



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

PMM8 French Language Translation Strategy

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Origin: Permanent Committee on Programs for Mission and Ministry

The Permanent Committee on Programs for Mission and Ministry recommends that The Executive of General Council:

- 1. Affirms a practical/functional bilingualism as the character of the United Church of Canada based on the following principles:**
 - i. To allow Francophones to fully participate in The United Church of Canada (UCC) and to feel included.**
 - ii. To allow Allophones who have learned French to understand and become involved in the UCC.**
 - iii. To recognize and honour French as one of Canada's two official languages.**
- 2. Affirm the protocol for communications in French as defined in the attached report.**

Background

In 2012 the General Secretary, the General Council was asked by the Executive to do a consultation with the French Ministries constituency. The consultation resulted in a restructuring of the structure of Ministries in French (MiF). A couple of the issues raised by the consultation were the issue of the bilingual nature of the church and issues of translation.

The consultation report had suggested that:

“The Executive of the General Council is being asked to clarify and communicate to the church its understanding of the bi-lingual nature of the United Church of

Canada, and the General Secretary is being asked to develop a clear policy for translation and identification of the appropriate resources for this to happen” [see *GCE October 2012 GS Report*]

This work was assigned to the developing National and Regional Connexional Tables. Representatives from the Regional Table in Montreal & Ottawa Conference have been working with the Responsible in developing a strategy and work plan for translation and reported to the Permanent Committee on Programs for Mission and Ministry.

Three key points underline their recommendations:

1. Complete bilingualism (professional simultaneous translation, all publications in both languages) is *not the goal*, given the investment of time and human and financial resources that would be required. What these standards of bilingualism aim for is a consistent presence of French so that « bilingual » events allow unilingual Francophones to feel at ease from beginning to end, and so that Francophones can fully participate in the life of The United Church of Canada without constant struggle.
2. Past experience has shown that the sincere and considerable efforts made to integrate French have lacked cohesion and consultation with Francophone leaders. Some examples include: publicity in French for a workshop that offers virtually no interpretation; translation of documents that are not relevant to the needs of the Francophone constituency; the refusal on the part of organizers to have table groups (one out of four) where participants can express themselves in French; a bilingual registration table for an event that takes place entirely in English; mailing multiple copies of English flyers to Francophone congregations. It is often assumed that Francophone delegates have no difficulty understanding debates in English.
3. On the one hand, the consequences of these inconsistencies can be seen in the reluctance, if not the refusal, of Allophones who use French as a *lingua franca* to see themselves included in the Church’s Ethnic Ministries or participate in the work of Conference and General Council committees. On the other hand, among our limited numbers of Francophone members, it is extremely difficult to find people who are both available and sufficiently bilingual to sit on Conference and General Council Committees, however interested they might be in the work to be done.

It might be helpful to define different types of assistance that can be offered to help people understand what is being communicated in a second language - or a language of which they have no knowledge at all.

Bilingual (written): = English and French translations **in the same document**, side by side or one above the other.

Translated (written): = easily available in French as well as English.

Simultaneous Translation: = system of complete oral translation with headsets and professional interpreters. Given the cost, use of this system should be very limited, and only after consulting with MiF.

Simultaneous Interpretation: = system of interpretation with headsets and a local interpreter of good will.

Alternating presentations: = Must absolutely avoid repeating exactly what is said in one language in the other. Alternating languages must be done in a way that allows everyone to have a good idea of what is said without tedious repetition.

Comprehension assistance: = an accompanying person discretely offers explanations and information (without necessarily translating everything) by quietly whispering to those needing assistance.

Areas where these Standards of Bilingualism would be applied:

- Official gatherings (Annual General Meetings of Conferences, General Council and General Council Executive);
- Small group gatherings (less than 30 people), less formal;
- National and Regional Events (*Behold, YAYA, Worship Matters*, etc.);
- Mail and information;
- Resources: forms, declarations, and educational documents etc.;
- Web site.

Official Gatherings:

- Publicity, registration table: **bilingual**;
- Important information (schedules, orientation, cafeteria, etc.): **bilingual**;
- Main documentation: **translated**;

- Keynote addresses: simultaneous translation available via headsets if the number of participants justifies it. As much as possible, encourage bilingual presentations;
- Making it easy for French-speakers to connect (cf. « Je parle français » buttons at the 41st General Council);
- English and bilingual or French table/discussion groups. (cf. Montreal & Ottawa Conference Annual General Meeting);
- Organize and offer comprehension assistance to those who need it;
- Gather all non-Anglophones at the beginning and end of meetings (and at points in between as required) for (de)briefing, exploration and exchanges in participants' language of choice.

Small Group Gatherings (under 30 people), less formal:

- Advertisements for the event, registration: **bilingual**;
- Important information (schedule, orientation, cafeteria, etc.): **bilingual**;
- **Preferred strategy: everyone speaks in his or her own language¹**, and please encourage everyone to speak slowly and clearly;
- Alternating presentations;
- English, bilingual and/or French table/discussion groups;
- Workshops: in English AND bilingual and/or in French;
- Organize and offer comprehension assistance to those who need it.

National and Regional Events:

In consultation with MiF, it is important to make a formal initial decision to allow Francophones to fully participate – or not – in the event. If the decision is made to include Francophone participants, there needs to be:

- Publicity and registration table: **bilingual**;
- Important information (schedule, orientation, cafeteria, etc.): **bilingual**;
- Main documentation: translated;
- Keynote addresses: simultaneous translation available via headsets if the number of participants justifies it. As much as possible, encourage alternating presentations;
- Ways of making it easy for French-speakers to connect (cf. « Je parle français » buttons at the 41st General Council);

- English and bilingual or French table/discussion groups;
- Comprehension assistance to those who need it;
- Gathering of non-Anglophones at the beginning and end of meetings (and at points in between as required) for (de)briefing, exploration and exchanges in participants' language of choice.

Mail and Information

- Press releases: **bilingual**;
- Letters and news from the Moderator: **bilingual**;
- Include the words: « *La version française suit* » or « *La version française suivra bientôt.* » at the beginning of all messages sent out across the Church

N.B. E-mail messages that begin with the words « *This message is sent blind copy to all...* » without a single word of French in them are a regular source of frustration for Francophones;

- The Moderator's videos should be subtitled in French;
- After each meeting of the Executive of the General Council, highlights should be translated and circulated across the church.

Resources:

Forms: via Internet, translated

Statements: translated

Educational Documents:

- In consultation with MiF, an initial evaluation must be made as to the relevance of the document for Francophones overall;
- Check with MiF to see if an adaptation would not be more appropriate than a translation;
- When a document is being designed/written, check to make sure that it will be translatable into French²;

- Distribute the French version of documents as soon as possible after the distribution of the English version³;
- When a report/document, etc. is available in French, this should be clearly indicated in the English version by an easily identifiable note;
- When a report/document, etc. is in the process of being translated/adapted, the English version of the document and all publicity surrounding it (especially publicity in English) should include an easily identifiable graphic element announcing the forthcoming translation (« ***Bientôt disponible en français*** »). This practice would also serve as a reminder to people from across Canada that there are perhaps Francophones in their areas as well.

Web Site:

The new French Web Site that is currently being developed will be significantly easier to navigate and reference documents will be easier to find. One major advantage is that the site will be managed by Stéphane Gaudet in collaboration with the Communications Unit and MiF. The launch of the new site is scheduled for the fall of 2014.

Operational Plan for Translation

Ministries in French offers services through a « single window » of access, which means that as soon as a General Council staff person gets the green light from MiF, that person contacts the Coordinator for Translation Services, who is then responsible for ensuring that the document is translated and proofread.

The Coordinator of Translation Services is responsible for:

- translating documents that require thorough knowledge of The United Church of Canada, its policies, its decision making bodies and its procedures (for example, the new edition of *The Manual*);
- coordinating the work of external translators;
- proofreading the work of external translators;
- overseeing billing and payment for the services of external translators.

One of MiF's objectives is to provide documents and news and information that are necessary for the proper functioning of congregations, missions and new French and bilingual

ministries, in order to allow them to carry out their mission as communities of faith; as well as participate in debates and decision-making processes of the Church at the presbytery, Conference and General Council levels. These resources include liturgical resources, documents related to denominational identity, handbooks, forms, educational resources, press releases and news stories, as well as pages from The United Church of Canada's Web site.

In order to understand the expectations and respond to the needs of The United Church in French, the members of the MiF team listen carefully to Francophone and bilingual clergy and laity, as well as to the various administrative and decision-making bodies of the Church. In this regard, the National Table and the Regional Table of Montreal and Ottawa Conference provide us with important information.

Some documents are directly translated from the English version. Others are adapted. In some cases, entirely different documents – that are more appropriate for Francophone contexts – are produced. Some of these replacement documents are adaptations of texts produced in French elsewhere, while others are original creations of MiF staff or freelancers.

Based on what we have seen and heard, the current priorities for the creation and distribution of resources in French are:

- Liturgies;
Liturgies for Sunday worship, for the Church's liturgical seasons, special occasions, meetings and prayers;
- Faith and Education for all Ages;
Preparation for baptism, marriage, confirmation, etc.; faith questions; introduction to the Bible; leadership preparation (training for lay people – motivation and discernment of gifts); Sunday School/Christian Education for Children;
- Resources Introducing The United Church and the United Church Identity
For people interested in learning more about The United Church of Canada, whether they be from other denominations, immigrants or people who don't belong to any community of faith;
- Theological Discussion of Current Issues;
Ecology, homosexuality, ecumenism, interfaith dialogue, etc.

Procedures for Determining which Documents to Translate

Every time the question arises as to whether or not a document, or series of documents, should be translated, the Responsable des MiF must be contacted for a discussion about the objectives and target market of the initiative.

- **At the beginning of a campaign, or as soon as a study group or a committee is formed:** it must be decided if everything will be translated, or if it is possible to create a combined approach that is better adapted to the interests and priorities of Francophones. The second option is the preferred one in most instances, especially in the case of committees or campaigns with long-term mandates in multiple phases, like the French communications strategy for the Comprehensive Review Task Group, or the *Unsettling Goods* campaign. This approach reduces translation costs and provides French and bilingual ministries with those documents that are most useful to them.
- **When plans are being made to create new liturgical or educational resources or documents related to United Church identity:** the Responsable des MiF will consult with the appropriate member of the MiF team to determine whether MiF will simply have the documents in question translated, or if the team should identify an existing resource or create one that would be better suited to Francophone realities.

When it is decided to use an existing resource or create a new one rather than translating the English resource, the team will need to determine if there are existing resources in French that can be either offered “as is”, or adapted. When it is most appropriate, the team will take responsibility for the creation of a resource specific to The United Church of Canada.

To this end:

- The Director for French Leadership Development will work with the Responsable to determine the best way to respond to requests: 1) for translation of theological reports of our Church; 2) for translation or creation of liturgical or educational resources; or material for events such as *Behold!* His or her role will be to evaluate what already exists, what the current needs are, and whether or not the proposed resource (or group of resources) is relevant.

- In consultation with the Responsible and the Executive Minister, Communications, MiF's Program Coordinator for Witness and Mission will discern which of the Church's news items and documents related to denominational identity are relevant to Francophone and bilingual ministries.

N.B. Certain resources will be identified as related to the work of two particular members of the team. In such cases, these team members will be consulted before a decision is made.

The Coordinator of Translation Services will have oversight of translation and billing. This includes proofreading translation done by external translators. In the case of a long-term project tied to a specific campaign or event, the work will preferably be assigned to a single translator.

Note:

- Time required for translation must be factored into production time if English versions of documents and their French translations are to be made available simultaneously. In cases where the French translation of a message, a letter, a document, a press release, etc. are not available when the English version is sent out or posted on the Web site, a note in French should be added to the English version announcing the date when the French version of the document can be expected.

Translation Team (2014)

- Judith Bricault – Coordinator of Translation Services
- Denis Fortin (Quebec City)
- Louise Carrier (Montreal)
- Roland Revet (France)
- Gilbert Beaume (France)
- Christian Nguyen (Toronto)

References

1. It should be noted that, in a bilingual context, unilingual Anglophones will almost always identify themselves and ask for translation, whereas Francophones and Allophones will say nothing and others will not know if they understand well. It is

important to raise awareness of this fact from coast to coast.

2. If the document makes numerous references to culturally well-known texts in Anglophone circles, it is often impossible to translate these references or to find an equivalent in another language (for example texts containing numerous references to lines from English hymns or Anglophone poets etc.)
3. The publicity and interest generated by a good document in English also influences the interest of Francophones in the same document. If the French version is only available 12 to 18 months later, it runs the risk of going largely unnoticed.

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