ATIM
Association des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes du Manitoba
The Association of Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters of Manitoba

March 18, 2020

His Worship Brian Bowman
Mayor, City of Winnipeg
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3B 1B9

Dear Mayor Bowman,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Association of Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters of Manitoba to express our concern over proposed cuts to the City of Winnipeg's translation services. We fear these cuts will diminish the City's ability to produce consistent, high-quality communications in French. ATIM represents many self-employed translators; however, we believe that moving to a system that relies primarily on outsourced, contracted work overlooks the importance of institutional memory and experience and threatens to impact the rights and safety of Winnipeg's French-speaking citizens.

ATIM is asking for guarantees that any cuts will not affect the amount or quality of French-language translation services. The City must implement effective control measures, identify any service gaps and work to mitigate them.

How will the City monitor quality if it reduces or eliminates on-site staff? Does the City have a firm grasp of the volume of translations it produces and of the number of staff it will require to maintain quality control? Has the City consulted with qualified translation professionals to ascertain these numbers?

Will the City take steps to intervene should the quality of communications be deemed unacceptable? Who will make this decision and what will these steps look like?

Should outsourcing be increased, we ask that the City prioritize language service providers residing in Manitoba to support our local economy and to protect the public interest. Engaging service providers outside the province will take tax money out of Manitoba, and translators residing outside the province will be unfamiliar with local issues. Translators do far more than translate words. We transmit information and knowledge. Especially when it comes to

municipal affairs, the people doing the communicating must have a nuanced understanding of the local scene to protect the public's right to accurate and cohesive information. Context is everything.

Finally, we recommend that the City prioritize certified members of ATIM in its outsourcing. Certification is a rigorous process that demands a high level of experience, knowledge and skill. It is our profession’s stamp of approval and should represent a minimum standard for government translation contracts.

Francophones in Winnipeg have reason to worry. One need only look to the engraving on the Andrew Mynarski monument at Vimy Ridge Memorial Park for an example of the kind of poor French translations we are subjected to even now. Despite numerous complaints to the City, this translation is still in place, an affront to Mynarski and to French speakers visiting his monument. It is, quite literally, a concrete example of what happens when translation and communication are neglected.

Given the health crisis we are currently all living through, it is no stretch to say that accurate communication can mean the difference between life and death. We sincerely hope that the City will carefully consider the ramifications of its proposal.

We would be happy to discuss this matter further and to offer our professional advice and expertise as the City moves forward with any changes.

Sincerely,



Jamie McLennan, C. Tr.
Certified Translator (ATIM & OTTIAQ)
Board Member, Association of Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters of Manitoba

cc: Nicole Young, Manager of French Language Services, City of Winnipeg
Christian Monnin, President, Société de la francophonie manitobaine