

SPEAKING NOTES FOR JUSTIN JOHNSON IN SUPPORT OF THE CITY OF WINNIPEG'S FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES REVIEW STRATEGY

DATE

January 30, 2020

SUBJECT

**Speaking notes for Justin Johnson,
AMBM Chief Executive Officer, in
support of the City of Winnipeg's
French Language Services Review
Strategy**

INTRODUCTION

Madam Speaker,

Your Worship,

Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me introduce myself. I'm Justin Johnson.

I am a Franco-Métis from Red River and the great-great-great-grandson of André Beauchemin, a member of Louis Riel's provisional government.

I am also the Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (AMBM).

I thank you for your welcome, and for the opportunity to express my personal support, as well as the support of the AMBM, on the City of Winnipeg's French Language Services Review Strategy.

At the outset, and for the benefit of all members of City Council, through you, Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by introducing the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (AMBM).

Since 1989, the AMBM has been the voice of Manitoba's bilingual municipal governments.

To date, the AMBM has fifteen member municipalities in Manitoba that have adopted French-language services policies.

The City of Winnipeg is the only *urban* bilingual municipality that is a member of the AMBM, by virtue of its designated bilingual sectors.

First of all, I would like to take stock of four key elements that, in my opinion, motivate and confirm the validity of the French-Language Services Review Strategy. These four key elements are as follows:

1. The progress that has been made and continues to be made in the area of French-language services.
2. The broader application of the principle of active offer.
3. The positive impact of the added value of French.
4. Recognition of the role and place of the City of Winnipeg in the development of its Francophone community.

In this way, I hope to show that, with the French-Language Services Review Strategy, we can build a more vibrant and prosperous City of Winnipeg that recognizes its action potential, celebrates its diversity, and fully values and benefits from its bilingual identity.

PROGRESS MADE AND ONGOING



For more than twenty-five years, the City of Winnipeg has been making progress in the area of French-language services.

This progress reflects the City of Winnipeg's clear commitment over time.

A precedent has been set.

In 2020, City Council has the opportunity to take the next step.

It is clear that the actions related to the recommendation are in line with the City of Winnipeg's past policy in the area of French-language services.

In this sense, City Council has an opportunity to build on past achievements and continue to move forward.

EXPANDED APPLICATION OF ACTIVE OFFER

The recommended actions of the French-Language Services Review Strategy show the way forward and go beyond the beaten path.

At their core, the recommended actions are guided by the principle of active offer and advocate an additive approach.

In my opinion, they make the meaning and purpose of the active offer of services in French more tangible. That is, that they be (a) more visible, (b) more readily available and accessible to the public, and (c) of higher quality, comparable to those offered in English.

The recommended action to apply more broadly the principle of active offer of services in both official languages throughout the municipality marks, more than anything else, a turning point, an historic milestone. It also makes a lot of sense.

Today, francophones live in every corner of the municipality. Francophones do not live only in St. Boniface, St. Vital, or St. Norbert. They go beyond these geographic designations. They are everywhere and everywhere they live, work, play and, above all, ask for services in French. The strategy to review French-language services is sensitive to this reality and offers a way to move things forward.

The AMBM is pleased to support this approach and would like to reiterate its willingness to work with the City of Winnipeg to improve the delivery of municipal services in French throughout its territory.

Manitoba's bilingual municipalities are your partners.

COOPERATION AND DIALOGUE

The added value of the French language brings with it positive economic and social benefits.

It welcomes newcomers.

It attracts investors and entrepreneurs.

It contributes to community economic development.

It diversifies the local economy.

It creates good jobs.

It gives a unique flavour to local tourism.

The economic and social benefits of the added value of French *for* the City of Winnipeg should not be underestimated.

They are the means by which the City of Winnipeg will succeed in making itself better known, in distinguishing itself more clearly.

I see the French-Language Services Review Strategy as a tool that sets the stage and enables the City of Winnipeg to promote and generate these positive long-term benefits.

In my opinion, it is precisely because the City of Winnipeg affirms the added value of French that it is preparing to enthusiastically host the next international meeting of the *Réseau des villes francophones et francophiles des Amériques* (RVFFA) on September 17 and 18, 2020.



The City has so much to offer, *through and with* its Francophone community.

RECOGNITION

This year we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of Manitoba's entry into Canadian Confederation.

The strategy to review French-language services clearly gives special meaning to this celebration.

Let me explain.

The French-Language Services Review Strategy reaffirms a principle that our founding father, Louis Riel, stated 150 years ago: the recognition of official linguistic duality as a fundamental value.

The City of Winnipeg is part of Manitoba's history. It is at the heart of it. *Literally*.

I would even say that it is still shaping that history to this day. The strategy to review French-language services is just one good example.

CONCLUSION

I hope that I have provided a sufficient overview of the issue to show that, with the strategy to review French-language services, the City of Winnipeg is moving forward and making progress in the right direction.

We can build a better City of Winnipeg *through and with* its Francophone community.

We can build a better City of Winnipeg *through and with* its official languages.

I therefore invite you all, through you, Madam Speaker, to vote in favour of the strategy to review French-language services.

You have our support.

Together, we can build a better City of Winnipeg.

Thank you for listening, and I salute you.

Merci. Thank you. Miigwetch.

CONTACT

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