French Language Services Policy

Safety, Licensing Appeals and Standards Tribunals Ontario

1.0 Introduction

The Safety, Licensing Appeals and Standards Tribunals Ontario (SLASTO) is a cluster of five adjudicative tribunals designated under the Adjudicative Tribunals Accountability, Governance and Appointments Act, 2009 (ATAGAA). SLASTO’s constituent tribunals resolve and decide matters arising from over 30 statutes relating to human and animal protection, public safety and the public interest. SLASTO’s five tribunals include the following:

- Animal Care Review Board
- Fire Safety Commission
- Licence Appeal Tribunal
- Ontario Civilian Police Commission
- Ontario Parole Board

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

- To comply with the provisions of the French Language Services Act (the "FLSA") in guaranteeing all persons and corporate entities the right to receive services in French.
- To inform the public about the manner in which French language services are provided by SLASTO.
- To reflect SLASTO’s commitment to the provision of French Language Services and to establish the cluster as a leader in the administrative justice sector.

If there is any conflict between this Policy and the provisions within the tribunals’ Rules of Practice, this policy will prevail.

3.0 Principles

- SLASTO is committed to an active offer of French language services. An active offer is the set of measures taken by designated government agencies to ensure that French language services are clearly visible, readily available, easily accessible, publicized, and of equivalent quality to services offered in English.
Integrating French language services in a cluster such as SLASTO will aim to provide an active offer of services in the French language. This means looking at an initiative or service delivery from a Francophone perspective – through a Francophone lens.

SLASTO is committed to actively engaging with the Francophone community to ensure its services reflect and meet the needs of the population it serves.

SLASTO is committed to increasing the geographic and cultural representation of Ontario by recruiting employees and adjudicators from diverse groups, including those with French language competencies. All employees and adjudicators providing services in French will be evaluated to ensure they meet the appropriate language requirements.

SLASTO’s successful provision of French language services is dependent on the commitment to, and recognition by all employees and adjudicators of their role in delivering French language services.

4.0 Policy

4.1 Communication

SLASTO will communicate in the client's language of choice (French or English) notwithstanding the fact that a client's representative may speak the other language. A client may change the language of his or her communication with one of SLASTO’s tribunals by notifying the tribunal in writing.

4.2 Written Communication

All written materials generated by SLASTO for public consumption, including SLASTO’s website, social media content, publications, forms, notices, rules, and policies will be available in English and in French and will be equivalent in quality and content.

All file-related correspondence initiated by any of the SLASTO's tribunals, as well as any electronic versions of such materials, will be provided in the client's language of choice (French or English). Forms will carry the notice that they are also available in the other language.

4.3 Oral Communication

When clients contact or are contacted by one of SLASTO’s tribunals by phone, the point of first contact will greet the client in both languages (French and English) and continue in the party’s language of choice (French or English). If the first point of contact is not able to communicate to the client in their language of choice, they will direct the party to an employee in a designated bilingual position.

Automated telephone services will be consistently available in French and English, including the interactive voice response system. Voicemail of all employees in designated bilingual positions will provide information in both French and English.
4.4 Case Conferences and Hearings

A bilingual Case Management Officer and Adjudicator will be assigned to case conferences and hearings when: an application or appeal is submitted in French; a client requests the proceeding to be conducted wholly or partly in French; and/or a client requests to communicate in French at any time in the process.

Parties will provide as much notice as possible, in advance of a proceeding, to advise SLASTO that they are requesting French or bilingual services OR that they no longer require the requested French or bilingual services.

A French-English interpreter will be provided by the tribunal for a party or witness who does not understand the other language. SLASTO will ensure that bilingual and French language proceedings are scheduled within timeframes equivalent to those applicable to proceedings in English.

4.5 Decisions

Tribunal decisions will be released in the language of the hearing. Decisions relating to hearings where the clients have participated in both English and French will be released in both languages. Significant decisions will be translated by matter of course.

All decisions will be translated in French or English by request.

4.6 Documents & Translations

Clients may submit written submissions or evidence either in English or in French. These documents will form part of the record in the language in which they are submitted. As a rule, the constituent tribunals will not translate documents provided by a client, but may order that the documents be translated if it considers it necessary for the fair determination of the matter.

5.0 Review

SLASTO will review this policy every two years along with other documentation required by the FLSA and ATAGAA. It will also update the policy, as required, to ensure that it reflects the most recent legal developments

6.0 Feedback & Complaints

Feedback and complaints about the quality of French language services or application of this policy can be sent to SLASTOinfo@ontario.ca. Complaints will be processed pursuant to SLASTO’s Public Complaints Policy.
Complaints can also be sent to Ontario’s French Language Services Commissioner at flsc-csf@flsontario.ca.

Ontario’s French Language Services Commissioner is an independent officer of the legislative assembly and reports directly to it. The Commissioner ensures that the rights of Ontario citizens and the obligations of the Government are respected according to the French Language Services Act.

Learn more about Ontario’s French Language Services Commissioner by visiting www.csfontario.ca