

**Air Canada Linguistic Action Plan  
Communications with and Services to the Public  
2011-2014**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Background .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Management’s commitment and leadership .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Recruitment.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Communication and training.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4. Service standards.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5. Audits and performance .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>6. Communities.....</b>	<b>13</b>

## **Background**

Under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equal status with respect to their use. In addition, Canada's *Official Languages Act* and the *Air Canada Public Participation Act* provide for equal rights for Canadians to be served in the official language of their choice where there is significant demand for communication in that language under the *Official Languages Regulations*. Finally, it makes good business and commercial sense for Air Canada to offer services and communication in both of Canada's official languages.

Air Canada has been subject to the *Official Languages Act* since 1969 and remained subject to it following privatization in 1988. Since its privatization, the Company has determinedly worked to fulfil its language commitments while adapting to the constantly changing environment in the private sector and in the airline industry in particular.

As Canada's largest full-service airline, Air Canada is proud to promote the principles of English and French duality as outlined in the *Official Languages Act*. No other North American carrier offers services in both official languages, English and French, throughout its world-wide network with such consistency.

It is also important to point out that unlike Government institutions that are subject to the *Official Languages Act*, Air Canada receives no direct or indirect funding for language training, testing or communication. Nonetheless, Air Canada has allocated significant resources (financial and human) to maintain its language programs even in the face of economic downturns and industry turmoil. In fact, Linguistic Affairs is one of the few departments at Air Canada that has not sustained budget cuts or a reduction of its programs over the years.

The previous 2001–2010 Air Canada Linguistic Action Plan was designed to resolve very specific operational issues resulting from the merger with Canadian Airlines in 2001. Since then, many initiatives have been undertaken to raise awareness among Air Canada employees of their official languages obligations and to improve customer service. The following are some examples of the measures implemented in the past decade:

- Production of Aerovocab, a bilingual pocket size booklet which provides quick and easy access to words frequently used in the airline industry;
- Development of eLang, an online management application for language testing;
- Video production "Hello Bonjour, The Air Canada Active Offer of Service", presented to all new front-line employees and accessible to all employees on our employee YouTube channel;
- Brochure on official languages obligations;
- Provision of an email address for customers with language-related complaints;
- Customer satisfaction surveys;
- Monthly quality internal audits;
- Creation of a language award;
- Online training;
- One-on-one coaching by language teachers;
- AC Official Languages obligations included in orientation kit;

- Presentation on Air Canada Official Languages' obligations to all new frontline employees;
- Development and distribution of “English-Français” biodegradable pens to enhance awareness.

In addition, in an effort to standardize its bilingual service within Canada and in several cities outside of Canada, regardless if there is significant demand, Air Canada has implemented several automated systems which provide services in both official languages:

**Self-service kiosks:** Located in airports, self-serve kiosks enable customers to carry out several types of transactions. The number of services offered by the kiosk has also increased steadily over the past 10 years. Customers can now check in, select or change their seats, request an upgrade or to be put on standby for an earlier flight, pay excess baggage fees, enter passport information, elect to receive payment receipts via email or print them, and print baggage tags, in either official language..

**Mobile device application:** Needless to say, this recently developed application is available in both official languages and continues to offer customers more options and flexibility no matter where they are. Using their mobile devices, users can check in for flights, receive electronic boarding passes, monitor flight status or receive notifications of delays or changes to departure and arrival times and more.

**Air Canada website:** Our web site also provides information on services offered, flight status, travel updates and more, all in both official languages.

Since the previous Action Plan, the Company has also encountered and tackled a number of challenges to ensure business continuity and provide its customers with superior service. Furthermore, in 2010, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages conducted an audit to assess service in both official languages on board designated bilingual flights, service at airports where the Company has language obligations and service provided by Call Centres. In accordance with the audit findings, Air Canada understands that despite the many tools already in use, greater effort must be made to raise awareness of the application of the Company's language obligations and responsibilities. Air Canada acknowledges that a new official languages action plan would help standardize its language activities and initiatives.

The objectives of the new 2011–2014 Linguistic Action Plan (enclosed) are as follows:

- To confirm senior management's commitment to providing the public with high-quality service in both official languages as required by the *Official Languages Act* and Air Canada's language policy;
- To clarify the Company's language commitments to its employees;
- To guide managers and employees in implementing the language policy.

## **1. Management’s Commitment and Leadership**

As with any major corporate initiative, commitment to promoting a culture of language duality must begin with senior management. Recognizing that the unique nature of an airline operation requires the mobilization of all of the company’s integrated resources to foster a bilingual culture, management has implemented an accountability framework to establish guidelines for effectively managing official languages.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Person or unit responsible</b>	<b>To be completed by</b>
<p>Designate an Accountable Executive as well as official languages champions within the Company.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Provides support to all Branches and Linguistic Affairs team for any initiatives that require executive leadership commitment</li> <li>✦ Ensures that the appropriate human and financial resources are available to meet our language obligations</li> <li>✦ Promotes the use of French and English in the corporation both in the language of work and service provided.</li> </ul>	<p>Senior Vice President, Employee Relations, and designated Accountable Executive</p> <p>Senior Vice President, Customer Service, and Co-Champion of Official Languages</p> <p>Vice-President, Corporate Communications and Co-Champion of Official Languages</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>Systematically review with senior management audit results and corrective actions, as well as any resource requirements</p>	<p>Senior Director, Customer Service Standards</p> <p>General Manager, Linguistic Affairs</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Hold regular meetings (minimum twice/year) with internal stakeholders to review progress on the 3-year action plan to identify issues, discuss priorities, etc.</p>	<p>Senior Director, Customer Service Standards</p> <p>General Manager, Linguistic Affairs</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Define and communicate objectives to senior management, including performance indicators.</p>	<p>Vice President, Customer Service and Champion of Official Languages</p> <p>Vice-President, Corporate Communications and Official Languages Champion</p>	<p>1st quarter 2012</p>

**1. Management’s Commitment and Leadership– cont’d**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Person or unit responsible</b>	<b>To be completed by</b>
Develop an Official Languages Publication which will include pertinent information such as Air Canada's official languages policy and procedures, roles and responsibilities, (including those of the Accountable Executive, Champions and Language coordinators), recruiting contacts, required language levels by function, signage, how-to (active offer, etc), language training options and schedule, etc..	Director, Corporate Human Resources  General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2011

## 2. Recruitment

In order to fulfil its language obligations Air Canada must maintain a sufficient number of bilingual employees on staff. Recruiting bilingual employees, specifically from outside Quebec, has always been and continues to be a significant challenge for the Company. This challenge is not exclusive to Air Canada since all federal institutions must also serve the public in both official languages. All institutions therefore compete to hire resources from the same limited pool. Over the past 10 years, it has been nearly impossible for us to increase our percentage of permanent bilingual employees, particularly since much of our hiring is for seasonal or part-time positions. While Air Canada is generally considered an attractive company for anyone wanting a career in the aviation industry, the Company must still advertise through targeted media and work with linguistic minority communities in order to draw a sufficient number of bilingual candidates,

The lack of opportunities for practicing language skills is another challenging issue. Employees for whom French is a second or foreign language need ongoing practice to help them maintain their language skills. Despite the fact that many of our employees enter the company with strong language qualifications and/or educational backgrounds, many report that without sufficient opportunity to practice in the workplace, they notice a decline in their language skills even to the point where they can no longer hold simple conversations in French. This being said, we will undertake certain changes to our processes which we believe could improve future hiring results of bilingual candidates.

Action	Person or unit responsible	To be completed by
Add clear objectives regarding Air Canada’s language obligations and the work mandate, including performance indicators, to the call for offers for a new HR service provider and the finalist evaluation grid.	Manager, Talent Acquisition and Diversity General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	Completed
Work with the new HR service provider to develop a stronger strategy for recruiting bilingual candidates for positions for which Air Canada has obligations under the <i>Official Languages Act</i> . This would include finding new ways to establish useful links with minority communities.	Manager, Talent Acquisition and Diversity General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter 2012
Review the hiring policy and process used by our recruiters to ensure that language components are adequately considered and included in the various hiring steps.	Manager, Talent Acquisition and Diversity	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter 2012

**2. Recruitment – cont'd**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Person or unit responsible</b>	<b>To be completed by</b>
Improve the Orientation kit for new employees by adding a section on language obligations (online).	Director, Corporate Human Resources General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2012
Review and update language levels according to requirements for relevant positions at Air Canada, Air Canada Express and any other providers offering services on behalf of Air Canada.	Linguistic Affairs Senior Director, Customer Service Standards	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2012

### 3. Communication and Training

As previously noted, lack of practice is an issue for Air Canada and Air Canada Express employees who are not regularly called upon to exercise their French skills. We recognize that some innovative thinking is required to develop new training models and to then encourage employees to use them. Air Canada already has many communication vehicles that can be used to promote awareness but a more organised and systemic approach is required to improve consistency.

Action	Person or unit responsible	To be completed by
Regularly review the Company’s expectations, service standards, and roles and responsibilities associated with Air Canada’s language obligations and commitments in all appropriate communications vehicles at the Company’s disposal.	Director, Corporate Human Resources General Manager, Linguistic Affairs Senior Director, Customer Service Standards	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2011 Ongoing thereafter
Enhance online initial and recurrent training for employees who interact with the public. Raise awareness of Air Canada’s language obligations by presenting relevant examples that demonstrate how to make an active offer.	Director, Corporate Human Resources General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2012 Long term goal due to the complexity of such a tool.
Develop and document communication opportunities for enhancing employee awareness, including frequencies and deadlines for each.	Senior Director, Customer Service Standards  Manager, Communication, Planning and Delivery General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter 2011
Develop new online tools to provide employees with more options and flexibility to learn and/or practice French at their leisure.	Manager, Language Training General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2012

**3. Communication and Training – cont'd**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Person or unit responsible</b>	<b>To be completed by</b>
Improve and promote the use of language pins: “English/Français” “J’apprends le français” [I am learning French]	Senior Director, Customer Service Standards General Manager, Linguistic Affairs Senior Director, Regional Airlines	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2012
Define and document the roles of key people: language coordinators and managers.	Senior Director, Customer Service Standards General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2012
Ensure a review of all language-related issues including status of complaints and training, is added to the agendas of joint meetings between the Air Canada and its unions.	Director, Labour Relations	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2012

#### **4. Service Standards**

In order to ensure and provide service of equal quality in both official languages and to effectively allocate our bilingual resources, it is essential to develop, review and maintain service standards for all customer contact areas. These need to be properly communicated to all employee groups so compliance can be adhered to.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Person or unit responsible</b>	<b>To be completed by</b>
Review our language standards and requirements for all customer contact areas.	Senior Director, Customer Service Standards General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2012 Annual review thereafter
Analyze any gaps between our day-to-day requirements for bilingual resources and the resources available and plan gap closure accordingly.	Senior Director, Customer Service Standards General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2011 Annual review thereafter
Develop and document service standards (resources and signage) for the various customer contact areas.	Senior Director, Customer Service Standards General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2011

## 5. Audits and Performance

To have an effective oversight mechanism to ensure that all of our services are of equal quality in both official languages in flight and on the ground, a robust audit program is required. We need to monitor not only Air Canada's performance, but that of companies such as Air Canada Express who operate flights solely on behalf of Air Canada.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Person or unit responsible</b>	<b>To be completed by</b>
Develop and document a periodical audit system and a follow-up process for Air Canada and the other affiliates providing services on its behalf.	Senior Director, Customer Service Standards General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2012
Develop and document a process for resolving complaints and implementing effective corrective actions.	Senior Director, Customer Service Standards General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2011
Develop complaint process with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in order to obtain timely information to enable Air Canada to conduct an effective investigation upon receipt of a language complaint.	General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2011
Enhance the survey questions for Mystery Shopper program and Ipsos Reid in order to get more relevant information.	Senior Director, Customer Service Standards General Manager, Linguistic Affairs	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2011
Introduce the complaint management tool used by Customer Service into the language process resolution process.	General Manager, Linguistic Affairs Manager, Translation and Official Languages Director, Call Centres and Customer Relations	4 <sup>rd</sup> quarter 2011

## 6. Communities

The minority communities of Canada and Air Canada can have a mutually beneficial relationship by understanding each others' needs.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Person or unit responsible</b>	<b>To be completed by</b>
Develop and document a list of resource persons in the various official language minority communities in Canada.	General Manager, Linguistic Affairs Director, Community Relations	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2011
Develop and document a communication plan and protocol with official language minority communities to better understand their service needs and establish a mutually beneficial partnership.	General Manager, Linguistic Affairs Director, Community Relations	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2011