

Resolution Relating to French Language and Cultural Initiatives

WHEREAS, French-speaking traders, farmers, and workers have lived in the Burlington region from the earliest times of European settlement through the present, and, with their descendants, have comprised an important component of our population, whose cultural and linguistic heritage continues to be worthy of preservation and celebration; and

WHEREAS, Burlington and its surrounding region is the largest United States population center close to Montréal, the second-largest French-speaking city in the world; and

WHEREAS, the Montréal area is home to approximately 3.5 million people, 70% of whom learn French from birth; and

WHEREAS, Burlington is a tourism and commercial center that derives substantial revenue from visitors to our city who come here to shop and to enjoy our natural and built amenities; and

WHEREAS, the Burlington International Airport serves a diverse clientele, of whom from 20 to 40 percent live in Québec; and

WHEREAS, people who grow up speaking a given language and using it at home and in their daily lives feel more comfortable where their native language is acknowledged and honored in public than where it is absent from sight and from thought; and

WHEREAS, recent efforts by the Church Street Marketplace and the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce to promote francophone (French-language) friendliness through “Bienvenue Québécois” (Quebecers Welcome) placards, and free French-language classes for their members and employees, and the seasonal Church Street “French Welcome Tent,” which efforts have been enthusiastically acknowledged by visitors from Québec and by media outlets in Montréal; and

WHEREAS, The Church Street Marketplace Association has surveyed French-speaking visitors and has compiled many suggestions for enhancing their experience of Burlington and its environs:

NOW, THEREFORE, for the benefit and enrichment of the regional culture, economy, and opportunity on both sides of the international border,

BE IT RESOLVED, that it is the policy of the City of Burlington that accommodation of francophone natives and visitors to our region is in the public interest, and should be enhanced wherever practicable; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that public signage and visitor information within the City of Burlington and at the Airport should be made English/French bilingual in significant measure, and that private businesses, especially retail and hospitality-related businesses, should be and hereby are encouraged to make their signage, maps, menus, and other materials bilingual, and that regional highway signage should become bilingual in significant measure as well, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Burlington retail and hospitality businesses should be and hereby are encouraged to affirmatively hire employees with French language skills, and to encourage and support existing employees to acquire and enhance such skills; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Burlington Public Schools and other area public and private school systems should be and hereby are encouraged to ensure that all area youth acquire basic familiarity with the French language, and with the history and culture of francophone societies around the world, especially as related to our region, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that regional school systems and institutions of higher learning should be and are hereby encouraged to expand and enhance their opportunities for adults to learn French and to appreciate our regional francophone culture and history, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the adoption of this resolution, and of the various public and private actions taken in the future in pursuit of its ends, should be communicated to the public, the media, and the governments of our region and of all francophone regions of the world.