



# FRENCH LANGUAGE LEXICON UPDATE

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In 2019, a committee of ICS Canada member agencies (Canadian Coast Guard, Global Affairs Canada, SOPFEU, Transport Canada, ICS Canada, CIFFC) met to discuss existing French translations. This was deemed a necessary exercise as opinions differed on certain terminology that had been provided different translators. It's been said that translation is an art: for literature is an act of inspiration that often conceals from readers the immense stylistic work involved. There is a double mastery in the act of translating. That of understanding and appropriating the written word, and that of transcribing it.

It should be noted that many distinctions remain between the two languages (quantity of available words, different meanings for the same term, distinction between the word used in English in the USA and in Canada, etc.). In addition, ICS member organizations sometimes have to deal with established usage of terms within their organizations, sometimes causing issues. But as you know, adopting a common language is one of the 14 Management Principles of ICS, so we had to get along.

Svonimir Majcen (professional translator and possibly one of the only translators in Canada specialized in ICS translation of English to French at that time) presented an in-depth review of over 200 ICS terms. The committee then debated the issues surrounding the modification of certain terms and agreed to modify 78 of them. The work was going to be time-consuming, repetitive, and tedious. It was estimated that it would take almost half a year's full-time work. Because of the time involvement and money constraints, the project was shelved until additional funding could be sourced.

In 2022, thanks to the expertise of Mathieu Bouchard who is an Artificial Intelligence scientist, specialized in language processing, ICS Canada funded the development of a "terminology search and correction" application to help accomplish this enormous task. The sample material provided to test the application totaled 955 training files in various formats and software versions (ppt, docm, doc, docsx, pptx, pdf) underwent corrections of all kinds. In the end, 9541 terms were replaced, while a further 1269 files were analyzed with no changes required.

Among the challenges encountered were those surrounding the multiplicity of file versions and applications to read files (ppt, pptx, pdf, doc, docx, docm), the evolution of certain terms over the years, issues surrounding certain fonts, and above all, along with the fact that in French nouns have a gender and that adjectives go with them. Although 78 terms were identified at the outset, the result was multiple iterations to match the variety of adjectives that could be used. At this time, it cannot be stated that the application was able to consider every single adjective and phrasing. However, a mechanism is being developed so that certain anomalies can be identified and in turn, will be corrected.

Because of the process established, and due to the lengthy discussions and debates held during the lexicon review, it is not possible to explain in detail the reasons behind each translation change. It came about as a result of many lengthy discussions. The [Lexicon document](#) can be



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found on the ICS Canada website under the “References” tab. It may be observed that some of the changes are rather subtle, while other times the terms are significantly different.

It is suggested that agencies and instructors familiarize themselves with the new lexicon as soon as possible, before starting to use the “updated” course material. It is anticipated that the updated material will be uploaded by the end of July, 2023.

This is a significant update and it is an important milestone towards the standardization of French terminology within the ICS Canada program. The current lexicon will be reviewed in 5 years, although it is being recommended that users do not hesitate to offer up requests for re-evaluation of any other current terminology.

- Vincent Demers, ICS Canada Chair