

French-language Services Plan

2022–2023

Justice

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French-language Services Plan
Department of Justice
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Ce document est également disponible en français sous le titre : « Plan de services en français 2022-2023 »

Message from the Deputy Minister

In accordance with the *French-language Services Act and Regulations*, I am pleased to provide the Department of Justice's French-language Services Plan for the year 2022-2023. Each year our plan reflects our ongoing commitment to contribute to the preservation and growth of the Acadian and Francophone community and provide for the delivery of French-language services.

While they operate independently from the Department of Justice, both the Nova Scotia Legal Aid (Legal Aid) and Public Prosecution Service (PPS) participate in the department's French-language services annual business plan. As a result, this plan also includes French-language services offered by Legal Aid and PPS as well as their goals and objectives for improving French-language services and their specific measures to achieve these in 2022-2023. Legal Aid and PPS have also included in this plan their progress in reaching specific goals and objectives set out for 2021-2022.

We continue our efforts to increase the amount of translated information contained on our websites and maintain the translation of the amendments to the Civil Procedure Rules. We began working towards the implementation of Bill C-78, an Act to amend the *Divorce Act*, recognizing a litigant's right to use the official language of their choice in divorce proceedings before the Supreme Court. The number of bilingual staff employed within Justice increased this past year, and we continued to offer staff opportunities to expand their skills by taking part in French-language and French legal terminology training.

As we enter the new fiscal year, we will continue to rely on the outstanding contributions that staff, as well as our justice partners make to create a better Nova Scotia. In the upcoming year, we will continue to work with employees to ensure our justice system responds to the needs of Acadians, Francophones, and Francophiles in the province of Nova Scotia.

We welcome your feedback on our plan for 2022-2023 and extend a sincere thank you to all who helped develop it and all who will contribute to its implementation in the upcoming year.

Candace L. Thomas, K.C.
Deputy Minister and Deputy Attorney General
March 31, 2022

What we're doing to contribute to the growth of the Acadian and Francophone community

We recognize the importance of French-language services as we fulfil our responsibilities under the *French-language Services Act* and *Regulations*. We believe Nova Scotians should have access to quality government services in French, and this plan demonstrates our commitment to ensuring our programs, policies and services address the priorities expressed by the Acadian and Francophone community. To achieve this, we collaborate with others in government – including the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie – through the French-language Services Coordinating Committee. We greatly value this partnership, which ensures a continued understanding of the unique needs of our province's Acadian and Francophone community.

As we continue to maintain and improve our French-language services, we welcome feedback on our progress, and we invite you to share with us your comments, questions or concerns by contacting our French-language services coordinator, **Leda Zlotnick** (Leda.Zlotnick@novascotia.ca, 902-424-1274).

Services offered in French

The Department of Justice responds to verbal and written requests to communicate in French from the public in a timely manner. This is accomplished by engaging bilingual staff and obtaining external translation, when necessary. Our goal continues to be to provide the same quality of handling inquiries and information requests in French as in English.

The Department provides the following French language services and programs:

- Court hearings in accordance with the *Criminal Code*
- Interpreters in Provincial Court for criminal matters
- Simultaneous interpreters as required at Supreme Court and Appeal Court for criminal matters
- Translated print materials in priority subject areas determined within divisions
- Staff participation in the “Bonjour!” campaign
- nsfamilylaw.ca available in both official languages
- Processing of uncontested applications for divorces
- The Parent Information Program (PIP) online and in group settings
- Bilingual staff in court administration offices located in designated areas
- French presentence reports
- Educational programs in French in correctional settings upon request
- Supervision of individuals in custody and in the community in French, upon request
- French educational presentations about cyberbullying upon request
- Phone and counter services in French in the private security and firearm office, and a bilingual firearms officer in the Yarmouth area

Nova Scotia Legal Aid provides the following French language services and programs:

- nslegalaid.ca available in both official languages
- A 24-hour telephone duty counsel service providing free and immediate legal advice to people arrested or detained
- French-speaking counsel available, under retainer, to represent an accused

Public Prosecution Service provides the following French language services and programs:

- French-speaking Crown Attorneys available
- Oral and written communication in French with various agencies (particularly police agencies) and the public (including accused persons, witnesses, and the media)

How we communicate with the public in French

The Department of Justice

Court Services, Correctional Services, Maintenance Enforcement and Victims Services are the divisions within the Department of Justice that most frequently interact with the public. Employees in a workplace fluent in French respond to written and oral French requests and when required, correspondence is sent to other Departmental employees or Communications Nova Scotia for translation and/or to other staff who can answer questions in French.

Across the Department, various staff members participate in the “Bonjour!” campaign to respond to specific inquiries in French. If there is no one at the local level who can manage the request, we communicate with the Department’s French-language services coordinator.

The installation of 50 licenses for French correction software program, Antidote, on the computers of staff, Judges, Crown Prosecutors, Court Reporters and Probation Officers also facilitate correspondence between the department and courts with our stakeholders.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid (NSLA)

NSLA full-service offices have the most frequent public contact. If NSLA receives written correspondence in French, the response will be in French. NSLA employees forward French written and oral requests to staff within their workplace who are able to respond in French. If translation services are required, NSLA may contact the Department of Justice French-language coordinator for a referral.

NSLA participates in the “Bonjour!” campaign to respond to specific inquiries in French. If there is no one at the local level who can manage the request, they refer to staff who can respond in French.

NSLA also maintain a list of French-speaking lawyers who are willing to provide telephone duty counsel services in French.

Public Prosecution Service (PPS)

PPS has members of their staff in each of their four geographic regions who can respond to requests from the public to communicate in French.

PPS has eight Crown Attorneys who can conduct trials in French, meeting communication obligations governed by sections 530.1 of the *Criminal Code*.

What we did to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2021–22?

Objective 1: Strengthen internal operational structures including policy, legislative and administrative frameworks

Department of Justice

Completed

- Collaborated with Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Services to draft and make public on the Department of Justice website in both official languages, the 2020-2021 French-language Services Accountability Report and the French-language Plan for 2021-2022 by March 31, 2021.

Carryover / Ongoing

- Drafted French-language *Accessibility Act* review consultation materials.
- Worked towards implementing the official languages amendments to the *Divorce Act* determined in consultation with the judiciary and with confirmation of budgetary contribution from Canada.
- Reviewed the French training policy and its operational needs tables (annual review) to ensure those identified in the operational needs tables are receiving training as identified.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid

Completed

- Contributed to the 2020-2021 French-language Services Accountability Report and the French-language Plan for 2021-2022.
- The frequently asked questions, contact Information and provincial and territorial information pages were updated and posted on website in both official languages.

Carryover / Ongoing

- Maintained membership on the Department of Justice French-language Services Advisory Committee by attending and participating in meetings.

Public Prosecution Service

Carryover / Ongoing

- Continued to have a representative on the Department of Justice French-language services committee.
- Maintained and updated a list of Crown Attorneys able to conduct trials in the French-language pursuant to s.530.1 of the *Criminal Code*.

Objective 2: Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programs to the public

Department of Justice

Completed

- Continued to increase capacity to respond to demands in French throughout the Department, by identifying legal and support staff capable of providing French-language services to clients.
- Established workflows for French-language Accessibility inquiries and service requests (navigation requests).
- Accessibility Directorate continued to work with Communications Nova Scotia to translate documents in French (2022-23, Accessibility Plan for 2022-2025 and other documents were released and translated in French).
- Negotiated a contract with the Centre canadien de français juridique to provide staff with French legal terminology training.
- Provided legal support to update *French-language Services Regulations*.
- Held 70 court proceedings in French.
- Employed French interpreters in court on 24 occasions totaling 96 hours of interpretation services.
- Hired federal contravention bilingual clerks for the Dartmouth, Halifax, and Yarmouth Justice Centre.
- Employees participated in the following training opportunities:
 - A Family Justice coordinator has participated in external online French training, including Family Law Perfectionnement sessions through the Centre canadien de français juridique and an online conference on family law violence through the l'Association internationale francophone des intervenant auprès des familles séparées (AIFI)
 - One (1) Court Reporter participated to several 60-minute online webinars about criminal and family law offered by the Centre canadien de français juridique
 - Eighteen (18) employees participated in various level of online French training at Université Sainte-Anne, some on several occasions
 - Twenty-two (22) Justice employees participated in French legal terminology training offered by the Centre canadien de français juridique, some on several occasions
 - Fifteen (15) staff attended an online French course titled "French Legal Correspondence 1, 2 and 3" February and March 2022 offered by the Institute Joseph Dubuc, Saint-Boniface, Manitoba.
- Maintained the French CyberScan website.
- Continue to have French CyberScan brochures printed and available during community presentations and presentation sot police agencies.
- Distributed French CyberScan information brochures to CSAP French schools, universities, sea cadets, women's centers, Victim Services, and Restorative Justice.
- Resumed CyberScan physical presentations.
- Continue to administer the Federal Firearms Program in compliance with bilingual requirements.
- Advertised in job postings for Public Safety sections and Accessibility Directorate that "French will be an asset" or similar wording.

- Hired a Bilingual MEP Enforcement Officer to support the *Official Languages Act Agreement* for the *Divorce Act* requirements.

Carryover / Ongoing

- Delivering French services and information to the public on an ongoing basis.
- Providing quality legal advice to clients, including Acadian Affairs and the Francophonie.
- Ensuring staff and lawyers continue to take advantage of relevant training opportunities.
- Promoting and supporting French-learning opportunities to Accessibility team, Correctional Services members as they arise.
- Delivering services and informational materials in Correctional Services that respond to the priority needs of the Acadian and Francophone communities.
- Supporting the French translation of the *Civil Procedure Rules* and updates related to the new *Divorce Act*.
- Updating the *Criminal Code* forms to French and publish on the Courts of Nova Scotia website.
- Providing funding for the translation of French wills.
- Ensuring French services are made available in criminal court in accordance with Section 530 of the *Criminal Code*.
- Filling designated Court Services clerk positions as vacancies arise.
- Offering employees from the Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Services a variety of French training opportunities.
- Continuing to support provincial judges' French training opportunities.
- Exploring the option of having a bilingual court reporter enroll in intensive French training.
- Responding to French translation/interpreter requests from Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program agencies.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid

Completed

- Supporting lawyers providing services in French who requested bilingual business cards.
- Four Nova Scotia Legal Aid staff studied various French training offered by Université Sainte-Anne, and two Nova Scotia Legal Aid Lawyers participated in French legal terminology training offered by the Centre canadien de français Juridique.

Carryover / Ongoing

- Promoting French as a desirable asset in hiring new personnel.
- Offering French-language training made available by government to NSLA employees.
- Providing French speaking counsel to individuals requesting a French speaking lawyer.

Public Prosecution Service

Completed

- Providing French-language *Criminal Codes* to bilingual Crown Attorneys including:
 - Three (3) Crown Attorney participated in training offered by the French-language Institute for Professional Development.
 - One (1) Crown Attorney participated in several 60-minutes online webinars on family law and criminal law offered by the Centre canadien de français Juridique.
 - Two (2) Crown Attorneys participated in French legal terminology training, some on several occasions.
 - Two (2) Crown Attorneys participated in various level of online French training at Université Sainte-Anne.

Carryover / Ongoing

- Continuing to provide “Antidote” licenses to bilingual Crown Attorneys.
- Retaining a list of staff members able to communicate with stakeholders in French.
- Offering French-language training made available by government to PPS employees.

Objective 3: Maintain ongoing dialogue and consultation with the Acadian and Francophone community

Department of Justice

Completed

- Meeting with l’Association des jurists d’expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse (AJEFNE) to discuss the needs of the Francophone communities.
- Developed French-language recruitment materials for members to participate on the third Accessibility Standard Development committee.
- Created French-language consultation materials for Phase 2 of the Education Standard Development committee recommendations.
- Conducted French-language *Accessibility Act* review focus groups.

Carryover / Ongoing

- Continuing recruitment in French for Agencies, Boards and Commissions
- Providing a grant to AJEFNE in support of Law Day at the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial French schools.
- Working to identify potential Accessibility Awareness campaign materials to be delivered in French.
- Promoting French-learning opportunities to Restorative Justice team members as they arise.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid

Carryover / Ongoing

- Consulting with French-language stakeholders by meeting and maintaining membership with AJEFNE.

Public Prosecution Service

Carryover / Ongoing

- Maintaining a French component on the PPS website.
- Providing bilingual business cards for newly hired Crown Attorneys.

How we plan to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2022–23

Objective 1: Strengthen internal operational structures including policy, legislative and administrative frameworks

Goals

To champion and support the internal administrative structures by strengthening the policy, legislative and administrative frameworks for the implementation of the *French-language Services Act* and Regulations, the Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Services commit to:

- Implementing the Nova Scotia *French-language Services Act* and *Regulations*.
- Implementing the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*.
- Contributing to the provincial government's Annual Plan and Progress Report on French-language services.
- The ongoing development and implementation of policies and procedures to support the delivery of French-language services; and raising awareness of French-language services, supporting employees, and increasing government's capacity to deliver services in French.

Planned Measures

Department of Justice

- Collaborate with Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service to draft and make public on the Department of Justice website in both official languages, the 2021-22 French-language Services Accountability Report and the French-language Plan for 2022-23 by March 31, 2023.
- Engage in activities to support the implementation of the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*.
- Review the French training policy and its operational needs tables annually to ensure those identified in the operational needs' tables are receiving training as identified.
- Translate documents about the *Accessibility Act*, regulations, standards, Prescribed Public Sector Bodies, and the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan.
- Explore/draft internal policies and procedures in relation to the official languages

- amendments to the *Divorce Act* in consultation with the judiciary.
- Create and deliver staff training on the official language's amendments to the *Divorce Act*.
- Translate the new Alternative Dispute Resolution Modules for Unified Family Court into French.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid

- Maintain membership on the Department of Justice French-language Services Advisory committee by attending and participating in meetings.
- Contribute to the 2021-22 French-language Services Accountability Report and the French-language plan for 2022-23.

Public Prosecution Service

- Continue to have a representative on the Department of Justice French-language services committee.
- Maintain and update a list of Crown Attorneys able to conduct trials in the French-language pursuant to the *Criminal Code*.

Objective 2: Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programmes to the public

Goals

In support of French-language services development, planning, and delivery to the public, the Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service commit to:

- Delivering services and informational materials that respond to the priority needs of the Acadian and Francophone community.
- Increasing capacity to provide French-language services in priority areas.
- Supporting French-language training for staff.
- Measuring the benefits and effectiveness of French-language training, with course participants.

Department of Justice

- Support a 2-year project for the translation and review of the consolidated Civil Procedure Rules in French.
- Arrange for translation of the *Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act and Regulations* for the purposes of publishing an unofficial version.
- Create French versions of the Online Intake Modules for family law litigants.
- Publish updated legal information content on nsfamilylaw.ca website in both official languages.
- Explore contracting with Centre canadien de français juridique to provide staff with French legal terminology training, including training specific to family law.
- Advertise French services in family court, such as:
 - the Online Parenting Information Program (PIP), via social media (Twitter, Facebook) and remind staff to offer the French PIP to clients;

- the new bilingual Family Law Nova Scotia website via social media (Twitter, Facebook) once the website is translated (French website activated).
- Draft French presentence reports, as required.
- Supervise individuals in custody and in the community in French, upon request.
- Provide French educational programs in correctional services, as needed.
- Ensure employees are aware of relevant French training opportunities.
- Continue to provide legal support and advice to Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.
- Advertise job postings with job “French will be an asset” or similar wording, where appropriate.
- Identify Accessibility Directorate priority press releases for French translation.
- Translate Accessibility Standard Development Committee recruitment materials in French.
- Continue to explore making Victim Services letters on the case management system available in French.
- Support French translation of the *Civil Procedure Rules* and plan for French translation of updates related to the new *Divorce Act*.
- Update French *Criminal Code* forms and publish on the Courts of Nova Scotia website.
- Continue to provide funding for translation of French wills.
- Ensure to provide French services in criminal court in accordance with s 530 of the *Criminal Code*.
- Fill designated French Court Services clerk positions as vacancies arise.
- Continue to offer employees a variety of French training opportunities.
- Continue to support provincial judges’ French training opportunities.
- Continue exploring options for offering a bilingual court reporter intensive French training.
- Promote French-learning opportunities to Restorative Justice team members.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid

- Provide bilingual business cards to lawyers providing services in French.
- Promote French as a desirable asset in hiring new personnel.
- Offer French-language training made available by the provincial government to NSLA employees.
- Provide French speaking counsel to individuals that request a French speaking lawyer.

Public Prosecution Service

- Continue to provide Antidote software licences to bilingual Crown Attorneys.
- Offer French-language training made available by the provincial government to PPS employees.
- Provide French-language *Criminal Codes* to bilingual Crown Attorneys.

Objective 3: Maintain ongoing dialogue and consultation with the Acadian and Francophone community

Goals

To engage Acadian and Francophone communities through communications and consultations in support to its development and growth, the Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service commit to:

- Supporting the community in its development, through consultation, collaboration, and partnerships.
- Consulting and communicating with the community and gain input, feedback, and recommendations.
- Encouraging Acadian and Francophone representation on ABCs by advertising for positions in both French and English.

Planned Measures

Department of Justice

- Recruitment for Agencies, Boards and Commissions will continue in French.
- Meetings with AJEFNE will continue to discuss the needs of the Francophone communities and to consult on activities related to the implementation of the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*.
- Exploration of supporting a family law justice networking event for French-language stakeholders.
- Continue to provide a grant to AJEFNE in support of Law Day for the students of the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial French schools.
- Continue to respond to French-language inquiries about disability and accessibility in French are ongoing.
- Continue to respond to French translation/interpreter requests from Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program agencies will continue.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid

- Maintain membership with AJEFNE.
- Continue to publish new contents or amendment to pages on the Nova Scotia Legal Aid website.

Public Prosecution Service

- Continue to maintain a French component on the Public Prosecution Service website.
- Continue to provide bilingual business cards for newly hired Crown Attorneys.