

# **French-language Services Plan**

2023–2024

Justice



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French-language Services Plan  
Department of Justice  
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## **French-language Services Plan 2023–24**

### **Department of Justice**

*Ce document est également disponible en français sous le titre : « Plan de services en français 2023-2024 »*

#### **Message from the Deputy Minister**

It is my pleasure to share the Nova Scotia Department of Justice's French-language Services 2022-23 Accountability Report and our 2023-24 Plan. Our 2023-24 Plan, which includes Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service, focuses on 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 within the justice system.

This year we are committing to improving the justice system by focusing on operational effectiveness, access to justice and family justice services. We will do this through training opportunities for staff, improvements to technology, and service delivery. We will expand family justice services to include French services across the province and provide translations of family laws. Training in family law and French legal terminology will also be ongoing. We also recognize the need to work with community, justice, and government partners to create the right conditions for preventing and reducing crime in Nova Scotia and we're working with our justice system partners to enhance French-language services in our criminal courts. This work will continue to be a key focus for us throughout the next fiscal year.

We are excited to see this plan in action. The Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and the Public Prosecution Service are committed to supporting the Acadian and francophone population in Nova Scotia by improving access to justice programs and services. This plan reflects a collaboration among staff, all levels of government, and our justice partners to integrate these goals and values into our day-to-day operations. None of this work is possible without your engagement and hard work.

We welcome your feedback and extend a sincere thank you to all who helped develop this document and to those whose hard work will be critical to its success.

Thank you.

Candace L. Thomas, K.C.  
March 2023

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

We recognize the importance of French-language services, and we endeavour to fulfill 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 aim, we collaborate with other designated public institutions across government – including the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie – through the French-language Services Coordinating Committee and l'Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse (AJEFNÉ). We greatly value these partnerships, which ensure a continued understanding of the unique needs of our province's Acadian and francophone community.

We encourage Nova Scotians to request services from government in French. We also encourage Acadians and francophones to have their voices heard by participating on Agencies, Boards and Commissions, which are regularly advertised by the Executive Council Office. 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 or questions by contacting our French-language services coordinator. If you wish to make a formal complaint regarding French-language services, please contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

### French-language services coordinator

Leda Zlotnick, telephone: 902-424-1274, email: [leda.zlotnick@novascotia.ca](mailto:leda.zlotnick@novascotia.ca)

### Services we offer in French

The Department of Justice offers various programs and services in French such as:

- hearings in court in accordance with the *Criminal Code of Canada*.
- interpreters in Provincial Court for criminal matters.
- simultaneous interpreters as required by law 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 in French.
- the Parent Information Program in both official languages online.
- 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 supports French-language services with:

- information on their website in both official languages.
- a 24-hour telephone duty counsel service providing free and immediate legal advice in French or English to people arrested or detained.
- French-speaking counsel under retainer to represent the accused.

#### Public Prosecution Service provides services in French, for instance:

- 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 have the most public contact. Employees forward French written or oral requests to staff within their workplace who can respond in French. If there is no one within the office who can respond in French, we forward the correspondence to head office or Communications Nova Scotia for translation and to other staff who can answer questions in French.

Other divisions have staff members participating 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 Antidote, a French correction software program, on the computers of staff, Judges, Crown Prosecutors, Court Reporters and Probation Officers also facilitate correspondence with our stakeholders.

### Nova Scotia Legal Aid (NSLA)

While NSLA operates the Commission independently from the Department of Justice, they are part of this French-language services plan.

NSLA full-service offices have the most public contact. If NSLA receives written correspondence in French, the response will be in French. NSLA employees forward French written or oral requests to staff within their workplace able to respond in French. Documents are translated in-Cohouse or by a service provider. If they require translation, NSLA may contact the Department of Justice French-language coordinator for a referral.

NSLA continues to track requests for French-language services. NSLA responds to French requests, in writing and orally, as capacity permits and has staff fluent in French who can address inquiries. 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 maintains 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 2022–23

### Objective 1

#### Strengthen internal operational structures including policy, legislative and administrative frameworks.

##### Department of Justice

###### Completed Goals

- Collaborated 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 2022-23 French-language Services Accountability Report and the 2023-24 French-language Plan by March 31, 2023.
- Engaged in activities to support the implementation of the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*:
  - Translated the new Alternative Dispute Resolution Modules for Unified Family Court, together with associated key learning tools, into French.
- Worked with Communications Nova Scotia through the Accessibility Directorate to translate documents about the *Accessibility Act, Regulations*, standards Prescribed Public Sector Bodies and the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan. Completed translation of:
  - Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2022-2025.
  - Compliance Framework for the *Accessibility Act and Regulations*.
  - Are You Ready: An Emergency Preparedness Guide for Persons with Disabilities and Older Adults.
  - Awareness campaign materials promoting International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- Worked with Communications Nova Scotia and the *Accessibility Act* Review team to provide Act Review Consultation opportunities in French:
  - provided information in French about the *Accessibility Act* Review.
  - organized a focus group for participants in French.
- Created and delivered staff training on the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*:
  - developed animated video demonstrating active offer of service in consultation with Nova Scotia's Department of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

###### Carried over/Ongoing

- Review the French training policy and its operational needs tables annually to ensure identified training needs are being met.
- Exploring/drafting internal policies and procedures in relation to the official languages amendments to the *Divorce Act* in consultation with the judiciary.

##### Nova Scotia Legal Aid

###### Completed Goals

- Contributed to the 2022-23 French-language Services Accountability Report and the French-language Plan for 2023-24.

###### Carried over/Ongoing

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

## Public Prosecution Service

### Carried over/Ongoing

- Continuing to have a representative on the Department of Justice French-language services committee.
- Maintaining and updating a list of Crown Attorneys able to conduct trials in the French-language pursuant to section 530.1 of the *Criminal Code*.

## **Objective 2**

### **Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programs to the public.**

## Department of Justice

### Completed Goals

- Supported a 2-year project for the translation and review of the consolidated *Civil Procedure Rules* in French.
  - Contracted with the University of Moncton’s Centre de traduction et de terminologie juridiques (CTTJ) for translation to be completed end of fiscal year 2022-23.
- Created French versions of the Online Intake Modules for family law litigants.
- Published updated legal information content on nsfamilylaw.ca website in both official languages.
- Contracted with Centre canadien de français juridique (CCFJ) to provide staff with French legal terminology training specific to family law over the 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscal years and delivered first 2 modules in January and March 2023.
- Advertised French services in family court.
  - Published the Online Parenting Information Program (PIP) in French and reminded staff to offer it to clients.
  - Promoted French PIP and new bilingual nsfamilylaw.ca website via social media (Twitter, Facebook) and included French stakeholders in the social media loop.
- Filled new bilingual family court staffing positions including:
  - Maintenance enforcement officer
  - JO4 conciliator
  - Court Services Manager
  - Court Services Coordinator, Policy and Compliance
- Promoted and supported French-learning opportunities as they arose to Correctional Services members.
  - Advised staff of French legal terminology training by the CCFJ, French training offered at l’Université Sainte-Anne and French legal communication training offered by l’Université de Saint-Boniface.
  - 2 Correctional Services employees participated in variety of French courses/training offered to Justice staff
  - Middleton office staff participated in a few French training opportunities and several Service Nova Scotia “Bonjour” Frunch series (French at lunch).
- Delivered services and informational materials in Correctional Services that respond to the priority needs of the Acadian and francophone community:
  - Translated and published In-Custody Phone System FAQ update on the division’s webpage.
  - Updated Correctional Services website so address formatting was accurate.
  - Updated youth webpage in French.
  - Supported the Bonjour Program in Port Hawkesbury, Yarmouth, and Middleton offices.



- Draft and translate disability and accessibility terminology to use in translations.
  - Expecting completion by end of fiscal.
- Worked with Communications Nova Scotia to translate in French the recruitment materials for the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee.
- Supported French translation of the *Civil Procedure Rules* and planned for French translation of updates related to the new *Divorce Act*.
  - Sent Amendments to Rules 7, 31, 91, and housekeeping items to CTTJ for translation and incorporation into the French *Civil Procedure Rules*.
- Update French *Criminal Code* forms and publish on Courts of Nova Scotia website:
  - provided updated forms to judiciary for review.
- Provide French services in criminal court in accordance with section 530 of the *Criminal Code*.
  - Held 10 French trials, plus 48 various court proceedings in French.
  - Employed French interpreters in court on 57 occasions totaling 278 hours of interpretation services.
- Offered Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service employees a variety of French training opportunities.
  - 3 court reporters participated in several 60-minutes online webinars about criminal law.
  - 6 justice employees took several online webinars about family law both offered by the CCFJ.
  - 2 court reporters enrolled in the national Semaine de perfectionnement en français juridique offered in Toronto, Ontario by the CCFJ.
  - 13 employees participated in various levels of French training at Université Sainte-Anne throughout the year.
  - 24 Justice employees participated in French legal terminology training offered online by the CCFJ, some on several occasions.
  - 14 staff attended an online French course titled “French Legal Communication 1 and 2 in January and February 2023 and Anglicismes et faux amis sans jugement March 2023 offered by the Institute Joseph Dubuc, Saint-Boniface, Manitoba.
- Continued to support provincial judges’ French training opportunities.
  - Sponsored 1 provincial court judge who took 45 hours of French tutoring offered by l’Université Sainte-Anne.
  - Supported 4 judges who participated in Juralingo, legal language education in French for provincial court Judges available in Caraquet, New Brunswick Spring and Fall 2022.
- Negotiated a contract with the CCFJ to provide staff with French legal terminology training.
  - Contract signed for fiscal years 2023-2028.

### **Carried over/Ongoing**

- Arranging for translation of the *Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act and Regulations* for the purposes of publishing an unofficial version.
  - Contracted with CTTJ for translation to be completed in 2024-25.
- Drafting French presentence reports as required.
- Supervising individuals in custody and in the community in French, upon request.
- Providing French educational programs in correctional services as needed.
  - purchased many French resources (French-English dictionaries) for Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility and Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility.
- Ensuring Legal Services’ staff and lawyers have training opportunities.
- Continuing to provide any legal support and advice needed by Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.
  - supported the revision of the *French-language Services Act and Regulations*.

- Working with Communications Nova Scotia to translate priority press releases for Accessibility Directorate. Completed announcement of:
  - the *Accessibility Act* Review
  - recruitment to the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee.
- Providing funding for translation of French wills as needed.
- Support launch of the French eCourt service once completed.
- Translate the Minister’s proposed accessibility standard in the Built Environment.
- Advertising in job postings for Accessibility Directorate that “French will be an asset” or similar wording.
- Explore making Victim Services letters on the case management system available in French.
- Explore offering intensive French training to a bilingual court reporter.
- Promoting French-learning opportunities to Restorative Justice team members as they arise.
  - Also ensured all materials describing and promoting the Restorative Justice Program are available in French.
- Filling designated Court Services clerk positions as vacancies arise.
  - Posted for the Dartmouth, Halifax, Port Hawkesbury, Digby, and Yarmouth Justice Centre. One position filled in Port Hawkesbury.

## Nova Scotia Legal Aid

### Completed Goals

- Provided bilingual business cards to lawyers providing services in French.
- Offered French-language training made available to NSLA employees by the provincial government.
  - 1 employee participated in the French summer session training offered at Université Sainte-Anne.

### Carried over/Ongoing

- Promoting French as a desirable asset in hiring new personnel.
- Providing French speaking counsel to individuals that requested a French-speaking lawyer.

## Public Prosecution Service

### Completed Goals

- Promoted the availability of French training available through the provincial government and elsewhere.
  - 1 Crown Attorney is enrolled in the Programme de certification en français juridique.
  - 5 Crown Attorneys have participated in French-language terminology training provided by the Department of Justice.
  - 4 Crown Attorneys have participated in the webinar training offered by the CCFJ.
  - 1 Crown Attorney participated in the French spring session offered at Université Sainte-Anne.

### Carried over/Ongoing

- Continuing to provide Antidote software licences to bilingual Crown Attorneys.
- Providing French-language *Criminal Codes* to bilingual Crown Attorneys, 10 in current year.

## **Objective 3**

### **Maintain ongoing dialogue and consultation with the Acadian and francophone community.**

#### **Department of Justice**

##### **Completed Goals**

- Continued with Agencies, Boards and Commissions recruitment in French.
  - Posted a French ad in “Le Courier” newspaper on November 4, 2022.
  - French ABCs recruitment materials were provided to all MLAs to share with constituents.
- Met regularly with l’Association des juristes d’expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse, in conjunction with the judiciary, to consult on activities related to the implementation of the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*, including suggested revisions to court and interjurisdictional support order forms.
- Provided funding to l’Association des juristes d’expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse for activities in French schools supporting Law Day.
- The Accessibility Directorate continued to respond to French-language inquiries in French.

##### **Carried over/Ongoing**

- Responding to French translation/interpreter requests from Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program Agencies.
  - Restorative Justice providers have offered French language information on their approach, and French translation and interpreters to anyone that requires or requests it.
- Responding to French-language inquiries in French.
- Explore supporting a family law justice networking event for French-language stakeholders.

#### **Nova Scotia Legal Aid**

##### **Completed Goals**

- Translated and uploaded “Appeals page” on the NSLA website. Updated “About us” French webpage.

##### **Carried over/Ongoing**

- Maintaining membership with AJEFNE.
- Translating and posting French content on NSLA website.

#### **Public Prosecution Service**

##### **Completed Goals**

- Supplied bilingual business cards to two Crown Attorneys.

##### **Carried over/Ongoing**

- Maintaining French content on the Public Prosecution Service website.
- Providing bilingual business cards for newly hired Crown Attorneys.

## How we plan to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2023–24

### 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 Service commit to:

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

#### Planned Measures

##### Department of Justice will

- 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.
- Work with Communications Nova Scotia to translate documents about the *Accessibility Act*, *Regulations*, standards, Prescribed Public Sector Bodies, and the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan.
- Draft and advertise in French and English on the Department of Justice website, the 2022-23 French-language Services Accountability Report and the French-language Plan for 2024-25 by March 31, 2024.
- Review and update the French Hearing Protocol and the French Oath Book.
- Deliver staff training on the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*.
- Continue to explore/draft internal policies and procedures in relation to the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act* in consultation with the judiciary.

##### Nova Scotia Legal Aid will

- Maintain membership on the Department of Justice French-language Services Advisory Committee by attending and participating in meetings.
- Contribute to the 2023-24 French-language Services Accountability Report and the French-language Plan for 2024-25.

##### Public Prosecution Service will

- 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 Section 530.1 of the *Canadian Criminal Code*.

## **Objective 2: Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programs 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.

### **Planned Measures**

#### **Department of Justice will**

- Explore making Victim Services letters on the case management system available in French.
- Promote French-learning opportunities to Restorative Justice team members as they arise.
- Draft French presentence reports on request.
- Supervise individuals in custody and in the community in French, upon request.
- Provide French educational programs in correctional services as needed.
- Ensure legal staff and lawyers continue to take advantage of relevant training opportunities.
- Continue to provide legal support and advice to Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.
- Translate Minister’s proposed accessibility standard in the Built Environment in French.
- Work with Communications Nova Scotia to translate Accessibility Standard related materials in French.
- Advertise in the job postings for Accessibility Directorate “French will be an asset” or similar wording.
- Support Accessibility Directorate staff participation in French language training opportunities.
- Promote French-learning opportunities to Restorative Justice team members as they arise.
- Increase the accessibility to French-language services through the increased availability and use of technology.
- Negotiate a new *Federal Contravention Act* Agreement for 5 years.
- Deliver French legal translation of the consolidated *Civil Procedure Rules* and Forms to the judiciary to consider for official adoption.
- Maintain ongoing updates to legal information content on nsfamilylaw.ca website in both official languages.
- Have the CCFJ deliver 4 remaining French legal terminology training modules 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. Include French stakeholders in the social media loop.
  - the French eCourt service once live.
- Continue to offer bilingual Alternative Dispute Resolution Services in *Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act* cases.
- Publish and deliver updated Parent Information Program Modules in both official languages.
- Continue activities to support future delivery of French eCourt.
- Continue with translation of family law materials into French, as needed.
- Explore upgrading of family court services staff French language skills to meet operational needs.

- Continue to increase number of family court staffing positions filled with bilingual and/or French proficient candidates.

#### Nova Scotia Legal Aid will

- Promote French as a desirable asset in hiring new personnel.
- Offer French-language training made available by the provincial government to Nova Scotia Legal Aid employees.
- Provide French speaking counsel to individuals that request a French speaking lawyer.

#### Public Prosecution Service will

- Promote the availability of French training available through the provincial government and elsewhere.
- Continue to provide Antidote software licences to bilingual Crown Attorneys.
- 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 the Acadian and francophone community 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 gaining input, feedback, and recommendations.
- Increasing Acadian and Francophone representation on Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABCs) by advertising for positions on ABCs in both French and English.

#### Planned Measures

##### Department of Justice will

- Respond to French translation and interpreter requests from Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program agencies and encourage in-house French-language program delivery.
- Continue to meet with l'Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse to consult on activities related to the implementation of the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*.
- Work with Communications Nova Scotia and Executive Council office to advertise opportunities to apply to the Accessibility Advisory Board in French.
- Collaborate with Communications Nova Scotia to provide opportunities to participate in accessibility consultations in French.
- Provide support to the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial in the development and implementation of their accessibility plan.
- Respond to and track French-language inquiries about disability and accessibility in French.
- Continue with Agencies, Boards and Commissions recruitment in French.

#### Nova Scotia Legal Aid will

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

#### Public Prosecution Service will

- Maintain French information on the Public Prosecution Service website.