

# **French-language Services Plan**

2023–2024

Service Nova Scotia  
and Internal Services



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French-language Services Plan  
Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services  
April 2023  
ISBN: 978-1-77448-483-8

# **French-language Services Plan 2023–2024**

**Department of Service Nova Scotia and  
Internal Services (SNS-IS).**

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

**September 2023**

***Note: This plan covers the period April 1, 2022 through to March 31, 2023 prior to the creation of the Department of Cyber Security and Digital Services.***

## Message from the Deputy Minister

We are pleased to share with you the 2023-2024 French-language services plan for the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services (SNS-IS).

This plan covers the accomplishments of SNS-IS from April 1, 2022 through to March 31, 2023, as well as key activities planned for 2023/24. In May of 2023, the Province of Nova Scotia announced that SNS-IS would become two organizations: the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Department of Cyber Security and Digital Solutions. Future reports will be issued separately.

As key service providers in government, we are focused on listening to the needs and expectations of Nova Scotians and we aim to deliver inclusive, accessible, high-quality French-language programs and services across our traditional and digital channels.

We recognize the importance of French-language services, and we are committed to meeting our obligations and improving our capacity to offer French-language services as outlined under the French-Language Services Act.

Moving forward, we will continue to support the needs of the Acadian and francophone community by looking for more opportunities to provide services in French, as well as to raise awareness of French-language services with the public service.

We are incredibly proud of the team and the work they do everyday, and we welcome the opportunity to share this plan with you.

Joanne Munro  
Deputy Minister  
Department of Service Nova Scotia

## How we contribute to the growth of the community

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The Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services (SNS-IS) recognizes the importance of Nova Scotia's vibrant Acadian and francophone culture and heritage. Providing access to quality government services in French benefits the Acadian and francophone community's economic, social, and cultural well-being, and contributes to its continued growth and development.

SNS-IS fosters a positive environment where French-language services are encouraged, respected, and valued. At SNS-IS the inclusion of French is an important component of both our internal and external client service strategies. SNS-IS further enables the francophone culture by providing and supporting the tools that help other public-facing departments deliver service in French.

Acadians and francophones are encouraged to become active participants of SNS-IS' agencies, boards, and commissions which impact their business, their community or way of life. As we all have a part to play to help preserve and grow awareness of the Acadian and Francophone culture in Nova Scotia.

We have achieved significant results and are committed to doing more work to meet the needs of Acadian and francophone clients. Providing increased access to programs, services and information in French benefits our customers, our employees and all of government.

If you have questions or comments, please contact our French-language services coordinator:

Michelle Saulnier  
French-language Services Coordinator  
Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services  
1505 Barrington Street, P.O. Box 10,  
Halifax, NS B3J 3K5

Note: The French-language Services Coordinator for Service Nova Scotia, also provides support to Department of Municipal Affairs and the Department of Cyber Security and Digital Solutions.

## What we achieved in 2022–2023

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Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programmes to the public.

Through the support of engaged program owners responsible for front line services and the team at the Nova Scotia Digital Services (NSDS), our work focused on providing French-language services for SNS-IS and for other departments that depend on SNS-IS front line staff and NSDS technical staff to deliver quality French Language services to the public. In 2022-23 we focused our efforts on:

- Heating Assistance Rebate Program
- Senior Care Grant Program
- Nova Scotia Child Abuse Registry Search Service (Community Services)
- Online Services updates:
  - Book an appointment at an Access Center
  - Online Driver's Licence Renewal
  - Pay a Municipal Parking Ticket (Mahone Bay)
  - Remembrance Day Act assessment tool (Labour, Skills and Immigration)
  - Nova Scotia Login Service
  - NovaScotia.ca – web content copy changes

Our work also included multi year projects that have an impact on the productivity and efficiency associated with using government services where we are striving to ensure that new services include a French language component. Our continued efforts are focused on helping with:

- Registry of Joint Stock Companies online portal and supporting Web content
- Registry of Motor Vehicles: Online Knowledge Testing Commercial Class Licences: Class 1, 2, 3, 4, and Air brake licences
- Vital Statistics Registry and the Registry of Joint Stock Companies - Modernization

## Inform the Public about services in French

- Promoted the availability of French-language services to the public through radio, print, social media, online advertising, and by word of mouth.
  - Online Knowledge Tests in French (Class 6, 7, 8)
  - Senior Care Grant Program and the Heating Rebate Program
- French staff say Bonjour!/Hello or Hello/Bonjour!
- Displayed the “*Bonjour! Services en Français*”, signage in offices where French Services are available to the public, such as in Dartmouth, Halifax, Truro, Port Hawkesbury and Yarmouth.
- Maintained the level of French-language services currently offered by phone, in-person, through our website and through “*Contact Us*” public enquiries.
- Published information about our programs and services in French on NovaScotia.ca.
- Encouraged the translation and development of bilingual services, forms, and affidavits for use online, in-person, mail, and by phone.

## Human Resources - strengthen the *Bonjour!* program

- 23 staff participated in French-language training provided by Université Sainte-Anne.
- Our vacant positions are advertised with French-language capacity as an asset or bilingual required.
- 10, Oui! Chef, sessions for staff to explore Acadian, Cajun and French cuisine while learning French.
- Worked with our internal communications team to promote French training and cultural awareness within the department.

## Public Engagement

- Continued to provide advice, assistance, and support to include options for members of the Acadian and francophone community to participate in French in public consultations and engagements.
  - No province-wide consultations were conducted in 2022-2023.
  - We conducted 15 stakeholder and other types of engagement sessions with no French component.

# How we plan to maintain and improve our services in 2023-2024

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

- French-language services (FLS) looks to champion and find new and innovative ways to help grow and deliver the best possible services for our French language clients. These efforts will include:
  - Making language a consideration when developing new products, services, projects, consultations, communications, and advertising.
  - Improving awareness and understanding of our FLS obligations related to public engagement and consultations.
  - Making all critical public information related to health, safety, and security available in French.
  - Developing and delivering quality French-language services and programs to the public.

Inform the Public about services in French.

- Communications, news releases, promotions or advertising campaigns related to a service that is available in French will be prepared in both languages.
- Advertising: HARP & Seniors Care Grant Advertising.
- New information about the Acadian Flag plate is available at our Access Centers.
- New ads to be developed for the Access TV screens with French content.
- Increase the use of translation services for press releases, advertisements, public consultations, invitations to participate, discussion papers, surveys, survey results, position papers and reports.
- Continue to support the publication of French information about our programs on NovaScotia.ca.
- Develop new bilingual services, forms, and affidavits for use online, in-person, mail, and by phone.



## Focus on Digital Services

- We will continue to work to enable the growth in the availability of services in French in our online channel. Working with program owners to support:
  - RMV Modernization and Online Knowledge Tests.
  - SNS-IS web team for Nova Scotia.ca and related services.
  - My NSID – Online Service / Health Service launch – translations and UAT testing.

## Support Divisions so they can serve clients in their language of choice.

- Residential Tenancies - updating website information and forms.
- Modernizing the provincial registries to include French language services:
- Registry of Joint Stock Companies and its supporting forms and website information.
- Vital Statistics Registry and its supporting forms and website information.
- Developing and creating more information about programs and services in French on NovaScotia.ca.
- Development of bilingual services, forms, and affidavits for use online, in-person, mail, and by phone.
- Increased translation of press releases, advertisements, invitations to participate, discussion papers, website content, surveys, survey results, position papers and reports.

## Human Resource Management

We continue to educate and inform staff and offer the following services:

- Access to **Bonjour!** Services en Français signs.
- French at Lunch - Interactive training for all with Oui! Chef.
- Provide staff with opportunities for French-language training or other training opportunities and supports to their learning with tools, such as French-English dictionaries or technology.
- Support and promote the Public Service Commission's new initiative that allows employees to self-identify which languages they know within their employee profile.

## Updating and improve signage at SNS-IS buildings.

- We will continue to work to enable bilingual signage at our locations across the province as leases change.

## Continue to work to strengthen the Bonjour! program

- French staff say Bonjour!/Hello or Hello/Bonjour!
- Display *Bonjour!* Signage to encourage the community to request services in French.
- Encourage the use of bilingual signage in our public spaces, as part of our renovations and lease changes.
- Continue to advertise vacant positions with French-language capacity as an asset or French required.
- Support, where possible and appropriate, services and technology solutions that enable French-language service delivery to Departments, Offices, Agencies, Boards and Commissions.
- Continue to promote Acadian and francophone culture, through support for cultural activities on National Acadian Day, Francophonie month, and through *Acadie at a Glance*.
- Explore opportunities to incorporate French-language service delivery into department policies and priorities, including continuous improvement, where applicable.



## Conclusion

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At SNS-IS, 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. As we continue to maintain and improve French-language services, we welcome feedback on our progress, and invite you to share 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.

We are pleased to offer Acadian and francophone Nova Scotians many options to interact with government in their own language. 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. We achieve this in collaboration with other departments, agencies, boards, or commissions 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.

Please drop by our offices or call in and say ***Bonjour!***

## APPENDIX A:

### Our FLS commitment and guidelines

SNS-IS is committed to meeting its obligations under the *French-Language Services Act and Regulations*, and SNS-IS considers the inclusion of French language as an important component of our overall client experience strategy across all channels. Our French-language services coordinator plans French-language initiatives for the department and represents the department on the French-language Services Coordinating Committee and its subcommittees.

Whenever possible, we will continue to incorporate French-language options in online services. We will do this by investing in and modernizing technology, training staff, and transforming programs through a client-centric approach. In an effort to ensure that the client experience is of the same quality in both French and English whether online, by phone or in person and is provided within the same turnaround time, whenever possible.

Staff are encouraged to champion French-language services, and to find new and innovative ways to help grow and deliver the best possible services for clients. Our French cultural inclusion lens as defined by the Regulations:

- Will this service/solution be public facing or used by businesses?
- Does the subject matter deal with the health, safety, or security of the public?
- Will the solution support a service that uses French characters?
- Will the service change or support an existing French service?
- Has there been a request to access the service/information/program in French?

## How we communicate with the public in French

When a communication is received in French, it is SNS-IS policy to respond in French whenever possible, including:

- Respond to verbal and written requests received from the public in a timely manner.
- Have French phone or in-person service enquiries handled by French-speaking staff, where possible.
- Interpretation services are coordinated as required.
- Make critical public information available in French (Issues related to the health, safety and security of the public)
- Promote the availability of French-language services to the public through print or online advertising, social media and by word of mouth.
- Communications, news releases, promotions or advertising campaigns related to a service that is available in French will be prepared in both languages.
- Continue to develop and install bilingual signage for programs and services provided by SNS-IS that impact other government department and their clients.

## How we make it easy for clients to interact with SNS-IS in the language of their choice

- Improving staff awareness and understanding of our FLS obligations related to public engagement and consultations.
- Making language a consideration when developing new products, services, projects, public consultations, communications, and advertising.
- Include options for members of the Acadian and francophone community to participate in French in any public consultation processes.
- Proactively inform our clients that French service is available.
  - French staff say Bonjour!/Hello or Hello/Bonjour!
  - Display *Bonjour!* Signage to encourage the community to request services in French.
  - Use of bilingual signage in our public spaces, as part of our renovations and lease changes.
- Support, where possible and appropriate, services and technology solutions that enable French-language service delivery to Departments, Offices, Agencies, Boards and Commissions.

- Support the publication of French information about our programs on NovaScotia.ca.
- Develop new bilingual services, forms, and affidavits for use online, in-person, mail, and by phone.
- Increase the use of translation services for press releases, advertisements, public consultations, invitations to participate, discussion papers, surveys, survey results, position papers and reports.

## How we assist and support the delivery of digital services in French

- Consideration must be given to the inclusion of French language in the development of all products and services for all channels. through: New or redeveloped information systems intended for public use, should all be available in both official languages. Where public unilingual systems exist, provisions will be made to provide the service in both official languages.
- Continue to work with SNS-IS divisions and staff to explore new opportunities to provide information in French to clients, suppliers, partners, and other stakeholders who may prefer to conduct interactions with the department in French.
- Partner with departments across government to provide and deliver French-language services by identifying opportunities, technical requirements, and other ways to enhance their ability to deliver services in French :
  - That business and technical requirements for public facing projects requests for proposals to acquire new software, and solution assets should include French-language requirements.
  - That our infrastructure and platforms can support the inclusion of French language and other languages in the development of all product and services for all channels at SNS-IS.

## How we help foster a positive environment and build awareness

- Continue to educate, inform, build awareness and increase/grow our capacity to deliver services in French.
- Encourage the use of **Bonjour!** government's active offer of French-language services.
- Promote Acadian and francophone culture through support for cultural activities such as National Acadian Day, Francophonie month, Acadie at a Glance and Oui! Chef.
- Make French-language more visible in our offices through signage, notices/posters and other means.
- Explore opportunities to include French-language service into department efforts and project work, including continuous improvement, and process management, where applicable.
- Reference the Public Service Commission's French-Language Services Human Resources Guidelines.
- Increase the number of bilingual staff hired in all divisions and at all levels.
- Continue to advertise vacant positions with French-language capacity as an asset or French required.
- Explore opportunities to incorporate French-language service delivery into department policies and priorities, including continuous improvement, where applicable.
- Develop a sense of French community at the department to attract and retain bilingual staff that can provide French-language services; contributing to our inclusive workplace culture.
- Provide staff with opportunities to access French-language training or other training opportunities that enhances their language skills.
- Support learning with tools, such as French-English d translation applications.
- Encourage Acadians and francophones to join SNS-IS' agencies, boards, and commissions.

## Services we offer in French - Website, Online, In person, and Business Services:

### Communications, Publications, Signage and Translated Material

#### Website: [novascotia.ca/SNS](http://novascotia.ca/SNS)

In March 2022 more than 70% of the information about SNS-IS programs and services was available in French.

#### Online Services available in French:

- Alcohol, Gaming, Fuel and Tobacco - Online Ticket Lottery License Application
- Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates
- Birth registration kiosks
- Book an appointment – Access NS tool
- Change of Address Service
- Collection Services – Payments
- Heating Assistance Rebate Program
- Immigrate to Nova Scotia online service
- Lien Check
- Motor Vehicles Services
  - Information for newly Licensed Drivers
  - RMV – French accents/long names
  - Vehicle Permit Renewal
  - Pay a Fine
  - Pay a Fee for Default Fines
  - Road and Knowledge test payments
  - Pay a Parking Ticket
  - RMV Online Inquiries Service
  - Online Knowledge Tests (Class 6,7,8)
  - Online Driver's Licence Renewals
  - Online Dealer Services (available to Car Dealers)
- Clearview Connects – Fraud report portal
- Driver Insurance Abstract Service (available to Insurance Companies)
- Make a restitution payment (Justice)
- Municipal Parking Ticket
- Nova Scotia Child Abuse Registry Search Service (Community Services)
- NS Login Service
- Personal Property Registry Service
- Remembrance Day Act assessment tool – tool (Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness)
- Request Nova Scotia Legislation (NS Legislature)
- Seniors Care Grant (Seniors)
- Teacher certification online payments (Education)
- Nova Scotia Dept of Health/Public Health
  - Travel Declaration Form/NS Safe Check-in
- Our bilingual Online Payment Service is used by other departments. (Environment, Immigration)

#### Business services available in French:

- BizPaL – business permits and licenses application
- Qmatic Ticketing service: Access Centres, Business Registration Unit
- Nova Scotia Estimated Kilometer Worksheet
- for International Registration Plan
- Registry of Joint Stocks modernization:
  - Company Name Search
  - Name Reservation Request
  - Society Update Forms/Special Resolution Forms
  - By-laws and Memorandum of Association Forms

#### Vital Statistics:

Website information and guides along with 21 forms, applications and affidavits including the Gender Options for Identity Documents are now bilingual.

#### Contact Center – technology updates

New telephone technology for Public Enquiries, RMV, BRU and Collections allows for better call handling.

#### Access Nova Scotia offices and In-person Service Office

- Access NS Digital Advertising Screens
- Book an appointment – Access NS tool
- COVID-19 signage (physical distancing, floor stickers)
- Free Wi-Fi in Access Centres
- iPad communication tools
- Qmatic ticketing service
- Respectful workplace signage

#### Geographic Information Services

Updates to the 1:10,000 Halifax Regional Municipality map sheets to include French information

#### Translation and Simultaneous Translations Services:

- Translations were supplied by Translation Services, Communications Nova Scotia
- Simultaneous translation services were provided upon request at Residential Tenancies hearings

#### Bilingual Signage

- 1505 Barrington Street - Head Office
- 6176 Young Street
- RMV Baddeck