

French-language Services Plan

2023–2024

Municipal Affairs
and Housing



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French-language Services Plan
Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing
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Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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

March 2023

NOTES:

This plan covers the period from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.

Message from the Deputy Minister

Bonjour!

I am pleased to present the 2023-2024 French Language Services (FLS) Plan for the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing (DMAH).

The Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing promotes responsible local government and safe, sustainable, inclusive communities. Through working with municipalities and other partners, DMAH contributes to strong and diverse economics, high quality of life, and affordable, adequate, and suitable housing for all. As the Department responsible for the Emergency Management Office and the Office of the Fire Marshall, we also help municipalities across the province govern and provide municipal services in times of emergency.

We recognize that the Acadian and francophone community plays a vital role in the cultural richness of our province. In collaboration with other designated public institutions, we are committed to enhancing and promoting access to French-language Services for all Nova Scotians. We hope that our efforts will make it easier for the Acadian and francophone community to access our services and programs in the language of their choice. We will continue to focus on actively offering French-language services whenever possible.

At DMAH, we are committed to providing access to government information and our programs and services to Nova Scotians in French. Whenever possible, we recommend FLS be considered when new programs and services are being developed and offered. We recognize the important role we play in preserving and promoting the province's Acadian and francophone culture and heritage. Municipal units are also encouraged to identify opportunities, where appropriate, to deliver new services or improve existing services in French, enabling Acadians and francophones to interact with all levels of government in the language of their choice.

We are proud of the work we do to promote FLS and welcome this opportunity to share it with you. We continue to look for opportunities to provide services in French, while raising the awareness of FLS within the department. We are committed, not just to meeting our obligations under the *French-language Services Act*, but to improving our capacity to offer FLS as a department.

Byron Rafuse
Deputy Minister
Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing

How we contribute to the growth of the community

The Department 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.

DMAH fosters a positive environment where French-language services are encouraged, respected, and valued. At DMAH the inclusion of French is an important component of both our internal and external client service strategies.

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

We are committed to meet the needs of Acadian and francophones by finding ways to provide increased access to programs, services, and information in French.

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

Michelle Saulnier
French-language Services Coordinator
Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing
1505 Barrington Street, P.O. Box 10,
Halifax, NS B3J 3K5

Note: Our French-language Services Coordinator also provides support to Department of Service Nova Scotia (SNS) and the Department of Cyber Security and Digital Solutions (CSDS).

What we achieved in 2022–2023

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.
 - Emergency Management Office (EMO) Storm advisories (#NSSTORM)
 - Home Emergency Kits
 - We are monitoring the Storm



- Office of the Fire Marshal issued 24 Notice / Recall reminders about unsafe products and 10 fire preparedness messages such as:
 - Change the batteries in your smoke detectors
 - Is your BBQ ready ?
 - Fire won't wait. Plan your escape.
 - Keep fire safety in mind during the holidays.



- 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 at DMAH Head Office in Halifax, as well as the EMO and Office of the Fire Marshall (OFM) offices in Dartmouth.

- 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.
- Volunteer fire departments, ground search and rescue organizations, and First Nations fire departments each received a one-time grant to help address the impacts of rising operational costs. Each group received \$10,000.
- Acadian communities received support through the Provincial Capital Assistance Program for water, wastewater, stormwater, and solid waste projects [Grant Supports Municipal Infrastructure Projects](#)

Human Resources - –Strengthen the *Bonjour!* program

- Staff are encouraged to participate 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 were organized 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.
- One province-wide consultation was conducted in 2022-2023.
 - **Housing needs survey –**
We Want to Hear Your Housing Experience!
An online public survey was conducted, allowing Nova Scotians to identify their housing needs.



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

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

- 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.

- We will strive to provide critical public information related to health, safety and security for citizens, businesses, and municipalities in French whenever possible.
- Communications, news releases, promotions or advertising campaigns related to a service that is available in French will be prepared in both languages.
- Strive to make information related to federal funding programs to municipalities, businesses, and citizens available in French.
- 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.
- Continue to promote the availability of FLS to the public through print or online advertising, social media and by word of mouth to improve public interaction with government in the language of their choice.
- Continue to use bilingual signage in our office, wherever possible.
- Strive to have new information systems intended for public or municipal use in both languages whenever possible. Where unilingual systems exist for use by the public or by municipalities, provisions should be made to translate or otherwise provide the service in both languages, where appropriate.

Focus on Digital Services

- We will continue to work to enable the growth in the availability of services in French online in collaboration with CSDS and SNS.

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.
- Inform and advise hiring managers of the availability of the Public Service Commission's FLS Human Resource Guidelines that encourages government to hire bilingual staff.
- Encourage the use of active offer by staff for FLS and continue to build awareness and capacity for the provision of FLS.
- Increase the number of staffing actions that include bilingual ability as an asset.
- Increase the number of bilingual staff in all divisions at all levels.

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.
- 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

At DMAH, 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. To achieve this, we will collaborate with other departments, agencies, boards, and 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. 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.

APPENDIX A:

Our FLS commitment and guidelines

The Deputy Minister champions and encourages FLS through the integration of French-language into our policies, programs, and services.

DMAH is committed, not just to meeting our obligations under the FLS Act and Regulations, but to improving our capacity to offer FLS. DMAH considers the inclusion of French language as an important component of our service strategies in the work that we do. We continue to incorporate French-language options in our core business areas.

DMAH continues to leverage its working relationships with SNS and the CSDS to provide online services for municipalities and we continue to encourage municipalities to offer services in French.

Supported by our FLS Coordinator, staff are encouraged to champion FLS and to find new and innovative ways to help grow and deliver the best possible FLS.

Staff are encouraged to consider the French perspective through questions such as:

- 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

We support, encourage, and utilize the active offer concept put forward by the Province of Nova Scotia and encourage the community to participate by requesting services.

- 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).
- Our news releases, safety alerts and advertising campaigns that promote a service we provide in French or public safety information will be issued in both languages.

- Encourage the use of bilingual signage in our public spaces. We will do this as part of our renovations and lease changes.
- 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 and advertising campaigns related to a service that is available in French will be prepared in both languages.

How we make it easy for clients to interact with us 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.
- 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.
- We partner with departments or third-party service providers that can help us deliver French-language services.
- We strive to ensure that our business and technical requirements include French-language requirements.

How we contribute to Community Development and Growth

- Support the Acadian and francophone communities by improving access to municipal and housing information and services in French.
- Collaborate and engage our stakeholders to develop policies, programs, and services in an effort to encourage and support vibrant, safe and healthy French-language communities.
- Encourage municipalities to increase the amount of French-language information and services provided to the public, in person and online through their websites and through BizPal.ca.
- Collaborate with SNS and CSDS in relation to FLS provided by DMAH.
- Encourage Acadians and francophones to find out about and participate in local government.
- Provide election information produced by DMAH in French to municipalities and le Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP).
- Encourage Acadian and francophone not-for-profit community groups and municipal units to learn more about funding programs offered by DMAH.
- Encourage a continued dialogue of cooperation and partnership between the Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDÉNÉ) and Municipal Advisors that supports economic growth and immigration, youth work force attachment, and rural enterprise.

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 services 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 DMAH 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 translation applications.
- Encourage Acadians and francophones to join our agencies, boards, and commissions.

APPENDIX B: Inventory of Services

The following is a detailed inventory of French-language services and information provided by DMAH on March 31, 2022.

Communications with the Public and Information Materials: Printed or Electronic

Continued to promote the availability of French-language services to the public through radio, print, social media, online advertising and by word of mouth.

Examples of services included:

- Prepared a bilingual version of the National Disaster Mitigation Program information pamphlet.
- In collaboration with the Halifax Regional Municipality, we facilitated access to translation for information related to the Office of the Municipal Clerk.
- Displayed the Bonjour! Services en Français signage in offices where French Services are available to the public, such as NSEMO in Dartmouth.
- Maintained the level of French-language Services currently offered by phone, in-person, through our website and through “Ask Us” public enquiries.
- French-language advertisements and materials in advertising, marketing campaigns and info graphics.

Emergency Management Office

All 911 services are available in French, as are the 911/EMO brochures. EMO Social Media tweets about helping citizens prepare for emergencies, included information in French. Information relating to emergency preparedness and what to do in an emergency was made available.

Print brochures available to the public:

- Are you ready for an emergency?
- Facts About 911

Alert Ready system - Emergency situations can unfold quickly, and, in some instances, alerts can help people protect themselves and their families.

- Tests of the National Alert Ready system – using a bilingual message
- Province, Police Make Changes to Alert Ready System

Examples of EMO social media tweets were as follows:

- Issued tweets and news releases in French – before, during and after a hurricane
- Stock your Emergency kit
- Hurricane Season Preparation
- Get Prepared
- Remove loose objects
- Batten down the hatches and put away that lawn furniture, Nova Scotia – there’s a storm coming.

- Home emergency kit
- Car emergency kit
- Power outage safety tips
- Blizzards and severe storm warnings and updates
- Freezing rain and ice safety tips
- Flooding safety tips
- Reminders about the public emergency alert system
- Knowing when to call 911

Office of the Fire Marshal

Information was made available in French to help reduce the risk of fire and know what to do if a fire happens. Examples include:

- Developed an educational campaign to inform Nova Scotians on safety precautions they can take to protect themselves from fire leading up to Fire Safety Week in October each year. Topics included: 'Some Heroes Wear Capes' ad and video, fire safety checklist, evacuation plans, wood stoves, chimneys, phones, space heaters, Fire safety, put a lid on it! when cooking; Keep your cooking area clutter-free! Turn pot and pan handles inward; Be smart use a timer; Never leave pots unattended; Keep kids safe in the kitchen; Install smoke alarms and smoke alarms save lives.
- Published information on proposed Building Code changes in French via the Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse.
- Issued the following tweets and news releases in French:
 - Various fire hazard Recall / Notices related to consumer goods.



Housing

The following affordable housing reports were published in 2021-2022:

- Affordable housing report Spring 2021: Charting a new course for affordable housing in Nova Scotia;
- Solutions for housing and homelessness; and,
- Affordable housing progress report: January 2022.

EN <https://beta.novascotia.ca/documents/affordable-housing-reports>

FR <https://beta.novascotia.ca/fr/documents/rapports-sur-le-logement-abordable>

Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing website:

[Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing - Government of Nova Scotia](#)

In March 2022, a portion of the online information about DMAH programs and services was available in French.

Public Engagement

We consulted with municipalities on a variety of topics that impacted them including:

- the Municipal Elections Act;
- Assessment Act;
- Nova Scotia Building Code;
- Minimum Planning Standards;
- Code of conduct;
- Housing supply (through the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission <https://nsaffordablehousingcommission.ca/>);
- Short-term rentals; and,
- Accessibility.

These consultations took a variety of forms and all municipalities, including those with a significant Acadian and francophone community, were invited to participate and provide the views of councils and citizens.

Community Development and Growth

- Kept an ongoing dialogue with Acadian and francophone community organizations at business and community events.
- Encouraged Acadians and francophones to find out about and participate in local government.
- Supported the 2020 Municipal and CSAP elections through the following services:
 - Provided the Candidate's and Safe Elections Guide in French and English ahead of the Municipal Election;
 - Worked with the Elections Vendor and CSAP to ensure that French translations for election materials were adequate; and,
 - Provided French-language posters for polling stations.