



French-language Services Plan

2024–2025

*Department of
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 2024-2025 »

Message from the Deputy Minister

It is my pleasure to share the Nova Scotia Department of Justice’s French-language Services 2023-24 Accountability Report and our 2024-25 Plan. Our 2024-25 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 translation 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 can implement this plan with the help of the Federal funding we receive to increase access to justice in both official languages. 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 2024

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

Stephanie Lo, telephone: 902-229-0861

Email: stephanie.lo@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.
- Online intake modules (for family law matters) in both official languages.
- Bilingual staff in court administration offices located in designated areas.
- French pre-sentence reports.
- Documents uploaded to the Correctional Services webpage are translated in French and bilingual promotional material is created as needed.
- Designated Community Corrections offices throughout the province participate in the “Bonjour!” program.
- Educational programs in French are offered at correctional settings upon request.
- Supervision of individuals in custody and in the community is offered in French, upon request.

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 the following services in French:

- 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 52 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-house 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 14 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 2023–24

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 2023-24 French-language Services Accountability Report and the 2024-25 French-language Plan by March 31, 2024.
- Worked 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.
- Translated parts of the NS Civil Procedure Rules and Forms and the Practice Memorandum pertaining to Family Law.

Carried over/Ongoing

- Reviewing the French training policy and its operational needs tables annually to ensure identified training needs are being met.
- Working 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.
- Delivering staff training on the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*.
- Continuing 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

Completed Goals

- Contributed to the 2023-24 French-language Services Accountability Report and the French-language Plan for 2024-25.

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

- Contracted with Centre canadien de français juridique (CCFJ) to provide staff with French legal terminology training specific to family law over the 2023-24 and 2024-25 fiscal years.
- Completed the year's sessions of French Legal Terminology related to family law, as well as criminal law.
- Provided French services in criminal court in accordance with section 530 of the *Criminal Code*.
 - Held 6 French trials, plus 16 various court proceedings in French.
 - Employed French interpreters in court on 117 occasions totaling 523 hours of interpretation services.
- Offered Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service employees a variety of French training opportunities.
 - 29 employees in the Department of Justice and 2 employees from the Public Prosecution Service participated in various levels of French training at Université Sainte-Anne throughout the year.
 - 22 Justice employees and 2 employees from the Public Prosecution Service participated in French legal terminology training offered online by the CCFJ, some on several occasions.
 - 7 staff members attended online French workshops in French Legal Correspondence 2, 3 and 4 in January, February, and March 2024 offered by Université de Saint-Boniface, Manitoba.
 - 2 staff members attended a French lunch cooking session as part of the Bonjour program.
- Continued to support provincial judges' French training opportunities.
 - Sponsored 2 provincial court judges for French tutoring offered by l'Université Sainte-Anne.
 - 1 judge received 16 hours of tutoring, while the other received 31 hours of tutoring in French.
 - Supported 4 judges who participated in Juralingo, legal language education in French for Provincial Court Judges available in Caraquet, New Brunswick Spring and Fall 2023.
- Filled 3 previously vacant bilingual front line clerk positions at 3 courthouses.
- Developed partnerships with external organizations by sharing bilingual job postings to recruit more bilingual candidates.
- Provided one pre-sentence report in French.

- Supervised 1 person on a probation order in the community, where the supervision was administered in French.
- Provided several French language books to individuals in custody, upon request.
- Worked with Communications Nova Scotia to translate Accessibility Standard-related materials in French.
 - Translated Minister's proposed accessibility standard in the Built Environment.
 - The Built Environment and Education recommendations are in French.
 - The Built Environment proposed standard was released in French for public review and comment.
 - Website for recruitment to the Public Transportation Standard Development Committee was provided in French.
- Explored making Victim Services' letters on the case management system available in French. Priority public facing documents have been drafted in French:
 - Case management letters for clients of the provincial program.
 - The Restitution Program Offender pay process brochures.
- Made Independent Legal Advice for survivors of sexual assault (ILA) brochures available in French.
- Directed advertising in Acadian Communities of employment opportunities with Victim Services.

Carried over/Ongoing

- Arranging for translation of the *Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act* and *Regulations* for the purposes of publishing an unofficial version.
 - Contracted with Centre de traduction et terminologie juridiques (CTTJ) for translation to be completed in 2024-25.
- Continuing activities to support future delivery of French eCourt and to support its launch once completed.
- Continuing to offer bilingual Alternative Dispute Resolution Services in *Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act* cases.
- Maintaining ongoing updates to legal information content on nsfamilylaw.ca website in both official languages.
- Continuing to advertise French services in Family Court, such as:
 - the Online Parenting Information Program (PIP), via social media (Twitter, Facebook) and reminding staff to offer the French PIP to clients, including French stakeholders in the social media loop.
 - the French eCourt service, once live, and continuing activities to support its delivery.
- Publishing and delivering updated Parent Information Program Modules in both official languages.
- Continuing with translation of family law materials into French, as needed.
- Exploring the upgrading of Family Court Services staff French language skills to meet operational needs.
 - French at lunch meetings with Family division employees to practice their French skills.
- Continuing to increase the number of Family Court staffing positions filled with bilingual and/or French proficient candidates.
- Responding to French-language inquiries in French.
- Continuing to offer French Legal Terminology training related to family law, to staff in the family law unit.
- Drafting French pre-sentence reports as required.
- Supervising of individuals in custody and in the community in French, upon request.
- Providing French educational programs in Correctional Services, as needed.
- Ensuring Legal Services' staff and lawyers have training opportunities.
- Continuing to provide any legal support and advice needed by Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

- Working with Communications Nova Scotia to translate priority press releases for Accessibility Directorate.
- Advertising in job postings for Accessibility Directorate that “French will be an asset” or similar wording.
- Supporting of Accessibility Directorate staff participation in French language training opportunities.
- Ongoing recruitment of French speaking ILA lawyers and identification of French speaking counselors for the Criminal Injuries Counseling Program.
- Promoting French learning opportunities to Restorative Justice team members as they arise.
- Providing funding for translation of French wills, as needed.
- Filling designated Court Services clerk positions, as vacancies arise.
- Sharing bilingual job postings with external partners, to recruit more bilingual candidates.

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.

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.
 - 2 Crown Attorneys have participated in French-language terminology training provided by the Department of Justice.
 - 2 staff members participated in the French sessions 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

- Attended meetings held in French with AJEFNÉ.
- Attended the French Language Services Coordinating Committee meetings with the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.
- Presented to a Social Work class at Université Sainte-Anne on the role of a Probation Officer.
- Provided coordination with Probation Offices in Quebec, on several occasions, to facilitate file transfers to other Probation Officers.
- Worked with Communications Nova Scotia and Executive Council Office to advertise opportunities to apply to the Accessibility Advisory Board in French.

Carried over/Ongoing

- Ongoing collaboration with Communications Nova Scotia to provide opportunities to participate in accessibility consultations in French.
- Ongoing support to the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial in the development and implementation of their accessibility plan.
- Continuing to respond to and track French-language inquiries about disability and accessibility in French.
- Continuing to meet with AJEFNE to consult on activities related to the implementation of the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid

Completed Goals

- Translated job titles to update the employee contact list on the French version of the website.

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 2024–25

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 2023-24 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.
- Victim Services will continue to have a representative on the Department of Justice French-language services committee.
- Continue to deliver staff training on the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act* including:
 - completion of an online information module providing an ‘active offer of service’ (in French) with virtual training for court staff regarding the same;
 - development of an ‘active offer of service’ best practice for family court staff to provide French service to clients upon request.
- Work towards adoption of the translated NS Civil Procedure Rules, Forms and Practice Memorandum:
 - review of the currently translated NS Civil Procedure Rules, Forms and Practice Memorandum by the Judiciary for eventual adoption by the Rules Committee;
 - completion of translation of all NS Civil Procedure Rules, Forms and Practice Memorandum.
- Provide legal advice and drafting in support of legislative amendments to the *French language Services Act* and *Regulations*, as required.

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 *Criminal Code of Canada*.

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

- Promote French-learning opportunities to Restorative Justice team members, as they arise.
- 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.
- Increase the accessibility to French-language services through the increased availability and use of technology.
- Develop partnerships with external organizations by sharing bilingual job postings to recruit more bilingual candidates.
- Provide French educational programs as requested.
 - Track the number of programs requested and offered in French.
- Promote and support French-learning opportunities to staff, as they arise.
 - Compile a list of staff who have taken educational courses throughout the year.
- Deliver services and informational materials that respond to the priority needs of the Acadian and Francophone community.
 - Participate in the “Bonjour!” program.
 - Ensure documents uploaded to the Correctional Services webpage are translated in French and promotional materials are provided in French when delivering messaging to the Acadian and Francophone communities.

- 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.
- Provide accessibility awareness and capacity building resources in French.
 - French versions of accessibility awareness materials (e.g. Access awareness week, International Day of Persons with Disabilities) and capacity building resources (Accessibility Foundations training) will be provided in French for prescribed public sector bodies.
- Continue prioritizing public and client documents for French translation including: The Provincial Victim Services Program, Criminal Injuries Counseling Program, Restitution, Independent Legal Advice.
- Continue to promote French-language learning opportunities for Victim Services staff.
- Continue to promote employment opportunities with Victim Services to Acadian Communities.
- Update and maintain the Victim Services website to provide French versions of priority brochures, forms, and information.
- Continue the recruitment of French speaking Independent Legal Advice Lawyers and French speaking Counselors for the Criminal Injuries Counseling Program.
- Post front counter signage at all Victim Services offices that reflect a multilingual greeting “Welcome.”
- Continue to offer French-language services and programs to the public through online and virtual platforms.
 - Publish and deliver updated Parent Information Program Modules in both official languages.
 - Publish and deliver updated Intake Modules in both official languages.
 - Maintain ongoing updates to legal information content on nsfamilylaw.ca website in both official languages.
- Continue to strengthen the fluency of family law court staff and explore upgrading of family Court Services staff French-language skills to meet operational needs.
 - Contract with the CCFJ to deliver additional French legal terminology training modules to family court staff, specific to family law.
 - Develop and offer monthly conversational French ‘lunch-and-learn’ opportunities for court staff to increase their fluency and comfort level with the French language.
- Continue to advertise French programs services in Family Court.
 - Information regarding French programs and services in Family Court to be advertised via social media and through digital signage available at all Nova Scotia family law courthouses.
- Continue activities to support future delivery of French eCourt.
 - Liaise with the judiciary to complete user testing of the French eCourt platform.
- Continue with translation of family law materials into French, as needed.
 - Contract with l’Université de Moncton regarding translation of additional legislation during 2024.
- Work on recruiting candidates for the bilingual role of Maintenance Enforcement Officer.

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 of 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.

Planned Measures

Department of Justice will

- 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.
- Share bilingual job postings with external partners related to the Acadian and francophone communities, to recruit more bilingual candidates.
- Continue collaborations with AJEFNÉ by participating in their meetings.
- Continue attending the French Language Services Coordinating Committee meetings with the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.
- Track French-language inquiries regarding services provided by Victim Services.
- Continue to meet with AJEFNÉ to consult on activities related to the implementation of the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*.
 - Regular virtual team meetings are scheduled with members of AJEFNÉ, Court Services and the judiciary to consult on, and discuss, activities related to the implementation of the Official Language amendments to the *Divorce Act*.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid will

- Maintain membership with AJEFNÉ and attend their meetings as scheduled.
- Publish new content or amendments to website pages on the Nova Scotia Legal Aid website.

Public Prosecution Service will

- Maintain French information on the Public Prosecution Service website.