

French-language Services Plan

2020–2021

Municipal Affairs and Housing



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French-language Services Plan
Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing
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Ce document est également disponible en français sous le titre : « Plan de services en français 2020–2021 ».

Message from the Deputy Minister

I am pleased to present the 2020-2021 French Language Services Plan for the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing (DMAH). Information in this plan outlines the progress we have achieved in our delivery and implementation of French-language services over the past fiscal year and identifies the priorities and initiatives for the upcoming year.

The department is committed to supporting and working with municipalities and our partners to ensure Nova Scotia has safe, strong, successful and vibrant communities. The mandate of the department is implemented through the following divisions/offices:

1. Corporate Policy and Innovation
2. Emergency Management Office (EMO)
3. Housing Nova Scotia
4. Municipal Sustainability

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 the inclusion of French-language services 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 French-language services 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 French-language Services 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 French-language services as a department.

Nancy MacLellan

Deputy Minister

Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Corporate Goals and Objectives

DMAH continues to build on the policy direction identified in the agreement with Heritage Canada *Nova Scotia Strategic Plan for French Language Services, 2018-2023*. This plan presents us with new challenges and new opportunities. The strategic plan identifies corporate objectives focused on three key areas:

Corporate Objective 1: Leadership and policy

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

Corporate Objective 2: Services to the Public

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

Corporate Objective 3: Community engagement and outreach

Maintain on-going dialogue and consultation with the Acadian and francophone community.

Our French-language Services policies in accordance with the FLS Act and Regulations.

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

DMAH is committed, not just to meeting our obligations under the *French-language Services Act* and Regulations, but to improving our capacity to offer French-language services.

DMAH considers the inclusion of French language as an important component of our service strategies in the work that we do. Whenever possible, we continue to incorporate French-language options in our core business areas of Corporate Policy and Innovation, Emergency Management, Housing Nova Scotia, and Municipal Sustainability.

DMAH continues to leverage its working relationship with Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services (SNS-IS) to provide online services for municipalities and we continue to encourage municipalities to offer services in French.

Supported by our French-language Services Coordinator, staff are encouraged to champion French-language services, to find new and innovative ways to help grow and deliver the best possible French-language services.

Working with the FLS Coordinator our staff are encouraged to consider the French perspective through a French cultural inclusion lens which utilizes these questions:

- Will this service/solution/program be public facing or used by business or municipalities?
- 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?
- Is our work funded by the Federal Government?
- Has there been a request to access the service/information/program in French?

How we communicate with the public in French

Active Offer of French-language Services:



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. Its purpose is to ensure that citizens feel comfortable expressing themselves in French when seeking a service; and that the service provided in French is comparable to what is offered in English.

We proactively inform citizens that French service is available:

- French staff say *Bonjour!* /Hello or Hello /*Bonjour!*
- We display *Bonjour!* Signage to encourage the community to request services in French.
- Our news releases, safety alerts or advertising campaigns that promote a service we provide in French or public safety information will be issued in both languages.
- We encourage the use of bilingual signage in our public spaces, we will do this as part of our renovations and lease changes.
- Provide general information on our website and in our communications in French, whenever possible.

DMAH responds to verbal and written requests from the public in a timely manner in French, whenever possible. Phone or in-person service enquiries received in French are handled by French-speaking staff, whenever possible, and interpretation or translation services are used as required, on a case by case basis.

Public Consultations

We will include options for members of the Acadian and francophone community to participate in French in any public consultation processes, in accordance with the *French-language Services Act* and Regulations.

Agencies, Boards and Commissions

Acadians and francophones are encouraged to become active participants of DMAH's agencies, boards, and commissions, which impact their business, their community or way of life:

https://novascotia.ca/exec_council/abc/

Communities: Development and Growth

The Acadian and francophone community is an important part of our communities. We recognize that providing increased access to programs, services and information in French, benefits everyone.

We will continue to maintain an ongoing dialogue with Acadian and francophone community organizations to determine and prioritize the needs for French-language government services.

What we plan to achieve in 2020-2021:



Availability and Accessibility of French-language Services

Goals and Objectives

- Citizens find it easy to interact with us in the language of their choice.
- We proactively inform our citizens when a service is available in French, to ensure that citizens feel comfortable expressing themselves in French when seeking a service.
- Our customer experience online, by phone or in person is comparable in French and English and provided within the same turnaround time, whenever possible.
- Consideration must be given to the inclusion of French language in the development of all policies, product and services that impact our clients and stakeholders.
- Our business and technical requirements for projects, contracts, and requests for proposals, include consideration of French-Language requirements.
- Ensure that our technical infrastructure and platforms can support the inclusion of French language or other languages in the development of all product and services for all channels.

Continued Efforts for 2020-2021

- Continue to educate and inform staff on the active offer of service and on the *French-Language Services Act* and Regulations.
- Identify opportunities, in consultation with our French Language Services Coordinator, to deliver new or improve existing services in French in all our business areas.
- Provide information online, verbal, and printed in French to the public and municipalities, whenever possible. This includes:
 - **Bonjour!** Services en Français, signage in offices where French Services are available to the public, such as the EMO offices in Dartmouth.
 - Developing bilingual services and forms for use online, in-person, mail, and by phone.
 - Translation of news releases, safety alerts, advertisements, invitations to participate, discussion papers, website content, surveys, reports and results, when applicable.
- Continue to promote the availability of French-language services to the public through print or online advertising, social media and by word of mouth.

French-language Services Coordinator

DMAH shares a French-language Services Coordinator with Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

Michelle Saulnier, French-language Services Coordinator
Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing,
1505 Barrington Street,
P.O. Box 2734,
Halifax, NS B3J 3K5

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.

Communications with the Public: Printed or Electronic Communications

Goals and Objectives

- All critical public information related to health, safety and security is available to citizens, businesses and municipalities in French.
- Continue to maintain the level of French-language services currently offered, by phone, in-person, through our website.
- We strive to make information related to federal funding programs to municipalities, businesses and citizens available in French.
- We continue to promote the availability of French-language services to the public through print or online advertising, social media and by word of mouth to allow for the public a greater ability to interact with government in the language of their choice
- We will use bilingual signage in our office, wherever possible.
- We will 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.

Continued Efforts for 2020-2021

- Provide critical public information related to health, safety and security to citizens in French, such as emergency alerts, public notices and warnings, fire safety, and housing information.
- Financial assistance is available to support the inclusion of French in new information systems, advertising materials, or marketing campaigns promoting French Services.
- Continue to identify opportunities to translate housing program materials in French, as part of the ten (10) year bi-lateral Agreement with Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). This will include documentation such as forms and applications and website information, social media posts, and promotional advertising about this and other housing programs.
- Continue to encourage the translation of web content, forms, brochures, manuals and other publications as opportunities become available (e.g., fire safety brochures)
- Continue to support staff as they work to support operations, planning and modernization initiatives such as: the Canada Infrastructure Program, Homelessness Action Plan, NS Action Plan for Affordable Housing.

Human Resource Management

Goals and Objectives

- Inform and advise hiring managers of the availability of the Public Service Commission's French-Language Services Human Resource Guidelines that encourages government to hire bilingual staff.
- Encourage the use of active offer by staff for French-language services and continue to build awareness and capacity for the provision of French-language services.
- Strive to better understand the current French-language capabilities of staff and resources available to support and provide services in French.
- 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.
- Increase the number of staff participating in French-language training and cultural awareness training: *Acadie at a Glance*.
- Develop a sense of French community at the department to attract and retain staff that can provide French-language services and promote an inclusive workplace culture.

Continued Efforts for 2020-2021

- Encourage managers to continue to advertise vacant positions with French-language capacity as an asset and hire bilingual staff.
- Provide staff with opportunities for French-language training or other training opportunities, such as *Acadie at a Glance*, and support their learning with tools, such as dictionaries.
- Administer a French-Language Services survey to identify language capacity within DMAH in collaboration with SNS-IS.
- Provide staff with opportunities to practice their French-language skills.
- Continue to promote Acadian and francophone culture, through support for National Acadian Day and other cultural activities.

Community Development and Growth

Goals and Objectives

- The Acadian and francophone community has access to municipal and housing information and services in French.
- Collaborate and engage our stakeholders to ensure policies, programs, and services 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, online through their websites and through BizPal.ca.
- Collaborate with SNS-IS in relation to French-language services provided by DMAH.
- Encourage Acadians and francophones to find out about and participate in local government.
- Provide election information produced by the department in French to municipalities and le Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial.
- 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), Municipal Advisors and the Regional Enterprise Networks (RENs) that supports economic growth and immigration, youth work force attachment, and rural enterprise.

Continued Efforts for 2020-2021

- Collaborate with municipalities to assist with the translation and to increase the amount of French-language information and services provided to the public.
- Provide election information produced by the department in French to municipalities and le Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial.
- Continue to provide information and publications related to EMO and fire prevention and public safety messages and materials in French.
- Maintain an ongoing dialogue with Acadian and francophone community organizations to help DMAH recognize the need for French-language government services.
- Continue to encourage collaboration between Le Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse, Municipal Advisors, and the Regional Enterprise Networks (RENS).
- Educate municipalities as to options to request the translation of their content within BizPal through SNS-IS.
- Encourage more Acadians and francophones to become volunteers for the Ground Search and Rescue teams in their communities.
- Assist municipalities with Acadian and Francophone populations and not-for-profit community groups as they apply for grants.
- Strengthening the municipal-provincial relationship by working in partnership with Acadians and Francophone community organizations. Ongoing dialogue will help DMAH improve their French-language government service offerings.

Conclusion

DMAH is committed to the promotion and improvement of our French-language services as we work toward our goals for 2020-2021 and build on our progress.

We are glad to offer Acadian and francophone Nova Scotians with ways to interact with government in their own language. To achieve this, we collaborate with other departments, agencies, boards or commissions across government, including the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie, through the French-language Services Coordinating Committee.

We value this partnership, which ensures a continued understanding of the unique needs of our province's Acadian and francophone community.

APPENDIX A: What we achieved last year 2019-2020

Active Offer / 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.
- Displayed the *Bonjour!* Services en Français, signage in offices where French Services are available to the public, such as EMO in Dartmouth.
- Financial support was provided for the inclusion of French-language advertisements and materials for the advertising and marketing campaigns.
- Maintained the level of French-language Services currently offered by phone, in-person, through our website and through the public enquiries.
- Co-hosted the meeting with the Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDÉNÉ) and the French Municipal Administrators in November 2019.
- In collaboration with Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and SNS-IS, HRM's information within BizPaL.ca was translated and updated in both English and French.

Emergency Management Office

- Produced and launched a bilingual video - 911 Proper Usage.
- Testing of the National Alert Ready system – using a bilingual message.
- Issued a series of news releases in French – before, during and after Hurricane Dorian.
 - Hurricane Preparedness Tips: <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20190905003>
 - Conseils pour se préparer en vue d'un ouragan : <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20190905004>
 - Hurricane/Post-tropical Storm Dorian Update: <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20190908005>
 - Ouragan / tempête post-tropicale Dorian : <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20190908006>
 - Emergency Order Issued for Crane Removal: <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20190918008>
 - Ordonnance d'urgence pour l'enlèvement de la grue : <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20190918007>
 - Financial Assistance Program for Dorian Damage: <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20191219003>
 - Programme d'aide financière pour dommages causés par Dorian: <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20191219004>
- Two new brochures were shared with the public:
 - Are you ready for an emergency? | Êtes-vous prêt pour une urgence?
 - Facts About 911 | Le service Urgence 911 Ce qu'il faut savoir

Office of the Fire Marshall

- 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 (October 6-12th). Topics included: 'Some Heroes Wear Capes' ad and video, fire safety checklist, evacuation plans, wood stoves, chimneys, phones, space heaters.
- Published information on proposed Building Code changes.

Housing

- Our Regional service delivery offices can assist clients in French.
- 2019-2022 Nova Scotia Action Plan and Fact Sheet are available in French.
 - 2019-2022 Nova Scotia Action Plan : https://housing.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/NS_Housing_Action_Plan_2019.pdf
 - Plan d'action de la Nouvelle-Écosse 2019-2022 : https://housing.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/NS_Housing_Action_Plan_2019-fr.pdf

- Housing Nova Scotia National Housing Strategy Agreement – Action Plan 2019-2022: <https://housing.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/Housing-Action-Plan-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
- Logement Nouvelle-Écosse Stratégie nationale sur le logement Plan d'action 2019-2022 : <https://housing.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/Housing-Action-Plan-Fact-Sheet-FR.pdf>

Human Resources

- Six (6) staff participated in French-language training provided by Université Ste Anne.
- Some vacant positions are advertised with French-language capacity as an asset or bilingual required.

Public Engagement

- DMAH held targeted consultation with municipal representatives on a variety of topics that impact them including: the *Municipal Elections Act*, *Assessment Act*, Nova Scotia Building Code, and Short-Term rentals. No province-wide public consultations were conducted in 2019-2020.
- Of the 4 stakeholder or other types of engagement sessions that were conducted, none included French.

APPENDIX B: Inventory of Services

The following is a detailed inventory of French-language services and information available from the Department of Municipal Affairs on March 30, 2019.

Please note: On May 30th 2019, the Province of Nova Scotia announced that Department of Municipal Affairs and that Housing Nova Scotia would form the new Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Active Offer / 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.
 - Fire Prevention Week: Look, Listen, Learn:
<https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20181004003>
Semaine de la prévention des incendies : regarde, écoute, apprends :
<https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20181004004>
 - Fire Safety Tips for Summer : <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20180614005>
Conseils de sécurité-incendie pour l'été : <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20180614006>
 - Beautification and Streetscaping Projects announced :
<https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20180720001>
Annonce de projets d'embellissement et d'aménagement du paysage de rue :
<https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20180720002>
- 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 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 EMO 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.

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:

- Provided \$108,390.57 in grants to first responder organizations in Francophone communities
<https://beta.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/1-1450/emergency-service-provider-fund-espf-grant-recipients-2018-en.pdf>

Emergency Management Office (EMO)

EMO has a bilingual Manager of Operations to enhance our ability to send Alert Ready Messages in both English and French. This allows us to communicate effectively with French speaking communities before, during, and after emergencies. It also enables us to respond to French media requests.

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.

Examples include EMO Social Media tweets such as:

- Home Emergency Kit
- Car Emergency Kit
- Power Outage Safety Tips
- Blizzards and Severe Storms Warnings and Updates
- Freezing Rain and Ice Safety Tips
- Flooding Safety Tips
- Public Emergency System Test Alerts were bilingual
- Knowing when to call 911

Department of Municipal Affairs website:

<https://beta.novascotia.ca/government/municipal-affairs-and-housing>

- In March 2019, a large portion of the online information about DMAH programs and services was available in French.

Human Resources

- One staff member participated in French-language training provided through Univ. Ste. Anne.

Public Engagement

We consulted with municipalities on a variety of topics that impact them including, the Nova Scotia Building Code, Minimum Planning Standards, and powers to expend. 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

- Co-hosted the meeting with the Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDÉNE) and the French Municipal Administrator.
- 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.