

French-language Services Plan

2020–2021

Service Nova Scotia
and Internal Services



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French-language Services Plan
Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services
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Message from the Deputy Minister

We are pleased to present our first French Language Services plan as the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. We are now one of the largest departments in government with a team of more than 1,500 employees. We serve and support Nova Scotian citizens and businesses as well as employees across government and the health sector. Collectively, we bring together the end-to-end expertise needed to achieve a unified and coordinated approach to client service and technology and processes that support it; all in line with government's focus on innovation and excellence.

Service excellence is at the heart of everything SNS-IS does. In addition to the many services we provide to the citizens and businesses of Nova Scotia, we provide services, tools, and supports that enable other government departments and public sector entities to focus on delivering service excellence to their clients.

We are proud of the work we do and welcome this opportunity to share it with you. Please take a moment to review our plan. As you will see, we continue to look for opportunities to provide services in French while raising the awareness of French-language services within Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. We are committed to meeting our obligations under the *French-language Services Act* and improving our capacity to offer French-language services.

Joanne Munro

Deputy Minister

Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services

Contribution to the Preservation and Growth of the Acadian and Francophone Community

The Department plays an important role in promoting and supporting the preservation of language through the development and delivery of French-language services. SNS-IS recognizes that 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.

In addition, Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone culture and heritage is preserved through SNS-IS' ability to support program and service delivery across government by providing and supporting the tools that help other public-facing departments deliver service in French. 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 service strategies.

SNS-IS supports Acadian culture and heritage through the collection of donations to the Vive l'Acadie Community Fund, which supports cultural projects within Acadian and francophone communities. Thanks to this funding, community groups across the province can contribute directly to the preservation and growth of their own vibrant and dynamic culture.

SNS-IS works to make it easier for our clients and our partners to do what they need to do, no matter their choice of language. We listen to the needs and expectations of Nova Scotians and deliver high-quality, accessible programs and services across multiple channels. We are committed to service excellence and encourage you to provide us with feedback on our services and to indicate areas or programs where we could initiate new French-language service offerings to meet community needs.

French-language Services Coordinator

The French-language Services Coordinator for Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services is:

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Corporate Goals and Objectives

The Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services (SNS-IS) continues to build on the policy direction identified in the *Nova Scotia Strategic Plan for French Language Services, 2018-2023* agreement with Heritage Canada. This plan presents us with new opportunities, and 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

We have achieved significant results and are committed to doing more work to meet the needs of Acadian and francophone clients.

Corporate Objective 1: Leadership and policy

French-language Services policies in accordance with the Act & Regulations

Championing French-language Services through Leadership and Policy Direction

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 overall client experience strategy through all channels. 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 addition, SNS-IS' Deputy Minister is one of the six Deputy Ministers who form the Committee of Deputy Ministers on the Implementation of the *French-language Services Act*.

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. One way we do this is through a 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?

Corporate Objective 2: Services to the Public

Develop and deliver quality French programs and services and to the public

Goals and Objectives

- Make it easy for clients to interact with SNS-IS in the language of their choice.
- Client experience should be 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.
- Consideration must be given to the inclusion of French language in the development of all products and services and service channels.
- Our business and technical requirements for projects, requests for proposals to acquire new software, and solution assets should include French-Language requirements.
- Ensure that our infrastructure and platforms can support the inclusion of French language or other languages in the development of all product and services for all channels at SNS-IS.



Continued Efforts for next year 2020-2021

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

- Signage relating to **Bonjour!** Services en Français.
- 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.
- Translation of press releases, advertisements, invitations to participate, discussion papers, website content, surveys, reports and results.

Communications with the Public: Printed or Electronic

Goals and Objectives

- All critical public information related to health, safety and security is available in French.
- Continue to promote the availability of French-language services to the public through print or online advertising, social media and by word of mouth.
- Any new or redeveloped information systems intended for public use should be in both languages. Where unilingual systems exist for use by the public, provisions will be made to translate or otherwise provide the service in both languages, where appropriate.
- Continue to develop and install bilingual signage in public offices.
- Continue to develop and install bilingual signage for programs and services provided by SNS-IS that impact other Government Department and their clients.

Continued Efforts for 2020-2021

- Modernizing the provincial registries to include French Services:
 - Registry of Joint Stock Companies
 - Vital Statistics Registry
- 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.
- Support client departments in providing and delivering French-language services by identifying opportunities, technical requirements, and other ways to enhance their ability to deliver services in French.
- Explore the suite of existing applications and databases to assess potential for multilingual support.
- Facilitate provision of tools and hardware to support French-language service delivery in client departments and organizations. E.g. Ability to order French-language keyboards.

Human Resource Management

Goals and Objectives

- Continue to build awareness and capacity for the provision of French-language services.
- Encourage the use of active offer of French-language services.
- Increase the number of bilingual staff hired in all divisions and at all levels.
- Continue to offer opportunities for staff to begin to learn or enhance their French Language skills.
- 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

- Continue to advertise vacant positions with French-language capacity as an asset.
- Administer a French-Language Services survey to identify language capacity within Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.
- 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.
- Continue to promote Acadian and francophone culture, through support for National Acadian Day and other cultural activities.
- Explore opportunities to incorporate French-language service delivery into department policies and priorities, including continuous improvement, where applicable.
- Explore opportunities to include French-language service into department efforts and project work including: Lean Six Sigma principles, and process management, where applicable.

Corporate Objective 3: Community engagement and outreach

How we communicate with the public in French

How we support the Active Offer of French-language Services:

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.
- French phone or in-person service enquiries are handled by French-speaking staff, where possible.
- Interpretation services are used as required.
- iPads are available at Access Centres to facilitate understanding to complete a transaction.

Active Offer is defined as: Services in French are evident, accessible, readily available, and demonstrated in the form of a bilingual greeting, signage, or other means.



SNS-IS proactively informs 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.
- News releases or advertising campaigns that promote a service that is available in French will be done in both languages.
- Encourage the 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.
- As the NovaScotia.ca evolves, SNS-IS is committed to and will continue to offer critical information related to our programs and services in both official languages.
- We welcome feedback on our progress, please contact our French-language services coordinator.
- To make a formal complaint regarding French-language services, please contact the Office of the Ombudsman

Public Consultations

SNS-IS includes options for members of the Acadian and francophone community to participate in French in any public consultation processes.

Agencies, Boards and Commissions

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

Community Development and Growth

The Acadian and francophone community are key clients. We recognize that providing increased access to programs, services and information in French, benefits our customers, our employees and all of government. 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.
- Continue to encourage the adoption of the Acadian Flag Licence Plate, which supports the local community.

Conclusion

SNS-IS believes 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 glad to offer Acadian and francophone Nova Scotians with many options 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:

- Promoted the availability of French-language services to the public through radio, print, social media, online advertising, and by word of mouth.
 - Heating Assistance Rebate Program Print and Radio Ads
 - Residential Tenancies Act: legislative changes
 - Property Tax Rebate for Seniors information and application
 - Online Vehicle Plate Renewal Service
- Displayed the “*Bonjour! Services en Français*”, signage in offices where French Services are available to the public, such as in Dartmouth, Halifax, 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.
- Financial support for the inclusion of French-language advertisements and materials for the advertising and marketing campaigns of the Heating Assistance Rebate Program and the Online Vehicle Plate Renewal Service
- Facilitated and coordinated access to Translation Services and Simultaneous Translation Services.
- Developed new French online services

New services available today

- Motor Vehicles: Information for newly Licensed Drivers
- Vital Statistics: Marriage forms and information
- Alcohol, Gaming, Fuel and Tobacco Online Ticket Lottery License Application
- Heating Assistance Rebate Program Online service

New services that are in Progress or in the planning stage

- Registry of Joint Stock Companies - Modernization
- Motor Vehicles: Online Dealer Service Program
- Vital Statistics: 21 forms, applications and affidavits are now bilingual
- Gender Options Expanded for Identity Documents: ID and Driver’s Licence, Birth Certificates and Health Cards
- Personal Property Registry System – Judgement Creditor Account
- Qmatic Ticketing Service – available at the Business Registration Unit

Continuous improvements to existing services

- Online Services and Immigration Online Service (updates)
- BizPaL – Provincial and Municipal Business Permits and Licensing information (43 updates)

Human Resources

- 1 university student hired to assist with French-language Services and Registry modernization projects.
- 6 staff participated in French-language training provided by Université Ste Anne
- More than 70% of vacant positions are advertised with French-language capacity as an asset or bilingual required

Public Engagement

- Continued to provide advice, assistance and support for consultations.
 - No province-wide consultations were conducted in **2019-2020**
 - 14 stakeholder and other types of engagement sessions were conducted; none included French

APPENDIX B: Inventory of Services

The following is a detailed inventory of French-language services available from Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services as of March 30, 2019.

Human Resources:

Bilingual Staff

Bilingual staff that can provide services in French are currently located in the following offices across the province:

- In-person Registry of Motor Vehicles services are available in the Dartmouth, Port Hawkesbury and Yarmouth Access Centres.
- In-person services are available at the Land Registration Office in Yarmouth and Lawrencetown.
- In Person and Telephone services are available from the Business Registration Unit to business clients.
- Telephone service is available from the Provincial Contact Centre for Registry of Motor Vehicles, Vital Statistics, Residential Tenancies and Public Enquiries.
- Geographic Information Services are available in French in Amherst.
- A bilingual service designer provides support for creating and updating French-language online services.
- A French-language services coordinator plans French-language initiatives for the department and represents the department on the French-language Services Coordinating Committee and its sub-committees.

Job Postings

- Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services managers and directors are encouraged to consider language capacity when hiring staff by including the statement "Bilingual ability in French and English will be considered an asset" in job postings.
- Successful candidates who self-identify as bilingual are asked to participate in French-language testing to certify their language proficiency level (beginner, intermediate, advanced).

Online Services, Business Services and Website:

Communications, Publications and Translated Material

Online Services available in French:

- Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates
- Birth registration kiosks
- Change of Address
- Collection Services – Payments
- Immigrate to Nova Scotia online service
- Government Store
- Personal property registry; issues a bilingual report
- Lien Check
- Motor Vehicles Services
 - Licenses and photo identification
 - RMV – French accents / long names
 - Vehicle Permit Renewal
 - Fine payments
 - Restitution Payments
 - Road and Knowledge test payments
 - Pay Parking Tickets
 - Online Dealer Services (available to Car Dealers)
- Driver Insurance Abstract Service (available to Insurance Companies)
- Municipal Services - Parking ticket payments
- Teacher certification online payments
- Our bilingual Online Payment Service is used by other departments. (Education and Early Childhood Development, Environment, Immigration, Justice)

Business services available in French:

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

Website: novascotia.ca/SNS

In March 2019 more than 50% of the online information about Service Nova Scotia programs and services was available in French.

Vital Statistics: Bilingual applications and guides

- Registration of Stillbirth
- Amendment to the Registration of Stillbirth
- Consent for Agent or Authorized Person to Apply for a Birth Certificate
- Physicians Notice of Live Birth or Stillbirth
- Change of Name application
- Change of Name and Sex for Applicants 16 and older application
- Change of Sex for Applicants 16 and older application
- Change of Sex for Applicants 15 and younger application
- Waive Fees for a Change of Name and Related Certificates Application
- Medical Certificate of Death
- Amendment to the Medical Certificate of Death
- Declaration of Domestic Partnership
- Domestic Partnership Application
- Consent for Marriage of a Minor
- Marriage Certificate Application
- Marriage Licence Application and Affidavit
- Registration of Marriage
- Clergy Registration to Perform Marriage
- Recognition of Religious Body Application

Consumer Protection Publications

- Residential Tenancies Guides: Residential tenancy guides provide tenants and landlords with information about their individual rights and responsibilities.

Access Nova Scotia offices

- iPad communication tools
- Access NS Digital Advertising Screens
- Qmatic ticketing service
- Free Wifi in Access Centres
- Respectful workplace signage

Translation and Simultaneous Translations Services:

- Translations were supplied by Translation Services, Communications Nova Scotia
- Simultaneous translation services were provided during a Residential Tenancies hearing