

French-language Services Plan

2021–2022

Municipal Affairs

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French-language Services Plan
Department of Municipal Affairs
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Message from the Deputy Minister

I am pleased to present the 2021-2022 French Language Services (FLS) Plan for the Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA). Information in this plan outlines the progress we have achieved in our delivery and implementation of FLS 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 promote vibrant, healthy and safe communities. The mandate of the department is implemented through the following divisions/offices:

1. Policy, Planning and Advisory Services;
2. Grants and Programs;
3. Municipal Finance; and
4. Emergency Management Office (EMO) and Office of the Fire Marshal.

At DMA, 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.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that Nova Scotia's local governments are resilient. In the year ahead, the pandemic will continue to present challenges for municipalities, and we will continue to work to understand the impact COVID-19 continues to have on local governments.

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 (FLS) Act*, but to improving our capacity to offer FLS as a department.

Justin Huston
Deputy Minister
Department of Municipal Affairs

Corporate Goals and Objectives

DMA 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 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 FLS 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 FLS policies in accordance with the FLS Act and Regulations.

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

DMA is committed, not just to meeting our obligations under the *FLS Act* and Regulations, but to improving our capacity to offer FLS.

DMA 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.

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

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.

DMA 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.

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 *FLS Act* and Regulations.

Agencies, Boards and Commissions

Acadians and francophones are encouraged to become active participants of DMA'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 Nova Scotia. 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 2021-2022:



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, products 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 2021-2022

- Continue to educate and inform staff on the active offer of service and on the *FLS 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 additional online, verbal, and printed information in French to the public and municipalities. This additional information includes:
 - **Bonjour!** Services en Français, signage in offices where French Services are available to the public, such as the EMO and OFM 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 FLS to the public through print or online advertising, social media and by word of mouth.

French-language Services Coordinator

DMA shares an FLS Coordinator with Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

Michelle Saulnier, French-language Services Coordinator
Department of Municipal Affairs,
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 FLS Coordinator. If you wish to make a formal complaint regarding FLS, please contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

Communications with the Public: Printed or Electronic Communications

Goals and Objectives

- Strive to provide critical public information related to health, safety and security is available to citizens, businesses and municipalities in French whenever possible.
- Continue to maintain the level of FLS currently offered, by phone, in-person, through our website.
- Strive to make information related to federal funding programs to municipalities, businesses and citizens available in French.
- Continue to promote the availability of FLS 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.
- 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.

Continued Efforts for 2021-2022

- Strive to provide critical public information related to health, safety and security to citizens in French, such as emergency alerts, public notices and warnings and fire safety information whenever possible.
- Ensure that financial assistance is available to support the inclusion of French in new information systems, advertising materials, or marketing campaigns promoting FLS.
- Continue to encourage the translation of web content, forms, brochures, manuals and other publications as opportunities become available (e.g., fire safety brochures)

Human Resource Management

Goals and Objectives

- 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.
- Strive to better understand the current French-language capabilities of staff and resources available to support and provide services in French.
- 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 FLS and promote an inclusive workplace culture.

Continued Efforts for 2021-2022

- 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 an FLS survey to identify language capacity within DMA 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

- Support the Acadian and francophone communities access to municipal information and services in French.
- Collaborate and engage our stakeholders to develop 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 FLS provided by DMA.
- Encourage Acadians and francophones to find out about and participate in local government.
- Provide election information produced by DMA 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 DMA.
- 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.

Continued Efforts for 2021-2022

- Collaborate with municipalities to assist with 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 (CSAP).
- Continue to provide information and publications related to emergency management, fire prevention and public safety messages and materials in French whenever possible.
- Maintain an ongoing dialogue with Acadian and francophone community organizations to help DMA recognize the need for French-language government services.
- Continue to encourage collaboration between Le Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse and Municipal Advisors.
- 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 DMA improve their French-language government service offerings.

Conclusion

DMA is committed to the promotion and improvement of our FLS as we work toward our goals for 2021-2022 and build on our progress.

We are proud 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, and commissions across government, including the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie, through the FLS 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 2020-2021

It is important to note that on February 23, 2021, the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal were altered to create the following departments: The Department of Municipal Affairs; the Department of Infrastructure and Housing; and the Department of Transportation and Active Transit. Moreover, on April 1, 2021, responsibility for the Regional Enterprise Network program moved from the Department of Municipal Affairs to the Department of Inclusive Economic Growth.

Municipal and CSAP Election Support

- Supported the 2020 Municipal and CSAP elections by providing the following services:
 - Providing the Candidate's and Safe Election's 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.
 - Provided French-language posters for polling stations.

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.
- Provided financial support 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.

Emergency Management Office

- Tested the National Alert Ready system – using a bilingual message.
- Issued the following tweets and news releases in French – before, during and after Hurricane Teddy:
 - Stock your Emergency kit / Préparer votre trousse d'urgence.
 - Get Prepared / Préparez-vous.
 - Remove loose objects / Retirez tout objet extérieur qui pourrait s'envoler.
 - Remind Nova Scotians to be prepared for Hurricane Teddy: [Hurricane Teddy Update.](#)
 - Rappeler aux gens de se préparer en vue de l'ouragan Teddy : [Mise à jour sur l'ouragan Teddy.](#)
 - Be Prepared for Hurricane Teddy: [https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20200918005.](https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20200918005)
 - Préparation en vue de l'ouragan Teddy : [https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20200918007.](https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20200918007)

Community Infrastructure

- Made the following announcements for the Provincial Capital Assistance Program and Flood Risk Infrastructure Investment Programs:
 - [Financement de projets pour gérer les risques liés aux inondations et les infrastructures communautaires](#): Quinze projets municipaux recevront une aide financière pour aider à atténuer les risques d'inondation et soutenir les infrastructures municipales, dont 675 477 \$ pour dix projets du Programme d'aide aux immobilisations provinciales et 246 448 \$ pour cinq projets du Programme d'investissement dans l'infrastructure réduisant les risques d'inondation.

- [Project Funding to Address Flood Risk and Community Infrastructure](#): Fifteen municipal projects will receive funding to help mitigate flood risk and support municipal infrastructure, including \$675,477 for 10 projects under the Provincial Capital Assistance Program and \$246,448 for five projects under the Flood Risk Infrastructure Investment Program.

Office of the Fire Marshall

- Developed educational tweets to inform Nova Scotians on safety precautions they can take to protect themselves from fire leading up to Fire Safety Week (October 4-10). The tweets covered the following topics: 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.

Human Resources

- Two (2) staff participated in French-language training provided by Université Ste Anne.

Public Engagement

- Held targeted consultation with municipal representatives on a variety of topics that impact them, including: code of conduct, housing supply, elected officials running for other levels of government, and accessibility.
- Completed bilingual consultation through the NS Affordable Housing Commission portal “Let's Talk Affordable Housing! Help us reimagine housing in Nova Scotia”.
<https://nsaffordablehousingcommission.ca/>.
- No other province-wide public consultations were conducted in 2020-2021.

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 31, 2020.

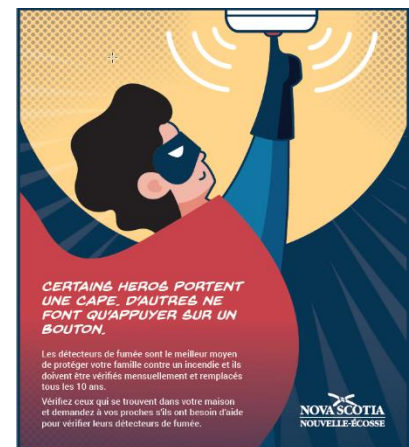
Active Offer / Communications with the Public and Information Materials: Printed or Electronic

- Continued to promote the availability of French-language services to the public through radio, print, social media, online advertising, and by word of mouth. Examples of services included:
 - Hurricane Preparedness Tips: <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20190905003>
 - Fire Prevention Week: Look, Listen, Learn: <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20181004003>.
 - Fire Safety Tips for Summer : <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20180614005>
 - Beautification and Streetscaping Projects announced : <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20180720001>.
- 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-esp-f-grant-recipients-2018-en.pdf>
- 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.



Emergency Management Office (EMO)

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.

- 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

Examples of EMO social media tweets were as follows:

- 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.
- Public emergency system test alerts were bilingual.
- Knowing when to call 911.

Department of Municipal Affairs website:

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

- In March 2019, a large portion of the online information about DMA 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, powers to expend, code of conduct, accessibility and ShortTerm rentals. 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.