

French-language Services Plan

2021–2022

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 share our 2021-22 French Language Services plan for the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services (SNS-IS).

SNS-IS serves and supports Nova Scotian citizens and businesses, as well as employees across government and the health sector. In addition to the many services we provide to Nova Scotia's citizens and businesses, SNS-IS delivers services, tools, and supports that enable other government departments and public sector entities to focus on delivering service excellence to their clients.

Service excellence is important to us as we put the client – Nova Scotians – at the centre of everything we do. Our teams remain resilient by working together to protect the interests, health, and safety of our clients and staff through innovative service delivery that supports modern, transformative, and digital ways of working while maintaining our obligations under the French-language Services Act. These changes improved service delivery, inspired our partners in government and healthcare to consider more service transformations, and are a permanent part of operations in many cases.

Our plan ensures Acadian and francophone needs are addressed in the development of programs, policies and services and recognizes the contribution of the Acadian and francophone community. More than 50 % of the information for our online programs and services is available in French, including the Online Drivers License Renewals, the Nova Scotia Login Service, and the modernized Registry of Joint Stock Companies (RJSC) which provides an integrated 24/7 online access in the location and language of their choice.

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. We will continue to support the needs of the Acadian and francophone community, to seek opportunities to provide services in French, and to raise awareness of French-language services within Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. We are committed to improving our capacity to offer French-language services as outlined under the French-Language Services Act.

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 of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services (SNS-IS) plays an important role in promoting and supporting the preservation of language through the development and delivery of French-language services in Nova Scotia. 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.

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

SNS-IS supports Acadian culture and heritage through the Acadian Flag Licence Plate sales and collection of donations to the Vive l'Acadie Community Fund, which supports cultural projects within Acadian and francophone communities. These Funds support 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 feedback on our programs and services, including 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 Canadian Heritage. 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 our overall client experience strategy across 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. Our 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?

Strengthen internal operational structures including policy, legislative and administrative frameworks

French-language services (FLS) looks to champion and find new and innovative ways to help grow and deliver the best possible services for our French Language clients. These efforts will include:

- Making language a consideration when developing new products, services, projects, consultations, communications, and advertising.
- Improving awareness and understanding of our FLS obligations related to public engagement and consultations.
- Coordinated access to Translation Services and Simultaneous Translation Services
- Development of new online services in French
- Making critical public information available in French (Issues related to the health, safety and security of the Public)

Corporate Objective 2: Services to the Public

Develop and deliver quality French programs and services 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 along with the service channel.
- Our business and technical requirements for public facing 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 2021-2022

New services that are in progress or in the planning stage

- Vital Statistics Registry and the Registry of Joint Stock Companies - Modernization
- Registry of Motor Vehicles: Online Knowledge Testing

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

- Increase use of signage for the *Bonjour!* Services en Français.
- Developing and creating more 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.
- Increased translation of press releases, advertisements, invitations to participate, discussion papers, website content, surveys, survey results, position papers and reports.

Communications with the Public: Printed or Electronic

Goals and Objectives

- All critical public information related to health, safety, and security is available in French.
- Promote the availability of French-language services to the public through print or online advertising, social media and by word of mouth.
- New or redeveloped information systems intended for public use should all be available in both official languages. Where public unilingual systems exist, provisions will be made to provide the service in both official languages.
- 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 2021-2022

- Providing COVID19 Bilingual Signage in SNS-IS public service areas
- Support the COVID19 tools and protocols such as:
 - Book a COVID-19 test and Nova Scotia Safe Check-in Form (self-declaration)
- Modernizing the provincial registries to include French Services:
 - Registry of Joint Stock Companies and its supporting forms and website information
 - Vital Statistics Registry and its supporting forms and website information
- 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.

- Partner with departments across government in providing and delivering French-language services by identifying opportunities, technical requirements, and other ways to enhance their ability to deliver services in French.
- Facilitate the provision of tools and hardware to support French-language service delivery in client departments and organizations.

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 2021-2022

- Continue to advertise vacant positions with French-language capacity as an asset.
- Administer a French-Language Services survey to identify language capacity within SNS-IS
- Provide staff with opportunities for French-language training or other training opportunities and support their learning with tools, such as French-English dictionaries or translation applications.
- Continue to promote Acadian and francophone culture, through support for cultural activities on National Acadian Day, Francophonie month, and through *Acadie at a Glance*.
- Explore opportunities to incorporate French-language service delivery into department policies and priorities, including continuous improvement, where applicable.
- Explore opportunities to include French-language service into department efforts and project work, including continuous improvement, and process management, where applicable.

Corporate Objective 3: Community engagement and outreach

How we communicate with the public in French: Active Offer of Services

What is active offer? An active offer of service is defined as an open invitation to the public to use one of our two official languages—English or French.

In Nova Scotia, services in French are evident, accessible, readily available, and demonstrated in the form of a bilingual greeting, signage, or other means.



How we support Active Offer:

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.
- Having French phone or in-person service enquiries handled by French-speaking staff, where possible.
- Interpretation services are coordinated as required.
- Assisting client transactions by using iPads at our Access Centres.

SNS-IS proactively informs citizens that French service is available.

- French staff say Bonjour! /Hello or Hello /Bonjour!
- Display *Bonjour!* Signage to encourage the community to request services in French.
- Communications, news releases, promotions or advertising campaigns related to a service that is available in French will be prepared 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.
- Continue to assist in the development of French information about our programs on NovaScotia.ca.
- Critical public 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 and partners. 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 and improve 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.

2020 -2021 French-language Services achievements

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
 - Online Vehicle Plate Renewal Service
 - Knowledge Tests and Road Tests
 - Renew your Drivers' Licence Online
 - Book an appointment at an Access Center
 - COVID-19 signage and physical distancing and routing floor stickers
- 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.
- Bilingual Head Office Signage was installed on all floors providing guidance for services to the public.
- 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 Driver's Licence Renewal Service
- Facilitated and coordinated access to Translation Services and Simultaneous Translation Services.
- Developed new French online services
 - New services available today
 - Motor Vehicles: Renew your Driver's Licence
 - Qmatic Ticketing Service – Business Registration Unit
 - NS Login Service
 - Online Driver's Licence Renewals
 - Online Travel Declaration Form/Nova Scotia Safe Check-in
 - Find out if you need a COVID-19 test
 - 811 Self-Assessment Tool
 - RMV Online Inquiries Service
 - Book an appointment – Access NS tool
 - New telephone technology for Public Enquiries, RMV, BRU and Collections
 - Continuous improvements to existing services
 - Online Services (updated: Pay a Parking Ticket, Road Test Payments, Pay a Fee for Default Fines, Pay a Fine)
 - Online Dealer Services
 - Heating Assistance Rebate Program online service
 - Geographic Information Services updated 61, 1:10,000 mapsheets related to Halifax Regional Municipality

Human Resources

- 24 staff participated in French-language training provided by Université Ste Anne
- 20 French at Lunch (1 hour) sessions hosted by Alliance Française
- More than 70% of vacant positions are advertised with French-language capacity as an asset or bilingual required
- 2020 In-TAC Virtual Career Expo – used bilingual materials showcasing what we do at SNS-IS and that we value bilingual capacity

Public Engagement

- Continued to provide advice, assistance, and support for consultations.
 - No province-wide consultations were conducted in 2020 -2021
 - 11 stakeholder and other types of engagement sessions were conducted, one included French

Conclusion

At SNS-IS we believe Nova Scotians should have access to quality government services in French, and this plan demonstrates our commitment to ensuring our programs, policies and services address the priorities expressed by the Acadian and francophone community. As we continue to maintain and improve French-language services, we welcome feedback on our progress, and invite you to share your comments or questions by contacting our French-language services coordinator. If you wish to make a formal complaint regarding French-language services, please contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

We are pleased to offer Acadian and francophone Nova Scotians many options to interact with government in their own language. We achieve this in collaboration with other departments, agencies, boards, or commissions 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: 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, 2020.

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, Halifax, 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, Public Enquiries and Collection Services.
- 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).

Website, Online, In-Person, and Business Services:

Communications, Publications, Signage and Translated Material

Website: novascotia.ca/SNS

In March 2020 more than 50% of the online information about Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services' programs and services was available in French.

Online Services available in French:

- Alcohol, Gaming, Fuel and Tobacco - Online Ticket Lottery License Application
- Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates
- Birth registration kiosks
- Change of Address
- Collection Services – Payments
- Heating Assistance Rebate Program Online application
- Immigrate to Nova Scotia online service
- Government Store
- Personal Property Registry Service
- Lien Check
- Motor Vehicles Services
 - Information for newly Licensed Drivers
 - 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)
- Clearview Connects – Fraud report portal
- Driver Insurance Abstract Service (available to Insurance Companies)
- Municipal Services - Parking ticket payments
- Teacher certification online payments
- Nova Scotia Dept of Health / Public Health
- Our bilingual Online Payment Service is used by other departments. (Education and Early Childhood Development, Environment, Immigration, Justice)

Business services available in French:

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

Vital Statistics:

Website information and guides along with 21 forms, applications and affidavits including the Gender Options for Identity Documents are now bilingual.

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 Wi-Fi 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 upon request during Residential Tenancies hearings