

French-language Services Plan

2022–2023

Municipal Affairs and Housing

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2022
French-language Services Plan
Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing
April 2022
ISBN: 978-1-77448-281-0

Message from the Deputy Minister

I am pleased to present the 2022-2023 French Language Services (FLS) 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 FLS over the past fiscal year and identifies the priorities and initiatives for the upcoming year.

The Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing continues to promote responsible local government and safe, sustainable, inclusive communities. Through working with municipalities and other partners, DMAH contributes to strong and diverse economics, high quality of life, and affordable, adequate, and suitable housing for all.

The mandate of DMAH is implemented through the following divisions/offices:

- Municipal Services;
- Housing, including programs delivered on behalf of Housing Nova Scotia (HNS); and
- Emergency Management Office (EMO) and the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM).

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 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.

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.

Paul LaFleche

Deputy Minister

Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Corporate Goals and Objectives

DMAH 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.

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

DMAH 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.

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 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.

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.

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 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 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 2022-2023:



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 2022-2023

- 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 DMAH Head Office in Halifax, as well 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

DMAH 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 2022-2023

- 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, safety messaging, or marketing campaigns promoting FLS.
- Continue to encourage the translation of web content, forms, brochures, manuals and other publications as opportunities become available, such as:
 - Province, Police Make Changes to Alert Ready System
 - [Emergency situations can unfold quickly, and in some instances, alerts can help people protect themselves and their families.](#)
 - Hurricane Season Preparation
 - [The province asks Nova Scotians to help minimize the risk of property damage and personal injury by being prepared for a hurricane or tropical storm.](#)
 - Nova Scotians Advised to Prepare for Fall Storms
 - [Batten down the hatches and put away that lawn furniture, Nova Scotia – there's a storm coming Monday.](#)
 - Province to Introduce Bilingual Stop Signs in Acadian Communities
 - [The province will begin installing bilingual stop signs on provincial roads in some Acadian communities this summer.](#)
 - Shared information about the District of Argyle opening its [new net-zero energy administration building](#) – the first of its kind in Canada
 - [Affordable housing reports:](#)
 - Solutions for housing and homelessness.
 - Affordable housing progress report: January 2022.
 - National Housing Strategy Action Plans:
 - Outline how federal funding will be used to achieve mutually-agreed National Housing Strategy targets.
 - 2022/23 Action Plan will be published in French and English.

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 2022-2023

- 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 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.
- Nova Scotia Family Heritage Day 2022
 - Shared information with staff to encourage dialogue and discussion, about Grand-Pré and its meaning to the Acadian people.



Community Development and Growth

Goals and Objectives

- Support the Acadian and francophone communities by improving access to municipal and housing information and services in French.
- Collaborate and engage our stakeholders to develop policies and programs and services in an effort to 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 and online through their websites and through BizPal.ca.
- Collaborate with SNS-IS in relation to FLS provided by DMAH.
- Encourage Acadians and francophones to find out about and participate in local government.
- Provide election information produced by DMAH in French to municipalities and le Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP).
- 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) and Municipal Advisors that supports economic growth and immigration, youth work force attachment, and rural enterprise.

Continued Efforts for 2022-2023

- Collaborate with municipalities 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 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 DMAH recognize the need for French-language government services.
- Continue to encourage collaboration between (CDÉNÉ) 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 DMAH improve their French-language government service offerings.

Conclusion

DMAH is committed to the promotion and improvement of our FLS as we work toward our goals for 2022-2023 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 2021-2022

It is important to note that on August 31, 2021, the Department of Municipal Affairs was altered to create the 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.
- *Bonjour!* Services en Français, signage in offices where French Services are available to the public, such as DMAHH Head Office in Halifax, as well as the EMO and OFM offices in Dartmouth.
- Provided financial support for the inclusion of French-language advertisements and materials for 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 a hurricane:
 - Stock your Emergency kit / Préparer votre trousse d'urgence;
 - Get Prepared / Préparez-vous;
 - Remove loose objects / Retirez tout objet extérieur qui pourrait s'envoler;
 - Province, Police Make Changes to Alert Ready System;
 - [Emergency situations can unfold quickly and, in some instances, alerts can help people protect themselves and their families.](#)
 - Hurricane Season Preparation; and
 - [The province asks Nova Scotians to help minimize the risk of property damage and personal injury by being prepared for a hurricane or tropical storm.](#)
 - Nova Scotians Advised to Prepare for Fall Storms.
 - [Batten down the hatches and put away that lawn furniture, Nova Scotia – there's a storm coming Monday.](#)

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.
- Issued the following tweets and news releases in French :
 - Various fire hazard Recall / Notices related to consumer goods

Housing

- The following affordable housing reports were published in 2021-2022:
 - Affordable housing report Spring 2021: Charting a new course for affordable housing in Nova Scotia;
 - Solutions for housing and homelessness; and
 - Affordable housing progress report: January 2022.
<https://beta.novascotia.ca/documents/affordable-housing-reports>

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:
 - the Municipal Elections Act;
 - Assessment Act;
 - Nova Scotia Building Code;
 - Minimum Planning Standards;
 - Powers to expend;
 - Code of conduct;
 - Housing supply;
 - Short-term rentals 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 2021-2022.
- Province to introduce bilingual stop signs in Acadian communities
 - [The province will begin installing bilingual stop signs on provincial roads in some Acadian communities this summer.](#)

APPENDIX B: Inventory of Services

The following is a detailed inventory of French-language services and information available from the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing on March 31, 2021.

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:
 - Remind Nova Scotians to be prepared for Hurricane Teddy: [Hurricane Teddy Update](#).
 - [Be Prepared for Hurricane Teddy](#)
 - Flood Risk infrastructure investments
[Project Funding to Address Flood Risk and Community Infrastructure](#):
- 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.

Human Resources

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

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.

- Print brochures available to the public:
 - Are you ready for an emergency?
 - Facts About 911
- Tests of the National Alert Ready system – using a bilingual message.

Examples of EMO social media tweets were as follows:

- Stock your Emergency kit
- Get Prepared
- Remove loose objects
- 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.
- Reminders about the public emergency alert system.
- Knowing when to call 911.

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>
- 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 in October each year. Topics included: 'Some Heroes Wear Capes' ad and video, fire safety checklist, evacuation plans, wood stoves, chimneys, phones, space heaters, 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.



Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing website:

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

- In March 2019, a large portion of the online information about DMAH 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;
- Housing supply (through the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission <https://nsaffordablehousingcommission.ca/>);
- Short-term rentals elected officials running for other levels of government; and
- Accessibility.

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 CDÉNÉ 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.
- 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; and
 - Provided French-language posters for polling stations.

Community Infrastructure

- Made the following announcements for the Provincial Capital Assistance Program and Flood Risk Infrastructure Investment Programs:
 - [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.