

French-language Services Plan

2022–2023

Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services

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

We are so pleased to share with you the 2022-23 French-language services plan for the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services (SNS-IS).

SNS-IS is focused on listening to the needs and expectations of Nova Scotians and we aim to deliver inclusive, accessible, high-quality programs and services across our traditional and digital channels. We are committed to meeting our obligations and improving our capacity to offer French-language services as outlined under the French-Language Services Act. Currently, more than 50% of the information for our online programs and services is available in French, including the Online Driver Knowledge tests, Request Nova Scotia Legislation, Remembrance Day Act assessment tool and the upcoming modernization of the Vital Statistics Registry.

Moving forward, we will continue to support the needs of the Acadian and francophone community by looking for more opportunities to provide services in French, as well as to raise awareness of French-language services within SNS-IS.

We are incredibly proud of the SNS-IS team and the work they do everyday, and we welcome this opportunity to share this plan with you.

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 both our internal and external client 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.

- The SNS-IS Deputy Minister is a member of the Committee of Deputy Ministers on the Implementation of the *French-language Services Act*.
- The SNS-IS French-language services coordinator plans French-language initiatives for the department and represents the department on the French-language Services Coordinating Committee and its subcommittees.

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.
- 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 for all channels.
- 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 infrastructure and platforms can support the inclusion of French language and other languages in the development of all product and services for all channels at SNS-IS.



Continued Efforts for 2022-2023

New services that are in progress or in the planning stage

- Request Nova Scotia Legislation (NS Legislature)
- Remembrance Day Act assessment tool (Labour, Skills and Immigration) Outil d'évaluation - loi sur le jour du Souvenir
- Vital Statistics Registry and the Registry of Joint Stock Companies - Modernization
- Registry of Motor Vehicles: Online Knowledge Testing (Commercial Class 1,2,3)
- Nova Scotia Child Abuse Registry Search Service (Department of Community Services)
- Updates to the Registry of Joint Stock Companies online services
- Updates to Nova Scotia Login Service

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

- Coordinate access to Translation Services and Simultaneous Translation Services
- 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 2022-2023

- Providing COVID-19 Bilingual Signage in SNS-IS public service areas
- Support the COVID-19 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 language 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 2022-2023

- 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, proceeds from the plate supports the local community.

2021 -2022 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.
 - Online Knowledge Tests in French (Class 6,7,8)
 - Senior Care Grant Program
 - Renew your Drivers' Licence Online
 - Book an appointment at an Access Center
- 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.
- COVID-19 masks printed with *Bonjour!* provided to front line staff in SNS-IS and other Departments such as Environment and Climate Change, Education, Community Services, Labour and Immigration, Justice and Acadian Affairs.
- 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 new Senior Care Grant Program
- Financial support to the Provincial Tax Commission's reprint of the French brochure - Private Sale Vehicle Tax
- Facilitated and coordinated access to Translation Services and Simultaneous Translation Services.
- Developed new French online services
 - New services available today
 - Request Nova Scotia Legislation (NS Legislature)
 - Remembrance Day Act – tool (Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness)
 - Senior Care Grant Program
 - Nova Scotia Child Abuse Registry Search Service (Department of Community Services)
 - Continuous improvements to existing services
 - Online Services updated: Municipal - Pay a Parking Ticket, Change of Address, Online Driver's Licence Renewals)
 - NS LOGIN service – system updates
 - Vital Stats (Registry Modernization, changes to Live Birth Registration Kiosk
 - Order a Certificate online - services updates (Birth, Marriage, Death, Pay on Account)
 - Make a restitution payment (Justice)
 - Heating Assistance Rebate Program online service
 - Online Travel Declaration Form/Nova Scotia Safe Check-in (Public Health)
 - Registry of Joint Stock Companies Web pages (approx. 70 pages)

Human Resources

- 25 staff participated in French-language training provided by Université Sainte-Anne
- 1 student from Université Sainte-Anne on a work placement (May to June 2021)
- 18 copies of Acadian Driftwood were shared with staff to promote NS Family Day Honoree: Landscape of Grand Pre
- In collaboration with the Public Service Commission the portal Success Factors was modified to allow employees to self-identify which languages they know within their employee profile.
- 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.
 - Two province-wide consultations were conducted in 2020-2021
 - Vital Statistics – Birth Record changes
 - Nova Scotia Health Calls - Need a Family Practice Registry
 - 8 stakeholder and other types of engagement sessions were conducted, two 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, 2021.

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 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 2021 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
- Book an appointment – Access NS tool
- Change of Address
- Collection Services – Payments
- Heating Assistance Rebate Program
- Immigrate to Nova Scotia online service
- Government Store (decommissioned)
- Personal Property Registry Service
- Lien Check
- Motor Vehicles Services
 - Information for newly Licensed Drivers
 - RMV – French accents/long names
 - Vehicle Permit Renewal
 - Pay a Fine
 - Pay a Fee for Default Fines
 - Road and Knowledge test payments
 - Pay a Parking Ticket
 - RMV Online Inquiries Service
 - Online Driver's Licence Renewals
 - Online Dealer Services (available to Car Dealers)
- Clearview Connects – Fraud report portal
- Driver Insurance Abstract Service (available to Insurance Companies)
- Make a restitution payment (Justice)
- Municipal Parking Ticket
- NS Login Service
- Teacher certification online payments (Education)
- Nova Scotia Dept of Health/Public Health
 - Travel Declaration Form/NS Safe Check-in
 - Find out if you need a COVID-19 test
 - 811 Self-Assessment Tool
- Our bilingual Online Payment Service is used by other departments. (Environment, Immigration)

Bilingual Signage

- 1505 Barrington Street - Head Office
- RMV Baddeck

Business services available in French:

- BizPaL – business permits and licenses application
- Qmatic Ticketing service: Access Centres, Business Registration Unit
- Nova Scotia Estimated Kilometer Worksheet for International Registration Plan
- 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.

Contact Center – technology updates

New telephone technology for Public Enquiries, RMV, BRU and Collections allows for better call handling.

Access Nova Scotia offices and In-person Service Office

- Access NS Digital Advertising Screens
- Book an appointment – Access NS tool
- COVID-19 signage (physical distancing, floor stickers)
- Free Wi-Fi in Access Centres
- iPad communication tools
- Qmatic ticketing service
- Respectful workplace signage

Geographic Information Services

Updates to the 1:10,000 Halifax Regional Municipality map sheets to include French information

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.