

French-language Services Plan

2021–2022

Justice

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French-language Services Plan
Department of Justice
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Message from the deputy head or CEO

Hello / Bonjour!

It is with great pleasure that we share with you the Nova Scotia Department of Justice's French-language Services 2020-21 Progress Report and Plan for 2021-22. This plan outlines the department's goals and priorities through extensive input from divisions across the department, Nova Scotia Legal Aid, and the Public Prosecution Service for the upcoming fiscal year. The Plan reflects the work accomplished in support of making Acadian and Francophones feel safe and secure and to guarantee they have confidence in the justice system.

The Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service are committed to sustaining the growth of the Acadian and francophone population in Nova Scotia by refining our programs and services. Through collaboration with our numerous partners, we are expanding and promoting access to our services and programs in the official languages of Canada, focusing on those selected regions where French-language services are in high demand. It is only with working with government and community partners safeguarding justice policies, that programs and services are successfully brought forward in response to the needs of our citizens.

It is through the efforts of our staff, the commitment of our stakeholders, and the support of Nova Scotians that we can accomplish this work. It will be exciting to observe this plan put into action and to work with employees, all levels of government and our justice allies to assimilate these goals and values into our daily processes.

We welcome your comments about this plan for 2021-22 and extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who was part of its development and to all who will support its achievement in the forthcoming year.

Candace L. Thomas, Q.C.
Deputy Minister and Deputy Attorney General
March 2021

What we are doing to contribute to the growth of the Acadian and francophone community

We recognize the importance of French-language services and we endeavour to fulfil our responsibilities under the *French-language Services Act and Regulations*. We believe Nova Scotians should have access to 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. To achieve this aim, we collaborate with other designated public institutions across government – including the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie – through the French-language Services Coordinating Committee. We greatly value this partnership, which ensures a continued understanding of the unique needs of our province's Acadian and francophone community.

We encourage Nova Scotians to request services from government in French. We also encourage Acadians and francophones to have their voices heard by participating on agencies, boards, and commissions, which are regularly advertised by the Executive Council Office. As we continue to maintain and improve our French-language services, we welcome feedback on our progress, and we invite you to share with us 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 Department of Justice French-language services coordinator.

French-language services coordinator

Leda Zlotnick

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Services we offer in French

The Department of Justice offers various programs and services in French such as:

- hearings in court in accordance with the *Criminal Code*;
- interpreters in Provincial Court for criminal matters;
- simultaneous interpreters as required by law at Supreme Court and Appeal Court for criminal matters;
- translated print materials in priority subject areas determined within divisions.
- staff participation in the “Bonjour!” campaign;
- nsfamilylaw.ca available in both official languages;
- processing of uncontested applications for divorces in French;
- the Parent Information Program in both official languages online and in group settings;
- bilingual staff in court administration offices located in designated areas;
- French presentence reports;
- supervision of individuals in custody and in the community in French, upon request;
- French educational presentations about cyberbullying upon request;
- phone and counter services in French in the private security and firearm office and a bilingual Firearms Officer in the Yarmouth area.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid supports French-language services with:

- information on their website in both official languages;
- a 24-hour telephone duty counsel service providing free and immediate legal advice in French or English to people arrested or detained;
- French-speaking counsel are under retainer to represent the accused.

Public Prosecution Service provides services in French for instance:

- French-speaking Crown Attorneys available;
- oral and written communication in French with various agencies (particularly police agencies) and the public (including accused persons, witnesses, and the media).

How we communicate with the public in French

The Department of Justice

Court Services, Correctional Services, Maintenance Enforcement and Victims Services are the divisions within the Department of Justice that have the most public contact. Employees forward French written or oral requests to staff within their workplace that can respond in French. If there is no one within the office who can respond in French, we forward the correspondence to head office or Communications Nova Scotia for translation and to other staff who can answer questions in French.

Other divisions have staff members participating in the “Bonjour!” campaign to respond to specific inquiries in French. If there is no one at the local level who can manage the request, it is referred to the Department’s French-language Services Coordinator.

The installation of 50 licenses for French correction software program Antidote, on the computers of staff, Judges, Crown Prosecutors, Court Reporters and Probation Officers also facilitate correspondence between the department and courts with our stakeholders.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid (NSLA)

While NSLA operates the Commission independently from the Department of Justice, they are included in the French-language services plan.

NSLA full-service offices have the most public contact. If NSLA receives written correspondence in French, the response will be in French. NSLA employees forward French written or oral requests to staff within their workplace able to respond in French. Documents are translated in-house or by a service provider. If translation is required, NSLA may contact the Department of Justice French-language Coordinator for a referral.

NSLA continues to track requests for French-language services. NSLA responds to French requests, in writing and orally, as capacity permits and has staff fluent in French who can address inquiries.

NSLA participates in the “Bonjour!” campaign to respond to specific inquiries in French. If there is no one at the local level who can manage the request, it may be referred to staff who can respond in French.

NSLA also maintain a list of French-speaking lawyers who are willing to provide telephone duty counsel services in French.

Public Prosecution Service (PPS)

PPS has members of their staff in each of their four geographic regions who can respond to requests from the public to communicate in French. PPS has eight Crown Attorneys who can conduct trials in French, these communication obligations are governed by sections 530.1 of the *Criminal Code*.

What we did to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2020–21

Objective 1 – Strengthen internal operational structures including policy, legislative, and administrative frameworks

Department of Justice

Drafted material related to the *Service Dog Act*, translated in French, and published on website for publication.

Translated the Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework, and the Built Environment and Education Standard recommendations.

Hired fluently bilingual Policy Analyst to work with the Accessibility Directorate staff.

Presented the Department of Justice 2019-20 French-language Services Accountability Report and the 2020-21 Goals and Priorities to the Senior Management Team for approval, completed in both official languages, and published on the Department of Justice website by March 31, 2020.

Submitted an Official Languages Business Plan Funding Request to the Federal Department of Justice, requesting funding for Official Languages implementation activities and staffing for the period of 2020-25 (in force date for *Divorce Act* amendments moved to March 1, 2021).

Nova Scotia Legal Aid

Maintained membership on the Department of Justice French-languages Services Advisory Committee.

Provided French-speaking counsel to individuals requesting a French-speaking lawyer.

Contributed to the 2020-21 French-language Services Accountability Report and the French-language plan for 2021-22.

Public Prosecution Service

Supported a consistent representative on the Department of Justice French-language services advisory committee.

Maintained a list of Crown Attorneys able to conduct trials in French.

Provided licences and maintained maintenance for Antidote software program for all bilingual Crown Attorneys.

Objective 2: Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programmes to the public

Department of Justice

Offered the Department of Justice employees a variety of French training opportunities.

- ✚ Three Court Reporters, two Justice Officers II and one probation officer participated in three online 60-minutes webinars about family law and three online 60-minutes webinars about criminal law. This training was offered by the Centre canadien de français juridique.

- ✚ Thirteen employees participated in various level of online French training at Université Sainte-Anne, some on several occasions.
- ✚ Twenty-six Justice employees, including four correctional services staff, one maintenance enforcement staff, two lawyers and two victim services employees took French legal terminology training offered by the Centre canadien de français juridique, some on several occasions.
- ✚ Six staff attended an online French course titled “Anglicisms and False Cognates without Judgement” March 2021. This was offered by the Institut Joseph Dubuc, Saint-Boniface, Manitoba.
- ✚ Five Justice employees and two Crown Attorneys participated in an online French course titled “La Communication 1” January 2021 offered by the Institut Joseph Dubuc, Saint-Boniface, Manitoba.
- ✚ Sought and received approval to offer 6-weeks of Intensive French training to a bilingual court reporter. Carried over to 2021.
- ✚ Offered French tutoring to three provincial court judges. One provincial court judge participated in 80 hours of French tutoring.

Accessibility Directorate

Hired a vendor for the Accessibility Awareness Campaign currently in development. Any French-language components will be identified in consultation with the service provider, Communications Nova Scotia and the division.

Legal Services

Identified one legal assistant able to provide French-language services.

Ensured legal staff and lawyers continue to take advantage of relevant training opportunities.

Public Safety

Posted three job postings from the Firearms Section that included the phrase “French will be an asset” during 2020-21. There is currently one bilingual firearms officer available. A competition is underway for a second.

Continued to offer service in French at the private security and firearms office on the phone and at the counter.

Administered the federal firearms program and continued to comply with bilingual requirements. All materials are available in French and English.

Correctional Services

Maintained French-language support for two individuals at Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility.

Monitored the Department of Justice correctional services website but no update required for French-language content.

Provided services in French (the Bonjour program) in five correctional services offices.

Translated into French three presentence reports requested by the court (two in New Glasgow and one in Dartmouth).

Victim Services

Explored Victim Services letters on the case management system made available in French. Carried over to 2021-22.

Maintenance Enforcement Program

Published on the Maintenance Enforcement website these two documents:

dépenses-spéciales –

<https://mep.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/Payor-Special-Expenses-Extraordinary-Expenses-fr.pdf>

ordonnances alimentaires pour enfants sans indication de fin -

<https://mep.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/Child-Support-Orders-with-no-Terminating-Events-fr.pdf>

Court Services

Amended Rule 92 (Unified Family Court), Rule 24 (Appearance), miscellaneous rules and Court of Appeal courtroom attire for counsel May 2019. Updated French *Civil Procedure Rules* to reflect amendments.

Translated Information, including Appendix “A”, and Affidavit of Service, in separate English and French format. These are available to enforcement agencies.

Provided funding for the translation of one French will into English processed in Halifax.

Held three French trials, plus twenty-eight various court proceedings in French.

Employed French interpreters in court on twenty-eight occasions totaling sixty-eight hours of interpretation services.

Posted to hire a federal contravention bilingual clerk for the Dartmouth Justice Centre. Hiring delayed due to COVID-19.

Supported eleven federally funded bilingual positions in the Halifax Regional Municipality, Yarmouth, Digby, and Port Hawkesbury.

Advertised online training to all employees at the Department of Justice to build capacity in support of French-language services requests by identifying employees suitable for French training.

Worked with the Senior Management Team and Procurement to renew a yearly contract with the Centre canadien de français juridique to provide staff throughout the province with five online training sessions about French legal terminology training.

Advertised the new bilingual Family Law Nova Scotia website via social media (Twitter, Facebook) between February – May 2020, including French stakeholders in the social media loop.

Continued to offer the Family Law Nova Scotia website in both official languages in partnership with several organizations.

Identified and planned for *Divorce Act* and *Civil Procedure Rule* amendment updates to Family Law Nova Scotia website, including public legal education and information materials.

Continued to identify and made plans for translating key materials relating to court processes and family justice programs and services (subject to Official Languages Funding).

Recognized and made plans for French-language IT updates to the family law court case management system (CISII).

Identified updates required to the French versions of the Parent Information Program (PIP)), online Intake, in person intake and the Do-it-Yourself Divorce Modules (PLEI) (implementation subject to Official Languages Funding).

Continued to advertise the French parent information program (PIP) availability with news bulletins on the Family Law Nova Scotia website and regularly reminded staff to offer the French PIP program to clients.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid

Provided lawyers offering services in French with bilingual business cards.

Offered French-language training made available by government to Nova Scotia Legal Aid employees.

- ✚ One Nova Scotia Legal Aid staff studied online French training offered by Université Sainte-Anne.
- ✚ Three Nova Scotia Legal Aid Lawyers participated in French legal terminology training on several occasions.

Amended several pages on the French Nova Scotia Legal Aid website.

Promoted French as a desirable asset in hiring new personnel.

Public Prosecution Service

Encouraged Crown Attorneys to attend and participated in training through Université Sainte-Anne; the Centre canadien de français juridique and the Department of Justice; COVID-19 provided some interruptions.

- ✚ One Crown Attorney participated in three 60-minute online webinars on family law and two Crown Attorney took three 60-minute online webinars about criminal law. The Centre canadien de français juridique offered this training.
- ✚ Five Crown Attorneys participated in French legal terminology training on several occasions.

Maintained French information on the website.

Rebranded and rolled out new business cards across the province; business cards in both official languages were provided to bilingual Crown Attorneys.

Objective 3: Maintain ongoing dialogue and consultation with the Acadian and francophone community

Department of Justice

Continued legal advice and legal supports provided by The Legal Services Division to Acadian Affairs and Francophonie as required, including advice on contract review. This fiscal year Legal Services Division worked to update Schedule A of the current Regulations under the *French-language Services Act*, which had not been updated since 2006. Schedule A of the *French-language Services Regulations* provides a list of designated public institutions that are subject to the Act.

Translated the Federal, Provincial and Territorial document about Nova Scotia's restorative justice work, Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program referral documents also translated upon request.

Remained involved with Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial with regards to restorative approaches in French schools.

Placed French advertisements in Le Courrier for positions on Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABC) in the October 23rd and November 13th issues. French ads were also sent to all Ministers, Members of Legislative Assembly, Deputy Ministers, and Assistant Deputy Ministers for circulation. Justice did not receive any applications in French over 2020-21 for our ABCs, but if we did, we would have them translated and assessed them with the other applications.

Met virtually and by telephone with l'Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

Provided a grant to l'Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse January 2020 in support of Law Day at the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP) French schools.

Continued to have French CyberScan brochures printed and available during community and police agencies presentations. CyberScan presentations halted since March due to COVID-19.

Maintained CyberScan website to provide information to Nova Scotians about online safety.

Distributed approximately 180 French CyberScan brochures to CSAP French schools, universities, sea cadets, women's centers, Victim Services, and Restorative Justice.

CyberScan presentations in CSAP school have been on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Offered virtual CyberScan presentations to all schools, including CSAP French schools.

[Nova Scotia Legal Aid](#)

Continued to consult with French-language stakeholders.

Signed up to participate in Moot Court activity with l'Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse (unfortunately cancelled due to COVID-19).

[Public Prosecution Service](#)

Employed ten Crowns Attorneys, one per diem Crown Attorney, and one staff member able to communicate with stakeholders in French.

[How we plan to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2021–22](#)

Objective 1: Strengthen internal operational structures including policy, legislative and administrative frameworks

Goals

To champion and support the internal administrative structures by strengthening the policy, legislative and administrative frameworks for the implementation of the *French-language Services Act and Regulations*, the Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service are committed to:

- implementing the Nova Scotia *French-language Services Act and Regulations*;
- implementing the Official Languages amendments to the *Divorce Act*;
- contributing to the provincial government's Annual Plan and Progress Report on French-language services;
- ongoing development and implementation of policies and procedures to support the delivery of French-language services; and raising awareness of French-language services, supporting employees, and increasing government's capacity to deliver services in French.

Planned Measures

Department of Justice will

Draft French-language *Accessibility Act* review consultation materials.

Collaborate with Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service to draft and make public on the Department of Justice website in both official languages, the 2021-22 French-language Services Accountability Report and the French-language Plan for 2022-23 by March 31, 2022.

Implement the official languages amendments to the *Divorce Act* determined in consultation with the judiciary and with confirmation of budgetary contribution from Canada.

Review the French training policy and its operational needs tables annually to ensure those identified in the operational needs' tables are receiving training as identified.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid will

Maintain membership on the Department of Justice French-language Services Advisory Committee by attending and participating in meetings.

Contribute to the 2021-22 French-language Services Accountability Report and the French-language plan for 2022-23.

Publish NSLA information and legal information on its website in both official languages by working with IT and the Service Delivery Director to identify any translation needed.

Public Prosecution Service will

Continue to have a representative on the Department of Justice French-language services committee.

Maintain and update a list of Crown Attorneys able to conduct trials in the French-language pursuant to s.530.1 of the *Criminal Code*.

Objective 2 – Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programs to the public

Goals

In support of French-language services development, planning, and delivery to the public, the Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service committed to:

- delivering services and informational materials that respond to the priority needs of the Acadian and francophone community;
- increasing capacity to provide French-language services in priority areas;
- supporting French-language training for staff;
- measuring the benefits and effectiveness of French-language training, with course participants.

Planned Measures

Department of Justice will:

Deliver French services and information to the public on an ongoing basis.

Provide quality legal advice to its clients, including Acadian Affairs and the Francophonie.

Continue to increase capacity to respond to demands in French throughout Justice by identifying legal and support staff capable of providing French-language services to clients.

Ensure staff and lawyers continue to take advantage of relevant training opportunities.

Maintain the French CyberScan website.

Continue to have French CyberScan brochures printed and available during community presentations and presentations to police agencies.

Continue to make the brochure available in French by distributing French CyberScan information brochures to CSAP French schools, universities, sea cadets, women's centers, Victim Services, and Restorative Justice.

Resume all CyberScan physical presentations when possible.

Continue to administer the federal firearms program in compliance with bilingual requirements. The section will have a bilingual employee to provide service to clients in both English and French and all materials will be available in French and English.

Advertise in the job postings for all Public Safety sections and Accessibility Directorate "French will be an asset" or similar wording.

Establish workflows for French-language Accessibility inquiries and service requests (navigation requests).

Translate foundational public documents and key press releases about Accessibility into French.

Promote and support French-learning opportunities to Accessibility team, Correctional Services members as they arise.

Deliver services and informational materials in correctional services that respond to the priority needs of the Acadian and francophone community.

Explore making Victim Services letters on the case management system available in French.

Support French translation of the *Civil Procedure Rules* and planned for French translation of updates related to the new *Divorce Act*.

Update French *Criminal Code* forms and publish on the Courts of Nova Scotia website.

Provide funding for translation of French wills.

Ensure to provide French services in criminal court in accordance with section 530 of the *Criminal Code*.

Fill designated Court Services clerk positions as vacancies arise.

Offer Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service employees a variety of French training opportunities.

Continue to support provincial judges' French training opportunities.

Negotiate a contract with the Centre canadien de français juridique to provide staff with French legal terminology training

Explore offering a bilingual court reporter intensive French training.

Translate Jurors' Summons and supporting materials package into French, as required.

Respond to French translation/interpreter requests from Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program agencies.

[Nova Scotia Legal Aid will:](#)

Provide bilingual business cards to lawyers providing services in French.

Advertise for all Nova Scotia Legal Aid internal and external job postings “French will be an asset” or similar wording.

Offer French-language training made available by the provincial government to NSLA employees by circulating educational opportunities to staff.

Provide French-speaking counsel to individuals that request a French-speaking lawyer by referring client to French-speaking counsel by inter-office referral or Certificate to private counsel.

Public Prosecution Service will:

Continue to provide Antidote software licences to bilingual Crown Attorneys.

Promote the availability of French training available through the provincial government and elsewhere.

Provide French-language *Criminal Codes* to bilingual Crown Attorneys.

Objective 3: Maintain ongoing dialogue and consultation with the Acadian and francophone community

Goals

To engage the Acadian and francophone community through communications and consultations in support to its development and growth, the Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Legal Aid and Public Prosecution Service committed to:

- supporting the community in its development, through consultation, collaboration, and partnerships;
- consulting and communicating with the community and gain input, feedback, and recommendations;
- ensuring Acadian and Francophone representation on Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABCs) by advertising for positions on ABCs in both French and English.

Planned Measures

Department of Justice will:

Continue with Agencies, Boards and Commissions recruitment in French.

Meet with l'Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse to discuss the needs of the francophone community.

Provide a grant to l'Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse in support of Law Day at the CSAP French schools.

Work with the vendor to identify potential creative Accessibility Awareness Campaign materials to be delivered in French.

Develop French-language recruitment materials for members to participate on the third Accessibility Standard Development Committee.

Conduct French-language *Accessibility Act* review focus groups.

Create French-language consultation materials for phase 2 of the Education Standard Development Committee Recommendations.

Respond to French translation/interpreter requests from Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program agencies.

Promote French-learning opportunities to Restorative Justice team members as they arise.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid will:

Consult with French-language stakeholders by meeting and maintaining membership with l'Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

Public Prosecution Service will:

Maintain a French component on the Public Prosecution Service website.

Provide bilingual business cards for newly hired Crown Attorneys.