

French-language Services Plan

2023–2024

Office of the Ombudsman



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French-language Services Plan
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Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman

Message from the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman considers and investigates complaints from people who believe they have not been treated fairly when accessing government services, or when they believe a policy or procedure has not been followed correctly. We are non-partisan and operate as an independent oversight agency.

I am pleased to present our French Language Services Plan for 2022-2023. The plan outlines the Office of the Ombudsman's progress and priorities for improving its capacity to provide French language services to members of the Acadian and Francophone community. – Christine Brennan, March 2023

What we're 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 quality government services in French, and this plan demonstrates our commitment to ensuring our programmes, 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 Office of the Ombudsman.

French-language services coordinator:

Kyle Jackson (Kyle.Jackson@novascotia.ca, 902-424-1296)

Services we offer in French

- Complaint resolution services when the complainant accepts the active offer in French
- The Annual Report
- Information brochures and promotional banners
- The 2022-2023 Ombudsman Youth Council application
- The Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman website including the online complaint form and case studies
- The French-Language Services Plan

How we communicate with the public in French

Staff providing intake services for the Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman have been instructed to use the French-Language Services offer by saying “Hello, Bonjour”. If the member of the public continues to speak in French, staff are instructed to say “Un moment, s’il vous plait” and to seek assistance from an Ombudsman Representative who can speak French. Furthermore, staff are encouraged to communicate their out of office email greeting in English and French. We currently have two Ombudsman Representatives who are proficient in French.

What we did to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2022–23

- Fulfilled obligations under the French Language Services Act
 - Participated in French Language Services Committee Meetings
 - The French Language Services Coordinator joined the Human Resources and French-language Training subcommittee
- Promoted an active offer of French by intake staff
 - Staff covering the intake position were encouraged by management and colleagues to provide an active offer to individuals and/or groups accessing our services
 - Placed the *Bonjour* sign at the front desk as part of our active offer
- Actively aimed to improve the French language service capabilities of the office
 - Encouraged staff to enroll in French language services training
 - The ability to communicate in French is included as an asset in recruiting and hiring of new staff
 - Encouraged Francophone and Acadian youth to join the Ombudsman Youth Council
 - Ensured informative brochures were available in French
- Ensured staff are aware of the historical and cultural significance of offering French-language services
 - Encouraged staff to attend training on French language services and the Acadian and francophone community

How we plan to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2023–24

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

- Develop and adapt plans and strategies for French language service delivery as part of the annual planning process
 - Identify and prioritize French language services to be offered, and strategies or approaches for service delivery
- Fulfill obligations determined in the French-language Services Act and Regulations
 - Participate on the French Language Services Coordinating Committee and actively support the government’s French language services initiative
 - The French language services coordinator will participate in the Human Resources and French-language Training subcommittee within the French Language Services Coordinating Committee
 - Publication of the French-language services plan

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

- Actively aim to improve the French-language capabilities of the office
 - Ability to speak French will continue to be included as a consideration in recruiting and hiring of new staff
 - Ensure print material continues to be circulated in French, including new materials
 - Encourage staff to enroll in French language course(s)
 - Will circulate and post the list of staff who can speak French to assist front desk staff with the active offer

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

- Integrate outreach priorities for the Acadian and francophone communities as part of our broader outreach initiative.
 - Gather information to identify areas of outreach priority within the Acadian and francophone communities
 - Promote public awareness of the role of the Office of the Ombudsman to the Acadian and francophone communities
 - Continue to encourage Acadian and francophone youth to join the Ombudsman Youth Council