



# Response to Reports from the Acadian and Francophone Communities

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October 2016





## Message from the Minister of Acadian Affairs

Acadian culture and heritage are an essential part of the fabric of Nova Scotia. To date, Acadian Affairs' focus has been on the French-language Services Act and the development and promotion of French-language services in government – but the community's needs are evolving, and Acadian Affairs must evolve to keep pace.

On behalf of government, I extend my deepest appreciation to the members of the committee and the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse for working diligently to bring forward recommendations on how to help the Office of Acadian Affairs meet the needs of the francophone community.

We reviewed the recommendations, and are committed to building strong relationships with the Acadian and francophone community, and connecting the community in a stronger, more meaningful way with the Office of Acadian Affairs.

Please find attached, a document containing government's response to each recommendation.

I am looking forward to working with you to better meet the needs of the Acadian and francophone community.

Sincerely,



Michel P. Samson

Minister of Acadian Affairs

<p><b>FANE Recommendations</b> presented to Premier McNeil, 2016</p>	<p><b>Government Response</b> <b>Action/Measures</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>Acadian Affairs reverts to Office of Acadian Affairs and is transferred under Intergovernmental Affairs.</p>	<p>The Office of Acadian Affairs will be strengthened and enhanced and will remain with the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage. The Office of Acadian Affairs is well positioned as an office within the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage where relationship-building and the promotion of the vibrant Acadian and francophone culture and heritage are a priority.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>The Minister of Acadian Affairs is responsible for the application of the French-language Services Act.</p>	<p>The Minister of Acadian Affairs will soon have assignment of authority over all matters pertaining to Acadian Affairs.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>Reinstatement of the status of the Executive Director of Acadian Affairs.</p>	<p>The Executive Director position within the Office of Acadian Affairs has been filled. The new ED will be focused on outreach and engagement.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>All departments, offices, agencies and public institutions to offer front-line French-language services.</p>	<p>Government recognizes the importance of delivering high-quality services in French, as well as building strong relationships within the community. Acadian culture and heritage are an essential part of the fabric of the province. A committee of deputy ministers will examine frontline French-language service offerings and identify how to close gaps where they may exist.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <p>All complaints or concerns with regard to French-language services to be addressed by the Ombudsman.</p>	<p>A deputy minister committee will consider this issue to ensure the complaint process is clear and understood. The Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman's mission is to foster confidence in the public service by promoting the principles of fairness, integrity and good governance. They encourage complainants to try and resolve complaints by contacting the government body involved.</p> <p>Our aim is to ensure that the Office of Acadian Affairs is meeting the needs of the Acadian and francophone community, and that includes providing high-quality services in French.</p>

<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>Creation of an Advisory Committee presided by the Minister of Acadian Affairs.</p>	<p>The Office of Acadian Affairs will begin exploratory conversations with FANE about the creation of a new body that could support the needs of the community.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b></p> <p>Establishment of Bilingual Service Centers in Acadian areas.</p>	<p>Government recognizes the importance of delivering high-quality services in French, as well as building strong relationships within the community. Acadian culture and heritage is an essential part of the fabric of the province. A committee of deputy ministers will examine frontline French-language service offerings and identify how to close gaps where they may exist.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8</b></p> <p>Insertion of most Regulations' sections in the Act, such as Annual Report, French-language Services Plans, and consultations with the Acadian community.</p>	<p>Government is committed to communicating with the Acadian and francophone community and building strong relationships. We will continue to translate materials that are relevant to the Acadian and francophone community and ensure this occurs in a timely fashion. The number of news releases in French has been increasing, and engagement and outreach will increase in the months ahead. (Note: the annual report is already a requirement of the Act).</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9</b></p> <p>A portion of community funding programs allocated in priority to the Acadian community organizations.</p>	<p>The Office of Acadian Affairs and divisions within Communities, Culture and Heritage invest in Acadian communities across the province through a variety of programs and grants. A new lens will be applied to the review of CCH investments in Acadian-based cultural activity and communities.</p>

<p>Committee Responsible for Making Recommendations to Enhance the Role of Acadian Affairs presented to Minister M. Samson 2016</p>	<p>Government Response Action/Measures</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>Government of Nova Scotia reaffirm the importance of the French-language Services Act and make changes to the legislative framework of the Act.</p>	<p>The Province is committed to strengthening and enhancing the role of Acadian Affairs. The Minister of Acadian Affairs will soon have assignment of authority over all matters pertaining to Acadian Affairs.</p> <p>The Deputy Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage is responsible for the Office of Acadian Affairs within the department. Her priority, as well as that of the Executive Director, will include fulfilling a mandate for the Office that emphasizes engagement and outreach, relationship-building and the promotion of the vibrant Acadian and francophone culture and heritage.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>That government examine the amendments proposed by FANE to the legislative framework.</p>	<p>The Office of Acadian Affairs will remain with the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage. The Office of Acadian Affairs is well positioned within the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage where relationship-building and the promotion of the vibrant Acadian and francophone culture and heritage are a priority.</p> <p>The Minister of Acadian Affairs will soon have assignment of authority over all matters pertaining to the Office of Acadian Affairs.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>That the human and financial resources in place before 2011, including those included in the agreement between the Government of Canada and the provincial government, be transferred to the new Acadian Affairs Secretariat.</p>	<p>The Office of Acadian Affairs will remain with the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage. The Office of Acadian Affairs is well positioned within the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage where relationship-building and the promotion of the vibrant Acadian and francophone culture and heritage are a priority.</p> <p>The Executive Director of Acadian Affairs has also been tasked to pursue further funding opportunities.</p>

<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>That government establish a committee of deputy ministers to allow Acadian Affairs to develop a new government-wide strategic direction and help government fulfil its obligations with respect to French-language services.</p>	<p>Government recognizes the importance of delivering high-quality services in French, as well as building strong relationships within the community. Acadian culture and heritage are an essential part of the fabric of the province. A committee of deputy ministers will be re-established with a focus on French-language services across government.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <p>That the Minister of Acadian Affairs establish an advisory committee to Acadian Affairs to annually assess the role, processes and new approaches to work relating to the French-language Services Act.</p>	<p>The Office of Acadian Affairs will begin exploratory conversations with FANE about how the creation of an advisory committee could support the needs of the community.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>That the deputy ministers select members of staff that are able to speak french to sit on the French-language Services Coordinating Committee.</p>	<p>Government remains committed to increasing our francophone capacity within the Public Service. The French-language services coordinators meet regularly, and we will examine how to enhance this process.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b></p> <p>That the French-language Services Regulations require that documents be translated into both languages simultaneously before being distributed to the public.</p>	<p>We remain committed to translating all documents that have relevance to the Acadian and francophone community.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8</b></p> <p>That Executive Council remind designated public institutions of their obligations with regards to annual reports on French-language services and ensure that institutions meet the deadlines and include the content required by Regulations.</p>	<p>Government, through the deputy ministers, will remind designated public institutions of the requirements of the French-language Services Act for the benefit of the Acadian and francophone community.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9</b></p> <p>That government put in place a mechanism independent from Acadian Affairs to deal with complaints from citizens who do not receive services in French or are unfairly treated when they request services in French.</p>	<p>The deputy minister committee will consider this issue to ensure the process for articulating complaints is clear and understood.</p>

<p><b>Recommendation 10</b></p> <p>That government, through the new Acadian Affairs Secretariat and with the collaboration of other departments that offer frontline services to Nova Scotians, put in place the necessary mechanisms, procedures and human resources to ensure that the experience of requesting services in French be a quick and positive one.</p>	<p>Government recognizes the importance of delivering high-quality services in French, as well as building strong relationships within the community. Acadian culture and heritage is an essential part of the fabric of the province. A committee of deputy ministers will examine frontline French-language service offerings and identify how to close gaps where they may exist.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 11</b></p> <p>That provincial consultations organized by departments be a space for real dialogue that takes into account societal issues in the way government implements the solutions proposed by the Acadian and francophone community in the context of new policies or initiatives.</p>	<p>The Office of Acadian Affairs will explore how to expand their work in the areas of outreach and engagement, relationship-building and the promotion of the vibrant Acadian and francophone culture and heritage.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 12</b></p> <p>That the Government of Nova Scotia establish a bipartisan committee to draw up a joint government-community plan that will serve as a framework for government initiatives that align with the priorities of Acadian and francophone community.</p>	<p>This recommendation will not be acted upon at this time.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 13</b></p> <p>That due to the significance of skills development programs and employment assistance programs provided by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education to the Acadian community, this department proceed immediately, making use of its current human resources, in appointing a person who meets the criteria cited above to ensure the coordination of French-language services.</p>	<p>The Office of Acadian Affairs will work with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education to help ensure that the programs they have in place are meeting the needs of the Acadian and francophone community.</p> <p>Considerable work has already been done to date by LAE to ensure French language service delivery. For instance, all Employment NS program and service offerings are available in both English and French.</p>