

# Progress Report on French-language Services

Provided by the Government  
of Nova Scotia, 2023–24

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# Message from the Minister

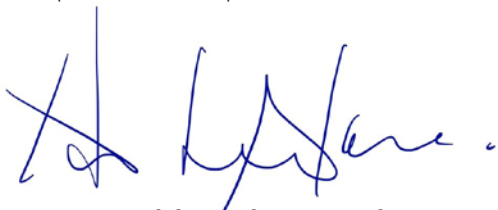
I am pleased to present the government of Nova Scotia's progress report on French-language services for 2023–24.

This report, published in accordance with the *French-language Services Act*, outlines how government delivers services in French. The report provides an overview of new and improved French-language services and summarizes the work that has been done during the 2023–24 fiscal year. To find out more about specific initiatives led by departments, offices and government organizations, I invite you to consult their French-language services plans, which are available online.

French-speaking Nova Scotians can contribute to the development of programmes and services in French, and provide valuable input on issues that impact the lives of all Nova Scotians. I encourage members of the Acadian and francophone community to consider participating on agencies, boards and commissions ('ABCs') to ensure that the community has a voice in important decisions in our province. Government departments, offices, agencies and organizations also regularly engage members of the public, including Acadians and francophones, on programme development, implementation and evaluation. I encourage French-speaking Nova Scotians to take part in such engagement initiatives to ensure the priorities and needs of the Acadian and francophone community are integrated into the policies, programmes and services of the provincial government.

I congratulate departments and offices for embracing new processes and technologies that facilitate dialogue with and service delivery to the Acadian and francophone community. Through continued collaboration and partnership with community and government partners, we will build on the progresses and momentum achieved.

Finally, I would like to thank employees on the frontlines who deliver services to French-speaking clients, translators who help to make more public information available in French, as well as French-language services coordinators who work across their respective organizations to plan and implement services for French-speaking Nova Scotians.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Colton LeBlanc', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Honourable Colton LeBlanc**

Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie  
September 2024

## How we approach our work

The **Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie** serves as government's central support agency for services in French. A division of the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, the Office leads work to ensure Nova Scotians can receive government services in French.

The *French-language Services Act* (2004, a. 2011) and French-language Services Regulations (2006) designate the government institutions who have responsibilities for providing services in French, including publishing an annual French-language services plan.

The **French-language Services Coordinating Committee** (FLSCC) is an interdepartmental committee chaired by the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie and includes representatives from public institutions designated by the Regulations, who are referred to as **French-language services coordinators**. These coordinators serve as a first point of contact for services in French within their institutions and for the public. The FLSCC met four times in 2023–24.

In addition to the FLSCC, there is an **Advisory Committee to the Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie**, comprised of eight individuals from the Acadian and francophone community who provide the minister with advice and information on issues of importance to the community. The Advisory Committee met three times in 2023–24. The Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie also engages executive and senior leadership throughout government on an ongoing basis to increase and sustain government French-language services.

This progress report covers the first year of Nova Scotia's new **Strategic Plan for French-language Services**, 2023–28. This five-year plan supports the Canada–Nova Scotia Agreement on (Official) Minority-language Services 2023–28, which provides funding to government organizations for services in French.

# Administration and policy work

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## **Strategic area 1:**

### ***Strengthen frameworks for French-language services***

#### **French-language services plans**

Government departments, offices and other government organizations offer a wide variety of programmes and services in French. Each of these ‘designated public institutions’ publishes an annual French-language services plan, describing the improvements that have been made to services in French over the past fiscal year. The plans also establish goals for maintaining or improving services over the next fiscal year. To find out more about each institution’s approach, consult the relevant French-language services plan online.

#### **French-language communications guidelines**

Members of the public can communicate in French with designated public institutions – any written correspondence in French will receive a reply in French. French-language services plans describe how employees have been instructed to respond to requests for service or information in French. Nova Scotia has also developed guidelines on French-language communications to ensure consistency in government communications.

#### **French-language human resources guidelines**

The French-language human resources guidelines provide hiring managers and other public servants with guidance on hiring, supporting and retaining French-speaking employees, to help increase the public service’s capacity to offer services to the public in French.

Bilingual public servants can volunteer on the French-language hiring panel pool to help recruit French speakers to fill positions throughout government.

#### **Informing the public of services available in French**

Nova Scotians should feel comfortable asking for, and receiving, services in the language of their choice. To this end, the government has developed, among other initiatives, the Bonjour! programme, which aims to inform the public that services and information are available in French.

#### **Acadie at a Glance**

This cultural training session is designed to raise awareness amongst government employees of Nova Scotia’s Acadian and francophone communities and to explain public servants’ roles in offering French-language services to the public. In 2023–24, more than 150 public servants attended Acadie at a Glance over eight sessions.

#### **French language training for public servants**

French language training courses are available to government employees, healthcare workers and MLAs at every level of French. Nearly 350 spaces in these courses were filled in 2023–24.

# Communication and consultations

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## **Strategic area 2:**

### **Engage (with) the Acadian and francophone community**

#### **Communicating with the public**

More than 700,000 words were translated into French in 2023–24. The following are examples of the information materials that were made available in French over the past fiscal year:

- Information and updates about public health
- Housing needs assessment reports
- Nova Scotia's equity and anti-racism strategy
- Treaty education booklet
- Home support direct funding programme form
- Why Outdoor Play Matters resources
- New business stream guides

The Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie manages a Facebook account, which saw 254 additional followers during 2023–24, and a 166% increase in content interactions (clicks, comments and shares/reposts).

#### **News releases**

In 2023–24, 89 government news releases were published in English and French.

#### **Print and radio advertising**

Advertisements and public service announcements are published in *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse*, Nova Scotia's only French-language newspaper. Government also runs radio spots on French-language stations throughout the province and conducts French-language advertising campaigns online and on social-media networks.

Some of the subjects of the 72 French-language advertising campaigns in 2023–24 included mental health resources, vaccinations, seniors' homecare services, coastal protections, blue-green algae, well water safety and distracted driving.

#### **Consultations with the public**

At least six public consultations were conducted in French in 2023–24 on subjects including workers' compensation, the *Children and Family Services Act*, the province's environmental assessment process and the proposed accessibility standard for the built environment.

The Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie meets regularly with the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE) and its member organizations. FANE is the umbrella organization which represents diverse sectors of the province's Acadian and francophone communities. This ongoing dialogue and collaboration help maintain a constructive relationship to discuss issues, exchange information and consult on matters of importance to the community.

# Programmes and services

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## **Strategic area 3:**

### ***Develop and deliver programmes and services in French***

#### **In-person, online and telephone services in French**

Nova Scotia continues to provide services to the public in French across various departments, offices and agencies.

New and improved services are now available online, including an online service for paying municipal parking fines, updates to home heating support and information on driver knowledge tests, as well as updates to bilingual signage and online information in French.

For more information, see the French-language services plans published by the Department of Service Nova Scotia and the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, or visit <https://beta.novascotia.ca/programs-and-services>.

#### **Municipal services**

Nova Scotia supports the delivery of municipal services in French. In 2023–24, the municipality of Clare received funding to support various municipal services in French, including simultaneous interpretation, advertising, public service announcements, a communications officer position and translation of municipal bylaws. The Halifax Regional Municipality published documents in French and provided French language training to municipal employees. Funding also assisted the municipality of Argyle with the publication of information on municipal elections.

#### **Healthcare and social services**

Access to healthcare and health communications in French remains a priority for government. Nova Scotia Health employs a French-language services consultant, an interpretation services coordinator and a French-language communications adviser to help coordinate services and communications in French. Funding also assisted Réseau Santé – Nouvelle-Écosse identify and plan for healthcare needs in French.

# Support for Acadian and francophone communities

## Vive l'Acadie community fund

A specialized licence plate featuring an Acadian flag design is available to Nova Scotian motorists. When purchasing or renewing the plate, a \$50 donation goes to a local Acadian and francophone community organization for the purpose of funding special cultural projects.

Among the projects supported by the Vive l'Acadie community fund in 2023–24 were a dinner-theatre musical (Sydney), a holidays concert (Truro), a farm visit for families (Greenwood), art workshops (Tusket), an outdoor theatre production (Halifax), intergenerational discussions on arts (Petit-de-Grat), dance workshops (Clare), activities for families (Pomquet), a Cajun–Acadian musical experience (Larrys River) and a tribute concert to local artists (Chéticamp).

In 2023–24, Nova Scotians bought and renewed 1,020 Acadian-flag licence plates, providing \$51,000 in support for community-led projects in 2024–25.

## Québec–Nova Scotia agreement

Nova Scotia is proud to partner with Québec to fund Acadian and francophone community projects. Each year both provinces contribute an equal amount to a common fund, which is then allocated to community groups for projects. Québec and Nova Scotia jointly funded four projects in 2023–24, including the Champions for Life physical education programme in CSAP schools and a support programme for francophone summer camps in Nova Scotia.

## Acadian and francophone community projects

The Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie funds a variety of community projects to support the province's vibrant Acadian and francophone communities. More than \$396,000 was awarded in 2023–24 within a range of sectors, including culture, economic development, education, healthcare and tourism. Some of the 42 projects funded in 2023–24 include:

- a special screening of Phil Comeau's 1979 documentary *La musique nous explique* (Société acadienne de Clare);
- Acadian Days celebrations in Amherst (Cumberland Acadian Society);
- a marketing and communication campaign to promote Hého, an online community platform for francophones in the Halifax Regional Municipality (Conseil communautaire du Grand-Havre);
- a feasibility study for a community centre in the Tor Bay region (Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse); and
- an online virtual tour (Conseil des arts de Chéticamp).

## Highway welcome signage for Acadian regions

In preparation for the Congrès mondial acadien (CMA) 2024, funding enabled the replacement and addition of new welcome signs on highways in Acadian regions, including in south-west Nova Scotia, the host region of the CMA 2024.



# Results by the numbers

**A data summary of the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024**

## Public service

- **27** departments, offices and institutions were represented on the interdepartmental French-language Services Coordinating Committee

## Promotion and advertising

- **89** news releases were issued in French
- Nearly **\$120,000** was spent on **72** individual print, radio and online advertising campaigns in French

## Public engagement and translation

- At least **six** public consultations were conducted in French
- More than **700,000** words were translated into French by government organizations

## Education and training

- Nearly **350** French language training placements were filled
- **159** public servants completed the Acadie at a Glance cultural training

## Community

- Nova Scotians bought and renewed **1,001** Acadian-flag licence plates (2022–23), providing **\$50,050** to community organizations for special events, cultural activities and other projects in 2023–24
- Québec and Nova Scotia jointly contributed a total of **\$46,500** to support **four** collaborative projects led by Acadian and francophone organizations
- More than **\$396,000** was spent on **42** Acadian and francophone community projects