



# **THE ACADIAN REALITY IN NOVA SCOTIA: IT'S TIME TO ACT!**

**Report of the Committee responsible for making recommendations  
to enhance the role of Acadian Affairs in government**

**March 20, 2016**

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## INTRODUCTION

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004, the Government of Nova Scotia introduced a bill (Bill 111) on French-language services in the province. *An Act Respecting the Office of Acadian Affairs and the Delivery of French-language Services by the Public Service* was passed by the Legislature on October 14, 2004, and received royal assent on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October.

The preamble to the act recognized that French is one of Canada's two official languages, that Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community plays an important role in the province and that this community wishes to preserve the French language for future generations as a way of enriching life in Nova Scotia.

In 2011, the Government of Nova Scotia tabled an omnibus bill (Bill 52) entitled *Government Administration Amendment Act*. This act effectively abolished the Office of Acadian Affairs, which became the Division of Acadian Affairs of the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

This report by the Committee responsible for making recommendations to enhance the role of Acadian Affairs in government represents one of the necessary steps to re-establish and strengthen the position of Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community in the province. The proposed recommendations aim to bring about the necessary changes to strengthen roles, duties and government processes so that this official language community can obtain the French-language services to which it is entitled from the provincial government and continue to develop and flourish.

Although the Committee had a short amount of time to produce this report, its members are nonetheless confident that the main issues raised during the public consultations and the recommendations resulting from them are of paramount importance to the development of the province as a whole and particularly for the Acadian and francophone community.

Nova Scotia's Acadian Affairs is at a crossroads. The time has come to set a new course with greater visibility and transparency. The Acadian reality in Nova Scotia (history, culture, language and identity) nurtures the province's French-speaking community. It is here that an intercultural dialogue takes place with respect for diversity that recognizes the dignity and equality of all francophones.

It is time to take action. It is time to act!

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Committee wishes to thank the organizations and stakeholders in the regions who kindly distributed invitations to participate in the consultations. These efforts allowed the members of the Committee to collect and listen to the views of citizens who are active in their communities in a short amount of time.

The staff at Acadian Affairs also deserve thanks for handling the logistics of the consultation meetings as well as for the transfer of knowledge of the inner workings of the machinery of government and the historic evolution of Acadian Affairs.

The Committee also wishes to thank the Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse, which kindly allowed the Committee to make use of its meeting room and communication tools. Also, we would like to thank the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial for the use of its videoconferencing system in order to facilitate the Committee's meetings.

The Committee would like to thank Marie-Claude Rioux, who presented the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse's (Acadian Federation of Nova Scotia's) positions on proposed changes to the *French-language Services Act* and the policy analyses carried out on the provision of French-language services.

The Committee is thankful and appreciative of the active participation of citizens from the Acadian and francophone community in the consultations. They shared their experiences and offered potential solutions so that the provincial government can put in place procedures when they request French-language services from government.

Finally, the Committee would like to thank the Minister of Acadian Affairs for having initiated this review process of Acadian Affairs in government.

## COMMITTEE MANDATE

In January 2016, the Minister of Acadian Affairs, the Honourable Michel P. Samson, announced the formation of a committee tasked with coming up with recommendations seeking to enhance the role of Acadian Affairs in government. According to the Minister, “Government wants to ensure that it is in the best position to help Acadian and francophone communities continue to grow and thrive, in both rural and urban areas.”

The Committee’s mandate was to examine the role of Acadian Affairs with respect to the implementation of the *French-language Services Act*, with an emphasis on client services and community development. It had to submit its report to the Minister before the end of March 2016.

The Minister chose eight people who are actively involved in their community and who are clients of French-language services to make up the Committee. The Committee members are:

- Yvon Samson, chair, Petit-de-Grat, Richmond County
- Marie-Germaine Chartrand, Argyle, Yarmouth County
- Clermont Charland, Sydney, Cape Breton Regional Municipality
- Paul Gaudet, vice-président, Clare, Digby County
- Rémi Deveau, Pomquet, Antigonish County
- Alfred Poirier, Chéticamp, Inverness County
- Daniel Cyr, Halifax
- Juliana Barnard, Truro

## **NOVA SCOTIA'S ACADIAN AND FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY**

Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community is rich in language and culture, while at the same time being deeply rooted in the history and life experiences of many generations, a testament to its great exuberance and increasing diversity. Resilient, innovative and dynamic, this community represents both the province's traditional heritage and current strengths.

At the same time, like many other communities in the province, the Acadian and francophone community is dealing with an aging population, a low birth rate, out-migration of youth, a labour shortage in rural regions, challenges relating to economic development and other challenges linked to its status as a linguistic minority in a primarily English-speaking province.

For several decades, the number and percentage of people reporting French as their mother tongue learned and still spoken at home continues to decrease, going from more than 39,335 people or 10.2% of the population in 1971 to 31,500 people or a little more than 3% in 2011.

There are however some interesting and promising statistics. The population able to speak French in Nova Scotia is steadily increasing and accounts for 95,000 people or 10.03% of the province's population. The Conseil scolaire acadien provincial will mark its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and continues to grow with a considerable rise in student numbers (1,000 more students than in 1996) who attend its French-language schools. In addition, Université Sainte-Anne, the only French-language university in Nova Scotia will celebrate its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary and remains a quality postsecondary institution. It provides opportunities to build language skills in French for the majority language population via its French immersion programs. What's more, the interest shown by anglophones for French immersion instruction in English-language school boards allows this community to develop an ability to speak and write in French and become familiar with Acadian and French culture.

The Ivany report guides the provincial government towards three priority measures and areas of concern. These measures seek to maintain our population, to become a more innovative province by focusing on ocean industries and finally, to focus efforts on developing the economy of the province as a whole. (PIE)

The Acadian and francophone community's contribution to Nova Scotia's economic success is worth mentioning. For several decades, A.F. Theriault & Son Ltd has been innovating in building drone boats for the military and fishing boats. We also note ocean product processing businesses such as Acadian Seaplants, an innovative business that processes seaweed for medical purposes and to create food products. Similarly, an ocean product processing businesses in Southwest Nova Scotia, namely Comeau Seafoods, and businesses located on Isle Madame, in Argyle and Chéticamp process ocean products to export not only to the United States, but also to Europe and Asia, notably to China, South Korea and Japan.

The Province of Nova Scotia has a mandate from the federal government to welcome a certain percentage of French-speaking immigrants. However, the assigned percentage has never been reached. We must redouble efforts to attract French-speaking immigrants to this province, in addition to putting in place structures to welcome immigrants in Acadian and francophone communities.

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According to the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (Federation of francophone and Acadian communities of Canada), the Francophonie is defined as “all those who choose to live and communicate in French regardless of their mother tongue or place of origin.” If the Acadian and francophone community wishes to sustain itself on Nova Scotian soil, it must turn to francophone migration and immigration. This requires the acceptance of the ethnic diversity of its members and inclusive structures, as a means of finding a solution to the demographic problem and meeting labour needs.

Individual pride in an identity, particularly among youth is at the heart of any fight against assimilation. Major efforts are needed to strengthen the vitality of the Acadian and francophone community. Thus, the Government of Nova Scotia must facilitate the improvement and strengthening of essential infrastructure that engenders a sense of pride in identity, in particular community life, education and culture.

## **FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES ACT OF 2004**

In 1985, the provincial government of Nova Scotia named its first advisor for Acadian Affairs. Among the series of initiatives seeking to strengthen the 1988 *Official Languages Act* of Canada and federal-provincial negotiations on the promotion of official languages in Nova Scotia, the Premier created the role of Minister responsible for Acadian Affairs and the Collège de l'Acadie. The role of advisor for Acadian Affairs reported to the Minister responsible for Acadian Affairs. Thus, responsibility for Acadian Affairs remained with the Minister based on the mandates assigned by the Premier until 2004.

In 2004, the Government of Nova Scotia, wishing to make the role and duties of the Minister responsible for Acadian Affairs official, passed *An Act Respecting the Office of Acadian Affairs and the Delivery of French-language Services by the Public Service* (the Act). This act provided official status to the Office of Acadian Affairs while making an addition to the *Public Service Act*.

The purpose of the 2004 Act was to:

- (a) contribute to the preservation and growth of the Acadian and francophone community; and
- (b) provide for the delivery of French-language services by designated departments, offices, agencies of Government, Crown corporations and public institutions to the Acadian and francophone community.

The Act clarified the responsibilities of the Minister of Acadian Affairs and the mandate of the Office of Acadian Affairs. What's more, the Act established the French-language Services Coordinating Committee, made up of French-language services coordinators from each government department and office and the senior employee responsible for Acadian Affairs, who chairs the committee.

Within the structure of government, the Office of Acadian Affairs came under Executive Council. The CEO had the status of deputy head and reported directly to the Minister of Acadian Affairs.

### **Amendments to the *French-language Services Act***

In January 2011, the Government of Nova Scotia announced the creation of a new Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage. The offices of Acadian Affairs, Gaelic Affairs and African Nova Scotian Affairs were brought in as divisions in the department.

On May 13, 2011, government passed an omnibus act, number 52, *Government Administration Amendment Act (2011)*, which made several changes to other provincial acts, namely the *French-language Services Act* and the *Public Service Act*. With these legislative changes, the Office of Acadian Affairs effectively became "Acadian Affairs," a division coming under the authority of the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage with respect to all matters relating to the supervision, management and control of the *French-language Services Act*. Interestingly, the



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Minister must consult the Minister of Acadian Affairs before advising government on Acadian Affairs.

It was in 2015 that the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (Acadian Federation of Nova Scotia) uncovered the changes made by the omnibus act of 2011. As a result of the 2011 amendments to the *French-language Services Act*, made unbeknownst to Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community, the status of Acadian Affairs in government was seriously diminished. The Act, in its current form, and the accompanying Regulations have significant shortcomings particularly with respect to obligations relating to language and the delivery of services.

## **ACADIAN AFFAIRS**

### **Acadian Affairs' Mandate**

Nova Scotia's Acadian Affairs seeks to provide greater visibility to the province's Acadian community and to promote Acadian culture and heritage as essential components of Nova Scotia's richness and cultural diversity. Acadian Affairs' areas of activity are the following:

- To raise awareness of Acadian heritage and culture as an integral part of the Nova Scotian community at all levels of government and among the population
- Promote partnerships and dialogue between French-speaking and English-speaking communities in Nova Scotia
- Support activities to promote the French language and culture in the province
- Highlight the needs of Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone population to the appropriate government authorities
- Analyze the needs of Nova Scotia's Acadians when policies and programs are being developed

According to the objectives of the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, Acadian Affairs must:

- a) ensure that the Government is aware of the needs of the Acadian and francophone community;
- b) offer advice and support to departments, offices and agencies of Government and to Crown corporations for the purpose of developing and adopting or providing programs, policies and services that reflect the needs of the Acadian and francophone community;
- (c) provide support for other departments for French-language services within the Government;
- (d) develop partnerships with Acadian and francophone agencies at provincial, national and international levels;
- (e) ensure that Acadian and francophone needs are addressed in the development of programs, policies and services; and
- (f) recognize the contribution of the Acadian and francophone community.

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**Continued...**

Currently, Acadian Affairs is made up of a staff of five people, which is a reduction of six people compared to 2004. Acadian Affairs receives communications support from staff at Communications Nova Scotia and legal services from staff at the Department of Justice. A lawyer is assigned to Acadian Affairs.

To summarize, Acadian Affairs administers and coordinates various services and programs, advises government on the implementation of the *French-language Services Act*, supports the Acadian and francophone community in various projects and plays a liaison role between government bodies and community organizations.

**Assessment: The *French-language Services Act***

Though the inclusion of Acadian Affairs as a division of the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage was undertaken “for administrative reasons,” the effects of this decision have had serious repercussions on the role and work of Acadian Affairs:

1. The Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage is responsible for Acadian Affairs’ budget. He grants ministerial approval for expenses of more than \$5,000 or for the establishment of a new program.
2. The executive director of Acadian Affairs is no longer a CEO or deputy head but rather an executive director reporting to the deputy minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage. In French, the job title has remained *directrice générale* in spite of the 2011 changes.
3. Acadian Affairs must now share its communications staff with the province’s communications services.
4. The Canada – Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services for 2013–2018 was signed by both the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage and the Minister of Acadian Affairs.
5. Departments and agencies have a tendency to hold information sessions on their intentions to impose changes to province-wide programs without engaging in meaningful dialogue with the community regarding its needs, to the detriment of the Acadian and francophone community.
6. Neither the Act nor the Regulations set out repercussions if a department or Crown corporation does not fulfil its obligations and neither one sets out a formal process for filing a complaint if a Nova Scotia citizen does not receive services requested from designated departments.

**Continued...**

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the French-language Services Regulations were adopted in English only, which must be rectified along with the changes to the Act.

The Committee is of the opinion that having Acadian Affairs as a division of the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage has severely undermined the status and role of Acadian Affairs. As a result, there has been a decrease in the amount of work carried out by departments to ensure that they fulfil their obligations under the provincial government's *French-language Services Act*.

What's more, we believe that the provincial government should consider the following initiatives:

- a) Though English remains the only official language that may be used in the provincial Legislature, be it in debates or the drafting or enactment of acts, an MLA who speaks French can, if he wishes, express himself in French, but will not be understood or only partly understood by the members of the House. It would be appropriate for government to consider putting in place a system of simultaneous translation during a half day or full day to allow MLAs able to speak French, to do so. This initiative could also be funded by the federal government. The Legislature seems to be fitted with sound equipment at the moment. In addition to letting young people know that the French language is useful in our provincial Legislature, this initiative would confirm the fact that Canada's official languages are of paramount importance and valued in Nova Scotia and that both of Nova Scotia's linguistic communities are important.
- b) In the justice system, it is not possible to obtain a trial in French in a civil court. However, Part XIV.1 of the *Canadian Criminal Code* has been in force in Nova Scotia since 1988, such that a criminal trial can now be heard in French. The province has a few bilingual judges as well as employees who understand both French and English. It would be appropriate for the provincial government to examine the possibility of holding civil court trials in French. What's more, the government could look into the possibility of allowing wills in French and the probation of wills in French, among others.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The *French-language Services Act* and administrative mechanisms were changed in 2011 and there are many shortcomings in the scope and implementation of the Act.

In other provinces, namely Prince Edward Island and Manitoba, responsibility for francophone affairs falls under Executive Council and the premiers of these provinces are responsible for these entities because they speak French. In Nova Scotia, since 1988, government has traditionally appointed a bilingual Minister of Acadian Affairs to take on these responsibilities.

We are of the opinion that Acadian Affairs must be designated as the Acadian Affairs Secretariat to distinguish its role and responsibilities as a central agency in government. We also believe that a deputy minister should be appointed to lead the Secretariat's initiatives and activities and to be able to encourage and influence other deputy ministers in government with regards to contributing to the development of the Acadian and francophone community and to the delivery of French-language services.

Therefore,

**RECOMMENDATION 1: We recommend that the Government of Nova Scotia reaffirm the importance of the *French-language Services Act* and make changes to the legislative framework of the Act. These changes must include:**

- a) **The appointment of a Minister of Acadian Affairs with a mandate letter for Acadian Affairs from the Premier**
- b) **Repositioning Acadian Affairs under Executive Council**
- c) **The appointment of a, preferably bilingual, deputy minister of Acadian Affairs**
- d) **The naming and addition of a mechanism in the Act limiting amendments to the Act or government disengagement without officially consulting the Acadian and francophone community.**

The Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (Acadian Federation of Nova Scotia) has carried out important work in revising the Act. Therefore,

**RECOMMENDATION 2: We recommend that government examine the amendments proposed by the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse to the legislative framework.**

**RECOMMENDATION 3: We recommend that the human and financial resources in place before 2011, including those included in the agreement between the Government of Canada (Canadian Heritage) and the provincial government, be transferred to the new Acadian Affairs Secretariat.**

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While the *French-language Services Act* was being drawn up in 2004, a committee of deputy ministers was formed to provide leadership on the implementation of the *French-language Services Act*. It was responsible for helping Acadian Affairs establish a government-wide strategic direction and to help government fulfil its obligations with respect to the advancement of French-language services. The committee was composed of the deputy ministers of the Public Service Commission; the Office of the Premier; Intergovernmental Affairs; and Communities, Culture and Heritage, as well as the executive director of Acadian Affairs.

Therefore,

**RECOMMENDATION 4: We recommend that the provincial government establish a committee of deputy ministers to allow the new Acadian Affairs Secretariat to develop a new government-wide strategic direction and help government fulfil its obligations with respect to French-language services.**

The Acadian and francophone community had a consultation mechanism for advising the Minister on matters relating to the Acadian and francophone community, progress in French-language services and the promotion of community life in French. This committee was abolished by the Minister of Acadian Affairs in 2011, without any explanation.

**RECOMMENDATION 5: We recommend 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*.**

## **FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

The French-language Services Coordinating Committee was created by the *French-language Services Act*. The committee's role is to support and advise the Minister of Acadian Affairs with respect to the implementation of the *French-language Services Act*. Chaired by the executive director of Acadian Affairs, the committee is made up of 21 French-language services coordinators from each department and office or representatives appointed by the deputy ministers of departments or the CEOs of offices. This committee provides advice on the implementation of the Act. The designated public institutions are required to advise the executive director of Acadian Affairs in writing of any changes in representation on the committee. A list of the committee members is published on the Acadian Affairs website and updated regularly. The committee works with Acadian Affairs to develop strategic plans and guidelines to support the provision of French-language services.

Coordinators assist their department or office in preparing their annual French-language Services Plan, coordinating translation and increasing awareness of their obligations under the Act.

Some members of the committee are administrative support staff and do not have an influential role or are not decision-makers in their department. Moreover, coordinators are not all bilingual.

Therefore,

**RECOMMENDATION 6: We recommend that deputy ministers select members of staff to sit on the French-language Services Coordinating Committee who meet the following criteria:**

- 1 Are able to speak French**
- 2 Report to the deputy minister on all matters relating to French-language services**
- 3 Are in a high enough position in the hierarchy to make decisions on behalf of the department**

## **FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES REGULATIONS**

On December 31, 2006, Executive Council approved the French-language Services Regulations (the Regulations). The Regulations clarified the responsibilities of departments, offices and agencies with respect to the Act and the provincial government's commitment to providing French-language services. Schedule A of the Regulations provided a list of designated public institutions to which the *French-language Services Act* applies, including all departments, most offices and agencies such as the district health authorities and the IWK Health Centre. The Regulations also specified the requirement that designated public institutions prepare annual French-language services plans as well as the content of these plans. In these annual French-language services plans, priority is given to following services:

- Services for which there is a demand from the Acadian and francophone community
- Services that if not provided in French, may compromise the health, safety or security of members of the public
- When government receives written correspondence in French (government must reply in French)
- When information is published simultaneously in French and English, the bilingual provincial logo is used
- When there is a need for departments and other institutions to inform the community about French-language services

The Regulations approved in 2006 were drafted only in English and are not up to date because there have been changes to the names of departments and the creation of Crown corporations since 2006.

Therefore,

**RECOMMENDATION 7: We recommend that the French-language Services Regulations require that documents be translated into both languages simultaneously before being distributed to the public, that the Regulations be made available in French and English and that the Schedule A of the Regulations be updated and simplified.**



## ANNUAL REPORT

Since 2007, the annual report on French-language services has been prepared by Acadian Affairs on behalf of the Minister of Acadian Affairs. According to the Regulations, at least one public consultation on French-language services must take place in the province.

Each public institution designated in the *French-language Services Act* is required to publish an annual French-language services plan in French and English. French-language services plans must specify:

- (a) Instructions given to the designated public institution's staff with respect to how to respond to verbal and written requests from the public to communicate in French
- (b) The services offered in French by the designated public institution
- (c) The steps the designated public institution will take to maintain or improve its services in French over the next fiscal year
- (d) The specific goals and objectives that the designated public institution has set to improve its services in French, if it intends to improve them over the next fiscal year, and the specific measures it will take to achieve those goals and objectives
- (e) How the plan will contribute to the preservation and growth of the Acadian and francophone community

French-language services plans must also explain how the designated public institution will address the priorities expressed by the Acadian and francophone community during consultations required by Section 15 of the Regulations or in communications between the Acadian and francophone community and the designated public institution.

The Committee responsible for enhancing the role of Acadian Affairs noted that designated public institutions have not all published their plans each year. What's more, certain institutions repeat the same content year-after-year. Others publish their annual plan belatedly (sometimes even between January and March of the year in question).

Therefore,

**RECOMMENDATION 8: We recommend 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 the Regulations.**

## **HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS**

The Regulations do not mention the handling of complaints from the public when a person does not receive services in French. In Prince Edward Island, the act specifies that a person will be tasked with handling complaints, and this person reports to the minister responsible for Acadian and francophone affairs. In provinces like New Brunswick and Ontario, official and independent mechanisms have been put in place such as a Commissioner of Official Languages or a Commissioner for French-language Services.

Currently, Acadian Affairs handles complaints regarding French-language services, often with the help of the coordinator from the relevant department. Some note that it is not the responsibility of Acadian Affairs to act as a judge when it comes to the implementation of the *French-language Services Act*.

The Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman is responsible for handling complaints from the public about government services. It is not specified that Nova Scotia's Ombudsman is able to deal with complaints with respect to the *French-language Services Act*, nor that he or she has the staff and financial resources to do this work in French.

Therefore,

**RECOMMENDATION 9: That the provincial 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.**

## PUBLIC DIALOGUE SESSIONS

From February 16 to March 3, 2016, the Committee responsible for making recommendations to enhance the role of Acadian Affairs in government held 10 public sessions (Cheticamp, Petit-de-Grat, Pomquet, Sydney, Cookville, Church Point, Greenwood, Dartmouth, Truro and Tusket). Eighty-six (86) people participated. The Committee chose these 10 regions due to the vitality of the Acadian and francophone community as evidenced by the presence of an Acadian school. What's more, an online survey "**À vous la parole!**" (Have your say!) was launched on February 12, 2016, and was available online until midnight on March 3. The promotion of the survey was done through the support of the regional member organizations of the FANE and via social media, namely Twitter and Facebook. It is important to mention that it was not as widely distributed as the survey in 2010, due to a lack of time and funds. Ninety (90) people completed the online survey.

The goal of the consultations was to create opportunities for meaningful dialogue with members of the community on:

1. their experiences (positive or negative) with respect to accessing French-language services from the provincial government
2. improvements government should make to French-language services in Nova Scotia
3. support from the provincial government for developing community life in French

There is no doubt that there has been progress in the delivery of French-language services. Public servants from various departments and agencies have devoted many hours of work since the role of Minister responsible for Acadian Affairs was created in 1988 and the enactment of the first *French-language Services Act* in 2004. The establishment of translation services allowed for the translation of hundreds of documents and millions of words into French. The provincial government's funding programs have contributed to the development of community life in French. Many public servants have taken the language training offered by Université Sainte-Anne and the Étoile de l'Acadie community centre. The *Bonjour!* pins and visuals as well as the *Bonjour!* Awards for Excellence are now used as tools by departments. There are positions for full-time coordinators in the departments of Community Services, Education, Health, Health Promotion and Protection and Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. The websites of designated departments provide more and more content in French. News releases are translated into French more frequently and job descriptions for hiring of staff in various departments more frequently include knowledge and use of French as an asset.

Ninety (90) people answered the **À VOUS LA PAROLE!** (Have your say!) survey. Among the respondents, 83.3% indicated that they use or request services in French while 16.7% have not used or requested services in French. The means used to access services in French are many and varied, either in person, via the internet or email, in Access Nova Scotia centres, by telephone or in writing.

## Online survey

With respect to the level of satisfaction with how these services were delivered in French, fourteen percent (14.3%) were completely satisfied while the majority or fifty-four percent (54.5%) were somewhat satisfied and provided comments similar to respondents who were somewhat unsatisfied (24.7%) or completely unsatisfied (6.5%)

Comments were provided by sixty-seven (67) respondents while twenty-three (23) chose not to expand on French-language services in the survey. There were more negative comments than positive ones on the level of satisfaction with services provided in French. On a positive note, respondents mentioned that services in French are usually good but employees always assume that the person prefers English (lack of active offer of French-language services), which makes for awkward situations. Some respondents noted that French-language services have greatly improved and others are satisfied with the services and documents received in French, but they represent a minority of respondents. The majority of respondents highlighted shortcomings, long wait periods, funny and humiliating situations and websites with very little information in French while the English version of the website provides a lot more information.

The fact remains that active offer of French-language services must become the norm. What's more, in some regions, like southwestern Nova Scotia and other regions where there is significant demand, measures must be put in place so that French-language services are available at all times.

Eighty-seven (87) people out of ninety (90) responded to the statement that they had noticed an improvement in the ability of the provincial government to provide services in French. Forty-one percent (41.4%) somewhat agreed and seven percent (6.9%) of respondents strongly agreed, while twenty-eight percent (28.7%) somewhat disagreed and five percent (5.7%) strongly disagreed with this statement. Seventeen percent (17.2%) do not know.

Forty-nine percent (49.4%) or nearly half of respondents said they somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement that improvements were noted in communicating in French with the public by the provincial government. Thirty-nine percent (39%) said they somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement. Eleven percent (11.5%) did not know.

The respondents noted that documents from the provincial government had improved (63.2%) while twenty-four percent (24.1%) somewhat disagreed. Twelve percent (12.6%) did not know.

With respect to provincial government websites, seventy-two percent (72.4%) of respondents said that the content of websites had improved. Respondents who disagreed made up nineteen percent (19.5%) and eight percent (8%) did not know.

We asked respondents to assess the opportunities to participate in consultations organized by the provincial government in French. Forty-two percent (42.5%) of respondents stated that they noted an increase in opportunities to participate in consultations in French. Respondents who disagreed made up twenty-eight percent (28.7%) and twenty-five respondents or 28.7% did not know.

Eighty-eight percent (88.5%) thought the *Bonjour!* program allowed one to identify employees who provide services in French, while eleven percent (11.5%) did not believe that it identified employees.

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When it came to the broader question of whether services provided by the provincial government had improved over the last few years, fifty-five percent (55.1%) of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that French-language services provided by the provincial government had improved while twenty-eight percent (28.7%) thought they had not improved. Sixteen percent (16.1%) did not know. Respondents' feedback can be found in Appendix 3 (page 54) of this document.

## **RESULTS**

The experience of requesting services in French must be a pleasant and positive one. Frontline staff are therefore called on to be courteous and to focus on client service.

According to participants, the three matters of vital importance to the community are:

- The need for designated bilingual positions in the province (e.g. Access Nova Scotia in Yarmouth, Digby, Truro, Sydney, Antigonish and Port Hawkesbury, the Seniors' Secretariat, Health, LAE and others) and the decentralization of jobs and bilingual government services to the regions.
- The devolution of Acadian Affairs' powers and the urgent re-establishment of the office of Acadian Affairs under the responsibility of Executive Council (with a deputy minister and a restored budget) and the Minister of Acadian Affairs, and an increase in its profile.
- The absence of a recourse mechanism for the *French-language Services Act* and the need to appoint an ombudsman to handle complaints or disagreements

Other points raised by participants from more than one region were:

- Extending the application of the *French-language Services Act* to municipalities and agencies, institutions and commissions that fall under the responsibilities of the provincial government, e.g. Public Service Commission, Human Rights Commission, emergency services, etc.
- Consultations carried out by public servants responsible for provincial programs that are truly open to listening to the community
- A roadmap or action plan to set out how government will foster the development of the community
- Raising awareness of French-language services among public servants (welcoming clients, active offer, signage, pins, forms, documents, websites, language training, etc.)
- Acadian Affairs as a broker for accessing government funding programs
- Remedying the harm done by the elimination of the traditional provincial ridings
- Put structures in place to be inclusive of diversity and welcome migrants, immigrants and newcomers.
- Investments in infrastructure projects for the development of the community (School in Wedgeport, community centres, the excellent Clare health centre, French-language media)
- French-language services directories, collections of businesses that provide services in French, a "Welcome Wagon" and stickers for businesses to encourage people to request services in French
- French or bilingual road signs in the regions

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At least one meeting recommended the following:

- Important changes to the legal system for civil matters
- The creation of an advisory committee for Acadian Affairs
- More advertising in French-language media, e.g. community radio stations, *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse*, etc.
- Promotional materials (flags, pins, other)
- Recognize August 15<sup>th</sup> as a provincial holiday

The Committee wishes to highlight the fact that very few youth participated in the consultations. We recognize that the contribution of youth is vital and the necessity of establishing consultation and participation mechanisms that are adapted to the schedules and realities of youth.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**RECOMMENDATION 10:** We recommend that the provincial 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.

**RECOMMENDATION 11:** We recommend 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. We also recommend that a consultation and youth participation process be established by the new Acadian Affairs Secretariat.

## COMMUNITY LIFE

One of the purposes of the *French-language Services Act* is that the provincial government contribute to the preservation and growth of the Acadian and francophone community. This objective specifically requires that funding programs and services from the various departments and agencies of the provincial government take the needs of Acadian and francophone community into account and adapt their programs as a result. The alternative solution would be to establish a funding program which is specific to the Acadian and francophone community, which could lead to a chaotic situation with respect to programs and consign the Acadian community to benefiting from a single funding program. Previous governments have therefore favoured the approach whereby all funding programs are available to all citizens. Acadians and francophones must gain the respect and acceptance of the majority population for who they are: full-fledged citizens who can learn, live, work and take advantage of leisure activities in French. The dialogue sessions brought to light challenges with respect to access to funding programs.

Some members of the Committee, individuals and regional groups noted that they have seen a shift in Government's intentions with respect to the objective of contributing to the preservation and growth of the Acadian and francophone community since 2011. These include the transformation of employment assistance centres under the authority of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, which, without taking into account its obligations to consult the Acadian and francophone community or the legal obligations set out in the federal-provincial labour agreement, intended to consolidate the management of the employment assistance centres without taking into account the obligations set out in the *French-language Services Act* nor the Regulations made under the *Official Languages Act* of Canada. Thankfully, this situation has been rectified, though quality services in French are still noticeably absent in Cape Breton.

French-language media (four community radio stations and *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse*) have noted that the provincial government places fewer and fewer ads via these communication channels, dropping from more than \$100,000 before 2011 to \$29,000 in 2015.

In Prince Edward Island, the government has decided to draw up a development plan jointly with communities to provide a framework for government initiatives that align with the priorities of communities. The Committee is of the opinion that this system could work in Nova Scotia.

Therefore,

**RECOMMENDATION 12: We recommend 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.**

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**RECOMMENDATION 13:** We recommend 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.

## **CONCLUSION**

Due to a lack of time, the Committee was not able to tackle issues relating to municipalities that have large numbers of Acadian and francophone citizens, bilingual signage in provincial government offices and so on. We hope that the proposed structure will allow those responsible to delve deeper into these important matters.

The report will allow government to get back on the right track with respect to the position and importance of the Acadian and francophone community in Nova Scotia's diverse society and the value of official languages in Nova Scotia, in Canada and in the world. We hope that the report will help strengthen French-language services and support the community life of the Acadian and francophone community in Nova Scotia.



# Appendices

**Appendix 1. Schedule of consultation sessions**

Public dialogues sessions with the community

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
February 16, 2016 (Tuesday)	6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.	École NDA, Chéticamp	13 participants
February 17, 2016 (Wednesday)	3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.	La Picasse, Petit-de-Grat	17 participants
February 18, 2016 (Thursday)	3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.	École acadienne de Pomquet, Pomquet	7 participants
February 19, 2016 (Friday)	6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Centre communautaire Étoile de l'Acadie, Sydney	6 participants
February 22, 2016 (Monday)	2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.	Centre communautaire de la Rive-Sud, Cookville	6 participants
February 23, 2016 (Tuesday)	7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.	Université Sainte-Anne, Louis E. Deveau Building, Church Point	23 participants
February 24, 2016 (Wednesday)	6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	École Rose-des-Vents, Suite 1270, Greenwood	1 participant
February 25, 2016 (Thursday)	6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Carrefour du Grand-Havre, Dartmouth	5 participants
February 26, 2016 (Friday)	4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.	École acadienne de Truro, Truro	3 participants
March 3, 2016 (Thursday)	4:00 p.m.	École du Carrefour, Dartmouth (Meeting with the FANE)	5 participants
March 3, 2016 (Thursday)	6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	École secondaire de Par-en-Bas, Tusket	13 participants

**Appendix 2: Acadian Affairs' initiatives, programs and services****Program of financial support for French-language services**

Acadian Affairs administers the Canada – Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services and provides funds from Canadian Heritage to departments and government institutions to support French-language services projects.

**Translation services (with Communications Nova Scotia)**

Not so long ago, Acadian Affairs managed professional translation services. These translation services were often provided to other government departments, agencies and public institutions.

Since November 2014, Acadian Affairs still pays the translators' salaries, even though the staff are now part of the Communications Nova Scotia team.

***Bonjour!* program**

Acadian Affairs manages the *Bonjour!* visual identification program, a program that seeks to promote the active offer of services in French. This program includes a logo, website, posters, language tools and pins to identify French-speaking staff and offices where services are offered in French.

***Bonjour!* Awards for Excellence in French-language Services (cancelled for 2015–2016)**

The *Bonjour!* Awards highlight the outstanding contributions of provincial government employees to the development and delivery of French-language services and programs in Nova Scotia.

**French language training**

Acadian Affairs coordinates French language training in order to help government improve its ability to provide services in French. French language courses, from beginner to advanced, are generally offered in collaboration with Université Sainte-Anne and the Conseil communautaire Étoile de l'Acadie.

***Acadie at a Glance* workshop**

Acadian Affairs offer the the *Acadie at a Glance* workshop several times a year, in both English and French. This one-day workshop provides an opportunity for government employees to learn about the Acadian and francophone community and French-language services in Nova Scotia.

**Programs to support the community**

The ***Vive l'Acadie* Community Fund** supports cultural projects in the Acadian and francophone community. It is funded through donations collected from the purchase and renewal of the licence plate.

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The **Quebec – Nova Scotia Agreement for Collaboration and Exchange** provides funding for French-language exchanges and cooperative activities between community organizations in Nova Scotia and Quebec.

Funds are also available to support initiative that contribute to the development of the Acadian and francophone community.

**Financial information**

For the 2015–2016 fiscal year, the budget allocated to Acadian Affairs was \$2.034 million. Funding for programs made up \$1.105 million of the budget, salaries and benefits took up \$0.691 million and general operating expenses represented roughly \$0.238 million.

A large part of Acadian Affairs' budget comes from the Canada – Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services. Acadian Affairs negotiated the 2013–2018 agreement with Canadian Heritage, which provides \$1,301,000 of federal funding annually.

**APPENDIX 3: MINUTES OF THE CONSULTATION MEETINGS**

**PUBLIC DIALOGUE MEETING ON ACADIAN AFFAIRS  
ARGYLE REGION  
March 3, 2016**

**IN ATTENDANCE: (13 people)**

**Moderator: Yvon Samson**

Yvon Samson welcomed the participants. He then presented the goal of the consultation, which was to have a real dialogue on what government can do to expand French-language services and contribute to community life.

**ACCESS TO FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES**

Participants said that in general there had been improvements over the years when it came to French-language services but that there was still a lot to be done to deliver government services in French in the region.

Many difficulties and frustrations were expressed regarding Access Nova Scotia in Yarmouth. Only one of the employees is bilingual and she is not always at the service counter to provide services in French. Another employee completed language training at Université Sainte-Anne but does not provide services in French. A few years ago a request was made to have certain positions designated bilingual at this office when new staff were being hired. The response was that this was not possible and would not even be considered.

We need designated bilingual positions. The current practice of stating that bilingualism is an asset instead of hiring bilingual people does not work.

Many provincial public servants are insecure about their language skills. We mention in particular the health care employees at the Yarmouth Hospital. A large number of laboratory technicians, administrative staff, nurses, etc. do not identify themselves as French-speaking.

One participant explained that during a presentation of a funding application submitted to the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, she was completely forgotten by the department's English-speaking public servants due to the fact that it had been submitted in French. It took a number of calls to remind public servants about the application they had submitted.

One participant explained that his or her funding application submitted to a seniors' program was nearly rejected due to the fact that the letters of support for the project did not have signatures. It turned out that the letters had been drafted in French and it was the English translations of the letters that lacked signatures. Due to this, the group nearly missed its opportunity to receive funding. Also worthy of mention is that the application form for the program was only available in English.

The forms for programs must be available in both languages.

One participant added that sometimes there is a risk of missing deadlines for project applications due to the fact that the project is written in French and sent for translation. In cases such as this, it is better to submit the application in English. In this way, we know that the application will not miss the deadline when the selection committee meets to decide which projects will be funded and which will not.

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Signage is a problem in the region. We see very few signs in French, Hello/Bonjour signs, etc. in government offices. The signs must be bilingual.

One participant stated that the majority of provincial public servants seem to promote “one Nova Scotia,” that of the English-speaking majority.

**LEGISLATION**

One participant said that it was a gross insult to the Acadian community to place Acadian Affairs in the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage and to make the department responsible for the *French-language Services Act*. Other participants agreed that this was not acceptable. The 2011 amendments to the Act are not acceptable.

According to several people, we have lost a lot and Acadian Affairs will have to be restored to its 2004 status and its powers increased. A lot is lost in positioning it under a cultural department where Acadian Affairs is seen as a cultural group and not one of the country’s founding peoples and an official language community.

We take a negative view of the fact that the Premier did not provide a mandate letter for Acadian Affairs to the Minister of Acadian Affairs.

As things are currently structured, the participants say that it is a deplorable situation that francophones must ask permission from anglophones on all matters relating to the development of Acadian and francophone community.

The participants would like to see:

- Acadian Affairs led by its own deputy minister and that he or she be responsible for managing Acadian Affairs’s budget.
- A position of Ombudsman be created to manage the complaints process with regard to the *French-language Services Act* in the province.
- The *French-language Services Act* applied to all agencies, institutions and commissions that fall under the responsibilities of the provincial government, e.g. Public Service Commission, Human Rights Commission, emergency services, etc.
- Access Nova Scotia be a department where providing services in French is required.

**COMMUNITY LIFE**

The participants would like to see:

- Funding for Acadian projects and programs managed by Acadian Affairs. The discretionary funds of \$238,000 are not sufficient.
- Language training for public servants.
- Advertising in French-language media, such as community radio stations and *Le Courier de la Nouvelle-Écosse*.
- Promotional materials (flags, pins and other materials).
- More advertising on websites.
- A roadmap or action plan to set out how government will contribute to the development of the community.
- A new school in Wedgeport.

Participants would like to see an end to “consistent marketing,” meaning that promotion in French is the mirror image of promotion in English, as it is with tourism.

**MINUTES****PUBLIC DIALOGUE MEETING ON ACADIAN AFFAIRS  
CHÉTICAMP REGION  
FEBRUARY 16, 2016****IN ATTENDANCE: (13 people)**

Moderator: Yvon Samson

Yvon Samson welcomed the participants. He then presented the goal of the consultation, which was to have a real dialogue on what government can do to expand French-language services and contribute to community life. In the presentation he briefly touched on Acadian Affairs' mandate, the amendments made to the Act in 2011, the current structure and the role of coordinating committee. He informed participants that the eight-person committee had been given the mandate by the Minister to hold consultations. He encouraged them to complete the online survey.

The participants noted that seniors need help completing the online forms and that this segment of the population is not comfortable with new technologies.

**ACCESS TO SERVICES**

Some participants mentioned the challenges faced by rural regions with respect to jobs when compared with urban areas. They believe that decentralizing government jobs and services should be prioritized by looking into the possibility of a sub-office or offering a contract to an association to support the population in obtaining services in French, as is the case with Service Canada which is present in the region two days per week.

When it comes to health and long-term care homes, decisions on placement are made by the office located in Sydney. One Acadian in the Chéticamp region was admitted to the care home located in Neil's Harbour but she wanted to be at Foyer Père Fiset. When a bed became available at Foyer Père Fiset, an anglophone from Port Hood received the place instead of transferring the Acadian in Neil's Harbour and sending the person from Port Hood to Neil's Harbour. There is a policy that deals with this matter but it is not followed. Acadians don't complain enough. We must ensure respectful treatment and strengthen policies in this area because the number of seniors is increasing in rural areas.

The *Bonjour!* program is for Halifax.

**FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES**

The visibility of the availability of French-language services is important. In the case of Access Nova Scotia in the Port Hawkesbury area, there are very few French-language services or they are not available at all.

Some participants believe that the province could increase its visibility in this Acadian region by having a provincial office with bilingual staff to provide access to services in the region. The active offer of services is crucial for the people who make use of the services. Therefore, there should be a satellite Access Nova Scotia office in Chéticamp.

One person mentioned her negative experience with the approval of the French name of a non-profit organization by the Registry of Joint Stocks. Because she knew an employee at Acadian Affairs, the issue was resolved in five minutes after a call to Acadian Affairs. She believes that

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Acadian Affairs must play a role as a broker between departments and clients when it comes to services because it is not everyone that understands the government machinery.

Some mentioned that the offices of Gaelic Affairs and African Nova Scotian Affairs have regional offices while the office of Acadian Affairs does not have this system of regional offices.

The participants are concerned not only by the possible closure of the visitor information centre (VIC) located in Port Hastings but also the loss of tourism staff who advise visitors to use Baddeck as a point of departure and arrival for day trips. There must be someone who knows the Chéticamp area in this establishment.

The participants were outraged when the names of roads were changed without consulting the community. They gave the example of *Belle Marche* which became Chéticamp Back Road. They would like to see the consultation processes rectified to avoid this situation from happening again.

### **LEGISLATION**

Some people noted the absence of means of filing a complaint when services are not provided in French. A fair and equitable complaint handling process should be put in place and the consequences for putting things right in the departments and agencies who do not comply with the Act should be considered.

### **JUSTICE SYSTEM**

There are many obstacles in the justice system that require changes to laws and regulations, namely:

1. Wills drafted in French must be translated into English before being registered in the system. In order to change this, seven or eight provincial laws would have to be amended.
2. During the appointment of judges by the province, there are no verbal or written questions required to evaluate the language skills of judges.
3. To get divorced in French the divorce forms must be translated before being accepted.
4. When the state takes French-speaking children into its care, the social worker responsible for the case must be able to speak French to avoid forcing the child and parents to speak in English. The situation is traumatic for all parties involved.
5. In the case of a criminal offence, the accused receives no services in French before the trial, so these people don't understand or understand very little of what charges are being brought against them and their rights.
6. A company cannot be incorporated in French in Nova Scotia.

It was also mentioned that judges, sheriffs and court clerks should be designated as bilingual. All legal services are now in Port Hawkesbury whereas before some services were available in the region, namely small claims court.

### **COMMUNITY LIFE**

Some participants mentioned the importance of services provided by municipalities. It is the order of government closest to the population but no services are offered in French. There are few French-speaking people who want to work in Port Hood. There is an opportunity to request a municipal office in the region.



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One participant shared their experiences with the Office of Immigration in submitting an application as a supplier of language services in French and English for immigrants. At the beginning, the public servants were receptive to the application. Eventually, with the departure of the public servant and the arrival of a new public servant to take over the process, the project became an English-only initiative.

Several people mentioned that the community radio station in the region changed attitudes towards French and communication. It reinforces the links in the community and they believe it is important to provide core funding for community radio stations, as is done for the school system. This possibility should be explored with Canadian Heritage.

The government invests in groups such as the Société Saint-Pierre, the Conseil des arts and the community radio station based on merit and it is beneficial for the work being carried out on the ground.

One participant believes that the government must recognize August 15<sup>th</sup> and use our national holiday as a special occasion for celebration and to raise awareness amongst the majority.

**CONSULTATIONS**

The people who participate in consultations do not meet the people who provide the services, but rather the people responsible for the delivery of programs.

The participants would like to see the Minister of Acadian Affairs travel to Acadian regions to have a conversation on the issues, challenges and possible solutions to address problems and hear the legitimate needs of communities.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ACADIAN AFFAIRS**

Some people mentioned that the existence of this committee at the time could contribute to the work of Acadian Affairs. Some believed that problems could be avoided with contributions from members during [sic]

**MINUTES****PUBLIC DIALOGUE MEETING ON ACADIAN AFFAIRS  
CLARE REGION  
FEBRUARY 23, 2016****IN ATTENDANCE: (23 people)****Moderator: Yvon Samson**

Yvon Samson welcomed the participants. He then presented the goal of the consultation, which was to have a real dialogue on what government can do to expand French-language services and contribute to community life.

**ACCESS TO SERVICES AND FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES**

The participants mentioned that provincial government forms, with the exception of Acadian Affairs, are not all in French. It is the same story for telephone calls made to departments and often they are not able to provide services in French.

The participants shared experiences of accessing services in French, notably at Access Nova Scotia. The employees are often unable to serve you in French and if you request the services there is a sense of shame for requesting the services in spite of the fact that the other person in front of you knows that you can speak English. There is a pause and they return. It is not a pleasant experience for both sides. Receiving services in French should be a pleasant experience and not a burden.

One participant shared her experience with frontline staff in obtaining a driver's licence in Digby. This staff person could not speak French. Her son filled out the test in French but because the employee did not speak French he was not able to explain the mistakes in French.

Signage is rarely in French. What's more, road signs in Church Point are only in English.

The Department of Health's *Thrive* program is only available in English because the person responsible for it is an anglophone from the Annapolis Valley.

French-speaking immigrants need French-language services because they speak very little English.

Participants strongly suggested that new hires be able to speak French from the get-go and that these people be designated in an essential bilingual position.

The participants noted that signage in government offices must be bilingual.

Community radio stations and *Le Courrier* are communications tools and government must use these tools to reach out to the Acadian and francophone population. Government advertising must be placed in these media outlets.

**LEGISLATION**

According to many of the participants we have lost a lot and Acadian Affairs will have to be restored to its 2004 status and its powers increased. We lose a lot from being placed in a cultural department where language is of little importance.

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According to some, it is essential that positions are designated bilingual and so long as the current practice of stating bilingualism as an asset remains in place this will not work.

**COMMUNITY LIFE**

One participant mentioned that she submitted funding applications in French and was under the impression that these applications were sent for translation and that as a result the processing of the application was slowed down. She received the response in both languages.

Funds are available for Gaelic Affairs and African Nova Scotian Affairs but there are no funds for Acadians.

One participant in the postsecondary sector noted that there had been deterioration since 2011 as up until that point the postsecondary sector was part of the Department of Education, where there is a French-language division. News releases are issued simultaneously in French and English. The Department of Labour and Advanced Education where it now sits has no French-language services. The participant was reproached by a public servant for the fact that the department had to pay \$1,500 to translate a document, an expense that was not necessary according to him.

The participants would like Acadian Affairs to act as a broker for accessing government's funding programs.

One participant who works in the medical field explained the challenges faced in dentistry. One dentist retired and sold his practice to a French-speaking dentist. Unfortunately, he had trouble finding a dentist who could speak French, especially for his younger clientele. He asks whether the agreement with the province of Quebec can include dentistry training?

The Municipality of Clare has invested in a program to attract new physicians, which has been successful. There are now four doctors in the medical centre. However, the Department of Health say that there are enough doctors in Clare and do not think they should be more. The position taken by the department is impeding the development of a medical cluster with a range of services that could serve patients from Digby to Yarmouth and generate economic activity in the Clare region, as well as growing the medical centre – a centre of health care excellence.

One participant is concerned about the future of the Acadian and francophone community because youth are less involved, the development of culture is less important and French-language services are not requested. Also, participation and promotion of Acadian activities does not seem to attract Acadians. Another participant believes that we must speak of French culture and language. We must follow the lead of Prince Edward Island which seeks to include francophiles in French-language activities. It is vital to be more inclusive and to put on events that are not just for Acadians. We must include people from other countries and francophiles. The children in immersion programs include the children of parents who make political decisions in Nova Scotia.

The community must change course to welcome immigrants. It must change its culture to include people coming from other communities and focus on economic development.

One participant mentioned that the FANE went by the name de *Fédération Francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse* (Francophone Federation of Nova Scotia) in the 1970s and swapped it for "Acadian." Acadians have deep roots and a rich identity and heritage that must be preserved. The rate of assimilation is high and the need is urgent. Acadians say yes to French-language services when real active offer of services takes place.

The government could provide financial assistance to modernise infrastructure in Acadian regions. Replacing École secondaire de Clare (Clare High School) and the ice rink on the

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university campus are some examples. Attractive infrastructure is a must. If a child has a positive experience growing up in a region, he will want to come back to earn a living. If he has bad experiences he wants to leave and not come back. The education system has no model school and in his opinion education is an essential service.

The participants are all in agreement that Acadian Affairs should act as a broker for accessing funding programs from the provincial government.

We must consider the Ivany Report, which speaks of three priorities. We must be innovative, attract immigrants to make up for the declining population and develop the economy to maintain our services.

We have lost our protected electoral ridings. This issue must be dealt with in the report to the Minister.

Francophones must specialise in fields such as speech therapy, as these are now essential services.

**CONSULTATIONS**

There is value in saying what you want to say.

With respect to the structure of consultations, Acadian Affairs would benefit from its own consultation structure to develop a strategy to implement for French-language services and to enhance the contributions governments make to community life. The annual plans are out of touch and unequal.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ACADIAN AFFAIRS**

This advisory committee must be re-established to develop strategies. There must be links between Acadian Affairs and the FANE.

**OTHER**

One person filed a submission – that of the Société acadienne de Clare on Acadian Affairs as whole.

Dr. Michel Comeau sent a summary of a study on the impact of the Government of Quebec's tax credits for the birth of children in Quebec.

**MINUTES****PUBLIC DIALOGUE MEETING ON ACADIAN AFFAIRS  
HALIFAX REGION  
FEBRUARY 17, 2016****IN ATTENDANCE: (5 people)****Moderator: Yvon Samson**

Yvon Samson welcomed the participants. He then presented the goal of the consultation, which was to have a real dialogue on what government can do to expand French-language services and contribute to community life.

**ACCESS TO SERVICES AND FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES**

The participants shared many unfortunate incidents, particularly at Access Nova Scotia in renewing their drivers' licences. The receptionist only speaks English, the signage is in English only and the public servants are not sensitive to language. In one incident the public servant took the *Bonjour!* sign and threw it on the floor. In another incident, the public servant answered "sorry I don't speak French." The participant answered in English, "please find someone that speaks French." There was no *Bonjour!* sign and he waited until someone could serve him in French.

One participant shared his experience with 211 less than a year ago, where he had to wait 20 minutes for services in French. However the person helping him had trouble expressing themselves in French and he then waited another seven minutes for an interpreter.

In the case of the supplementary education funding in Halifax Municipality, the Human Rights Commission did not have any lawyers able to speak French.

There is a need for awareness building, education and programming in French. The annual reports from departments on the progress in French-language services are too vague, do not inform readers on progress and do not focus on results.

Telephone services are not actively offered in French. It is currently African Heritage Month and the posters are only in English. The French posters are not visible, as though the French language was not important for African Nova Scotians.

We must look at how Anglophones raise awareness.

One participant shared her positive experience at Dartmouth General.

You always play the role of token Frenchman as a francophone. He is the only bilingual person. Francophones don't have the tools they need to do their work, such as access to a French keyboard, the Antidote French correction software, etc.

One participant shared her experience in obtaining five pins from Acadian Affairs for Dartmouth General. It was an involved process since they had to sign the documents required by Acadian Affairs as it was not an official, formal request from the hospital. Another person who works in the private sector made the same request and was turned away since he wasn't from a government institution. It is difficult to identify francophones in the city.

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Acadians live in a state of linguistic insecurity and services must actively offered. To say “Hello-Bonjour” and to be unable to carry on the conversation in French is not a good experience. The government must put in place procedures after the first contact so as to not make the French-speaker feel bad for requesting services in French.

Government departments and agencies work in silos. The annual reports do not outline basic targets nor results.

Consideration should be given to establishing a program of shared human resources, as Health has done with Réseau Santé – Nouvelle-Écosse. The public servant gains the experience of working in French and gets to know the realities of the community.

The government could encourage municipalities to offer more services in French.

According to some, it is essential that positions be designated bilingual and so long as the current practice of stating bilingualism as an asset is in place, it will not work.

There needs to be a change of culture and efforts to make French ubiquitous on signs, active offer, visibility, etc.

Government websites could post a list of locations where services are provided in French. Also, a directory of government services in French would be very useful.

The government could carry out awareness-building tours to explain programs offered in French, namely Access Nova Scotia, Justice, etc.

Government must require that public servants receive French language training and an awareness of how to deal with someone who requests services in French.

Bilingual signage at Access Nova Scotia: Access Nova Scotia – Accès Nouvelle-Écosse.

## **LEGISLATION**

One participant dreams that one day Nova Scotia will be declared a bilingual province like New Brunswick.

The Act must be restored to how it was 2004. The FANE has carried important work in this area and it is time for action. The FANE has solutions to bring to the table and regularly consults with communities.

Frontline services must be offered in French and English. Government must put in place hiring policies requiring knowledge of French and apply them.

Some people noted the absence of a means for filing complaints when they have not received services in French.

## **COMMUNITY LIFE**

One participant shared his experience as executive director of the Société Grand-Pré. Before 2011, there were no issues obtaining funding for the society’s activities at the provincial level. Since 2011, the province no longer contributes and anglophones are responsible for the funding file. Since 2011, Acadian Affairs have not been acting as a broker, which is unfortunate.

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The CSAP can offer an Acadian studies course but the English-language school boards offer courses in African Nova Scotian studies. Why can't these two courses be offered in all school boards? It would contribute to mutual understanding between the two linguistic communities.

One participant mentioned the fact that we must increase the number of employability apprenticeship programs.

Government could fund the setting up of a French-language welcome program like the Welcome Wagon.

Government must work with the CSAP to attract youth to the francophone school system.

The participants believe that government must allocate funds from its programs for the Acadian community.

During large celebrations organized by government, it is important that they highlight the Acadian community and French language, in addition to first nations and African Nova Scotians.

**CONSULTATIONS**

One participant mentioned the importance of establishing a strategic advisory committee for Acadian Affairs.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ACADIAN AFFAIRS**

**No comments**

**MINUTES  
PUBLIC DIALOGUE MEETING ON ACADIAN AFFAIRS  
POMQUET REGION  
FEBRUARY 18, 2016**

**IN ATTENDANCE: (7 people)****Moderator: Yvon Samson**

Yvon Samson welcomed the participants. He then presented the goal of the consultation, which was to have a real dialogue on what government can do to expand French-language services and contribute to community life.

**ACCESS TO SERVICES AND FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES**

The participants shared their experiences in accessing services in French, notably at Access Nova Scotia in Antigonish and Port Hawkesbury.

One participant shared her experience with Access Nova Scotia, with respect to the licence plate and how she waited two hours to receive services in French and her experience obtaining a driver's licence in French in 2012. She had to explain to the employee where the box for the Acadian licence plates was located.

Others expressed that actively offering services by saying "bonjour" when the person on the other end of the line does not speak French is not OK. When you request the services, you seem to bother them and in many cases francophones rarely make use of the services to avoid ruffling feathers.

One participant needed to travel to the Antigonish Hospital to deal with a crisis situation involving her great-grandmother who spoke very little English. She noticed that there no staff at admissions who spoke French and that this is a serious problem in the event of a crisis. There do not seem to be procedures to facilitate the use of the French language at Access Nova Scotia and in the health care system, and when francophones request services in French it's a hassle.

One participant was transferred six times before receiving services. One time is reasonable.

Public servants must be made aware of their obligations with respect to French-language services and increase bilingual signage.

**LEGISLATION**

According to some participants, it is vital that positions be designated bilingual and so long as the current practice where bilingualism is stated as an asset remains in place, it will not work. They need to hire more bilingual people.

The participants were unanimous in asserting that Acadian Affairs must be strengthened, at least to the same level it was at in 2004.

**COMMUNITY LIFE**

The participants would like Acadian Affairs to act as a broker in accessing government funding programs.

One noteworthy initiative would be to make road and street signs bilingual in French and English.



***Report of the Committee responsible for enhancing the role of Acadian Affairs***

Greater promotion of French-language services and increased communication to inform Acadians and francophone they are available.

Many participants think that the Minister of Acadian Affairs should send a message to citizens to explain his role and what he can do to support communities.

Some participants believe that Acadian Affairs must act as a broker to facilitate access to various departments.

Some participants asserted that the status of French in Canada and Nova Scotia is not at the same level as Gaelic.

Language rights and history are taught to CSAP students in grade 9 social sciences. The participants believe that these subjects should be revisited with students in grades 11 and 12. Teachers will have to be made aware of the importance of insisting on services in French.

The participants mentioned that awareness-building is needed in both linguistic communities. People who were victims of assimilation must have access to “Frenchifying” courses to help their children. It is important that they not be ashamed of their situation.

The winter carnival in Pomquet is getting bigger and it is one of the rare community activities held in French.

A discussion ensued on communicating with youth. Brochures don't work. Youth like to watch videos and short forms of entertainment, so this is a better way to communicate with them. They live in a constant duality and it is important to establish one's identity through personal experiences.

**MINUTES****PUBLIC DIALOGUE MEETING ON ACADIAN AFFAIRS  
ISLE MADAME REGION  
FEBRUARY 17, 2016****IN ATTENDANCE: (17 people)****Moderator: Yvon Samson**

Yvon Samson welcomed the participants. He then presented the goal of the consultation, which was to have a real dialogue on what government can do to expand French-language services and contribute to community life.

**ACCESS TO SERVICES AND SERVICES IN FRENCH**

The participants shared experiences of accessing French-language services, notably at Access Nova Scotia in Port Hawkesbury. The only person at this office able provide services in French is part-time and the services are not always available and remain inconsistent.

One participant said that she had requested services and the employee told her that she had never heard of the *Bonjour!* program or French-language services. When the participant was leaving, the employee mentioned to one of her colleague that she could speak Gaelic.

Another participant said that she wanted to buy an Acadian licence plate for her new car and was refused one because the plate that would be replaced on the car was recently renewed. She must wait two years before she can have an Acadian licence plate. The policy seems to be that the current plates on the car must be eligible for renewal before making the change.

In Sydney, there is no promotion of French-language services. A person shared his or her experience at Access Nova Scotia, where the anglophone tried to explain things but it was difficult for this anglophone to speak French and be understood.

One participant mentioned her attempts to contact the Department of Health in French. She tried 245-4807 – no service; she tried 426-5023 – no service; she then tried 426-5200 and got through to the staffperson for Inuit Affairs (federal) who speaks French.

The participants spoke of the progress in health care service, especially with the new bilingual physicians.

One participant mentioned the absence of services and documentation in French at the Seniors' Secretariat.

The cancer clinic at the hospital in Sydney must encourage bilingual staff to wear the *Bonjour!* wordmark, as it says that they provide services in French, but it is not obvious which members of staff are bilingual.

One participant mentioned that provincial documents for student loans and bursaries are only available in English. These documents must also be make available in French.

With respect to the departments of Health and Community Services, it is important to identify bilingual positions, due to the nature of the services provided, though this is not always the case. In one case, an employee told a client in English that "somebody who speaks French will be here

***Report of the Committee responsible for enhancing the role of Acadian Affairs***

in half an hour” and the belief that all Acadians speak English must be dispensed with, particularly for newcomers from other provinces.

The *Bonjour!* program is underutilised by public servants, particularly in hospitals. There is still work to be done in communications and to facilitate access to programs. Acadian Affairs can and must play a role to increase its communications and identify the points of entry for funding programs and French-language services.

Community radio stations and *Le Courier* are communications tools and government must make use of these tools to reach the Acadian and francophone population. They are able to find funds for other government advertising and activities.

One participant mentioned that if she tries to obtain services in French and the person is not able to manage in French, she switches to English. It is frustrating, but it's easier and takes less time.

Communication and raising awareness among public servants with respect to their obligations to provide services in French are still a priority according to some of the participants. Government signage in French and English is essential because it would cause a paradigm shift in the idea that Nova Scotia is unilingual and English-speaking. In New Brunswick and elsewhere signage is bilingual.

Francophones do not insist on services in French, particularly people aged 40 years and less. Based on the comments, people in these age groups do not seem to have the time to insist on being served in French to anglophones. According to others, an awareness-building program will have to be put in place for this age group to inform them of their rights.

## **LEGISLATION**

Some people noted the absence of a means of filing complaints when they do not receive services in French.

According to some, it is essential that positions be designated bilingual and so long as the current practice of stating bilingualism as an asset is in place, it will not work.

## **COMMUNITY LIFE**

The participants mentioned that raising awareness among both linguistic communities is key both to encourage Acadians and francophones to use French-language services and to reduce the linguistic intolerance of the anglophone community.

There is a need to strengthen identity-building activities and assert ourselves as a people. Youth speak amongst themselves in English and are not inclined to ask for services in French from governments and the quickest service is in English. We risk losing our culture if we do not build bridges between the generations.

Some are worried about the future, particularly among youth. They are francophone, anglophone and bilingual and do not see the importance of preserving the language and culture. To do so, we need funding to help encourage the use of the language and cultural expression. We must speak to the radio station about these challenges.

Jobs must be created to slow the out-migration of youth towards urban centres. It would be appropriate to create a fund to stimulate the economy in French.

One participant mentioned the importance of funding for community centres.

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One person mentioned the importance of having a representative in government who can provide advice on funding applications to improve its chances of being approved.

One person mentioned that Acadian Affairs' budget should be restored and that government programs should be administered by Acadian Affairs.

**CONSULTATIONS**

The participants would like Acadian Affairs to travel to Acadian regions to discuss issues, challenges and possible solutions to address the problems and listen to the needs of communities. There is very little opportunity for dialogue. The consultations carried out by program staff involve very little actual consultation and are seen rather as directives from them.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ACADIAN AFFAIRS**

**No comments**

**MINUTES****PUBLIC DIALOGUE MEETING ON ACADIAN AFFAIRS  
SYDNEY REGION  
FEBURARY 19, 2016****IN ATTENDANCE: (6 people)****Moderator: Yvon Samson**

Yvon Samson welcomed the participants. He then presented the goal of the consultation, which was to have a real dialogue on what government can do to expand French-language services and contribute to community life.

**ACCESS TO SERVICES AND FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES**

One participant shared her experience with Medical Services Insurance (MSI) when requesting a refund for treatment in another province (Quebec). The documents for requesting a reimbursement for these services have not been translated. After four phone calls, she was able to speak to someone in French, however she wanted to file a complaint and asked that the person put what they were saying in writing. She has not yet been reimbursed and was told that there was not agreement with Quebec.

With respect to Access Nova Scotia in Sydney, there is a *Bonjour!* sign, but no one can serve clients in French.

One participant does everything online with the Department of Natural Resources, but all in English. The forms are only available in English.

At the hospital in Sydney, there is a sign at the end of the hallway on the first floor which has two mistakes on it.

The information desk staff at the hospital and volunteers who direct people to the appropriate places do not speak French. Often they say "bonjour" but are unable to carry on further in French.

There are nonetheless health care professionals who speak French. There are also medical specialists who speak French. There was a wave of Quebeckers who came but they returned to Quebec.

**LEGISLATION**

Some participants noted the absence of a means of filing complaints when they do not receive services in French.

According to some, it is essential that positions be designated bilingual and so long as the current practice of stating bilingualism as an asset is in place, it will not work.

The participants believe that Acadian Affairs must be positioned under Executive Council and have its powers restored to at least 2004 levels.

**COMMUNITY LIFE**

***Report of the Committee responsible for enhancing the role of Acadian Affairs***

The participants mentioned that awareness-building is important among youth, as they request few or no services in French.

It is time to open a new CSAP school for New Waterford and the surrounding area. The provincial government must support the efforts of the parents of this region which was once a strong Acadian community.

**CONSULTATIONS**

**No comments**

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ACADIAN AFFAIRS**

**No comments**

**MINUTES****PUBLIC DIALOGUE MEETING ON ACADIAN AFFAIRS  
TRURO REGION  
FEBRUARY 26, 2016****IN ATTENDANCE: (3 people)**

Diane Pelchat

Juliana Banard

Robert Carreau

**Moderator: Yvon Samson**

Yvon Samson welcomed the participants. He then presented the goal of the consultation, which was to have a real dialogue on what government can do to expand French-language services and contribute to community life.

**ACCESS TO SERVICES AND FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES**

One person noted that the staff at Access Nova Scotia is not polite and does not actively offer services in French. These services must be easy to identify (signs, pins, etc.). Pins must be given to more staff because approaching public servants in French it is not easy.

One participant mentioned that she worked on a tourism project and contacted the Tourism Agency by online chat in French and was pleasantly surprised in being able to obtain services and visitors' guides. She however laments the fact that the guide tells readers that VICs provide services in French when in her experience these services are non-existent.

Support is needed to increase the visibility of the French language. Municipalities must also make a greater effort to provide services in French.

The Red Cross' publications are in English and French. Linguistic duality is less threatening for language communities.

**LEGISLATION****No comments****COMMUNITY LIFE**

According to one participant, it would be important to put in place a system to identify services in French in the private sector. At the current time, he happily chats with his barber in French. However, there are other businesses that are able to provide services in French but the fact that these businesses can offer them is not made apparent. Stickers aimed at businesses would be one solution. What's more, support for businesses seeking to provide services to the French-speaking population (training in customer service) does not exist.

We must make French cool for anglophones. There should be a dialogue between cultures, notably when it comes to tourism. What's more, the visibility of the francophone community is important in changing the anglophone community's attitudes. Participants noted that there was a need to provide services to support people wishing to learn French and get involved in the francophone community, because there are people who are interested but cannot easily find a way in.

It is important to listen to French music, speak in French and share our culture. There are few opportunities in this region to share this richness. French cinema must be promoted as well as

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fine art and theatre in French. In fact, plays put on by the community should be recorded so that they can be distributed more widely in the community and beyond.

We must partner with first nations peoples to share our experiences as minorities and work together as we are facing the same issues when it comes to language.

One participant mentioned the lack of books for teens in the school library. Students are asking for recent titles that are not translated from English, but schools not have sufficient funds to make these purchases.

Recreation NS must offer more services in French and access to recreational activities in French. This group must encourage recreation organizations to provide services in French.

Even if some people in the region identify as Acadians, other identity more as francophones. According to one participant, we are francophones and we must not live in the past but rather celebrate diversity.

**CONSULTATIONS**

**No comments**

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ACADIAN AFFAIRS**

**No comments**



**MINUTES****PUBLIC DIALOGUE MEETING ON ACADIAN AFFAIRS  
ANNAPOLIS VALLEY REGION  
FEBRUARY 24, 2016****IN ATTENDANCE: (1 person)****Moderator: Yvon Samson**

Yvon Samson welcomed the participant. He then presented the goal of the consultation, which was to have a real dialogue on what government can do to expand French-language services and contribute to community life.

**ACCESS TO SERVICES AND FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES**

Lack of family doctors for military personnel and the general population (90% of students at Rose-des-Vents school are from Quebec).

**LEGISLATION****No comments****COMMUNITY LIFE****No comments****CONSULTATIONS****No comments****ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ACADIAN AFFAIRS****No comments**

**Appendix 4: Survey Comments****1.C) If you answered “yes,” to what extent are you satisfied with the way in which this service was provided to you in French. Please explain:**

23 no answer provided and 67 answers

- Usually it's OK. However, they always assume that I would probably prefer to speak in English, either because they don't want to speak to me in French or because they don't believe that I really want to speak to them in French. This creates a rather awkward situation... English is the norm and they seem to want to enforce it as so.
- It seems to me that most departments are not prepared to deliver services in French except if there is someone in the office that is designated as the francophone contact. Even if there is someone who plays this role in the department, it appears to me that there are long delays when documentation in French is sent – delays which hinder our ability to work in French.
- There was only one person available to take calls in French and track down resources in French. Here in Nova Scotia, it is not easy.
- Receiving services in French in Nova Scotia is a game of chance. It is humiliating to attempt to be served in French at Access Nova Scotia in Yarmouth.
- Change the name of the services.
- I think we should always have access to a bilingual member of staff to provide services at all times. On two occasions I did not deal with a bilingual member of staff throughout the process.
- The service was not always available. It is discouraging to request services in French. Also, it takes more time so often times we go for the quicker option and don't ask to be served in French...
- Often we must wait much longer or the service is not available. Active offer is rarely employed, especially in THE capital city. Employees don't make an effort to offer service in French.
- Services in French are not always available in provincial government offices, especially in the southwest region. An office such as Access Nova Scotia in Yarmouth should be designated as bilingual – with services in French and English at all times. This would show full respect for the Acadian community in southwest Nova Scotia.
- Services are not always actively offered. Sometimes we need to request them.
- Although the child care service is said to be “in French” and “Acadian and francophone” in character, it is not, sadly, at least in the Argyle region. Things too often take place in English and people seem to be OK with this, but I am not. I feel the impact of a lack of services in French in this region, which makes me want to return to Clare, where there are more services in French.

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- It is an incomplete service. On more than one occasion, part of the service was available, but bilingual staff had to be fetched, who are sometimes on break, etc. and every transaction becomes frustrating because sometimes we are made to understand that we are bothering them. All staff should be bilingual if they want to serve people in French.
- In October 2015, I made my way to Access Nova Scotia (Bayers Lake) and asked the receptionist how to renew my registration in French. The receptionist was unilingual and explained to me in English that she was going to find someone to help me. Among the 16 employees present, she found one who spoke a little French. The employee quickly placed a *Bonjour!* sticker on the counter (the sticker had seen better days). The receptionist explained to me in English that I could speak to this employee as soon as she was available, which I did a few minutes later. I gave my ticket to the employee and as there were at least thirty numbers before mine, she told me that I had to return to the waiting area and make my way to the counter where my number was called and explain to another English-speaking employee that I wished to be served in French. This employee would then redirect me to her counter... If the employee who spoke French was busy with another client I had to return to the waiting area... completely ridiculous. Finally, I continued in English! I would like to be able to show up at Access Nova Scotia without having to explain in English that I would like to be served in French. What's more, I would like children to be able to complete the hunting course online in French. I would also like provincial websites to be in French. For example, the Department of Education's site has been improved of late, but it far from being at the same level as its English counterpart, etc., etc.
- There certainly is a lot of progress that needs to be made but I find that the provision of services has greatly improved!
- I was able to do what I had to do.
- Sometimes our regional dialect causes difficulties.
- I've often been served in French without having even having had to request it!
- In general, I am able to receive services in French, if I am willing to wait longer. On a few occasions, I was not able to receive services in French.
- Services were available in French.
- We are disappointed with the amount of English in school. We chose to educate our children in an Acadian school and not an immersion one in order to include Acadian culture in their education. The letters sent home, the school staff speaking with parents as well as the school principal at the Christmas concert are examples of times when we heard more English than French spoken. In my opinion, this is not acceptable in a francophone school.
- Bilingual staff who can serve us are not always on hand.
- We are always spoken to in English and we must ask to be served in French. I don't think it's difficult to address people in both languages from the get-go. If there are no francophones available, the staff are not always very polite with us.

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- The service is often provided out of politeness or obligation, but the staff aren't necessarily able to answer your questions or have a full conversation in French.
- Services are not always available when needed.
- There were no issues communicating with an employee at Employment Nova Scotia in Yarmouth both verbally and in writing.
- Not all services are able to serve clients in French. There is a lack of knowledge...
- Jobs in departments are not designated as bilingual. These important services for the Acadian and francophone community as rather left to chance.
- There is always room to improve services in French provided by the Province of Nova Scotia.
- Hospital, family doctor, employment insurance, various stores.
- It is rare that services are available.
- Driver's licence – no *Bonjour!* sign at the reception desk, the receptionist forced me to speak in English, saying "sorry I don't understand" three times without seeking out a bilingual employee. I had to request in English that she find someone who was bilingual. The two designated bilingual employees being absent (vacation or off sick), they finally found someone in the office to serve me. 211 service – long wait time and eventually an employee whose mother tongue was French translated the information on senior abuse for the English-speaking employee. It took about 20 minutes for two websites. Another experience was with the Human Rights Commission – requesting information and consultation in French were poorly handled.
- Services in French in traditional Acadian regions is satisfactory. At the provincial level, I am encouraged by the fact that there are more and more services available (particularly online). However, in general, the services that are offered are incomplete at a provincial level.
- Our business is always conducted in English. Our conversation is always in French.
- The services was not available.
- Did not request services in French.
- At the Access NS office in Sydney, it is not possible to receive services in French.
- It is difficult to receive services in French in Yarmouth. The public servants do not actively offer services in French. We must request them. One provincial public servant in Bridgewater replied "Sorry I don't speak French" to an email that I sent regarding a provincial consultation in French. Often times, in order to move things along more quickly, it is better to send correspondence in English to the provincial government. Translation services take too long.
- The document I needed for my work was available.
- It can be difficult to speak with someone who speaks French.
- As an Acadian, I appreciate being spoken to in French.
- Good results.
- Employee was well informed and spoke good French.

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- The person was able to speak French.
- It is more important to receive services verbally than in writing.
- Translation services.
- Translation takes too long.
- There's always room for improvement in any service provided.
- I received my service in French but had I gone to the office it would have been more difficult.
- In the context of my work, when I approach Acadian Affairs for support, I am always impressed with the services they offer, including services that we are not necessarily aware of. In other departments, you always seem to have to push for them to recognize the importance of services in French. (Example: educational programs and materials are not always available in French.)
- The temporary employee was a unilingual English-speaker but the permanent employee was bilingual.
- Where possible we can have documents, etc. translated into French.
- The employees who served me had a limited command of the language. That being said, they at least made the effort to serve me in French. I wonder whether bilingualism is really promoted in the public service. There are more than 15,000 students in NS who are in CSAP schools or immersion programs. We should be able to find enough graduates for these bilingual positions.
- Services: In health, put a public health office in our region, provide information on the environment, e.g. recycling in French.
- Lack of bilingual staff, report was poorly written, no conditions of release in French
- e.g. Information on the budget of the fund, documents and services in English only, on recycling from the municipality – information in English only. Professionals from our communities who work in health care are not allowed to say that they are bilingual and cannot promote services in French. Patients or clients must make the request, e.g. speech therapists, public health nurses.
- Access Nova Scotia. Registry of Joint Stock Companies. The website is much easier than trying to served in person. Being an hour from the nearest office, it is clear that the internet is the most practical way of benefiting from the *French-language Services Act*.
- Excellent collaboration with the representative. I must note however that there is a lack of understanding of the Acadian reality among certain English-speaking managers in the department.
- I cannot recall an occasion where I was served in French by government (Doctor's appointment – YES. Very satisfied.)
- The response was slow.
- My answers were provided in French.
- Service was received in French.

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- The services were warm and courteous, which leaves you with a feeling of satisfaction and makes you want to come back.
- Translation services reasonable, without delays.
- The province's employees have difficulty expressing themselves in French and you often have to switch to English to receive clarification so that you can understand.
- The wait for documents in French and the lack of services in French.
- Had to wait for quasi-bilingual staff!
- I am happy to note the improvements and progress made in this area.

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS

- French-speakers seem to be completely neglected in Nova Scotia but I find this to be more of a shame at the municipal level than at the provincial level. There are few Acadians in the province, but they are found in large numbers in certain municipalities. However, like in Argyle, they prefer to anglicize themselves rather than identify as Acadians.
- More resources in French or the ability to translate free-of-charge. Find a way of hiring more francophones and reward them for their contributions to the province.
- The division of Acadian Affairs was placed under the the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage. This is unacceptable for Acadians, who are a one of the peoples who make up Canada's two official language communities – we cannot simply push aside this identity which is distinct at a provincial level. We are known as one of the two founding peoples of Canada at the federal level. It goes without saying that Nova Scotia's Acadian population finds it difficult to accept being placed in the context of multiculturalism at a provincial level. Also, the executive director at Acadian Affairs must work directly with the deputy minister of Acadian Affairs, as well as with the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse which is the group that speaks for the Acadian population in Nova Scotia and represents 29 groups, associations and institutions in Nova Scotia.
- When I compare the efforts made twenty or thirty years ago by the government with respect to French in schools and in the community with the efforts made these past few years, I see a big difference. The efforts made today do not compare with those of the 80s and 90s. I don't know why but I wonder whether the community insists or whether we are consigned to leaving the status quo as it is. The status quo is not enough.
- Change the name of the *French-language Services Act*, the goal of Acadian Affairs and the growth of our community in a larger sense – arts, language, and defending our representation. You put a lot of effort into “Frenchifying” anglophone public servants in government. Acadians were neglected by this service. Things must be made right by providing more culture funding and help for artists to support the development of our communities. Do not change the name Acadian to francophone.
- A good effort was made at the beginning of the *Bonjour!* campaign and it seemed that all documents, communications and many services were being provided in French. However, I have noticed a decline in the ease and efficiency of obtaining services in French over the past few years. It's as if the francophones and anglophones are saying to each other: “There, we are able to do it, are you happy now?” And I do not agree with this. If the agreement is that services should be available in French, then they should be available! And not because the bilingual staff is there (i.e. not off sick, in a meeting or on training) that we can obtain it.

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- I think that French-language services should be systematically offered where it makes sense to do so (where there are large concentrations of francophones). More communications directed at the francophone community about services provided in French by the provincial government and promotion of bilingual positions targeted at this community to give our bilingual graduates a chance to apply for these positions and thus serve as a means of retaining bilingual youth in our area.
- Over the past few years, services in French in the province have taken a step backwards. Instead of advancing or improving, the Act was changed to yield legislation that has no substance. Often I feel that as a francophone I am a second class citizen. French-language services must be provided without having to ask for them.
- I will make my other opinions and points known during the consultation in my region.
- We must not reduce the services of the office of Acadian Affairs. We must increase and improve the services of this office. These services do not replace the mission of the FANE (Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse). It is a shame that the Government of NS did not consider it important to consult with the FANE before going ahead with an evaluation of the office of Acadian Affairs. I understand that it is the prerogative of government to make its decisions but the FANE is there to speak on behalf of all Acadians in our province. Why ignore it? We must work together and not everyone in their corner... we are too small of a minority in NS to avoid close collaboration amongst ourselves.
- All too often, the terms of reference used in these types of surveys are vague. When I read them, many specific situations come to mind but the wording of the question causes me to answer "somewhat agree", when in truth, I do not. Situations where French-language services should be provided (and they are said to be) but are not, are not captured in this type of survey. A glaring example is the automatic correction not confirmed by me of the French used in my answers to this survey, and I am leaving out others...
- The staff responsible for French-language services are spread across different departments who often do not seem to represent the interests of Acadians, which makes the application of the Act inefficient. The translation system, for example, is slow and documents in French are sometimes released months after a document in English, at which point, we have already read the document English, if necessary. The staff responsible for services, funding, planning, and all things Acadian must work with the Fédération Acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, which has a real understanding of our needs.
- If an Acadian or francophone who can express himself very well in English must explain in English that he wishes to be served in French, the demand for these types of services will continue to decrease. I can't imagine a situation where a young person who suffers from linguistic insecurity would request to be served in French, receive a response in English and like me insist upon continuing in French... I think we find ourselves in a rather



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paradoxical situation: “We do not offer services in French because the demand for these services is weak AND the demand is weak because fewer quality services are being provided in French.” In conclusion, for the survival of the Francophonie in a minority language context, it is essential that we can prove to our children that the French language has some utility in the world around them, or else it will be “Game over!”

- Continue to push to further improve and well done on the work to date!
- This questionnaire is really focused on the provision of services in French – direct services and online. I would have thought and would like to have seen more of the survey focused on the structure of Acadian Affairs and the importance of Acadian Affairs to community development. It would be interesting to talk about awareness-building and the promotion of French, if we hope to see progress in the demand for more and more services in French. What are the chances that people will request services in French if they speak more and more in English? Youth who study in French should be targeted to a greater extent. It is these people who are likely to be equipped to make use of French-language services. But they must first speak the language and then we increase the likelihood that services will be requested in French. The consultation meeting that I attended did not reflect this reality. No high school students were in attendance. Acadians of a certain age have already been educated and unfortunately, this education was all too often in English. It is these people who don't think they have what it takes to request services in French. Do we have current data on how many people request or insist on services in French? How many people by Acadian region subscribe to *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse*? How many people, at this time of year, file their tax return in French? How many people make use of bank machines in French?
- Not really! Thank you for your work and continue!
- Often staff wearing the *Bonjour!* pin are not francophones and do not want to serve people in French.
- Hire more French-speaking or bilingual staff.
- I think government's intentions are good, but there are lots of improvements that need to be made. Employees who can provide quality services in French, and not just the offer without the promised service, must make use of active offer. Lots also needs to be done to raise awareness among decision-makers. Although Acadians and francophones are a minority like other minorities in Nova Scotia, we also have an additional barrier to consider (language) and this barrier is a fundamental right in this country that should be respected. It seems as though Acadians and francophones have to constantly fight, defend themselves and remind the provincial government that it crucial for the vitality of our communities. In an ideal world, the act of providing services in French in our Acadian communities would be automatic would come naturally to decision-makers and included in their planning, without having to request and justify it.

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- There should be a reinvestment in the *Bonjour!* program. Many employers are not aware of it. It should be required that the program be introduced to new government employees during orientation.
- Although services in French have improved over the years thanks to the *French-language Services Act* and thanks to support from Acadian Affairs, there remains much that needs improvement within certain departments. These departments must work with partners to a greater extent towards this goal and contribute to the implementation of action plans aimed at providing consistent and quality services in French to the public. It is also essential that plans are revised in order to assess the level of engagement of each department.
- Having reached the level of French which is currently offered, which consists of lots of information available to the public on websites, brochures, etc. I think it's time to require that there be more staff in offices who are able to provide services in French. I think that the province is doing its utmost to help francophones with their needs, but sometimes these experiences are frustrating for them, because the staff person who is helping them sometimes does not have the best command of the language. There is also a great need for implementing active offer at the department level. The Deveau study clearly states that if active offer is absent, it is highly likely that the Acadian and francophone population will not request services in French. It is very difficult for Acadian Affairs to push departments to provide French-language services if they are not being requested. This is also the case for consultations in French. I worked with my department to offer consultations in French and the result were not great. Usually, we would see one or two people in person and one or two online questionnaires completed in French. It is difficult to justify the additional expense to the department to accommodate the province's Acadians and francophones if they do not participate.
- There have been improvements but the *Bonjour!* symbol does not really stand for a complete service in French. Thank you, but there is still much to do to offer a complete service.
- The performance indicators or measures must be improved: increase in awareness of staff and promotion and visibility of French at work, increase in bilingualism and direct services to clients (by bilingual human resources – especially with respect to the level of spoken language), more work tools (bilingual keyboard, Antidote software), survey and comparison of the quality and level of service in French vs. English (time, satisfaction) for services delivered in person and by telephone, increase implementation of best practices between departments and other institutions, actively promote bilingual government services to Acadian and francophone communities – outreach presentations.
- French-language services would be easier to integrate into the lives of Acadians if the member of staff providing the service was Acadian. Differences in dialect constitute an obstacle for many Acadians. In order to encourage greater use of French-language

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services, this linguistic reality should play an important role in the hiring of public communications officers within the provincial government.

- English only.
- It is worrying to see Acadian Affairs considered a cultural group and not an official language minority within the provincial government. This reduces the impact of Acadian Affairs' work. Today, Acadian Affairs is seen as an office that supports other provincial departments. Acadian Affairs' role within Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community seems diminished to me. We must change this. We must also change the way in which the province seeks to standardize services from Sydney to Yarmouth. Equality is not equity. This way of working hampers the the development of the community.
- Regarding health. A sick or dying person has the right to have access to care in their mother tongue.
- Do a good job.
- The choice could have been given to fill out this survey in our two official languages. There are many Acadians who communicate perfectly well in their mother tongue but feel more comfortable reading and writing in English. Their opinions are just as important.
- Acadian Affairs' mandate is not clear.
- The FANE worked closely with its members to create a document to improve the *French-language Services Act*. It should be consulted before submitting a report.
- I moved from Moncton five years ago and I must confess that I did not expect to receive services in French in this province. I could function in French in Moncton but I find myself communicating in English here because it is easier than finding services in French.
- For certain positions, particularly in health care, they must make sure to have francophones to offer services in French. There are positions where the employees need to be bilingual.
- It is high time that a hiring policy that ensures that our population truly has access to services in both of the country's official languages. The important changes happening in health care and community services are a unique opportunity to put in place a hiring policy outlining the proportion of new positions created, at least in the 10 communities where there are Conseil scolaire acadien provincial schools. These communities are: Argyle, Clare, Greenwood, Bridgewater, Bedford-Sackville, Dartmouth-Chezzetcook, Truro, Pomquet-Antigonish, the Acadian region of Richmond, the Chéticamp region and Cape Breton Regional Municipality.
- Continue to push for services in French, to raise awareness of our needs.
- Active offer is always lacking. Moreover, some government employees don't seem to have a good understanding of the province's geography and demographics. We should not have to explain to staff that Chéticamp is located more than 200 kilometers from Sydney and that in spite of this, the people who live there are not all on employment insurance or social assistance!

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- Continue to make improvements to our services. Be careful of Google translation of documents. There is a great need to raise awareness among Acadian folk around pride in the language. Often we understand the language but hesitate to express ourselves in French. This is clearly limiting and why there is perhaps less demand for French-language services.
- Assimilation is gaining momentum and in a few generations, a consultation such as this would perhaps not be needed but we cannot stop our efforts. Our work in education, our community radio stations and even our churches, Acadian festivals and community centres have all played an important role over the past thirty years. The province must play a proactive role to support the communities.
- My interaction with the government generally went through intermediaries (usually people who work with the Acadian community on a regular basis) who had a good grasp of the Acadian reality but when I approached other people in the know in government, I quickly ran into obstacles, a lack of knowledge of Acadian organizations, etc...
- I have not yet noticed any striking changes to the extent that I could say that I could say that I've noted a great improvement in the provision of fully bilingual services.
- Hopefully services will continue to be offered in French when requested.
- We must continue the efforts.
- Offer French language training to employees of the Province. Encourage them to take this training by offering increases in benefits or salary. It is reasonable that bilingualism should have advantages, otherwise, what benefit is there for them to move things forward in this direction.
- Despite the fact that frontline services are important, rather than investing in the hiring or training of the province's employees, why not take this money and invest it in the running of organizations working to promote and preserve Acadian culture and the French language. As an Acadian, I can communicate very well in English and I can translate any information from English to French. To ensure the survival of Acadian culture and the French language in Nova Scotia, it is going to require investments in projects and organizations, rather than investments in the province's human resources.
- Active offer!!!

**APPENDIX 5: Submission from the Société acadienne de Clare**

Submission from the Société acadienne de Clare to the ministerial committee on Acadian Affairs on behalf of the Société acadienne de Clare, February 23 at 6:30 p.m.

The Société acadienne de Clare has 200 individual members and 55 member associations.

It is thanks to the tireless work of Nova Scotia's Acadians who joined forces with the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Ecosse (Acadian Federation of Nova Scotia) that the office of Acadian was established in 2004. Until 2011, the office of Acadian Affairs reported directly to the Minister of Acadian Affairs. In past few years, we have observed major changes in the way Acadian Affairs operates. Since 2011, the division of Acadian Affairs was placed under the the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage. This is unacceptable for Acadians, who are a one of the peoples who make up Canada's two official language communities – we cannot simply push aside this identity which is distinct at a provincial level.

As the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse works closely with its 29 member organizations, it is better placed to understand the everyday needs of Nova Scotia's Acadian community when it comes to language and culture.

The executive director of Acadian Affairs should be in regular contact with the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Ecosse. When the office of Acadian Affairs was established, the executive director of the office worked in collaboration with the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

In order to understand our linguistic minority situation, the executive director of Acadian Affairs should, where possible, be Acadian with French as their mother tongue. He or she should report directly to the Minister of Acadian Affairs and have the status of deputy minister. The role of chair of the French-language Services Coordinating Committee should not be held by the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, but by the executive director at Acadian Affairs.

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The Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage provides envelopes of community funding specifically for African Nova Scotians, Mi'kmaq and Gaelic (and rightly so), but provides no funding specifically for Nova Scotia's Acadians. When we submit applications for community projects it is never entirely clear where the funding comes from. Sometimes it is split between provincial funding and funds from the Canada – Nova Scotia envelope, other times it comes from the province, and on other occasions it is split with funds from the Quebec – Nova Scotia Exchange envelope. Currently, we seem restricted to receiving most of our funding from the money collected from the Acadian licence plates. This money does not come from government, but from Acadians themselves. Clarification is needed on how the province funds applications for community projects it receives from the community. To do so, it would be useful to have an envelope of funding specifically for Acadians, and this funding should be administered by the office of Acadian Affairs.

The fact that we have an office of Acadian Affairs to this day is thanks a few Acadian politicians who were devoted to the Acadian cause and who collaborated with the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Ecosse to create the office of Acadian Affairs. With time, we got the *French-language Services Act*. Today, it is the Commission on French-language Services that oversees whether the Regulations of the Act are being adhered to.

A Community Advisory Committee or Council must be established within the office of Acadian Affairs as a matter of urgency, and the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, which speaks on behalf of Nova Scotia's Acadian population, must be part of this council.

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We would like to thank the Commission on French-language Services for having developed the translation system, the Acadie at a Glance program, French language training for provincial government employees and public servants, the *Bonjour!* program and promotion in French in the media. Most of the work that was performed by Acadian Affairs with respect to the *French-language Services Act* is now accomplished by the Commission on French-language Services.

That being said, Nova Scotia's Acadian population still has many concerns. With respect to the provincial government's engagement and services available in French for the community in Acadian regions, there is a lot of work to be done. The Municipality of Clare is a French-speaking municipality and its citizens should be able to receive most provincial services in French at the Access Nova Scotia Centre in Yarmouth. At the moment, it is humiliating to request services in French at the access centre in Yarmouth.

To conclude, we ask that a bilingual member of staff be designated at the Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman to handle complaints relating to the *French-language Services Act*. This will ensure that there is a contact person who understands the unique realities of Nova Scotia's Acadians and francophones and who can respond to their concerns with respect to French-language services.

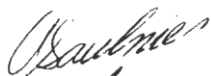
Submitted by

**Original signed by**

Elaine Thimot, executive director  
Société acadienne de Clare  
and the members of the Board of Directors

Elaine Thimot, executive director of the Société acadienne de Clare and the members of the Board of Directors:











*vice presidente*

The recommendations submitted by the Société acadienne de Clare to the ministerial committee on Acadian Affairs on behalf of the Société acadienne de Clare:

1. The executive director at Acadian Affairs should remain in regular contact with the executive director of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Ecosse.
2. The mother tongue of the executive director of Acadian Affairs must be French.
3. The executive director of Acadian Affairs must report directly to the Minister of Acadian Affairs and have the status of deputy minister.
4. The role of chair of the French-language Services Coordinating Committee must not be held by the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage but by the executive director of Acadian Affairs.
5. The Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage should have an envelope of community funding specifically for Nova Scotia's Acadians and this envelope must be administered by the office of Acadian Affairs.
6. The Municipality of Clare is a French-speaking municipality and its citizens should be able to receive most provincial government services in French at the Access Nova Scotia Centre in Yarmouth.
7. Finally, we ask that a bilingual member of staff be designated at the Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman to handle complaints relating to the *French-language Services Act*.