
**FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES POLICY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA**

POLICY STATEMENT

The Department of Education is committed to providing access to government information, programs and services in French for Acadian and Francophone Nova Scotians. The services provided by the Department of Education will contribute to the preservation and growth of the Acadian and Francophone community.

DEFINITIONS

In this policy,

- *Department* means Department of Education, unless otherwise specified;
- *Formal correspondence* means letters, on departmental letterhead, between the Department of Education as a whole, and Acadian and Francophone stakeholder groups. It may also include electronic communication when such communication contains directives or information pertaining to French-language service delivery from the Department, or when the health, safety or security of members of the public may be compromised if such communication is not provided in French;
- *French-language Services Coordinator* refers to the person assigned to coordinate public French-language services for the Department of Education;
- *French-language Services Resource List* refers to a list of individuals within the Department of Education who have acknowledged their ability and willingness to provide services in French. The French-language Services Resource List will be compiled and updated annually by the French-language Services Coordinator.
- *French-language Courtesy Responses List* refers to a list of phrases that can be used by staff members who do not speak French to give basic courtesy responses to clients requesting communication in French, either on the telephone or face-to-face;
- *Translation resources* refers to translators employed by the Department of Education. Any person requiring translation can access the translators by contacting the Acadian and French-language Services Branch.
- *Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP)* refers to the Conseil scolaire as an institution and includes the students, the parents, the staff and elected members of this school board.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The purposes of this Policy are to:

- Provide direction and guidance to Departmental employees to support compliance with the requirements of the Nova Scotia French-language Services Act and Regulations
- Clarify French-language requirements for working groups, committees and other groups under Departmental direction

APPLICATION

The Policy applies to all branches of the Department of Education.

POLICY DIRECTIVES

Communicating with the public

To ensure effective communication in the delivery of government services in French, consideration will be given to the complexity and importance of the information to be communicated, and the context in which the communication takes place.

All written correspondence in French that is received by the Department shall be replied to in French.

Staff members are expected to take reasonable and appropriate steps to make members of the public aware that services are available in French and English.

Staff will accommodate requests to communicate orally in French, either by phone or in person, to the greatest extent possible.

All information material issued to the public simultaneously in French and English must display a bilingual provincial logo, in those cases where a logo would normally be used.

Communication with Acadian and Francophone stakeholder organizations

Formal correspondence between the Department and Acadian/Francophone stakeholder groups must be in French.

Divisions administering province-wide questionnaires shall ensure that they are administered in both English and French whenever there are French-speaking stakeholders involved.

Information material

- Development Process – When the Department, for publishing purposes, seeks to obtain endorsements or quotes supporting province-wide programs or activities, the presence and profile of the CSAP shall be taken into account. Those employees who are responsible for developing the material should consult with the Acadian and French-language Services Branch during the planning or drafting process. Translation requirements and the need for simultaneous release of the English and French versions should also be addressed.

- Translation Process – Any learning resource or information document intended to be used by the CSAP must be provided in French. Any information material intended for the public must be translated if it meets any of the following conditions: 1) the information material is of particular relevance to the Acadian and Francophone community; 2) the information material pertains to French-language service delivery by the Department; 3) failure to provide the information in French may compromise the health, safety or security of members of the public. In case of any doubt, the preferred approach shall be to translate the document.
- Release Process – For the purpose of determining the order in which documents are to be translated, priority will be given to those information materials that meet any of the above-mentioned conditions. In such cases, the English and French versions of the document shall be released simultaneously.

Any exceptions must be approved by the deputy minister in consultation with the executive director of the Acadian and French Language Services Branch.

Public consultations

French-language services must be provided during at least one session of every series of province-wide public meetings conducted by the Department for the purpose of consulting the public. This does not apply if, in the opinion of the Deputy Minister or the Minister, members of the Acadian and Francophone community have been able to participate in the public consultation process by other appropriate means.

When conducting reviews or public consultations, the Department should consider French-language capacity when selecting internal and external reviewers or consultants.

GUIDELINES

Written correspondence received in French

Staff members who are tasked with formulating responses to French correspondence, and who are unable to understand the text sufficiently to do so, should request a formal translation of the correspondence into English. If the response is prepared in English, it is expected that staff request a formal translation of the response into French, using the translation resources of the Department. The final French version shall be forwarded to the author for coordinating signature.

Oral communication in French

When accommodating requests to communicate orally in French by phone, staff members who are not sufficiently fluent to respond in French are encouraged to provide a courtesy response, using the French-language Courtesy Responses List. This list will be compiled by the French-language Services Coordinator and provided to senior managers for distribution to their staff. If a staff member is not able to respond in French and the courtesy response does not sufficiently address the needs of the individual requesting French communication, the call will be referred to a bilingual staff member.

In the case of a face-to-face exchange, a staff person who is not sufficiently fluent to respond in French should contact a bilingual staff person, using the Department's French-language Services Resource List, to attend to the individual requesting communication.

Committees and working groups

When Department staff are working with staff of Acadian and Francophone organizations in the context of committees or working groups, communication from Department staff should be in the normal working language of that committee or working group.

INTERPRETATION AND RESOLUTION

Employees who require clarification or direction regarding the interpretation or application of this policy shall consult with their supervisor and/or the Departmental French-language Services Coordinator.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Minister/Deputy Minister is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

REVIEW

The Department of Education shall review this policy periodically to ensure compliance with the Government of Nova Scotia's French-language Services Act and Regulations, and to ensure it continues to support the effective operations of the Department.

EFFECTIVE DATE: JUNE 1, 2009

APPROVED BY DEPUTY MINISTER: _____

DATE APPROVED: _____

Enquiries:

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