

## French-Language Services Policy

### Policy Statement

Elections Nova Scotia (ENS) is committed to providing high quality and accessible service to all stakeholders, including voters, the public and political participants at all times and especially during electoral events. ENS strives to provide members of Nova Scotia's Acadian and Francophone community access to a reasonably comparable level of service to that of the Anglophone community.

To achieve this, ENS has adopted the active offer concept, whereby the services and public communications materials that are available in French are evident, and easily accessible to the public. During electoral events ENS actively offers public communications materials in French in all electoral districts in the province and strives to provide French-language services at voting locations within those electoral districts defined by the Electoral Boundaries Commission as exceptional districts, having a large Acadian and Francophone population and at voting locations in other electoral districts where there is a predominance of Francophone voters where practicable.

### Policy Objectives:

- To meet the requirements of the Nova Scotia *French-language Services Act* and French-language Services Regulations by:
  - Replying in French to all written correspondence that is received by ENS in French;
  - Ensuring that all public material issued by ENS in French displays our French logo;
  - Taking reasonable and appropriate steps to make members of the public aware that services are available in French and English.
- To define and deliver the appropriate level of service and public communications materials that ENS can reasonably provide in French to Nova Scotia's Acadian and Francophone community.

### Scope

This policy applies to the following:

- The delivery of any correspondence received by ENS in French;
- The production of public communications materials as outlined in ENS's Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy; and

- The delivery of electoral services by ENS in French when possible to stakeholders (including voters, the general public and political participants), with an emphasis on delivery during electoral events.

Although social media posts and ENS’s website are public communications tools, the ability for ENS to provide content in French through these mediums is challenging due to the time required for translation. The French-Language Communications Guidelines requires that social media posts in French be released at the same time as the English content. For this reason, social media posts and website content are currently out of scope for this policy. ENS will work to provide social media and website content in French in the future through our Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy.

Personalized voter information cards (commonly known as a VIC), which are mailed to electors are beyond the scope of this policy. ENS has no means to determine if individual electors would prefer to receive their VIC in French. The time-sensitive parameters for production of the VICs currently limits our ability to achieve translation.

The translation of internal communications and staff materials and the delivery of training programs for election workers and candidates’ official agents in French is currently beyond the scope of this policy. All internal staff materials and training programs will only be provided in English.

## **Authority**

In developing its French-language services policy, ENS sought guidance from the Nova Scotia *French-language Services Act* and French-language Services Regulations, which layout requirements for public bodies when providing service to Acadian and francophone communities in the Province.

Nova Scotia *French-language Services Act* and Regulations:

Act: <https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/frenchla.htm>

Regs: <https://novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/flsregs.html>

*Section 12 of the French-language Services Regulations, communicating with the public, states that:*

Each designated public institution must ensure the following:

- (a) that all written correspondence in French that is received by the designated public institution is replied to in French;
- (b) that all information material issued to the public simultaneously in French and English displays a bilingual provincial logo;
- (c) that reasonable and appropriate steps are taken to make members of the public aware that services are available in French and English.

*Section 13 of the French-language Services Regulations, information material, states that:*

In determining which of its information material that is intended for the general public will be issued simultaneously in French and English; a designated public institution must give priority to information material to which one or more of the following apply:

- (a) the information material is of particular relevance to the Acadian and francophone community;
- (b) the information material pertains to French-language service delivery from the designated public institution;
- (c) failure to provide the information in French may compromise the health, safety or security of members of the public.

In the development of this policy, EHS has also considered the Government of Nova Scotia’s French-Language Communications Guidelines, which provides a framework for public bodies when communicating in French with the Acadian and Francophone community.

## Definitions

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Acadian and Francophone community	The Acadian and Francophone community in Nova Scotia includes 34,585 people with French as a mother tongue (3.8% of the population), according to 2011 Census Data from Statistics Canada.
Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy	ENS has developed an Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy to support the provision of as much public election collateral as possible over time in French to ensure the elector needs of the Acadian Francophone community are met.
Active offer	The active offer of French-language services means that the public are proactively informed when communications materials or service is available in French. Its purpose is to ensure that the public feels comfortable expressing themselves in French when interacting with ENS.
Electoral event	For the purposes of this policy an electoral event refers to the writ period for a provincial general election or by-election taking place in Nova Scotia.
Exceptional Electoral Districts	The 2018-2019 Electoral Boundaries Commission defined the electoral districts of Argyle, Clare, Richmond, and Preston as exceptional electoral districts due to their representation of the Acadian and Black communities in the province.
Internal communications materials	Electoral collateral developed for internal use only by ENS headquarters staff or field staff. These materials are not for public use. This includes training programs developed for field workers. For purposes of this

	policy, internal communications materials are out scope and will not be provided in French.
Public communications materials	Printed electoral collateral such as posters, brochures, and oaths developed for public use during electoral events. For purposes of this policy public communications materials does not include social media, website posts, and voter information cards which are out of scope for this policy.
Electoral Services	The delivery of in-person face-to-face services by ENS staff and election workers to stakeholders during an electoral event. This includes assistance at voting locations and returning offices, as well as at mobile and community polls and the write in ballot teams.
Stakeholders	For purposes of this policy stakeholders includes voters or electors, the general public, and political participants.

**Policy Overview**

ENS has established this French-Language Services Policy to enhance the delivery of public communications and services in French over time. This policy is supported by a three phased Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy. The goal of ENS’s Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy is to provide as much public communications and service in French as is reasonably possible to ensure the elector needs of the Acadian Francophone community are being met. Phase 1 of the outreach strategy is in force for the 41<sup>st</sup> Provincial General Election (PGE).

**Accountability and Responsibilities**

The following are the major roles and responsibilities under the French-Language Services Policy.

**Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and ENS Management**

- The CEO and ENS management are responsible to ensure the directives outlined in this policy are implemented and followed to actively delivery public communications and services in French.
- The CEO and ENS management are responsible for the oversight of ENS’s Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy to support this policy.

**ENS Headquarters Staff**

- ENS headquarters staff are responsible to follow the directives outlined in this policy to ensure public communications and services are actively offered in French.
- ENS headquarters staff are responsible to ensure translation is considered when developing public communications materials.

- ENS headquarters staff are responsible to work with returning officers to ensure that the electoral services are available in French in exceptional electoral districts with a significant Acadian population.

### **Field staff - Returning Officers and Election Workers**

- All field staff are responsible for actively offering public communications and services in French as outlined in this policy.
- Returning Officers in exceptional electoral districts are responsible for the recruitment of Francophone field staff to ensure an adequate level of electoral services are available in French in their electoral district.

## **Policy Directives**

### **Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy**

- ENS has established a three-phased Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy to support this policy. This policy supports the implementation of the first phase of the policy for the 41<sup>st</sup> PGE.

### **French Correspondence**

- Written correspondence, including emails received by ENS in French, will be replied to in French, in accordance with Section 12 on the Provincial Regulations.
- ENS will work with Provincial French Language Services to ensure any French correspondence is appropriately translated.
- If a letter has been received in both English and French, the letter may be responded to in either language or both.
- When an English application form is received completed in French, the written reply should be in French if the application normally triggers a written reply.
- All French correspondence will be placed on ENS's French letterhead.
- The delivery of correspondence in French is aligned with phase 1 of ENS's Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy

### **Active Offering of French Language Services**

- An acceptable quantity of public communications materials will be available in French at all returning offices and voting locations across the province. The appropriate number of French materials will be determined in phase one of ENS's Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy
- Signage will be developed and posted at all voting locations to indicate that public communications materials are available in French.
- Returning offices and all voting location located in an exceptional electoral district, must be available to provide electoral services in French if requested.

- Signage will be developed and posted for returning offices and voting locations located in an exceptional electoral district to actively show that electoral services are available in French if requested.
- The active offer of French language services will be aligned with phase 1 of ENS’s Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy

**Delivery of Public Communications Materials in French**

- ENS will provide as much public communications materials in French as is reasonable in each phase as identified through the Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy.
- ENS will maintain and inventory of public communications materials available in French.
- ENS will ensure translation of current public communications materials is up to date.
- ENS will ensure translation is considered when developing new public communications materials.
- ENS will ensure that any communications materials related to public safety during an electoral event will be available in French.
- The ENS French logo will be used on all translated public communications materials.
- Although social media posts, website content, and voter information cards are currently out of scope. ENS will work to provide social media and website content in French in the future phases of the Acadian and Francophone Outreach Strategy.

**Delivery of Electoral Services in French**

- During an electoral event, returning offices in exceptional electoral districts will recruit at least one core staff member that is bilingual.
- In addition, any voting location located in an exceptional electoral district must have a French-speaking election officer available to provide electoral services in French if requested.

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