



NOVA SCOTIA

Human Rights Commission

2015/16 French-Language Services Plan

Message from the Director & CEO

It is my pleasure to present the 2015/16 French-language Services Plan for the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. The Commission remains committed to fulfilling the Government's obligations pursuant to the *French-Language Services Act* and Regulations.

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission plays a special role in protecting the well-being of Nova Scotia's Acadian and Francophone communities. The Act with which we are entrusted, *The Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*, promotes and protects the rights of members of these communities as they seek to thrive in all aspects of life in Nova Scotia. Our mandate in this regard compels us to serve the Acadian and Francophone communities to the best of our ability. This means maintaining and expanding our capacity to provide services in French.

I am pleased to report that we have maintained our capacity to provide services in French. As a result, clients can interact with our staff in French at all stages of our human rights dispute resolution process. In addition, we constantly seek opportunities to expand our interaction and contact with members of the Acadian and Francophone communities. The upcoming period will see increased involvement in work to support the expansion of French language services offered by the City of Halifax, and our Commissioners will be visiting an Acadian region of Nova Scotia to learn about the language and culture of that region.

Attentiveness to language and culture is critical to ensure the long term success and growth of both. All staff and Commissioners of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission are committed to supporting the provision of French language services in Nova Scotia.

Tracey Williams, Director & CEO

Responses to French Requests (Written and Oral)

Inquiry / Intake Services

The Human Rights Commission responds to phone inquiries and provides information to the public on human rights issues mainly through its phone service in the Halifax office, through distribution of print material and the website. Staff are directed to provide service in French to all callers and walk-in clients who request or need service in French.

Beginning in 2014, all French-speaking intake staff were directed to make an active offer of French language services. Two of our three intake team members can communicate in French both orally and in writing.

Written Correspondence

All written correspondence in French received by the Commission is replied to in French. The *Human Rights Act* is available in French.

Investigation / Resolution

Complaint investigation is a highly technical process that requires knowledge of and the ability to describe investigation techniques, legal theory and Commission policies. French speaking clients can interact with the Commission in their own language at both the investigation and Board of Inquiry stage.

Resolution of complaints through restorative settlements is also an important feature of the dispute resolution process. When necessary, settlements can be negotiated and documented in French.

Training / Public Events / Media

Training and public events are generally conducted in English. One Commissioner has French as a first language and is available to conduct public speaking engagements in French. The CEO has CBC Level French capacity. Media releases involving Board of Inquiry decisions or other matters of relevance are distributed in French.

French-Language Service Inventory

The Commission currently employs 24 people and operates provincially with three offices: a central office in Halifax and regional offices in Sydney and Digby. The Commission constantly strives to increase the capacity of its staff to provide services in French.

Currently ten Commissioners, serving on a part-time basis, come from diverse backgrounds and from different regions of the province. One Commissioner is a member of the Acadian community. There are a number of staff who can communicate in French and competency levels vary. Two Human Rights Officers working with Inquiry/Intake service are functionally bilingual, and the CEO is bilingual. In addition, the Commission has retained the services of a French-speaking lawyer who can serve our French-speaking clients at the Board of Inquiry level.

The Commission has a number of brochures available in French:

- *Human Rights Act* - Loi sur les droits de la personne
- *Rapport sur le profilage racial des consommateurs de Nouvelle-Écosse*

- Basic Guide to the work of the Commission - Guide de base sur le travail de la Commission des droits de la personne de la Nouvelle-Écosse
- For Employers, a guide for drafting job application forms and interview questions - Pour les employeurs, guide de rédaction des formulaires de demande d'emploi et des questions d'entrevue
- Workshops and Training through the Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion Division - Ateliers et formation offerts par la Division des relations interraciales et de l'action positive de la Commission des droits de la personne de la Nouvelle-Écosse
- Plan for Dispute Resolution of Aboriginal Complaints - Plan pour l'investigation et la résolution des plaintes déposées par des Autochtones and the Executive Summary - Résumé

French-Language Services Coordinator

The French Language Services Coordinator for the Nova Scotia Human Rights

Commission is Pam Osborne. She can be reached at pam.osborne@novascotia.ca.

Table 1 – Progress in Reaching Goals and Objectives for 2014/15

Human Rights Commission

Objectives	Department Goals and Objectives – 2014-2015	Planned Measures – 2014-2015	Progress in Reaching Goals and Objectives 2014-2015
<u>Objective 1: Leadership and Policy Direction</u>	<p>Continue to meet responsibilities by increasing familiarity with the obligations under the Act and Regulations.</p> <p>Submit progress report.</p>	<p>Commission Senior Management Team reviews the French-language Services Act and Regulations.</p> <p>Progress report is filed.</p>	<p>French Language Services Act is posted on employee notice board.</p> <p>Senior Management Team familiar with FLSA.</p> <p>Most staff and Senior Managers attended an Acadie at a Glance workshop to familiarize themselves with Acadian history and culture.</p> <p>Progress report has been filed.</p>
<u>Objective 2 –Availability and accessibility of French language services</u>	<p>Hold a Commission meeting in a French-speaking community to raise awareness of the Commission and its work, or organize an opportunity for Senior staff to visit French-speaking communities.</p>	<p>A meeting is held in a French-speaking community.</p>	<p>The Chief Executive Officer and the Manager of Dispute Resolution toured and held meetings in the Clare region of Nova Scotia with many French speaking individuals and organizations. This meeting will pave the way for a Commission meeting to be held in this region in the future.</p>
	<p>The website review includes a plan to include select French content.</p>	<p>Core elements of the Commission’s revised website are available in French.</p>	<p>The review of the web site has not yet been carried out. This initiative is awaiting necessary prior work on developing a new brand for Human Rights in Nova Scotia.</p>
	<p>Clients are presented with an Active Offer to speak French when they contact the Inquiry Line.</p>	<p>Every initial greeting includes a greeting in French when the Inquiry Line is answered.</p>	<p>Two of three Intake staff can function in French and provide an active offer of French to all callers.</p>

Objectives	Department Goals and Objectives – 2014-2015	Planned Measures – 2014-2015	Progress in Reaching Goals and Objectives 2014-2015
<u>Objective 3 –Community Engagement and Outreach</u>	The Commission will engage, through community-based conversations, with members from the Acadian and Francophone communities.	Members of Acadian and Francophone communities have been invited to participate in the Commission's new "Community Conversations" initiative.	This program remains under development. When it is deployed, the Acadian and French-speaking areas of Nova Scotia will be priority regions to host a Community Conversation.

Table 2 – Goals, Objectives and Measures for 2015-2016

Human Rights Commission

Objectives	Department Goals and Objectives – 2015-2016	Planned Measures – 2015-2016
Objective 1: Leadership and Policy Direction	Continue to meet responsibilities by increasing familiarity with the obligations under the Act and Regulations. Submit progress report	Commission Senior Management Team reviews the French-language Services Act and Regulations. Progress report is filed.
<u>Objective 2 –Availability and accessibility of French language services</u>	Hold a Commission meeting in a French-speaking region to raise awareness of the Commission and its work. Provide opportunities for Commissioners to interact with local officials and community leaders to enhance understanding of the culture.	A Commission meeting has been held in a French region within Nova Scotia. Senior Commission Officials have met with Francophone community leaders and have increased their knowledge of those communities and their unique needs and strengths.
	Management team continues to use French and to promote its usage throughout the organization.	French speaking staff members are used as a resource by managers and staff when necessary. Staff attend French language training when funded seats are available.

Objectives	Department Goals and Objectives – 2015-2016	Planned Measures – 2015-2016
	The website review includes a plan to include select French content.	Core elements of the Commission’s revised website are available in French.
	Clients are presented with an Active Offer to speak French when they contact the Inquiry Line.	Every initial greeting includes a greeting in French when the Inquiry Line is answered by French-speaking staff.
<u>Objective 3 –Community Engagement and Outreach</u>	The Commission will engage, through community-based conversations, with members from the Acadian and Francophone communities.	Members of Acadian and Francophone communities have been invited to participate in the Commission’s new “Community Conversations” initiative.
	In connection with an ongoing Board of Inquiry matter involving French language services with the City of Halifax, the Commission will support ongoing efforts to increase French language services available from the City of Halifax.	The Human Rights Commission is an active and contributing member to the Halifax Table de concertation - Promotion des relations avec la communauté acadienne et francophone.