



NOVA SCOTIA – QUEBEC STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE DIVISION
DRAFT UPDATED MAY 2024

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Note: For a more detailed overview of the program, including the application and selection process, please see [Nova Scotia-Quebec Student Exchange Program: Program Guide](#)

All involved in the exchange program should reviewed the detailed list of roles and responsibilities found in [Nova Scotia-Quebec Student Exchange Program: Roles and Responsibilities](#)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Nova Scotia-Quebec Four-Month Student Exchange Program is designed to further second-language skills development and cultural awareness through an exchange between French Second Language high school students from Nova Scotia and English Second Language high school students from Quebec.

From mid-September to mid-November, participating Quebec students live with Nova Scotia host families and attend the same school as their exchange partner.

From early February to early April, participating Nova Scotia students live with and attend the same school as their exchange partner in Quebec.

This Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development French Second Language Programs initiative is supported by the 2024-2028 [Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on French-language Services](#)

Participants in this exchange program can apply for an additional high school credit. An official application must be submitted by April 15th prior to the school year in which the exchange takes place. For more information, and the application form, please see:

<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/dpslf/en/cultural-experience-12-credit>

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES

APPLICATION

1. Students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) complete the online application on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website: <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/dpslf/en/nova-scotia-quebec-student-exchange>
2. Once the application is complete, the liaison teacher informs the French Second Language Coordinator of potential participants.
3. Students submit the completed consent form and the \$100 non-refundable registration fee to the liaison teacher.

While an application does not guarantee participation in the program, students who apply should begin planning their timetable for the next school year to better accommodate the exchange period in Quebec.

SELECTION

1. Upon receiving the consent form from the student, the selection committee conducts an interview with the candidate and their parent(s)/guardian(s) at the residence where the student from Quebec will be staying.
2. Following the interview process, the selection committee (made up of the liaison teacher and/or the French Second Language Coordinator and/or the school principal) decides whether the candidate is eligible to participate in the program.

To be considered for the exchange, a student must:

- be attending public school in Nova Scotia
- be enrolled in a French Second Language program
- be between the ages of 15 and 17 during the exchange year (students who turn 18 during the exchange period are not eligible)
- have approval from the liaison teacher, the school, the regional centre for education, and their parent(s)/guardian(s)
- be willing to live in any part of Quebec
- provide the incoming exchange student with suitable accommodation, family life, and social setting
- be able to organise their timetable to accommodate the two-month period in Quebec
- be recommended by the selection committee (following the application/interview process)

PRIOR TO THE EXCHANGE

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES PRIOR TO THE EXCHANGE

Prior to the exchange, **participating students will:**

- participate in an initial information session
- complete and submit all forms and documentation within the required timeframe
- participate in a home interview with the liaison teacher and French Second Language Coordinator
- if interested, apply for the EXC 12 credit by April 15th and participate in an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) with the French Second Language Coordinator
- communicate with their exchange partner (after June 1st)

Prior to the exchange, **parent(s)/guardian(s) will:**

- participate in an initial information session
- review all program information/documentation
- complete and submit all forms within the required timeframe
- participate in a home interview with the liaison teacher and French Second language coordinator
- complete a Criminal Record, Vulnerable Sector Check and a Child Abuse Register check, and ensure all members of the household 18 years or older have done the same
- inform the Provincial Coordinator as soon as possible if their child can no longer participate in the program
- inform the Provincial Coordinator of any living arrangement, family dynamic, or other significant changes that may affect the exchange
- review behavioural expectations with their child
- prepare space for the visiting Quebec student – a separate bedroom is not essential, but a separate bed is required, as is the availability of a private space where the exchange student may be alone if desired

- communicate with the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the Quebec student and inform them about household rules
- notify their insurance company that an additional person will be living in their home for a period of two month

PLANNING AHEAD ACADEMICALLY

It is important for Nova Scotia students to plan their courses for the upcoming year with special care and attention. Before the end of the current school year, students should consult with their teachers, guidance counsellor, liaison teacher and school administrators to ensure that their schedule is structured in such a way that they receive a full year of credits. The schedule for the following year should be completed by the end of June. Nova Scotia students are required to take an English course at each high school grade level, so it is encouraged that participating students take their English course during the first semester of the exchange year.

Prior to leaving for Quebec, students are expected to develop written plans with teachers for the completion of Nova Scotia course requirements. Students are expected to follow the agreed upon plans for meeting the requirements for Nova Scotia courses. Students will have a full schedule in the Quebec school, and this will limit their ability to complete Nova Scotia coursework. The time in Quebec should be fully devoted to participation in the exchange. Therefore, it is recommended that students complete most of their Nova Scotia course requirements before and after the Quebec exchange period. With good planning, students should not be overwhelmed with schoolwork while in Quebec or upon their return to Nova Scotia in April.

CORRESPONDENCE

Communication between families helps develop important ties and contributes to the success of the exchange. Correspondence between Nova Scotia and Quebec students and families should begin once both parties have received confirmation of a pairing from the Provincial Coordinator, but not before June 1st.

As part of the first correspondence, students should let their exchange partner and host family know about themselves (typical daily activities, chores, weekend activities), their family, their school (student handbook, courses available, extra-curricular activities) and their community (location, population, cultural and sports activities, clubs, and recreation facilities). Providing photos is recommended.

When students receive communication from their exchange partner they should reply in a timely manner. If a student has not received a written response from their exchange partner by July, they should inform their liaison teacher and the Nova Scotia Provincial Coordinator, and they may wish to try calling. If either student has a different summer address it is important to inform the exchange partner so that communication can be maintained.

It is important for students to involve their family in the communication(s) with their exchange partner and host family, as families play a key role in the exchange.

EXCHANGE PERIOD IN NOVA SCOTIA

ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

Arrival

Nova Scotia students and families must be present at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport to greet the Quebec exchange student in September. Once in the home, Nova Scotia students should help their exchange partner settle in by offering to help unpack, giving a tour of the home and going over household rules and routines. The arrival of the Quebec exchange student should be treated as a special event.

Planning a get together, dinner, or family night, for example, will make the exchange student feel welcome. It is also important for Nova Scotia students to remember that their exchange partner may be tired and overwhelmed with the change in location and language, so allowing some time to relax is recommended.

The first few weeks

During the two-month exchange period in Nova Scotia (and particularly the first few weeks), the key responsibility of the Nova Scotia family is to welcome the Quebec student and make them feel comfortable in the home and community. It can be stressful for a teenager to leave their familiar environment and live with a new family, and this is usually compounded by language/communication challenges. While some students from Quebec may be able to express themselves quite well in English, it is important to note that nuances of meaning and cultural understanding may require special attention and assistance.

HOME LIFE

Family Rules

It may be beneficial for Nova Scotia students to make their exchange partner a short, written list of house rules and expectations. They should be made aware of family routines, mealtimes, curfews, chores, and family activities.

Communication

It is very important for Nova Scotia students and families to communicate clearly and directly with the Quebec exchange student. In the early stages of the exchange, host families should verify that the exchange student understands what is being said. The exchange student should also be encouraged to communicate with the host family if they are having any concerns or problems.

If after the first few weeks, the host family notices that the exchange student is spending a lot of time alone or in their room they should ensure that everything is alright. It is also encouraged that the host family contact the exchange student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to express their concerns. Host families may wish to involve the liaison teacher to help communicate and check on the exchange student.

Language Learning

When a student becomes capable of expressing themselves in a second language, it is a great accomplishment; however, this may take time. The family environment, along with the student's motivation to learn, will help determine the rate of progress. The exchange students from Quebec should always be encouraged to communicate in English.

To help the exchange student learn English, here are some suggestions for host families:

- dictate grocery lists and have the student write down the items
- expose the student to English television programs, movies and music
- play games, such as Scrabble or cards, that develop vocabulary and encourage communication
- encourage exchange student to communicate in English when in the community (restaurants, drive-thrus, community centres)

When learning a second language, people tend to tire very quickly. It is recommended that Nova Scotia students give their exchange partners the opportunity to be alone, to sleep or to play sports and participate in non-conversational activities.

Friends

Nova Scotia students should introduce their exchange partner to their circle of friends. During the exchange period, the Quebec exchange student will make their own friends, and this will allow both partners to spend some time apart which is conducive to a positive exchange.

SCHOOL LIFE

When the Quebec student attends school in Nova Scotia for the first time, the first person they should meet is the liaison teacher, followed by school administration and the guidance counsellor. Nova Scotia students should provide a tour of the school and inform their exchange partner of the school rules, routines, timetable, cafeteria, and gymnasium. Until a timetable is established, the Quebec student should attend the classes of their Nova Scotia exchange partner. Once the Quebec student's timetable is complete, Nova Scotia students should accompany their exchange partner to their classes for the first time and introduce them to their teachers.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

If a medical emergency arises with the exchange student, host families should contact the exchange student's family as well as the liaison teacher as soon as possible. The liaison teacher will then contact the Regional French Second Language Coordinator and the Provincial Coordinator.

In the event of a declared disaster or emergency, the host family has a responsibility to provide safety and security for the exchange student until the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development can make arrangements for their transportation home. The exchange student and their host family should attempt to contact the Provincial Coordinator to confirm their safety. The exchange student should also contact their family in Quebec as soon as possible. The

Provincial Coordinator will make every effort to contact the exchange student and their host family as soon as possible.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE EXCHANGE PERIOD IN NOVA SCOTIA

Participating students will:

- be present for their Quebec exchange partner
- introduce the Quebec exchange partner to school staff
- develop written plans with teachers for the completion of required coursework
- comply with all rules related to the program

Parent(s)/guardian(s) will:

- commit to ensuring the custody, supervision, and education of the visiting student, under conditions that are in the student's best interests and that respect the student's rights
- meet the Quebec exchange student at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport upon their arrival in Nova Scotia, and accompany them back to the airport on the day of their return flight
- provide a warm and welcoming environment
- treat the exchange student as part of the family and invite and encourage participation in family events
- provide three balanced meals a day and laundry facilities
- clearly explain house rules and expectations
- provide suitable cultural and recreational experiences (this may include travel within the province, local sight-seeing, etc. – costs should be covered by the host family)
- host the Quebec student in a completely Anglophone context and use English to communicate when engaging in family activities (i.e. television shows, conversations, etc.)
- inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the visiting Quebec student, the Provincial Coordinator and the liaison teacher if they wish to travel to another province during their hosting period and ensure all agree to the arrangements. International travel is not permitted during the exchange period.
- devote time to spend with the Quebec student, while at the same time allowing the student a certain degree of autonomy
- ensure that teachers are aware that their own child will be absent during the two-month exchange period in Quebec
- ensure that their own child has adequate medical insurance coverage for the two-month exchange period in Quebec

EXCHANGE PERIOD IN QUEBEC

INSURANCE

The parent(s)/guardian(s) of Nova Scotia students are responsible for obtaining any desired medical and liability insurance.

The Canada Health Act requires that the provinces and territories extend medically necessary hospital and physician coverage to their eligible residents during temporary absences from the province or territory (see: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/medi-assur/faq-eng.php#a8>). Sometimes there is a requirement for patients to pay 'up front' and seek reimbursement from their home provincial or territorial health insurance plan. The provision of additional benefits (e.g. prescription drugs, ground, and air ambulance services) that provinces and territories provide are generally **not** portable outside one's home province/territory.

Most private health insurance plans provide coverage for ambulance services, prescription drugs and other additional benefits provided outside the home province/territory. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development recommends that parent(s)/guardian(s) obtain supplemental medical insurance for their child for the duration of the exchange period in Quebec if they do not already have adequate coverage through a private plan.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) should also notify their insurance company that an additional person will be living in their home for a period of two months.

PREPARATION FOR DEPARTURE

Preparation Suggestions

After the Quebec exchange partner returns home, Nova Scotia students will need to complete the final preparations for their own departure. The following are some suggestions to help prepare:

- students may want to start watching French television and listening to French radio and podcasts
- students should ask their exchange partner about the local weather for the duration of the exchange, and pack accordingly
- if a student has been asked to provide a presentation to their class upon their return from Quebec, or has applied for the Cultural Experience 12 credit, they may wish to consider what items or images they want to collect to include in their presentation
- students might consider giving their Quebec host school a tentative list of courses they would like to take (keeping in mind possible restrictions)
- students should determine the frequency in which communication with their family and friends will take place while they are away
- families should develop a weekly/monthly budget for personal expenses and discuss which form of payment students will be using most, i.e. cash, credit, debit
- students may wish to have medical and dental checkups done prior to departure

- students should ensure that they have all necessary medications for the entire exchange period

Departure Documents

At the time of departure, Nova Scotia students should have with them:

- a copy of their electronic plane ticket (it is important that students check with the air carrier prior to departure to ensure that there are no schedule changes)
- their Nova Scotia health card
- details of their insurance coverage and emergency contact information
- a passport or government-issued photo identification card
- sufficient funds for their travel (a bank card is recommended)

It is suggested that students have a suitcase with wheels to better facilitate transportation. It is also very important that baggage is labelled with the student's name, and Quebec exchange partner's address (and for the return trip, be sure to change this to the Nova Scotia address).

WHILE IN QUEBEC

Arrival

The first few weeks in Quebec may be a challenge as Nova Scotia students will be surrounded by new people and situations, and all communication will be in French. As they are becoming familiar with the area and family, students shouldn't hesitate to ask people to repeat information and names. It is important for students to indicate if they have not understood what is being said.

When students arrive, they should ask about the host family rules and expectations regarding mealtimes, dietary restrictions, chores, and daily household schedules.

Communication with Home

While it is expected that students will want to maintain contact with friends and family at home, it is suggested that they limit the amount of time they spend communicating in English in order to fully immerse themselves in the exchange experience. Consider setting aside a certain time or time limit to connect with home rather than ongoing communication throughout the day.

If Nova Scotia students are using their host family's phone to call home, they should organise payment for their long-distance charges.

Technology and Social Media

Students are encouraged to discuss with their exchange partner how to change settings in frequently used apps to French, and to find French accounts/content to engage with when using social media.

Friends

The Quebec exchange partner will introduce the Nova Scotia student to their friends, as well as people at school and in the community. It is important for students to try new activities and be open to meeting new people and making new friends. Keep in mind that new friendships take time and may be challenging while Nova Scotia students are still developing their French.

Language Learning

When improving French language skills in a total immersion setting, it is important for students to be patient. It is not possible to become bilingual overnight, so students must give themselves time and permission to make mistakes (as this is how people learn). It is also important for students to ask questions as their fluency will improve as people help with diverse vocabulary and structures.

When students do not know a word or phrase in French, it is natural for them to use English or a literal translation. Research in linguistics has determined that translation to English merely strengthens the English brain centre. To learn and develop the French language, students must use French in all aspects of their daily life. To take advantage of the language aspect of the exchange, students must be ready to:

- ask people to repeat themselves if they haven't understood
- learn the French names for objects
- learn and use French phrases that express common ideas
- refrain from translating into English

HOME LIFE

While in Quebec, it is important for Nova Scotia students to adjust to living with their host family. Their host family may have unfamiliar customs and traditions, but it is important to keep an open mind and try new things to gain the most from the exchange experience.

Nova Scotia students can better integrate into their host family by spending time with the host family and sharing traditions from home. The Quebec host family will want to learn all about the Nova Scotia exchange student, their family, their home community, their culture, and their customs. The Quebec host family may have different cultural viewpoints (religion, politics, etc.) than the Nova Scotia student's own family. If this is important to the Nova Scotia student, they should discuss it with their host family prior to their arrival in Quebec and make necessary arrangements.

Nova Scotia students should acknowledge and show appreciation when the host family does something nice for them and they should offer to help around the home. Nova Scotia students should keep in mind that they are guests in their host family's home and are representatives of their school, region, and province.

SCHOOL LIFE

When Nova Scotia students arrive at the Quebec school for the first time, they should have their exchange partner introduce them to the liaison teacher and the administrative staff. Students may

not receive a timetable right away and until it is finalised, they should attend their exchange partner's classes.

Quebec schools may not be able to meet Nova Scotia students' exact needs regarding course selection, as their system is quite different from the semester system in Nova Scotia. Students should take advantage of all that the Quebec school has to offer and request courses that they cannot take in Nova Scotia. Students should discuss any scheduling concerns with their liaison teacher in Nova Scotia who may refer the issue to the Nova Scotia guidance counsellor. With agreement from the student and parent(s)/guardian(s), the Provincial Coordinator will request that the Nova Scotia student be excused from English classes while in Quebec as this time may be used more productively to focus on other academic work. Although this option cannot be guaranteed, it is usually possible.

Clubs and teams can offer students the chance to make friends. It is suggested that students get involved in clubs and teams during their first week at school.

Students should remember that they are in Quebec as an exchange student and an ambassador for Nova Scotia. During the exchange period, they are expected to attend school on a regular basis, put forward their best effort with regards to schoolwork and demonstrate a positive attitude.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE EXCHANGE PERIOD IN QUEBEC

During the exchange period in Quebec, **participating students will:**

- meet expectations, of both their host family and their Nova Scotia family, regarding appropriate behaviour and conduct and comply with the Provincial Code of Conduct policy (found at <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/pubdocs-pdf/provincialschoolcodeofconduct.pdf>)
- respect the house rules of their host family in Quebec and participate in household activities
- be respectful and polite at all times
- bring any required medication
- make every effort to communicate in French to the best of their ability and limit conversation in English
- accept the schedule offered by the host school recognizing that Quebec schools do not have a semester system and do not offer the same programs as Nova Scotia
- attend all classes and attempt to complete coursework assigned by the host school
- participate in check-ins with liaison teacher and provincial coordinators

During the exchange period in Quebec, **parent(s)/guardian(s) will:**

- inform the liaison teacher of any major difficulty their child may encounter during the program
- ensure their child is provided with sufficient funds for personal expenses for their two-month stay in Quebec (\$800 is suggested, however families should create a rough budget in advance)
- ensure their child has any required medication(s) and communicate with host family about child's medical needs, if needed
- ensure that their child has adequate medical insurance coverage for the two-month exchange period in Quebec
- encourage their child to continue with the exchange, even though initial difficulties in adapting may be experienced
- inform the liaison teacher and the Provincial Coordinator (cultural.exchange@novascotia.ca) before any travel arrangements are made, if the Nova Scotia student must return home before the end of the exchange period
- not request a new host family once the exchange program has commenced - if a situation arises that cannot be resolved, the Provincial Coordinator will investigate the situation by consulting all parties involved

RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

GENERAL

The rules outlined below are part of the commitment that participating students and their families must make before participating in the Nova Scotia-Quebec Student Exchange Program.

It is essential that every member of the host family be supportive of the exchange program and committed to its success. It is important that each member of the family agree to participate in the exchange and actively support the new member of their family for the two-month period.

Students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) must respect religious and cultural differences and be willing to adapt to a different lifestyle. The Nova Scotia student must also respect the customs and beliefs of their Quebec host family.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development reserves the right to dismiss any student who fails to uphold any of the rules contained within the Provincial Code of Conduct policy. In the event that a student is dismissed from the program, the Nova Scotia parent(s)/guardian(s) are responsible for all additional expenses incurred, including return transportation costs.

FOR PARTICIPATING NOVA SCOTIA STUDENTS

While living in Quebec:

- students must comply with their host family's rules (mealtimes, curfews, etc.)
- use of drugs and/or alcohol/cannabis is strictly forbidden
- students are forbidden to drive a motor vehicle during the exchange period in the province of Quebec

- travel is only permitted if it is with adult members of the host family, the program coordinator, or is an outing supervised by a teacher from the host school - for all other travel arrangements, students must obtain written permission from the Nova Scotia Provincial Coordinator and their parent(s)/guardian(s). International travel is not permitted during the exchange period.
- employment is not permitted during the exchange period
- students must comply with the school rules, even if they differ from those of their home institution

CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions and concerns about the exchange can be addressed by the Nova Scotia Provincial Coordinator, who may be reached at the following addresses:

Email: cultural.exchange@novascotia.ca

Mail:

Provincial Coordinator of Nova Scotia – Quebec Student Exchange Program
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
French Second Language Division
Brunswick Place
2021 Brunswick Street
PO Box 578
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