

French language rules



Things to know

- Québec's Charter of the French Language sets out detailed rules that regulate (among other things) the language of:
 - computer software, including game software and operating systems, whether installed or being offered for sale.
 - toys and games.
 - product packaging.
 - standard form contracts.
 - public signs, posters and commercial advertising.
 - websites.
 - catalogues, brochures and similar documents.
 - customer service.
- Enforcement is generally limited to individuals and companies with a place of business in Québec, which means local resellers, distributors, and sales representatives involved in the marketing or sale of non-compliant products are the one at risk of prosecution.
- Federal laws impose limited [bilingual packaging and labelling requirements](#).

USEFUL RESOURCES

- [Québec's Charter of the French Language](#)
- osler.com**
- [Guide to doing business in Québec](#)

Things to do

- If a French version of computer software exists, make it available in Québec and offer it on terms that are no less favourable than the non-French version (except price where it reflects higher production or distribution costs) and ensure that it has technical characteristics that are at least equivalent.
- Ensure the availability of French versions of toys and games which require the use of a non-French vocabulary for their operation in the Québec market on no less favourable terms.
- Ensure that every inscription on a product, its container or wrapping, or on materials supplied with it, including the directions for use and warranty certificate, is drafted in French if the product is sold in Québec; limited exceptions apply including for some cultural or educational products and for inscriptions that are not merely printed onto product packaging.
- Ensure that standard contracts and related documents are drawn up in French; they may be drawn up in another language as well at the express wish of the parties.
- Ensure that public signs, posters and commercial advertising in Québec are at least in French (with the exception of recognized Canadian trade-marks which may appear exclusively in English provided that a French version of the mark has not been registered in Canada) and that the French version is “markedly predominant”.
- Ensure sufficient presence of French on exterior signage of physical premises, including storefront signage in indoor shopping complexes.
- If you have a place of business in Québec, ensure that the version of your website directed at the Canadian market has equivalent French and English versions, at least in respect of products marketed in Québec.
- Ensure that any French language version of a catalogue, brochure or similar publication distributed in Québec is available and on no less favourable conditions of accessibility and quality than any non-French versions.
- Give consumers in Québec customer service in French (e.g., by in-store staff and call centre personnel).

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