

Living IN FRENCH in Québec



Note :

The text of this brochure is provided to help explain the language policy of Québec. However, the Charter of the French Language and its regulations shall prevail.

Original French text

Website: www.spl.gouv.qc.ca

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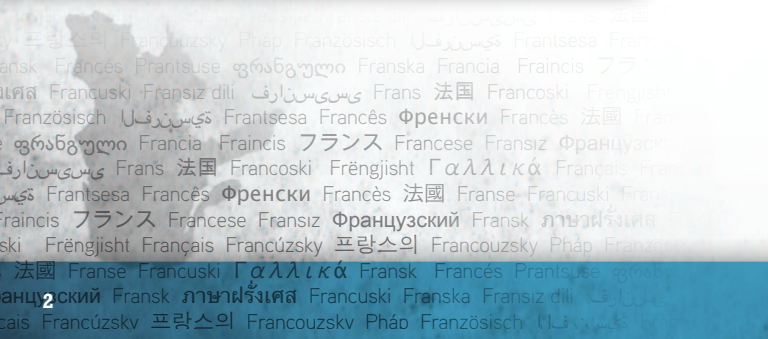
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INTRODUCTION

Located in northeastern North America, Québec has nearly 8 million inhabitants, 80% of whom speak French as their first language. It is therefore home to the largest native French-speaking population in Canada, and an even larger proportion of residents speak French at home more frequently than any other language.

Francophones are however a minority in Canada and North America, and their proportion of Canada's population has been decreasing for the past 60 years. Nevertheless, for over 400 years generations of Québécois have worked to preserve the use of the French language.

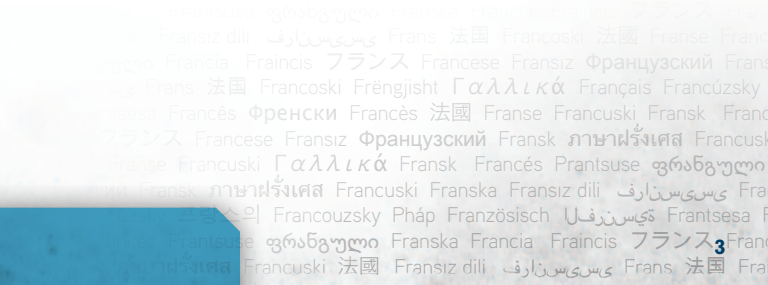




FRANCOPHONES IN NORTH AMERICA

Surrounded by 300 million English speakers, Francophones make up about 2% of the North American population. They must therefore contend with the forces of the Canadian and American linguistic markets, which favor the use of English.

In recent decades Québec has increasingly opened up to the world, while striving to maintain its identity and promote its culture and language. Québec's current export volume is a testament to this, as the province exports nearly 45% of its GDP. Moreover, Québec is also home to North America's largest populations of bilingual and multilingual workers. Québec's unique geopolitical circumstances and its determination to live in French within a North American context have made it a fierce proponent of cultural diversity.



CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO THE ADOPTION OF THE CHARTER OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

The state of the French language in North America remains fragile and requires constant vigilance. This is why, since the end of the 1960s, one Québec government after another worked to establish a language policy.

The cornerstone of this language policy is the Charter of the French Language adopted by Québec's National Assembly on August 26, 1977. Of a greater scope than the language laws that preceded it, the Charter reaffirms the determination of Québécois to make French the normal and everyday language of public life, from which Québec's social, cultural, intellectual, and economic vitality would stem.

The Charter of the French Language is supplemented by a dozen regulations and a government policy on the use and the quality of the French language in the Administration. Other government policies address areas where the language component is of strategic importance (education, culture, immigration, information and communication technology (ICT), etc.) and are also intended to ensure the longevity and promotion of the French language within Québec. All of these measures are part of Québec's language policy, which aims to promote the French language and foster its growth within North America.

A number of factors were behind the decision to develop a language policy that would delineate the relations between the languages spoken in Québec:

- The gravitational pull of the English language had increased throughout North America in step with industrialization and urbanization.
- The demographic weight of Francophones in Canada, and of Québec within Canada, had declined steadily since 1951.
- The tendency of new immigrants, prior to 1977, to enroll their children primarily in English schools triggered a number of linguistic crises within the Québec school system.
- Declining birthrates meant that the demolinguistic future of North American Francophones depended in large part upon the integration of immigrants, even in Québec.

PROGRESS MADE SINCE THE ADOPTION OF THE CHARTER OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

Québec's language policy was enacted to counter the strong pull of the English language apparent for the most part in Montréal and in Québec regions where French and English coexist on a daily basis. In the 30 years since the Charter's adoption, French has made clear progress in Québec.

- Public and commercial signage have, in part, recovered a French character, particularly in Montréal.
- French-speaking consumers have access to more services in their language.
- French is used to a greater extent among workers and in the day-to-day activities of enterprises.
- Enrolment of young immigrants in French-language schools has increased, smoothing their transition into Québec's primarily French-speaking society.
- Disparities in income and status, traditionally skewed against French speakers, have narrowed.

Despite these advances, much work remains to be done for French to prevail as the normal and everyday language of public communication in Québec. It is important to remember that the French language faces daily challenges in Québec, particularly in today's context of globalizing economies where information and communication technologies reign supreme. Therefore, Québec's language policy is as important as ever.

THE CHARTER

The Charter confers French the status of Québec's official language.

It also enacts fundamental language rights:

- Every person has a right to have the civil administration, the health services and social services, the public utility enterprises, the professional orders, the associations of employees and all enterprises doing business in Québec communicate with him in French.
- In deliberative assembly, every person has a right to speak in French.
- Workers have a right to carry on their activities in French.
- Consumers of goods and services have a right to be informed and served in French.
- Every person eligible for instruction in Québec has a right to receive that instruction in French.



EDUCATION: FRENCH-LANGUAGE SCHOOLING A PRIORITY

Québec has a high-quality school system that ranks among the most modern industrialized countries thanks to its structure and teaching methods.

It is also home to excellent universities renowned the world over for the quality of their instruction and research.

The vast majority of the establishments that make up the Québec public school system offers classes in French. Québec has also long had a full English-language public school system offering instruction from kindergarten to university.

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Given that the population is 80% French-speaking, it is no surprise that most Québec students are taught in French. The children of immigrants who choose to live in Québec are required to attend French-language schools until they finish high school to smooth their integration into a majority French-speaking society. Still, a number of exceptions to this rule exist that allow children to be taught in English.

RULES GOVERNING ELIGIBILITY FOR ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The specific guidelines for determining a child's eligibility to attend an English-language public or subsidized private school are outlined in the Charter of the French Language.

The main rules are:

- The child's father or mother is a Canadian citizen who received the major part of his or her elementary education in English in Canada.
- The child's father or mother is a Canadian citizen and the child has received the major part of his or her elementary or secondary education in English in Canada.

Once a child has been authorized to attend an English-language school under these rules, his or her siblings are also deemed eligible.



Children staying in Québec temporarily while a parent studies or works may attend an English-language school during that period, provided they meet certain regulatory requirements.

No authorization is required for children to attend a non-subsidized English-language school. When this type of education is used as the basis for application to a state-funded English-language school, a special regulatory evaluation framework is employed. This framework outlines the criteria and weighting involved in the assessment of this type of education.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Once Québec students complete their secondary education they may enroll in the college or university of their choice, regardless of whether instruction is given in French or English.

In recent years Québec's French-language colleges and universities have adopted strategies for improving their students' French. Under the Charter of the French Language, Québec's colleges and universities are required to adopt a policy regarding the use and quality of the French language. For establishments that provide French-language instruction to the majority of their students, this policy governs the use of French as the language of instruction, administrative communications and work, as well as the quality and command of the French language among students and staff.

For establishments offering English-language instruction to the majority of their students, the policy governs the teaching of French as a second language and the use of French as the language of written communication between the establishment's administration and the government, government agencies, municipal and school bodies, health services, social services, and legal persons within Québec.

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HEALTH

In Québec, the health and social services network operates primarily in French, and its services must always be made available in French.

Moreover, the Charter of the French Language enshrines the right of all people to communicate in French when dealing with health and social services.

SERVICES IN FRENCH AND OTHER LANGUAGES

To enable English speakers to receive care in their language, just like French speakers, some establishments have been tasked with providing services in English. Therefore, all English speakers have the right to receive health and social services in English, insofar as the establishments in question possess the human, material, and financial resources to do so. In practice, English speakers appear to have access to health and social services in English throughout the province.

In the same vein, the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux gives access—resources permitting—to health and social services delivered in the languages of people from Québec's various cultural communities.

FRANCIZATION IN THE WORKPLACE

To ensure the French language is not limited to the private sphere and to make it useful and attractive to learn and use, it must provide access to well-paid jobs and management positions. It must be indispensable in the workplace. This is why the language of work plays a key role in Québec's language policy.

Of course, the use of French as a language of work does not exclude the use of English or other languages where necessary. The major role played by exports in Québec's economy obliges businesses with foreign clients to employ languages other than French.



FRENCH: A RECOGNIZED RIGHT IN THE WORKPLACE

Given workers' right to perform their work in French, the Charter of the French Language nonetheless stipulates that enterprises doing business in Québec must normally use French, particularly in communications addressed to staff. Likewise, collective agreements must be written in French.

The Charter of the French Language also prohibits employers from dismissing, demoting, or transferring employees because they only speak French or do not have sufficient knowledge of another language. Furthermore, employers are prohibited from requiring that employees have knowledge, or a specific level of knowledge, of a language other than French, unless the job in question requires this knowledge. Any person who believes they have been subject to this type of discrimination has the right to seek legal redress.

Québec's business communities play an active role in francization efforts within their businesses. Enterprises wishing to settle in Québec in order to carry out production, commercialization, or research activities are able to fully leverage their decision to operate within Québec by participating in francization efforts that will greatly facilitate their integration into Québec society.

WHAT DOES “WORKING IN FRENCH” MEAN IN QUÉBEC?

Generalizing the Knowledge and Use of French

To ensure French is widely used in the workplace, the Charter of the French Language contains specific guidelines for Québec enterprises employing 50 people or more. These enterprises must take part in a process aimed at making sure they comply with the law and that French is the language of their daily operations.

Taking Action to Ensure that Employees Speak French

For French to be the language used every day in the workplace, managers and other staff members must know French and be able to use it in their day-to-day communications. If this is not the case, enterprises must ensure that their employees learn French, particularly by providing lessons in the workplace or through educational institutions.

Displaying French Throughout the Workplace

Enterprises must ensure that text displayed internally (e.g., posted notices, inscriptions on office equipment and factory machines, etc.) is in French. In cases where another language is used in addition to French, the French text must be markedly predominant or at least equivalent in appearance to the other language used, depending on the situation. This rule also applies to all documents, work tools, and written communications.

Using French Communications in the Workplace

Official communications between senior managers and their employees, as well as communications between staff members, must be in French. Therefore, all notices, instructions, memos, and newsletters must be written in French.

Making French Documentation Available

Enterprises must ensure that commonly used work documents such as forms, work processes, plans, quotes, reports, etc. are printed and filled out in French, both on paper and in electronic formats. The same rule applies to all technical documentation and reference documents.

Using French-Language Technologies

Enterprises must use computer equipment that can function in French, with proper accented characters, and install French versions of software on staff computers.



Communicating in French with Clients, Suppliers, the Public, and Public Agencies

Enterprises must ensure that they are able to communicate with and serve their Québec clientele in French. Clients must be greeted in French both in person and on the phone. Administrative, commercial, and marketing documentation for Québec clients and the general public must also be in French, even when posted online. This also applies to documents distributed with products, such as instructions, warranties, etc.

FRENCH IN THE WORKPLACE: AN ONGOING EFFORT

The Office québécois de la langue française is the body tasked with assisting, advising, and monitoring corporate francization efforts. The Charter of the French Language lists the various steps necessary to complete the process of francization.

Analyzing the Linguistic Situation

All enterprises employing 50 people or more must register with the Office québécois de la langue française and conduct an analysis of their linguistic situation with the assistance and guidance of the Office. Large enterprises employing 100 people or more must establish a francization committee consisting in equal parts of employer representatives and workers to oversee all francization efforts. The Office may also, when it sees fit, ask any enterprise employing 50 to 99 people to form a francization committee.

Employers cannot fail to pay or dismiss, fire, demote, or transfer employees for the sole reason of having participated in francization committee or subcommittee meetings, or for having performed duties for those committees.

Francization Programs

Once the Office has assessed an enterprise's linguistic situation and found French to be widely used within the organization, it will issue a francization certificate. If results are found to be unsatisfactory, the Office will ask the enterprise to submit and implement a francization program. The goal of such a program is to generalize the use of French within the enterprise and address things such as the use of French by staff, increases to the number of employees with a good knowledge of French, and the use of French in internal communications, documents, and for ICT applications, etc.

The Francization Certificate

Once the Office québécois de la langue française has deemed an enterprise's francization attempts successful, it issues a francization certificate. However, receiving a certificate does not mean that an enterprise no longer needs to improve its internal status and quality of French. Rather, it should be seen as a starting point for regular French-language operations, and the enterprise must strive to maintain its use of French and ensure it is employed in a meaningful and sustainable way. To ensure the longevity of francization results, the Charter of the French Language requires all enterprises that hold a

francization certificate to submit a report on the evolution of the use of French within their organization every three years.

Special Cases

To assess francization efforts undertaken by an enterprise, the Office considers certain constraints such as a business's foreign relations, the sector in which it operates, and whether it produces cultural goods with a linguistic component. Special considerations apply to head offices and research centers located in Québec whose activities extend beyond the province's borders. Special agreements may be signed with the Office permitting the use of a language other than French. However, these enterprises are asked to use French in their communications and documents intended for the Québec market.



FRENCH: THE LANGUAGE OF COMMERCE AND BUSINESS

Over 80% of Québec shoppers are French-speaking. To enable them to obtain service and information in their language, the Charter of the French Language sets forth certain rules to make French the normal and everyday language of commerce and business in Québec.

These rules apply to public and commercial signage, product labeling, games and software, names of enterprises, sales literature, and all client and customer communications.

PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL SIGNAGE

The terms public and commercial signage apply to all messages displayed in a public place, whether in the form of a brand name, notice, sign, or text displayed temporarily on a billboard or in a window. All of these messages must be written in French.

One or more other languages may be added, but the law stipulates that the French be markedly predominant and have a much greater visual impact.

Exceptions

- Commercial advertising displayed in the subway, on buses, in bus shelters, and on billboards must be written in French only.
- Public signs and posters concerning health or public safety must be written in French, but another language may also be used, provided that French appears at least as prominently.
- The latter rule also applies to public signage posted by museums, botanical gardens or zoos, cultural and scientific exhibitions, as well as public signage and advertising for events whose participants come for the most part from outside Québec.
- Public signs and commercial advertising for cultural or educational activities or products that are not in French or that come from a news media source that does not publish or broadcast in French may be written solely in a language other than French.
- The same applies to messages of a religious, political, ideological, and humanitarian nature aimed at an audience that speaks a language other than French, if not for a profit motive.

PRODUCT LABELING

Product labeling includes text appearing directly on products, on their containers and packaging, and the documents that accompany products, such as manuals, operating instructions, warranty certificates, etc.

Excluding certain exceptions provided by regulations, all products sold in Québec, whether made here or imported, sold wholesale or by retailers, must be labeled in French. The use of one or more languages is however possible, as long as the French is at least equivalent to the versions in other languages.

GAMES AND SOFTWARE

The Charter of the French Language stipulates that toys and games sold in Québec must be available in French. Software, including game software and operating systems, must also be available in French when such a version exists.

NAMES OF ENTERPRISES

Enterprises established in Québec must have French names. This name is required in order to obtain a juridical personality.

Family names, place names, expressions formed by the artificial combination of letters, syllables, or numbers, and expressions borrowed from other languages may also be used as specifics in enterprise names. Therefore, using a French generic, a specific term such as the name of a historical figure (e.g., Shakespeare) may be used to name a bookstore in order for it to stand out from the competition.

The name of an enterprise may be accompanied by a version in another language when used, for example, in documents or advertising matter, so long as the French name appears at least as prominently. However, when the name is used on commercial signage, the rule concerning marked predominance of the French name, adapted according to the applicable regulations, prevails.

COMMERCIAL DOCUMENTATION AND ADVERTISING

Sales literature distributed in Québec must be written in French. This rule extends in particular to advertising copy in print and electronic formats, such as catalogues, brochures, folders, and commercial directories, as well as commercial messages on the websites of companies that do business in Québec. This also applies to purchase orders, invoices, receipts, and quittances submitted to customers and suppliers.

In all of these cases it is possible to use one or more other languages in addition to French, but the French text must be displayed at least as prominently as every other language. However, the Charter does stipulate certain situations where languages other than French may be used exclusively. The same goes for printed matter aimed at ethnic groups published in the language of those groups or in publications concerning an activity or cultural or educational product in another language.

A PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION THAT FUNCTIONS IN FRENCH

The public administration in Québec must play an exemplary role and be a driving force in promoting French in order for its actions to reflect the fact that French is Québec's official language and the everyday language of public life.

NAMES, CORRESPONDENCE, AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

The Charter of the French Language stipulates that the government, its departments and agencies, municipalities, school bodies, and health and social services must bear only French names.

The Charter also requires all public administration texts and documents to be written in French. The same goes for written communications addressed to other governments and legal persons established in Québec. This does not preclude the use of other languages. However, the *Politique gouvernementale relative à l'emploi et à la qualité de la langue française dans l'Administration* (Government Policy on the Use and the Quality of the French Language in the Administration) outlines the degree of latitude permitted in various situations. Furthermore, the government may use a language other than French when corresponding with individuals who address it in another language.

SIGNAGE

The public administration uses only French on its signage. Exceptionally, other languages may be used, for example if health or public safety so require or on public administration signage of a tourist or commercial nature, in accordance with regulations.

Road Signs

Where road signs are concerned, the French text may be complemented or replaced by symbols or pictograms, and another language may be used when no symbol or pictogram exists that fulfills public health or safety requirements.

Furthermore, to designate a thoroughfare situated within the territory of a municipality, it is possible to use, together with a French generic, a specific term other than a French term if this term is commonly used or if its use bears an unquestionable merit given its cultural or historical value.



RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATIONS

The Charter of the French Language makes provisions enabling certain organizations, such as municipalities where over 50% of residents are native English speakers, and health and social service institutions where the majority of people served speak a language other than French, to be granted “recognized organization” status. This status is granted to all of Québec’s English-language school boards.

“Recognized organization” status aims to enable such organizations to use both French and another language in cases where they would normally be required to use only French, such as on their administrative signage, in their name, or for internal communications.

GOVERNMENT LANGUAGE POLICY

In order to set a consistent and exemplary standard with its language practices, the government adopted *Politique gouvernementale relative à l’emploi et à la qualité de la langue française dans l’Administration* (Government Policy on the Use and the Quality of the French Language in the Administration). This policy, revised in 2011, applies to government, and its departments and agencies. It complements the Charter of the French Language and sets forth more specific requirements designed to give pride of place to the French language in the Administration’s activities. It also requests that departments and agencies adopt their own language policy and procedures.

As a general rule, this policy requires government and its departments and agencies to operate exclusively in French and pay constant attention to the quality of language used. It establishes communication rules, particularly as concerns the production of texts, the dissemination of information online, messages in voicemail and interactive voice response systems, and language use at inter-governmental meetings and conferences. It also sets forth conditions concerning linguistic accountability.

The Policy also requires legal persons and enterprises to use French in documents such as applications for grants, contracts, permits, all other types of authorization, and, more generally speaking, documents pertaining to compliance with statutory or regulatory requirements.

Furthermore, the Policy stipulates that government, and its departments and agencies may not award any contracts, grants, or benefits to enterprises with 50 or more employees that are not in conformance with the francization component of the Charter of the French Language.

BILINGUALISM IN LEGISLATIVE TEXTS AND COURTS

Though French is the language of Québec's legislation and legal system, under the requirements of the Canadian Constitution that apply to Québec, a certain level of legislative and legal bilingualism must be upheld.

LEGISLATIVE DOCUMENTS

Laws and regulations, as well as certain acts of a similar nature, are adopted and published in French and English, and both versions carry equal legal weight.

LANGUAGE OF THE COURT

Any person may use French or English in all matters brought before Québec courts and in all resulting proceedings. In theory, it is therefore possible that a judge may render a judgment in English, even if the person appearing before the court speaks only French. Judges may also render judgments in French even if one of the parties is an English speaker.

However, the Charter of the French Language enables one of the parties in court to obtain French or English translations depending on the situation. In criminal proceedings, defendants have the right to request that the trial take place in French or English, depending on the language they identify as their own, and the judge, jury, and prosecutor must all be able to speak the language chosen by the accused.

FRENCH IN TECHNOLOGY AND ONLINE

The development of technology and virtual networks presents new challenges to French usage, both in the workplace and in forms of electronic entertainment.

English has always played a predominant role in information and communication technology (ICT). However, ICT workplace and communication tools can be well adapted to the French language and most other languages used around the world.

Since the normal language of everyday communications in Québec is French, we must strive to ensure that this is also true of electronic communications.

FRENCH IN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Québec has adopted its *Politique d'utilisation du français dans les technologies de l'information et des communications* on the use of French in ICT within the government and its departments and agencies.

This policy generalizes the use of French in its entirety (including the proper use of accents, cedillas, diereses, ligatures, French typographical conventions, etc.) in communications with citizens and enterprises, as well as on staff computer workstations. It reinforces the requirements concerning the acquisition of French software and technical support. It also stipulates that equipment, databanks, information systems, and software must meet nine standards.

These standards concerning the interoperability and integral usage of French in ICT provides a normative framework for government, and its departments and agencies, and also clearly outlines the government's requirements vis-à-vis suppliers of goods and services. Where large databanks are concerned, they facilitate the proper spelling of names and addresses of Québec citizens and residents.



PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION ONLINE

The spread of the Internet has made it possible for information to rapidly cross borders and has broken down old barriers, including language barriers. The electronic production and transmission of knowledge and information pose numerous challenges to states whose primary language is not English. As a result, Québec aims to:

- Take the necessary measures to help French occupy a growing place within information and communication technologies;
- Work with its international partners to ensure respect for and use of national languages—French in particular—on the World Wide Web.

To achieve these objectives, not only material must be adapted to the French language, but also production tools and browsing systems that make it possible to surf the Internet in French and increase French-language content.

The Québec government has called on all partners from the public and private sectors to promote the French language on the Web and to provide French content for Web users.

IMMIGRATION AND FRANCIZATION

Under the Canadian Constitution, jurisdiction over immigration is shared between the Québec and Canadian governments.

Québec's primary responsibilities include recruiting and selecting new immigrants, as well as welcoming them and facilitating their integration.

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

Each year Québec welcomes some 50,000 new immigrants from the four corners of the globe. Roughly 65% report they have some knowledge of French upon arrival.

To facilitate the integration of non French-speakers, the Québec government offers French courses online and in the workplace. Furthermore, most universities, general and vocational colleges (CEGEPs), and school boards also offer French classes. Together with public education institutions and community organizations, the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles (MICC) offers a variety of flexible learning approaches tailored to individual needs.



Depending on a person's needs and availability, courses can be taken full time, part time, or while at work. These courses also offer an introduction to daily life in Québec. Financial support is available to help immigrants pay for this instruction.

WHY SPEAK FRENCH?

The Québec government offers French courses in order to help immigrants integrate socially, culturally, and professionally. The French language acts as a prime tool of social cohesion in Québec. The Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles website (www.micc.gouv.qc.ca) features a section entitled "Langue française" designed for new immigrants not fluent in French. It explains the importance of learning French in order to communicate effectively in their daily lives; work in Québec's official language; practice a profession; do business; participate in cultural, civic, and social activities; and help their children succeed in school.

46 PROFESSIONAL ORDERS

Québec is home to 46 professional orders with over 340,000 members.

The primary role of these orders is to oversee their respective fields to ensure that professionals are providing the public with the best possible services. This includes providing services in Québec's official language.

To fulfill this important legal mandate, each professional order possesses the necessary powers to assure the public is protected and that professionals are providing quality services.



ONE PLACE, ONE NAME



Toponymy is the science of studying and managing place names. This term also refers to all the place names used in a region.

Founded in 1977, under Section 122 of the Charter of the French Language, the Commission de toponymie replaced the Commission de géographie (1912–1977). It disseminates a databank called TOPOS, which is updated regularly and provides precise information on over 258,000 place names in Québec.

The Charter sets forth the jurisdiction, duties, and authority of the Commission, which is responsible for managing place names in Québec.

ONE LANGUAGE, SEVERAL POINTS OF REFERENCE

La Commission de toponymie du Québec

750, boulevard Charest Est, rez-de-chaussée
Québec (Québec) G1K 9M1

418 643-2817

www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca

Le Conseil supérieur de la langue française

800, place D'Youville, 13^e étage
Québec (Québec) G1R 3P4

418 643-2740

www.cslf.gouv.qc.ca

L'Office québécois de la langue française

125, rue Sherbrooke Ouest, 1^{er} étage
Montréal (Québec) H2X 1X4

or

750, boulevard Charest Est, rez-de-chaussée
Québec (Québec) G1K 9K4

1 888 873-6202

www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca

Le Secrétariat à la politique linguistique

225, Grande Allée Est, 4^e étage
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