



**THE ABCS OF QUÉBEC'S
LANGUAGE POLICY**

Québec 

INTRODUCTION

Nearly eight million people live in Québec, and French is the first language for about eight in ten of them. When we count those whose second or third language is French, fully nine out of ten Quebecers speak French.

Québec is the only predominantly francophone (i.e., French-speaking) province in Canada and is home to 85% of Canadians whose mother tongue is French. Québec's francophone character comes with its share of challenges since, for the past two centuries, linguistic dynamics have done little to foster the development of the French language in North America, where some 300 million English speakers live.

Québec shares a long border with the United States, a global force in promoting English. In addition, its neighboring Canadian provinces, all predominantly English speaking, have seen the percentage of their French-speaking populations fall from one census to the next.

Québec has therefore adopted a language policy to ensure the long-term viability of the French language within its borders. This policy, composed of legislation, regulations, sector policies, and programs, covers those areas that come under provincial jurisdiction in Canada.

This primer is designed to provide an easy-to-understand overview of language management in Québec. Readers who wish to learn more may consult the suggested documentation at the end of each topic.

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Over Four Hundred Years

Most Quebecers whose native language is French are descendants of the French settlers who came to New France in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, many of them also share aboriginal, Irish, Scottish, and British ancestry—among others.

After the British conquest of 1760, the French language lived on in Québec, protected in part by geographic isolation and a very high birthrate among Francophones, but also by the population's determination to protect its language and culture in the territory that would be successively known as Province of Québec (1763), Lower Canada (1791), and Province of Canada (1840), before being incorporated into the Canadian Confederation in 1867.

The 1851 census shows that French-speaking citizens had ceased being the majority in the colony made up of Québec, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia at the time. In the decades that followed, the provinces bordering Québec grew quickly. In addition, between 1840 and 1930, nearly one million "French Canadians," most of them from Québec, emigrated to the United States in search of a better life. Québec became the only North American jurisdiction in which French speakers were still the majority.

In 1960, the winds of change sweeping the world also made their way to Québec, which modernized its institutions, reformed its education system, and introduced measures promoting the culture and language of its majority population. A French language bureau (Office de la langue française) was created. Beginning in 1969, under pressure from the French-speaking public, the first foundations for what today comprises **QUÉBEC'S LANGUAGE POLICY** were laid. Legislation and measures were adopted that all aimed at the same goal: maximizing the French language's chances of thriving on a continent inhabited by nearly three hundred million English speakers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Michel PLOURDE, Hélène DUVAL and Pierre GEORGEAULT (eds.), *Le français au Québec 400 ans d'histoire et de vie*, Montréal, Fides, 2008

La langue française au Québec - 400 ans, quelques repères
www.spl.gouv.qc.ca



Building an Accurate Picture of the Language Situation

Implementation of Québec's language policy has been gradual. First, during the 1960s, a series of major public inquiries were held to assess and document the status of French in Québec.

In 1961, the Gouvernement du Québec set up the Commission royale d'enquête sur l'enseignement dans la province de Québec (Parent Commission). This commission would notably report on the low level of education among Francophones, their lagging socioeconomic status, and problems with French-language instruction.

In 1963, the federal government instituted the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Laurendeau-Dunton Commission), which reported on the disadvantages facing Francophones in Québec and the rest of Canada compared to Anglophones (i.e., English speakers), particularly at the economic level.

In 1968, the Québec government created the Commission d'enquête sur la situation de la langue française et sur les droits linguistiques au Québec (Gendron Commission). In its report, the Commission highlighted the historical economic inferiority of francophone workers in Québec, the negative perceptions of Québec's anglophone elite respecting their demands, immigrants' marked tendency to choose English school for their children, and the common requirement of having to work in English to get and keep a job.

The work of the commissions subsequently allowed Québec to establish a basis for action in matters of language. Today, university and government studies continue documenting the Québec language situation and in 2000, the Commission des États généraux sur la situation et l'avenir de la langue française reviewed Québec's language policy.

Since 2002, the Office québécois de la langue française has been the agency officially tasked with monitoring **THE CHANGING LANGUAGE SITUATION IN QUÉBEC** and reporting on it (at least once every five years) to the Minister responsible for the application of the *Charter of the French Language*.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Virtual libraries

Conseil supérieur de la langue française

www.cslf.gouv.qc.ca/bibliotheque-virtuelle/toutes-les-publications

Office québécois de la langue française

www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ressources/bibliotheque/index.html

Secrétariat à la politique linguistique

www.spl.gouv.qc.ca/documentation

The *Charter of the French Language* is the cornerstone of Québec's language policy. Adopted in 1977, it transformed Québec by strengthening the status of French in all spheres of public life.

It all began with a school controversy. In the 1960s, growing numbers of immigrant families were registering their children for English school. Over the long run, this situation threatened to have had a major impact on Québec's linguistic future. The Commission scolaire de Saint-Léonard, on Montréal Island, responded by adopting a resolution requiring all new elementary school students to attend French school as of September 1968. The decision sparked strong reactions, forcing the Québec government to take legislative action. In 1969, it adopted the *Act to promote the French language in Québec*, which gave parents the right to choose the language of instruction of their children, but attendance at English schools continued to grow. In 1974, the *Official Language Act* was passed, making French the official language of Québec. It imposed English proficiency tests on students wishing to study in that language, but the tests caused problems. It was not until three years later that the *Charter of the French Language* established the general principle of education in French, while giving Québec's English-speaking minority access to English school.

CLF

The time has come to stop thinking about our future in terms of timid survival, to rediscover our true sense of greatness: that of participating by right in one of the great linguistic and cultural expressions of this vast world, of which we—in Québec—are citizens.

La politique québécoise de la langue française, 1977

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Marc V. LEVINE, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1990

The Charter of the French Language covers all areas aimed at making French the **LANGUAGE OF GOVERNMENT AND THE LAW**, as well as the **NORMAL AND EVERYDAY LANGUAGE OF WORK, INSTRUCTION, COMMUNICATION, COMMERCE, AND BUSINESS**. Since its adoption, the charter's initial rules on the language of public signs and commercial advertising, instruction, and legislation and the courts have been amended to abide by various court judgments and promote language peace in Québec. Yet its spirit has remained the same: to change the power dynamics between French and English in the public domain so as to ensure the future of Francophones and the French language over the medium and long term.

D

istinct and Fundamental Language Rights

A charter is not like other legislation because it is founded on shared values, sets out major principles, and inscribes rights. In its first lines, the *Charter of the French Language* sets out five fundamental language rights granted to Quebecers:

- The right to be served in French by the government, health and social services, public utility enterprises, professional orders, associations of employees, and enterprises doing business in Québec
- The right to express themselves in French in deliberative assembly
- The right to work in French
- The right to be informed and served in French when consuming goods and services
- The right to receive instruction in French

These rights are exercised in a spirit of fairness and open-mindedness, as stated in the Charter's preamble. Québec thus makes French its official language but is committed to respecting the institutions of Québec's English-speaking community, which has been a part of Québec society for over two centuries. The community has a comprehensive English-language public education system (kindergarten to university) that long predates the Charter, as well as a network of cultural institutions that are eligible for the same government grants as their French-language counterparts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Marc CHEVRIER, *Des lois et des langues au Québec. Principes de la politique linguistique québécoise*, Ministère des Relations internationales, 1997



Education Learning in French

French is the first language of nearly 80% of Québec's population, so it is normal that most Québec students receive their education in this language. The *Charter of the French Language* sets out the principle of education for all in French, in kindergarten classes as well as government-funded elementary and secondary schools. In so doing, the Charter aims to ensure that francophone children are educated in their own language and that children whose mother tongue is neither French nor English are integrated into Québec society. Prior to the adoption of the Charter, 80% of the latter were enrolled in English schools; today that percentage is reversed.

The *Charter of the French Language* does provide for a variety of exceptions to the principle of education in French. The main one covers children who have a connection with the anglophone community because one of their parents is a Canadian citizen who completed elementary school in English elsewhere in Canada.

Although nearly nine in ten Québec students receive instruction in French today, English as a second language instruction was increased in 2006, and now begins in grade 1. In addition, after finishing high school, young Quebecers may continue their studies in French or in English at the college or university of their choice. Note, however, that most colleges and universities in Québec teach in French.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Title I, Chapter VIII of the *Charter of the French Language: The Language of Instruction*

<http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/english/charter/index.html>

The *Common Values/Speaking French is a Necessity* section of the *Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles* website

<http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/choose-quebec/common-values/french-language.html>

By providing instruction in French in all fields and at all educational levels, and by encouraging newcomers to study in the majority language, Québec ensures its official language remains vibrant and also **PROMOTES SOCIAL COHESION**.

In a context where some Quebecers worry about the risk of social fragmentation, Québec schools are a powerful vector for cohesion.

Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor,
Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation, report, 2008



French in the Workplace

Generations of past Quebecers had to work in English, but since the adoption of the *Charter of the French Language*, working in French has been a recognized right in Québec. Employers today can no longer refuse to hire someone because he or she doesn't speak or have a specific level of proficiency in a language other than French, unless the job requires such knowledge. Similarly, an employer may not dismiss, lay off, demote, or transfer an employee because he or she only speaks French or does not speak another language well enough.

Specific rules apply to businesses with 50 or more employees. They must register with the Office québécois de la langue française to receive a certificate attesting that they use French throughout their business. Francization advisors from the Office will guide them through the necessary steps, provide them various services (including financial assistance), and help them find solutions that fit their needs.

Over the years, with the help of the Office québécois de la langue française and the efforts of organized labor, among others, large Québec businesses have become progressively francized. The *Charter of the French Language*, by making French a professional necessity, has invested the language with **AN ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE** that has significantly strengthened its status. Over the past 30 years, the income gap between Francophones and Anglophones has appreciably decreased. Of course, there is still work to be done and progress to be made at a time when market globalization and the rise in information technologies and communication bear witness to English's ongoing power of attraction in the workplace.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Title I, Chapter VI of the *Charter of the French Language*,
*The Language of Labor Relations***

<http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/english/charter/index.html>

**Title II, Chapter V of the *Charter of the French Language*,
*Francization of Enterprises***

<http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/english/charter/index.html>

**The *Vos droits et obligations* section of the Office
québécois de la langue française website**

www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca

**Carrefour francisation, the one-stop service center for
small business francization**

<http://carrefourfrancisation.com>



Governing— in French!

It is the Québec government's responsibility to lead the way in matters of language and **SET AN EXAMPLE** when it comes to promoting French in Québec.

As such, the *Charter of the French Language* sets out a certain number of rules applicable to the Québec government, i.e., all government departments and agencies as well as schools, municipalities, and health and social service establishments. Their names, signage, and internal communications must be written solely in the official language. A number of exceptions are provided for, in particular for certain municipalities and special-status organizations and establishments.

The Charter also requires that government documents, contracts, and other communications be written in French. Public services must also be provided in French. This does not mean that the government cannot use both French and another language in certain circumstances, or communicate in a language other than French with someone who addresses it in this language.

Three other policies also govern the activities of government departments and agencies. The first deals with employment and the quality of the French language. It establishes the general principle that departments and agencies must privilege French monolingualism in their activities to clearly mark the fact that French is both the official language and the normal and everyday language used in the public domain. This policy sets out guidelines that are applicable in certain special situations.

The purpose of the second policy is to generalize the use of French in information technologies and communication. It strengthens requirements for acquiring software and supplier technical support in French and stipulates that hardware, databases, information systems, and software must comply with nine specific standards.

The third policy covering contract management specifies that all steps involved in the acquisition of goods and services must take place in French and that supporting documents and inscriptions on any such goods (labels, packaging, etc.) must be in French.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Title I, Chapter IV of the *Charter of the French Language: The Language of the Civil Administration*
<http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/english/charter/index.html>

The *Vos droits et obligations* section of the Office québécois de la langue française website
www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca

The three cited policies are available at
www.spl.gouv.qc.ca/documentation/loisreglementspolitiques

Heroes and Heroines of the French Language

Even the best language policy is not enough to preserve a language on its own. In Québec, French has flourished through the efforts of Québécois who love and defend it. Every year, the Gouvernement du Québec recognizes their work by honoring exceptional contributions to the development and promotion of the French language.

A number of awards are presented. The Georges-Émile-Lapalme Award, named after one of the fathers of the Quiet Revolution, is the highest distinction granted by the government to someone whose commitment, work, or career has significantly contributed to the quality and influence of spoken or written French in Québec. "There is something miraculous in the obstinate determination of the Québec people to **LIVE IN FRENCH IN NORTH AMERICA,**" declared Pierre Bourgault, the first winner of this award (created in 1997), the evening he was honored.

Other awards, presented by the Conseil supérieur de la langue française and the Office québécois de la qualité de leur writing and Québec journalists for contributions that individuals, companies, and organizations have made to the promotion of French.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Prix Georges-Émile-Lapalme
www.prixduquebec.gouv.qc.ca

Ordre des francophones d'Amérique
www.cslf.gouv.qc.ca/prix-et-distinctions/ordre-des-francophones-damerique

Prix du 3-juillet-1608
www.cslf.gouv.qc.ca/prix-et-distinctions/prix-du-3-juillet-1608

Prix Jules-Fournier
www.cslf.gouv.qc.ca/prix-et-distinctions/prix-jules-fournier

Prix Raymond-Charrette
www.cslf.gouv.qc.ca/prix-et-distinctions/prix-raymond-charrette

Prix Camille-Laurin, Mérites du français, and Prix Francopub
www.francofete.qc.ca



Inuktitut, Cree, Naskapi: Respect for Aboriginal Languages

Québec's First Nations and Inuit, descendants of the country's first inhabitants, have the fundamental right to maintain and develop their indigenous languages and cultures. The *Charter of the French Language* preamble clearly recognizes this right.

The *Charter of the French Language* allows for the use of First Nations languages in First Nations schools and of Inuktitut in Inuit schools. In addition, the Charter specifies that the languages of instruction for schools under the Cree School Board and the Kativik School Board are respectively Cree and Inuktitut, in addition to the other languages of instruction in use within these communities. A similar measure applies to the Naskapi of Schefferville. It should also be noted that the *Charter of the French Language* does not apply to Indian reserves.

Québec's 11 aboriginal nations represent around 1% of the population and belong to **THREE MAJOR LINGUISTIC FAMILIES**: Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Eskaleut. Here, as elsewhere in the Americas and around the world, several indigenous languages have seen a decline in the number of people speaking them. However, for the past several years, thanks to their use in schools and First Nations and Inuit community radio station programming, the future of aboriginal languages seems a bit brighter in Québec's aboriginal communities.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

SECRETARIAT AUX AFFAIRES AUTOCHTONES, *Amérindiens et Inuits. Portrait des nations autochtones du Québec, 2009*
www.autochtones.gouv.qc.ca/publications_documentation/publications/document_11_nations.pdf

Justice *and Legislation* in French — and English



French and English may be used in Québec courts, and Québec legislation and regulations are adopted and published in French and English, with both versions having the same legal force. These requirements are enshrined in the Canadian Constitution of 1867.

The Canadian Constitution does not, however, guarantee that judgments will be published in French and English. For this reason, **QUÉBEC AMENDED THE CHARTER of the French Language** in 1993 to allow Québec court judgments to be translated into French or English (as the case may be) at the request of either party. The Québec government bears the cost of such translations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Title I, Chapter III of the *Charter of the French Language*:
The Language of the Legislature and the Courts:
<http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/english/chartef/index.html>

Kuujuuaq, Buckingham, Mont-Joli: Place Names That Tell Our Story

A geographical area as vast as Québec contains hundreds of thousands of place names. Visitors encountering them on signs may not always realize their historic significance.

The oldest Québec place names come to us from the First Nations and Inuit, who had already named thousands of sites within the boundaries of present-day Québec well before the arrival of the Europeans. Even the word “Québec” is of aboriginal origin, according to most specialists. The First Nations heritage is also readily apparent in names like Kénogami, Yamaska, Coaticook, Rimouski, Matane, Natashquan, Chibougamau, Kuujuuaq, and the Témiscamingue region, just to name a few.

However most Québec place names are French, handed down to us from the first explorers (Rivière Champlain, Mont Royal, Grondines, etc.) and fishers (Île Bonaventure, Île aux Basques, etc.), then by settlers, civil, military, and religious authorities, and seigneurs (Lanoraie, Lotbinière, Portneuf, etc.). We also see place names taken directly from France, such as Honfleur and Chérisy, as well as names spontaneously coined for descriptive reasons, such as Lac Creux (hollow lake), Blanc-Sablon (white sands), and Mont-Joli (beautiful mountain).

The British for their part have passed along thousands of English names to us. There too, many place names have direct English, Scottish, and Irish counterparts (Buckingham, Inverness, Kildare, etc.), while others come from the Royal Family, politicians, and British figures (Lac Victoria, Rivière George, Nelson, etc.).

In Québec, there has been an organization in charge of place names, or toponymy, since 1912. However it was the *Charter of the French Language* that, in 1977, gave the **COMMISSION DE TOPONYMIE** its current powers over geographic names. Today the Commission is very active in standardizing place names, and its expertise is recognized throughout Québec, Canada, and the world.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**COMMISSION DE TOPONYMIE, *Noms et lieux du Québec*,
Publications du Québec, 2006**

**Commission de toponymie website
www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca**

Languages: How Many Do We Speak?

In Québec as elsewhere, newcomers today are more numerous and more diverse in origin: North Africa, South America, East Asia, the West Indies and the Caribbean, Western Europe, etc. Increased immigration, coupled with population aging and markedly lower birthrates among Francophones, helps explain the decrease in the percentage of Quebecers whose first language is French, even though the French-speaking population continues to grow in terms of numbers.

Québec's demolinguistic profile is therefore changing little by little. Over one-third of Québec's native French speakers now know English, a proportion that nearly doubles among young people. Moreover, two-thirds of Quebecers whose mother tongue is English also speak and understand French. A large number of recent newcomers to Québec already speak French as well, or are in the process of learning it. Québec is not only the sole Canadian province with a French-speaking majority, it is also home to the highest number of bilingual and trilingual persons in the country, particularly on Montréal Island, where one Montrealer in four speaks at least three languages.

OPENNESS TO LANGUAGE LEARNING is one of the principles underlying the *Charter of the French Language*. In strengthening the status of French as the official language and the language of public life, the Charter has allowed Québec's population to balance the learning of other languages with the learning of its official language.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

La politique québécoise de la langue française, Gouvernement du Québec, March 1977

www.spl.gouv.qc.ca/documentation/loisreglementspolitiques/

Learning French in Québec and the various free courses available:

<http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/french-language/learning-quebec/index.html>

Montréal area:
514 864-9191

Elsewhere in Québec:
1 877 864-9191 (toll-free)

Madame la députée: the Feminization of Titles

Today, every boy and girl can dream about pursuing the profession of his or her choice. But this has not always been the case: for centuries, society refused women this opportunity.

As women gradually entered traditionally male-dominated jobs and professions, it was necessary to reflect their presence in the language. Some languages have neutral terms that can apply to both men and women. But in French, women were not keen about being called “madame le maire” or “madame le juge” (with *madame* simply being tacked on to the traditional masculine noun). Linguists therefore set to work feminizing titles. This is how words like *ingénieure* (engineer), *maçonne* (mason), *ramoneuse* (chimney sweep), and *policière* (police officer) entered Québec’s vocabulary, just as women were starting to enter these professions in the labor market!

Québec was **A PIONEER IN THIS AREA** since it began feminizing the names of occupations, functions, ranks, and titles in 1979. Since then, other countries where French is spoken, such as Switzerland, Belgium, and France, have followed in its footsteps.

Regarding the gender of job titles, Office de la langue française has recommended the use of feminine forms in all possible cases:

- *Through the use of the commonly employed feminine form. Examples: couturière [seamstress], infirmière [nurse], avocate [lawyer].*
- *Through the use of the gender-neutral term combined with a feminine determinant. Examples: une journaliste [journalist], une architecte [architect], une ministre [minister].*
- *Through the spontaneous creation of a feminine form that follows French morphology. Examples: députée [Member of Parliament], chirurgienne [surgeon], praticienne [practitioner].*
- *Through the addition of the word femme [woman/female]. Examples: femme-magistrat [judge], femme-chef d’entreprise [business executive], femme-ingénieur [engineer].*

Gazette officielle du Québec, notice of recommendation, July 8, 1979

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Répertoire de noms masculins et de noms féminins, Banque de dépannage linguistique, Office québécois de la langue française
http://66.46.185.79/bdl/gabarit_bdl.asp?Th=1&Th_id=359

Pierrette VACHON-L’HEUREUX and Louise GUÉNETTE,
Avoir bon genre à l’écrit. Guide de rédaction épïcène, Québec,
Publications du Québec, 2007

An increasingly large percentage of Québec's population has lived in the province for less than a generation. Québec welcomes some 50,000 immigrants annually. Although a growing percentage of newcomers declare that they know French—around 65% in 2010—many must continue learning French in order to integrate into Québec society. The changing labor market has naturally translated into ever-more diverse francization needs. Language requirements vary depending on the type of job and the professional field (health, engineering, law, business, etc.).

In 1989, the Québec government took stock of the importance of helping newcomers familiarize themselves with the French language and Québec culture. The key principle guiding its statement on immigration and integration—still valid today—is **THE SHARING OF FRENCH AS THE COMMON LANGUAGE OF PUBLIC LIFE** in Québec society.

Newcomers: Integrating into a French-Speaking Society

One of the most important measures implemented to facilitate the integration of non-French speaking immigrants is providing French courses in various formats: full- and part-time courses, online courses, classroom and workplace courses, as well as courses designed for beginning students and those wishing to perfect their skills. These courses, offered by the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles or one of its partners, are free. Financial aid is also available.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

To enroll in or get information about French courses for newcomers, contact the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles general information service or fill out the online inquiry form:
<https://services.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/coordonnees/courriel.php>
Montréal area: 514 864-9191

Elsewhere in Québec: 1 877 864-9191 (toll-free)
The Immigration-Québec website www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca
Website designed to facilitate the professional integration of Montréal immigrants: www.travailimmigrant.com

Obtaining Information and Assistance

Québec's language policy covers many facets of public life. Each government department and public agency can provide information about different facets. However, below is a list of where to find the most frequently requested information:

For INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHARTER OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

- › Office québécois de la langue française:
1888 873-6202 (toll-free)
info@oqlf.gouv.qc.ca

To report A VIOLATION OF THE CHARTER OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

- › Office québécois de la langue française:
1888 873-6202 (toll-free)
www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/francisation/respect/index.html

To obtain the ELIGIBILITY RULES FOR ENGLISH SCHOOL

- › Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport:
1866 747-6626 (toll-free)
aea-mtl@mels.gouv.qc.ca

To get SUPPORT FOR FRANCIZING YOUR BUSINESS

- › Office québécois de la langue française:
1 888 873-6202 (toll-free)
info@oqlf.gouv.qc.ca

To francize your SMALL MONTRÉAL BUSINESS

- › Carrefour francisation:
514 940-1633
<http://carrefourfrancisation.com>



Public Signs and Commercial Advertising

The *Charter of the French Language* and its associated regulations provide for exceptions, notably if public health or safety is at stake. Exceptions are also made for media that broadcast in a language other than French and for non-profit religious, political, ideological, or humanitarian advertising.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Title I, Chapter VII of the *Charter of the French Language*:
The Language of Commerce and Business**
<http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/english/charter/index.html>

A city's "linguistic face" is reflected in the signs lining its streets and windows and hanging from its shops and businesses.

In Québec, commercial advertising and public signs and posters must be in French. If a language other than French is used on signs or posters, the French text must have **A MUCH GREATER VISUAL IMPACT** than text written in other languages.



Quotas and Other Measures for Culture in French

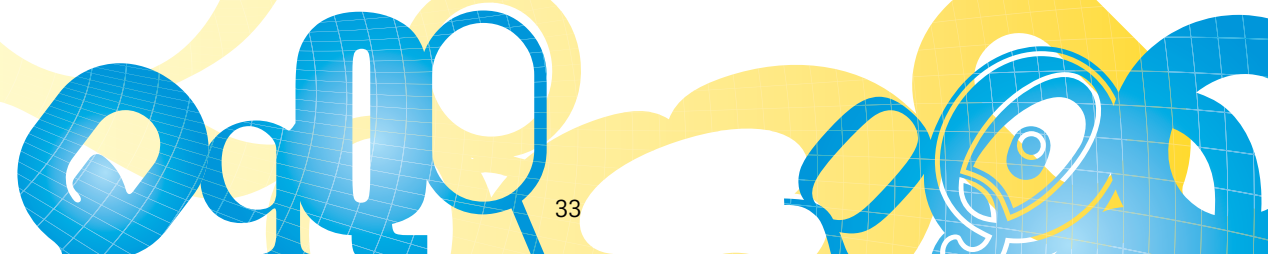
French is the dominant language in all artistic disciplines involving the spoken and written word in Québec. In music, theater, literature, and film, in particular, Québec's French-language works have gained renown and attracted audiences around the world. To facilitate the distribution of these works in its home market where competition from English-language cultural products is fierce and the francophone population relatively small, Québec has sometimes had to **DEVELOP ORIGINAL APPROACHES**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

***La politique culturelle du Québec. Notre culture, notre avenir*, June 1992**
www.mcccf.gouv.qc.ca/?id=925

At Québec's prompting in the 1970s, for example, French-language song quotas were imposed on francophone radio stations by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), a model that other states subsequently imitated. Other measures include the specific rules that made possible the emergence of specialty French-language television channels (while cable and satellite broadcasting were paving the way for distribution of a growing number of English-language channels) as well as a variety of measures taken by the Québec government to strengthen the quality of language in the media.

Since the mid-1980s, the *Cinema Act* has promoted the use of French on Québec screens. In 1992, Québec adopted a cultural policy that gave top priority to advancing the French language as a means to express and access culture. In 2007, an agreement with Canadian video game editors and distributors reinforced the progressive francization of video game content sold in Québec. Measures such as these are all the more common in Québec because of the perpetual challenge of maintaining the presence, availability, and visibility of French-language cultural content on an English-speaking continent.



REACHING OUT ACROSS THE CONTINENT AND AROUND THE WORLD

For the past half century, the Québec government has sought to promote and enhance the influence of French around the world. To this end, Québec works closely with other countries that also use French. It has become an active partner within the International Organisation of La Francophonie, helping not only to create and develop international francophone institutions but also to define their role and carry out their activities.

Québec's determination to promote French-language cultural works in a world dominated by Anglo-Saxon culture has made it an avid defender of the diversity of cultural expressions. On November 10, 2005, Québec's National Assembly became the first parliament in the world to approve the UNESCO Convention on **THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF THE DIVERSITY OF CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS**. This step was all the more natural in that the Convention affirmed the importance of practices that had already been in effect in Québec for many years, practices that consist of providing significant public support for Québec culture while at the same time fostering openness to artistic and cultural creations from elsewhere and to foreign partnerships.

In 2008, the Québec government created the Centre de la francophonie des Amériques, a unifying measure to promote and enhance the value of French in North America. This new venue for discussion aims to strengthen relations between Francophones and Francophiles in the Americas.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Diversity of Cultural Expressions Newsletter
<http://www.diversite-culturelle.qc.ca/index.php?id=3&L=1>

Centre de la francophonie des Amériques
www.francophoniedesameriques.com

Special Rules

for Health and Social Services

Receiving health care and social services in French is a fundamental right in Québec. All health and social services institutions must therefore offer their **SERVICES IN FRENCH.**

However, under the *Act respecting health services and social services*, English speakers are entitled to receive health and social services in English, in keeping with the organizational structure and human, material, and financial resources of the institutions providing such services and to the extent provided by an access program.

In addition, the same *Act* allows Québec's various cultural communities to access health and social services in their own languages, where resources permit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The Québec Health and Social Services System in Brief

http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/sujets/organisation/ssss_enbref/index.php?accueil_en

The Secrétariat à l'accès aux services en langue anglaise et aux communautés

culturelles website <http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/ministere/saslacc/index.php?home>

TREASURES HIDDEN IN WORDS

Like all languages in the world, French was built on encounters, alliances, and exchanges between peoples. As early as the Crusades, French had already borrowed some 1,000 words from Arabic, words we still use today—such as *sucre* [sugar] or *café* [coffee]—without realizing their origin. The Dutch gave us *bouquin* [book] and *ruban* [ribbon], the Bulgarians, *yogourt* [yogurt], and the Inuit, *anorak* [parka]. English for its part (half of whose current vocabulary itself comes from French, even though we don't always realize it) has given us dozens of terms and continues to do so today: *canif*, *football*, *budget*, etc. In fact the French language, which also includes words derived from Russian (*cosaque* [Cossack], *moujik* [muzhik], *steppe* [steppe]), German (*accordéon* [accordion], *bretelle* [strap], *dollar* [dollar]), Spanish (*vanille* [vanilla], *tango* [tango], *chocolat* [chocolate]), and Italian (*balcon* [balcony], *opéra* [opera], *incognito* [incognito]), takes us on a real tour of the world.

Québec has also helped enrich the French language in its own way. Certain words used in Québec but not necessarily in other French-speaking parts of the world are sometimes called “Canadianisms,” “Québecisms,” or “regionalisms” by dictionaries. These are often French words that arrived here along with the first settlers or that reflect regional French usage still employed in Québec. Québec French also contains new words, new meanings, and new expressions created over the years. From *tourtière* [meat pie] to *traversier* [ferry], *tuque* [stocking cap] to *poutine* [French fries served with gravy and cheese curds], and *hameçonnage* [phishing] to *clavardage* [online chatting], **QUÉBEC'S LEXICON IS RICH** and has long been of interest to researchers and linguists. Through its language policy, the government supports many initiatives that aim to showcase its richness and originality.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Julie BARLOW and Jean-Benoît NADEAU, *The Story of French*, Toronto, Random House Canada, 2006

The network of lexical corpuses
<http://www.spl.gouv.qc.ca/languefrancaise/corpuslexicaux/>

Claude POIRIER (ed.), *Dictionnaire historique du français québécois*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1998

Henriette WALTER, *Dictionnaire des mots d'origine étrangère*, Paris, Larousse, 2009

Quebecers do not realize how original their language is in lexical terms; even well-educated Quebecers and those who travel regularly to France have but a limited perception of the lexical usages that make them recognizable as French speakers from Québec.

Claude Poirier, Dictionnaire historique du français québécois

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE LANGUAGE POLICIES

Since 2002, the *Charter of the French Language* has required Québec universities and government-funded colleges to have a policy on the use and quality of French. These policies must cover the language of instruction (including the language used in textbooks) and the language of communication used by administrative staff as well as the language of work, the quality of French, and the French-language proficiency of students, teaching staff, and other staff members.

In colleges and universities where English is the primary language of instruction, **POLICIES ON THE USE AND QUALITY OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE** cover the teaching of French as a second language and the language of written communications with the government and legal entities in Québec.

Also, since January 1, 1998, students must pass a standardized French test to earn a diploma from a French-language college or to be admitted to a university. Some francophone universities have set up special programs to facilitate the integration of non-francophone international students.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Title I, Chapter VIII.1 of the *Charter of the French Language*: Policies of College or University-Level Institutions regarding the Use and Quality of the French Language
<http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/english/charter/index.html>

The standardized French test
http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/ens-sup/ens-coll/Eprv_uniforme/Mfrancais.asp

Vouchers, Invoices, Labels... Selling Products in Québec

Prior to the adoption of the *Charter of the French Language*, it was not unusual for Quebecers to purchase a product that did not have any French product information printed on it. The Charter, however, made it mandatory to use French on labels, catalogs, brochures, leaflets, and notices accompanying products sold in Québec.

The Charter stipulates that any **INSCRIPTIONS** on a product, its container or packaging, or on any accompanying documents or items must be **WRITTEN IN FRENCH**. Catalogs, brochures, leaflets, commercial directories, and other such publications must also be written in French, as well as order forms, invoices, receipts, and quittances. A language other than French may also be used, provided the French text occupies at least the same amount of space.

For Québec business websites, any commercial information must also be in French. Other languages may be used, provided the French text is at least equally prominent.

There are various exceptions allowing for inscriptions written solely in a language other than French, notably on cultural or educational products.

Anyone who has reason to believe that a Charter violation has occurred may file a complaint with the Office québécois de la langue française.

If there are two stores side by side, one based on an anglophone model and the other tailored to the Québec market, but both featuring the same prices and the same styles, I am convinced that people will choose the French because they feel a sense of belonging.

Louise Arbiue, president of Francisation Interglobe

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Title I, Chapter VII of the *Charter of the French Language*:
The Language of Commerce and Business
<http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/english/charter/index.html>

Regulation respecting the language of commerce and business
<http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/english/regulations.html>

Www.inFrench.pls

In the mid-1990s, a digital revolution of global proportions began. Because French was scarce on the Web at the time, the Québec government took a variety of measures to ensure that it would have its place in the changing landscape. Indeed, the Office québécois de la langue française provides technological expertise and support to help businesses ensure their computer hardware, websites, intranets, and extranets are available in French.

English continues to dominate information and communications technology today, but Quebecers, like the rest of the world's French speakers, have access to a multitude of websites, discussion forums, blogs, and social media in French.

In 2010, French was **THE 8th MOST WIDELY USED LANGUAGE ONLINE**, after English, Chinese, Spanish, Japanese, Portuguese, German, and Arabic.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

DÉLÉGATION GÉNÉRALE À LA LANGUE FRANÇAISE ET AUX LANGUES DE FRANCE, *Rapport au Parlement sur l'emploi de la langue française, 2010*
www.dglf.culture.gouv.fr/

Centre francophone d'informatisation des organisations (CEFRIO)
www.cefrio.qc.ca

The Bétel technolinguistic evaluation bank and the PIF database of computer products that exist in French
www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/francisation/ti/index.html

The assistance program for francization through information technologies
www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/subventionTIC

XIst CENTURY: What Future for French?

Of the world's 6,000 languages, French is among the ten most widely used, ranking somewhere between 5th and 9th, depending on which statistical measurement is used. As a matter of fact, never have so many people spoken French as today. The International Organisation of La Francophonie estimates that around 220 million individuals can be unequivocally identified as francophone—20 times more than two centuries ago, when French was the universal language of Europe.

French, an official language of the United Nations and the Olympic Games, remains the second most-taught language in the world and one of the rare languages that is learned in nearly every country in the world. We often forget that French is the third most-spoken language in the United States, after English and Spanish. Despite the global domination of English in the 21st century, the French language has therefore successfully maintained its influence and reach, thanks in part to France's cultural clout, the immensity of French-speaking Africa, and La Francophonie's diverse membership.

In more ways than one, Québec is an exception among French-speaking countries and regions. Its language situation will always be unique and the relationship Quebecers have with the French language is still special, built on both **CONFIDENCE AND UNCERTAINTY**. Quebecers have long shown patience, courage, and determination in their fight to preserve their linguistic identity, and recent history has demonstrated that their vigilance is vital to ensuring that French remains a useful language in all spheres of society—a language capable of expressing our modern world. As a result, despite the obstacles and predictions, French continues to grow and flourish in 21st century Québec. The language policy has played a large role in fostering this situation, but Quebecers' determination to preserve and share their language has played an even larger role.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE, *La langue française dans le monde 2010*, Paris, Éditions Nathan, 2010

Your French,

Following the British conquest of 1760, Québec was essentially cut off from France for nearly two centuries. During this period, contact with “French from France” was infrequent at best. Just as American English, Mexican Spanish, and Brazilian Portuguese grew apart from the languages spoken in London, Madrid, and Lisbon, certain differences emerged between the French spoken by Quebecers and their French cousins. This also explains why expressions no longer used in France still pepper the French spoken in Québec. In addition, the omnipresence of English, which long dominated Québec’s linguistic and social landscape, has produced a specific type of linguistic anglicization that is different from the anglicization found in France.

Our French...

The fact that the French of Québec evolved far from Paris does not make it fundamentally different from the French described in all standard reference works. But it has developed its own inflections and been enriched with vocabulary that describes Québec and North American wildlife, flora, geography, habitat, food, customs, holidays, and so on. The French of Québec has also drawn words from aboriginal languages and English, as well as from its own creative potential.

Although the French spoken in Québec has always elicited keen interest (the first *Canadian* glossary, written by Belgian missionary Pierre-Philippe Potier, dates from the 18th century, and an impressive number of dictionaries, glossaries, and lexicons have been published since), there is still much to be done to describe it. That is why the government has supported many **INITIATIVES RELATED TO THE HISTORY AND USAGE OF FRENCH IN QUÉBEC.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Franqus, a dictionary of standard French usage in Québec

<http://franqus.ca/projet/>

Le Trésor de la langue française au Québec

www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/



Zapping or Zapping? Who Standardizes Words?

The term *zapping* is used in France, whereas in Québec, it is *zappage*, a derivative of the verb *zapper* [to channel surf or hop], which is the most frequent term, coexisting alongside the more informal *pitonnage*. But who decided it should be so?

In France, the Commission générale de terminologie et de néologie recommends terms that must be used by the French government. It works in cooperation with various partners, including the Académie française. In Québec, this task is handled by the **OFFICE QUÉBÉCOIS DE LA LANGUE FRANÇAISE**.

Since its creation in 1961, the Office has worked to propose French equivalents to English terms in use in Québec. In 1977, the *Charter of the French Language* gave the Office a mandate to recommend or standardize words and expressions. Its *Grand dictionnaire terminologique* (GDT), a free online tool, currently contains over three million French and English terms.

The Office's speedy execution and linguistic expertise have earned it a reputation that extends beyond Québec's borders. One of the most well-known terms standardized by the Office is undoubtedly *courriel* [e-mail], a word formed by combining the words *courrier* [mail] and *électronique* [electronic], to replace *e-mail*. But we owe much more to the Office which, through its terminological activities, ensures that French is the everyday language of commerce, business, and government in Québec.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Gaston CHOLETTE, *L'Office de la langue française de 1961 à 1974. Regards et témoignages*, Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture/Office de la langue française, 1993

Office québécois de la langue française's *Grand dictionnaire terminologique*
www.granddictionnaire.com

***Politique de l'officialisation linguistique*, policy updated by the Office québécois de la langue française at its March 5, 2004 session**

***Politique de l'emprunt linguistique*, policy adopted by the Office québécois de la langue française at its September 14, 2007 session**



THE ABCS OF QUÉBEC'S LANGUAGE POLICY

Secrétariat
à la politique
linguistique

Québec 