

FAQ ON QUÉBEC'S NEW FRENCH LANGUAGE LAW

What is Bill 96?

The new French Language Law, also known as "Bill 96" will come into effect on June 1st, 2025, in the province of Québec, Canada.

It will change the way business is carried out in the province.

- It makes French the **only** official language in Québec.
- It **prioritizes French** over any other languages.
- It affects **all aspects of society**, including education, business and government services.
- It makes access to French a **basic right** for residents of Québec.

My company is based outside Québec. Does Bill 96 apply?

Bill 96 applies to your company if:

- It interacts **directly** or **indirectly** with clients, employees, individuals, companies or government agencies in Québec.
- It employs **25 people** or more.
- It is based **in or outside of Québec**.

When does Bill 96 come into effect?

- Bill 96 will come into force on **June 1st, 2025**.
- There is a two-year compliance grace period for companies who have started the compliance process before June 1st, 2025.

What happens if my company does not comply with Bill 96?

Bill 96 gives the OQLF (Quebec's French Language Office) new powers to investigate suspected violations.

- A first offense will result in fines up to **\$30,000 per infraction**.
- Subsequent offenses may result in a double or triple penalty.
- Bill 96 provides many ways for the public and employees to **report violations** or sue companies for non-compliance.
- People and employees who feel discriminated against due to a limited or lack of command of a language other than French have the right to file a discrimination or harassment complaint with the [CNESST](#).

What does Bill 96 cover?

- Bill 96 covers **every area of society** from education and health care to privacy, business and communications and **every aspect** of business-to-consumer or business-to-business interactions.

SDS IS HERE TO HELP

- We know the new law and are ready to apply it.
- We help you provide advice and suggestions on how to stay or become compliant.

IN SHORT

- French is the **only** official language in Québec
- Bill 96 applies to all companies doing business in Québec, **regardless of their headquarters' location**
- Bill 96 comes into effect **June 1st, 2025**, with a 2 year grace period
- Fines **up to 30,000 \$** per infraction apply
- Bill 96 applies to **every aspect of society**
- Everything a business produces **internally and externally** must now be in French
- French must always be **as or more prominent** than any other language

HOW DOES BILL 96 APPLY TO INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS?

All **internal messages** must be provided in French to employees in Québec, including:

- Email messages
- Human resources documents (policies, procedures, benefits, etc.)
- Training (courses and material)
- Employment-related communications (job offers, descriptions and contracts, performance evaluation, termination documents, etc.)

What should I watch for?

- When sending bilingual/multilingual communications, using a French line on top saying something like **“French to follow below”** is no longer acceptable.
- French often takes more space than other languages. In multilingual communications, **plan enough space** to make sure French uses the same size (or larger) font.
- Documents **must not “feel translated”**. As such:

✎ **Do not use automated translation tools** (e.g. Google Translate) as they lack the ability to translate colloquially or interpret intricate meanings.

✎ **Have your documents translated by a professional translator.**

Most francophones, whether from Québec or other countries, unknowingly use expressions or words originating from a foreign language, due to the influence of English or other languages on their culture. If written, such words or expressions are now subject to hefty fines.

It **would be risky** to ask a francophone to translate internal documents if they do not have translation, comparative linguistic, semantics and etymology training.

Trying to save money by using automated tools or internal staff to translate your internal communications puts your company at risk.

- Trust SDS to provide you with translations that appear [to have been written in French first](#).
- Check out [our website](#) for more information on our services

In all bilingual/multilingual communications, French must:

- Be **positioned first**
- Be **as or more prominent** than any other language
- **Appear to have been written in French first**

HOW CAN SDS HELP?

SDS translators are trained in linguistics, semantics, etymology and language laws.

We ensure you are compliant by:

- **Reviewing** your current translated documents
- **Providing quick turnaround** for documents that are not yet available in French
- **Hosting French webinars or training sessions** on your behalf
- **Adapting your translations** so they appear to have been written in French first
- **Translating** your future communications so they are always compliant.

HOW DOES BILL 96 APPLY TO EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS?

Whether they are **individuals or businesses**, Québec customers have the right to be **informed and served** in French.

They also have the right to **sue businesses** that fail to meet this obligation.

- This means that **everything a customer sees must be in French**, whether it is printed, digital, etched, engraved, etc.
- And remember: French must always be **as or more prominent** than any other language.

The entire customer experience must be offered in French, regardless of the media.

Everything the customer sees must be in French.

These elements are often overlooked:

- URLs, hashtags
- Links
- Social media
- E-commerce, software and app interface
- Voice commands
- Trademarks and product names
- Outdoor signage
- Indoor displays
- Product Packaging
- Inscriptions on products
- User Manuals
- Instructions for use
- Warranty booklets
- Quotes, purchase orders, invoices, receipts, etc.
- Ingredient lists

What should I watch for?

Online

- All your content online and on **social media** must be in French.
- Pay specific attention to **hashtags**, embedded URLs, popup windows, **cookie consent**, **payment screens** or terms of service. Everything your client sees must appear in French.
- All your **links** must direct to French content, even if the link directs the user to external content.

Print

- When you create a bilingual piece, pay attention to **spacing, font size and placement**. French must appear as or more prominent than any other language.

Trademarks, Taglines and Product Names

- Company names, trademarks, taglines and Product Names in another language must also be in French or describe the product of service offered in French.
- **Bill 96 does not make exceptions for trademark names.**

HOW CAN SDS HELP?

SDS will

- **Review** your website and social media pages to ensure compliance.
- **Review your links** to ensure they direct to a French page.
- If links direct to an exterior source, SDS will **research similar articles in French or provide translation.**
- **Shorten current translations** so French will be the same size as any other language displayed.

HOW DOES BILL 96 APPLY TO PRODUCTS AND SERVICES?

If your company distributes a product that display another language without French or provides a service in another language but not in French, it will be held liable.

What should I watch for?

Products

- If an **inscription** appears on your product in another language, it must also appear in French.
- Check that ingredient lists, instructions for use, warranty booklets, safety messages, etc. are all in French.
- Ensure **any text on a product**, an **interface** or any other **physical or digital item** appears in French if it also appears in another language.
- Watch for **font sizes**. French must be **the same size or larger** than any other language displayed.

Packaging

- **Any text written in another language** must be in French:
 - ↳ regardless of the country of origin,
 - ↳ whether it is outside or inside the box.
- Be creative in your solutions:
 - ↳ If you are a wholesaler, you may provide retailers with stickers to be placed on the packaging.
 - ↳ If you are a retailer, display French prominently on all packaging.

Software and Interface

- All **software** must have a French user interface.
- If **voice commands** are available, your software must respond accurately to French voice commands.

Customer Service

- The same services available in another language must also be provided in French.
- Ensure you have French representatives to serve your customers during any opening hours listed on French documents

- Our full range of services are designed to **save you time and money**, while providing you peace of mind.
- To get more advice on Bill 96, please contact Stephanie at stephanie@sdslinguistics.com or 587.752.6779.

Any word appearing in any language on any item, product or media must also appear in French.

Any service offered must also be offered in French.

HOW CAN SDS HELP?

SDS will:

- **Review** your designs, packaging and product names to verify compliance.
- **Provide workarounds** or suggestions for improvement.
- **Work with your suppliers** to make sure the packaging reflects the new requirements
- **Shorten translations** to ensure French is prominently displayed.
- **Provide customer support** for your French clients, by phone and email
- **Provide voiceover** or subtitles for videos.
- **Test your software** for compliance
- **Provide new translations** in a timely manner.

We will help you find creative solutions that fit your budget.