

# As Of November 24th, Use Of Non-French Trademarks On Outside Signs Will Require The Presence Of French

November 18, 2016

On November 4th, 2016, amendments to the Regulations respecting the language of commerce and business (the "Regulations") enacted pursuant to the Charter of French Language, were published. These are identical to those announced by the Québec Government on May 4, 2016. The purpose of the amendments, which will come into force on November 24, 2016, is to ensure the presence of French when a trademark in a language other than French is displayed on an immovable. These amendments will require **businesses established in the Province of Québec which have a trademark "only in a language other than French"** to add a "sufficient presence of French" to their outdoor signage.

The presence of French may take the following forms: (1) a generic term or a description of the products or services concerned, (2) a slogan, or (3) display information pertaining to the products or services to the benefit of consumers or persons frequenting the site. However, the presence of French cannot simply take the form of business hours, telephone numbers, addresses, numbers or percentages or a term requiring for its legibility to be within a radius of less than 1 metre.

The Regulations stipulate that the presence of French on outdoor signage must have the following characteristics: (1) it should give French permanent visibility, similar to that of the trademark displayed; and (2) it should ensure its legibility in the same visual field as that mainly covered by the trademark. To illustrate these characteristics, the Regulations state that the signs or posters in French should be designed, lighted and situated in relation to the trademark so as to make them easy to read, both at the same time and at all times. For example, the French text should be lit if the trademark in a language other than French is lit.

In summary, these amendments shall apply:

- to all businesses having an establishment in Québec;
- where there is a sign or poster that displays a trademark in a language other than French;
- in the absence of French text on the sign or poster; and
- where the trademark in a language other than French appears:

- on a sign or poster located on the exterior of a building, including the roof;
- on a sign or poster located on a facade located inside a building or a shopping centre;
- on a sign or poster located inside a room or a building if it is intended to be seen from outside; or
- on a sign or poster located on a bollard or any other independent structure.

For existing signs and posters, the Regulations provide for a 3-year transition period (until November 24, 2019) in order to allow businesses to proceed with the required modifications.

**The amendments are a response to the recent Québec Court of Appeal decision issued in April 2015, which confirmed that businesses could continue to use their non-French registered trademarks on storefront signs without running afoul of the provincial language law.**

We invite you to consult the guidance document (in French only) on the display of trademarks which was recently issued by the **Office québécois de la langue française** and which is available online.

By

Alexandra M. Nicol

---

## **BLG | Canada's Law Firm**

As the largest, truly full-service Canadian law firm, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) delivers practical legal advice for domestic and international clients across more practices and industries than any Canadian firm. With over 800 lawyers, intellectual property agents and other professionals, BLG serves the legal needs of businesses and institutions across Canada and beyond – from M&A and capital markets, to disputes, financing, and trademark & patent registration.

[blg.com](http://blg.com)

## **BLG Offices**

### **Calgary**

Centennial Place, East Tower  
520 3rd Avenue S.W.  
Calgary, AB, Canada  
T2P 0R3  
T 403.232.9500  
F 403.266.1395

### **Ottawa**

World Exchange Plaza  
100 Queen Street  
Ottawa, ON, Canada  
K1P 1J9  
T 613.237.5160  
F 613.230.8842

### **Vancouver**

1200 Waterfront Centre  
200 Burrard Street  
Vancouver, BC, Canada  
V7X 1T2  
T 604.687.5744  
F 604.687.1415

**Montréal**

1000 De La Gauchetière Street West  
Suite 900  
Montréal, QC, Canada  
H3B 5H4  
  
T 514.954.2555  
F 514.879.9015

**Toronto**

Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower  
22 Adelaide Street West  
Toronto, ON, Canada  
M5H 4E3  
  
T 416.367.6000  
F 416.367.6749

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to constitute legal advice, a complete statement of the law, or an opinion on any subject. No one should act upon it or refrain from acting without a thorough examination of the law after the facts of a specific situation are considered. You are urged to consult your legal adviser in cases of specific questions or concerns. BLG does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy, currency or completeness of this publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written permission of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. If this publication was sent to you by BLG and you do not wish to receive further publications from BLG, you may ask to remove your contact information from our mailing lists by emailing [unsubscribe@blg.com](mailto:unsubscribe@blg.com) or manage your subscription preferences at [blg.com/MyPreferences](http://blg.com/MyPreferences). If you feel you have received this message in error please contact [communications@blg.com](mailto:communications@blg.com). BLG's privacy policy for publications may be found at [blg.com/en/privacy](http://blg.com/en/privacy).

© 2026 Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. Borden Ladner Gervais LLP is an Ontario Limited Liability Partnership.