

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 16, 2025

Re: Charter of the French Language – Quebec update: Are you ready for the changes?

Are you ready for changes to the *Charter of the French Language* (“Charter”) that will come into force on June 1, 2025? Bill 96 was enacted on June 1, 2022, with its various provisions taking effect over a three-year period. The Charter applies not only to Quebec-based companies, but also to Quebec subsidiaries and divisions of companies based elsewhere. Franchise operations in Quebec are also subject to Charter requirements, as are all products and services sold or offered in Quebec. In addition to Charter changes under Bill 96 that are already in effect, the following are important to note for the June 1 deadline:

- **Registration with the Office québécois de la langue française (“OQLF”):** Companies and other entities employing 25 or more employees in Quebec over a six-month period will be required to register with the OQLF, replacing the previous requirement for registration in the case of 50 or more employees. This registration will lead to a certificate of registration and subsequent analysis of the overall linguistic situation of the Quebec business.
- **Product packaging:** As is already the case, any inscription on a product, its packaging or any document provided with it must be in French. Another language may also appear as long as no other language is more prominent than French. A trademark that is “recognized” (used under common law without registration) under the Trademarks Act may appear provided that a French version is not registered in Canada.

Changes effective June 1, 2025: Any generic or descriptive elements in trademarks, for example, flavours, ingredients, and fragrances, must appear in French on the product or on a medium permanently attached to the product. The name of the product as sold and the name of the enterprise may be used in another language. A transition period until June 1, 2027 is provided for noncompliant products manufactured before June 1, 2025 that contain generic or descriptive terms as long as a French version was not registered in Canada as of June 26, 2024. Products that are subject to new labelling standards under certain regulations, such as the Regulations amending the Food and Drug Regulations and the Cannabis Regulations, also benefit from a transition period until June 1, 2027 if manufactured between June 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025.

- **Outdoor signage:** Under Bill 96 and amended regulations under the Charter, “recognized” trademarks will continue to be allowed on outdoor signage as long as a French version is not registered in Canada, subject to new requirements. French text on outdoor signs must be markedly predominant such that the French text must have greater visual impact than any other language. To satisfy this condition, the French text must take up twice as much space as any other language and the legibility and permanent visibility of the French text must be equivalent to that of any other language. In addition, if a trademark or business name is displayed in a language other than French, a French generic or descriptive term or slogan must be added. Dynamic signage may display a language other than French as long as the French version is visible for at least twice as long as the other language.

