



Understanding Language Requirements for Businesses in Ontario

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When expanding a business into new regions, understanding local language requirements is crucial for compliance and customer engagement. For companies considering entering the Ontario market, it's essential to know the province's stance on language services, particularly when it comes to French.

Ontario operates primarily in English, and there is no overarching legal mandate for businesses to provide services in French. The [French Language Services Act](#) (the “**FLSA**”), which governs the availability of French-language services, specifically applies to certain [government services and institutions of the Legislature](#) within designated areas.

Under the FLSA, [certain public entities are required to provide services in French](#). These include government ministries, excluding psychiatric facilities, residential facilities or colleges of applied arts and technology unless designated by regulation. Additionally, boards, commissions or corporations with a majority of members or directors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, non-profit organizations subsidized by public funds, and specific long-term care homes or homes for special care designated by regulation must offer French-language services. This also extends to service providers and boards defined under [various acts](#) if they are designated as public service agencies. Moreover, the French-language requirement for *government services and institutions of the Legislature* are required in [specific regions with significant Francophone populations](#), such as parts of Eastern Ontario and cities like Ottawa and Toronto, as well as municipalities with Francophone majorities.

This means that for private businesses setting up operations in Ontario, there is no requirement to offer services in French. This is in contrast to some other regions in Canada where bilingual services are more strongly enforced.

For businesses planning to expand into Canada, understanding these nuances helps in making informed decisions about service offerings and compliance.

Disclaimer: This article offers general comments on legal developments of concern to business organizations and individuals and is not intended to provide legal advice. Readers should seek professional legal advice on the particular issues that concern them.

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Fiona has extensive experience advising international businesses entering the Canadian market. To date, she has advised more than 100 companies expanding into Canada. Fiona advises clients in this space all day, every day. She has been practising for more than a decade and is a regular speaker and writer on market expansion matters. Fiona is proud to have been recognized by *The Best Lawyers in Canada*, *The Canadian Legal Expert Directory* and *Benchmark Canada*.

A proactive and comprehensive approach is required to succeed in a new market. Fiona manages teams of other lawyers and patent agents to provide her clients with a full range of legal services to help their businesses grow. She acts as project manager to ensure her clients receive seamless legal services in all relevant areas.

Fiona takes great care to understand her clients' businesses and deliver advice that is tailored to meeting their specific needs. Her responsiveness, dedication to clear communication and hands-on approach show that she is personally invested in the success of her clients.

Fiona is pleased to offer a multitude of resources answering often-asked questions about expanding into Canada, including [this video](#) and [this one-page guide](#), all of which can be found on the [Market Expansion Resources Dashboard](#).



Felix Ng

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Felix is a member of the firm's Corporate/Commercial Group. His practice focuses on M&A transactions and advising international clients on expanding their businesses into Canada. Felix represents clients in a range of industries, including pharma, e-commerce, transportation, agriculture, food and beverage and construction.

Felix is a dedicated corporate lawyer. He is committed to learning about the intricacies of his clients' businesses in order to help them reach their goals. Felix's clients appreciate his responsiveness and problem solving skills on a wide variety of corporate matters.

Felix has passed Level III of the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Program.



Emily Naveenan

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Emily recently completed her fifth year in the Honours Bachelor of Commerce and Juris Doctor dual program in the French Common Law section at the University of Ottawa.

During her legal studies, Emily received the Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP Prize (for the highest grade in Business Organizations) and the Scotiabank Scholarship for International Studies in Common Law.

Before joining Aird & Berlis, she gained valuable experience working at the Office of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.