



2727 COWORKING / RESEARCH & PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

Business Permits and Licences in Montreal: Do You Need One?

Find a practical home for your work at 2727 Coworking in Montreal. Explore private offices, day workspaces and meeting rooms, plus business-address and virtual-mailbox services for your company.

Published by 2727 Coworking · 2026-10-29 · business permit montreal · do i need a business licence in montreal · permis d'affaires montréal

Original article: <https://2727coworking.com/articles/business-permits-licences-montreal-do-you-need-one>



In this article

1. Quebec has no general business licence
 2. REQ registration is not a licence
 3. Three layers of permits
 4. Use the official permit finder first
 5. Regulated sectors and who issues the permit
 6. Revenu Québec permits and registrations
 7. Ville de Montréal: zoning first, then the occupancy permit
 8. Home-based businesses
 9. Signs, terraces and renovations
 10. Professional orders
 11. A sequenced checklist
 12. Delays and penalties
 13. Sources
-

Quebec has no general business licence

Many founders arriving from other places expect to buy a single "business licence" from the city before opening. Montreal and Quebec do not work that way. There is no all-purpose licence that authorizes you to do business. Instead, permits are attached to **specific activities** (building work, food, liquor, door-to-door sales, pesticides) and to **specific premises** (the space you occupy, the sign you hang, the terrace you build).

So the question is never "Do I need a business licence?" but rather:

1. Does my **activity** fall in a regulated sector?
2. Is my **location** allowed for that activity, and does the borough need to issue an occupancy permit for it?
3. Am I a **regulated professional** who must belong to an order?

A consultant working from a coworking office may need only a borough occupancy permit (and sometimes not even that, as explained below). A restaurant may need half a dozen authorizations from three levels of government. This article walks through who issues what. It is general information, not legal advice; confirm your own case with the issuing body.

REQ registration is not a licence

Registering with the Registraire des entreprises is a separate, mandatory formality for most businesses. According to [Québec.ca](https://quebec.ca), the majority of businesses must register "dès leur création" by filing a registration declaration, and the Registraire then assigns a **Québec enterprise number (NEQ)**.

What registration gives you is a public identity in the enterprise register and an identifier you use with government bodies. What it does **not** give you is permission to carry on a regulated activity. An NEQ does not let you do renovation work for clients, sell food or serve alcohol.

Two details worth knowing from the same [Québec.ca](#) page:

- A sole proprietor operating under a name that does not include their own family name and first name must register; one operating under their own full name may register voluntarily.
- A sole proprietor who runs a **retail tobacco outlet or a tanning salon** must register even when using their own name.

Corporations incorporated in Quebec are registered automatically on incorporation. For the full walk-through, see our [NEQ registration guide](#).

Three layers of permits

Permits in Montreal come from three broad layers, and one business can deal with all three:

- **Quebec government bodies, by sector.** The Régie du bâtiment du Québec (RBQ) for construction, the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation (MAPAQ) for food, the Office de la protection du consommateur (OPC) for certain consumer trades, the Régie des alcools, des courses et des jeux (RACJ) for liquor, the environment ministry for pesticides, and professional orders for regulated professions.
- **Revenu Québec**, which issues permits, licences, decals or registration certificates for tobacco and fuel, and handles IFTA for carriers.
- **Ville de Montréal, through its 19 boroughs.** Zoning, occupancy permits, sign permits, terraces and renovation permits. Most of this is administered by the borough where your premises are located, which is why fees, forms and some rules differ from one borough to the next.

The federal government adds sector rules of its own (imports, telecom, transport and so on). The permit finder described next covers federal, provincial and municipal requirements together.

Use the official permit finder first

Before reading sector pages, run your activity through **PerLE (Permis et licences)**, Quebec's version of the national BizPaL service. Québec.ca's [Permis et certifications](#) page lists PerLE first, to "connaître les permis et les licences nécessaires pour exploiter une entreprise au Québec". The [PerLE search page](#) asks for a location and a sector of activity, then lists the permits and licences you may need. Revenu Québec points new businesses to the same tool on its [Other Administrative Formalities](#) page, and the Ville de Montréal's [Open a business](#) page links to it for provincial and federal requirements.

The underlying BizPaL service, according to [Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada](#), generates "a list of permits and licences from all levels of government (federal, provincial, territorial and municipal)" with links to each issuer. PerLE is in French only.

Two cautions. First, the result is a starting list, not a legal opinion: read each issuer's page. Second, municipal coverage depends on which municipalities participate, so always confirm municipal steps directly with your borough.

Regulated sectors and who issues the permit

The table below covers the sectors new Montreal businesses most often run into. Fees are shown only where verified at the issuer, as of October 2026.

If you...	Issuer	What you need	Verified detail
Do construction or renovation work for others	RBQ	Contractor licence	Required when the work benefits you directly or indirectly (RBQ)
Prepare food (restaurant, catering, home kitchen) or sell food at retail	MAPAQ	Restaurant or retail food permit	\$367 general preparation + \$144 first-file fee; 2 to 6 weeks (Québec.ca)
Sell or serve alcohol	RACJ	Liquor permit	Bar or restaurant permit: \$289 on application, then \$688 a year plus a capacity charge (RACJ); borough occupancy permit comes first
Sell door to door or from a kiosk away from your establishment	OPC	Itinerant merchant permit	Unless an exception applies (OPC)
Run a travel agency, lend money, collect debts, run a gym ("studio de santé"), sell vehicles	OPC	Sector permit or certificate	Listed by the OPC
Sell or apply pesticides (e.g. lawn care, pest control)	Environment ministry	Pesticide permit (plus individual certificate)	Permit valid 3 years (Québec.ca)
Distribute, rent or sell video material, or screen films publicly	Ministère de la Culture et des Communications	Distributor, retailer or venue permit	Listed on Québec.ca
Sell tobacco or fuel, or haul freight interprovincially	Revenu Québec	Permit, licence, decal or registration certificate; IFTA	Revenu Québec
Practise a regulated profession (lawyer, engineer, CPA, nurse, architect...)	Professional order	Membership on the order's roll	Québec.ca list of professions
Occupy premises for a commercial or professional activity in Montreal	Borough	Occupancy permit (certificate of occupancy)	Fee varies by borough (Ville de Montréal)
Install or change a commercial sign	Borough	Sign permit	Needs an occupancy permit or a pending application (Ville de Montréal)

Construction (RBQ)

The RBQ rule is broader than many people expect. Under article 7 of the *Building Act*, as the [RBQ explains](#), a person who carries out construction work for another person "for profit" is a contractor, and "for profit" includes any direct or indirect benefit. The RBQ's own examples: doing renovation work in exchange for reduced rent,

or demolishing a garage in exchange for keeping the materials, both require a licence. Promoters who sell buildings they built, and some owner-builders, also need one. Workforce competency cards are a separate matter handled by the Commission de la construction du Québec.

Food (MAPAQ)

MAPAQ's [restaurant and retail permit page](#) is explicit: "restauration" is not limited to restaurants. Preparing meals for sale from a home kitchen counts as a restaurant activity and needs a restaurant permit, with conditions such as a 100 kg per month limit on food handled and direct sales to consumers. You must receive the permit **before** starting and display it to customers; it is valid one year. As of October 2026, the general-preparation restaurant permit costs \$367, hot-or-cold holding \$283, and buffet options \$566, plus a one-time \$144 file-opening fee on a first application. MAPAQ also tells applicants to check with the municipality that a food business is allowed at the location before applying. Its [online identification tool](#) shows exemptions.

Consumer trades (OPC)

The [Office de la protection du consommateur](#) issues permits for vehicle dealers and recyclers, travel agencies, money lenders, high-cost credit, collection agencies, health studios, extended vehicle warranties and debt settlement services, plus certificates for travel counsellors and collection representatives. The itinerant merchant permit catches more businesses than the name suggests. The [OPC](#) says selling from a kiosk in the street or a shopping centre is itinerant trade, and in residential renovation (doors, windows, insulation, exterior cladding) any sale concluded at the consumer's home counts, even when the client invited you.

Liquor (RACJ)

The [RACJ](#) issues liquor permits for sale or manufacture, as well as gaming and other licences. In Montreal, the order matters: the city states that if you operate a bar or restaurant, you must obtain the occupancy permit **before** applying for a liquor permit ([Ville de Montréal](#)). As of October 2026, a bar or restaurant permit costs \$289 when you apply (including a \$120 publication fee), then annual duties of \$688 plus \$0.75 per person the premises may admit, with that variable part capped at \$800 ([RACJ fees](#)). The RACJ does not publish a processing time. Some boroughs, such as Le Plateau-Mont-Royal, also cap the number of bars and restaurants per street segment, so check the quota before you lease.

Revenu Québec permits and registrations

Revenu Québec's [permits page](#) lists three fields where you need a permit, licence, decal or registration certificate:

- **Tobacco:** collection officers, importers, manufacturers, storers, carriers and retail vendors of tobacco products.
- **Fuel:** collection officers, importers, refiners, bulk storers and carriers, retail dealers, people who colour fuel oil, and people who blend taxable fuel for resale.
- **IFTA:** carriers providing interprovincial or international passenger or freight transportation in member jurisdictions.

Tax registration is a different thing. Revenu Québec notes on its [formalities page](#) that GST registration is done with Revenu Québec at the same time as QST registration. A QST number is not a permit, and a permit does not register you for sales taxes.

Ville de Montréal: zoning first, then the occupancy permit

The city's [Open a business](#) page sets the order of operations:

1. **Zoning.** Before renting or purchasing a space, make sure the activity is authorized by zoning. Ask the borough permit counter or check the interactive zoning map.
2. **Occupancy permit.** Then apply for an occupancy permit for commercial or professional activity, also called an occupancy certificate.
3. **Renovation permit**, if you will do work inside or on the facade. It may be required when you apply for the occupancy permit.

The [occupancy permit page](#) states that the permit is needed "to conduct a commercial or industrial activity in a building for purposes other than housing, or use part of your home for professional purposes". It is attached to both the premises and the operator. A new permit is needed when the operator changes, the floor area changes, or activities are changed or added, so a new tenant cannot simply inherit the previous occupant's permit.

Typical documents include the owner's or co-ownership syndicate's authorization, proof of the business's legal existence (company charter and declaration of company name), a power of attorney if someone applies for you, and sometimes a floor plan.

Fees are set by each borough. Examples from the city's page, as of October 2026, quoted as each borough lists them:

Borough	Occupancy permit fee (general or office use)
Lachine	\$100 (taxes included)
Ahuntsic-Cartierville	\$237 (taxes included)
Ville-Marie	\$281 (taxes included)
Le Sud-Ouest	\$348 for office and other general uses (no mention of taxes); bar, restaurant and lodging uses cost more
Le Plateau-Mont-Royal	\$376 (taxes included); \$972.25 for bar, restaurant, hotel and similar uses

Le Sud-Ouest adds that a separate conversion permit may be required first if you move into a location with no history of activity or your activity is a change of use under the Construction Code, and that the permit must be displayed in the establishment. Our [occupancy permit checklist for offices](#) covers the application in more detail.

Home-based businesses

Working from home does not exempt you. The [city's guide](#) says the occupancy procedure "is necessary even if you are only using part of your home as an office."

Borough rules on what is allowed in a dwelling also differ. In Ahuntsic-Cartierville, for example, the [city's page](#) limits a home office, studio or personal-care space to the smaller of 50 m² or one third of the dwelling, with its own separate exterior entrance. That rule is shown for that borough, not city-wide. Check your own borough's block on the page, and see our article on the [home office occupancy certificate](#).

Signs, terraces and renovations

- **Signs.** In Montreal, a [permit is required](#) to install, replace or change a commercial sign. You must already hold an occupancy certificate or have applied for one. Heritage areas may require extra review.
- **Terraces.** The [city's guide](#) says terrace rules depend on the borough, the nature of the activity and whether the terrace is on private property or the street. A café-terrace permit may be needed on top of the construction permit.
- **Renovations.** Interior or facade work needs a renovation permit from the borough. Work done for you by someone else also falls under the RBQ licence rule above: hire licensed contractors.

Professional orders

If your work is a regulated profession, the authorization comes from the professional order, not from the city or the Registraire. Québec.ca's [list of professions](#) links each profession (from acupuncturists and lawyers to engineers, CPAs and nurses) to the order's directory of members who have the right to practise. Incorporating or registering a business name does not replace that membership.

A sequenced checklist

1. **Define the activity precisely** and run it through [PerLE](#).
2. **Check zoning** with the borough permit counter or zoning map **before** signing a lease or offer to purchase. Make the lease conditional if you can; see our guide to [commercial lease obligations under the Civil Code](#).
3. **Register the business** with the Registraire if required, so you have the NEQ and the documents the borough asks for.
4. **Apply for the occupancy permit** (and any conversion or renovation permit) once you have the owner's authorization.
5. **Apply for sector permits:** RBQ, MAPAQ, OPC, RACJ (after occupancy), pesticides, Revenu Québec, or your professional order.
6. **Register for GST/QST and payroll accounts** with Revenu Québec and the CRA as they apply.
7. **Then signs and terraces**, which build on the occupancy permit.
8. **Display** the permits that must be posted (MAPAQ food permits, and occupancy permits in some boroughs) and calendar the renewals (MAPAQ permits are annual).

Delays and penalties

Build the processing time into your opening date:

- **MAPAQ** quotes 2 to 6 weeks for a new restaurant or retail permit ([Québec.ca](#)), and you cannot start before it arrives.
- **RBQ** posts its backlog: on October 28, 2026 it was processing regular licence applications received on September 23, 2026, and priority ones received on October 7 ([RBQ](#)).
- **Boroughs** vary. Le Plateau-Mont-Royal says the person handling an online occupancy application will contact you within 14 days, and that issuing time depends on complexity and season ([Ville de Montréal](#)).

On penalties, the [RBQ](#) states that anyone who carries out work without a licence commits an offence and is liable to a "severe fine". Beyond fines, the practical risk is sequencing: a lease signed for a space where your use is not permitted, or a liquor application that cannot proceed without occupancy, can cost months of rent before you open.

If you are comparing workspaces, 2727 Coworking has private offices in Griffintown on the Lachine Canal; run the zoning and occupancy steps above for any space before you sign.

Sources

- [Open a business or launch a company](#) — Ville de Montréal
- [Get an occupancy permit for commercial, industrial or professional activity](#) — Ville de Montréal
- [Get a commercial sign permit](#) — Ville de Montréal
- [Permis et certifications](#) — Gouvernement du Québec ([Québec.ca](#))
- [PerLE: Trouver les permis et les licences dont vous avez besoin](#) — PerLE / BizPaL
- [BizPaL Initiative](#) — Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
- [À propos de l'immatriculation d'une entreprise](#) — Gouvernement du Québec ([Québec.ca](#))
- [Obtaining Permits, Licences, Decals or Registration Certificates](#) — Revenu Québec
- [Other Administrative Formalities](#) — Revenu Québec
- [Work requiring a licence](#) — Régie du bâtiment du Québec
- [Permis pour préparation d'aliments, restauration ou vente au détail](#) — MAPAQ ([Québec.ca](#))
- [Outil d'identification des permis alimentaires](#) — MAPAQ
- [Permis et certificats délivrés par l'Office](#) — Office de la protection du consommateur
- [Le commerce itinérant, c'est quoi?](#) — Office de la protection du consommateur
- [Permis pour la vente et l'utilisation de pesticides](#) — Gouvernement du Québec ([Québec.ca](#))
- [Régie des alcools, des courses et des jeux](#) — RACJ
- [Frais et droits payables se rattachant au secteur de l'alcool](#) — RACJ
- [Liste des professions et répertoire des membres](#) — Gouvernement du Québec ([Québec.ca](#))

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

1. <https://www.quebec.ca/entreprises-et-travailleurs-autonomes/demarrer-entreprise/immatriculer-constituer-entreprise/immatriculation-entreprise/a-propos>
2. <https://www.quebec.ca/entreprises-et-travailleurs-autonomes/permis-certifications>
3. <https://services.bizpal-perle.ca?b=24&lang=fr>
4. <https://www.revenuquebec.ca/en/businesses/life-cycle/starting-a-business/other-administrative-formalities>
5. <https://montreal.ca/en/articles/open-business-or-launch-company-18507>
6. <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/bizpal/en>
7. <https://www.rbq.gouv.qc.ca/en/licence/knowning-if-a-licence-is-required/work-requiring-a-licence>
8. <https://www.quebec.ca/entreprises-et-travailleurs-autonomes/industries/industrie-bioalimentaire/permis-alimentaires/permis-restauration-vente-detail>
9. <https://www.racj.gouv.qc.ca/alcool/boite-a-outils/frais-et-droits-payables-se-rattachant-au-secteur-de-lalcool>
10. <https://www.opc.gouv.qc.ca/commercant/permis-certificat/commercant-itinerant/description>
11. <https://www.opc.gouv.qc.ca/commercant/permis-certificat>
12. <https://www.quebec.ca/entreprises-et-travailleurs-autonomes/permis-certifications/permis-vente-utilisation-pesticides>
13. <https://www.revenuquebec.ca/en/businesses/life-cycle/starting-a-business/obtaining-permits-licences-or-decals>
14. <https://www.quebec.ca/emploi/informer-metier-profession/ordres-professionnels/liste-repertoire-membres>
15. <https://montreal.ca/en/how-to/get-occupancy-permit-commercial-industrial-or-professional-activity>
16. <https://media.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/identification-permis-alimentaire>
17. <https://www.racj.gouv.qc.ca>
18. <https://montreal.ca/en/how-to/get-commercial-sign-permit>

THE PUBLISHER

About 2727 Coworking

2727 Coworking is a Montreal workspace and business-address provider. We serve people who need a place to focus, meet, run a small business or establish a professional mailing presence. Our website offers English and French information about workspace options and services, alongside educational resources for operating a business in Canada.

A workspace that fits the day

Our workspace options include private offices, day passes and desks, and a conference room. These formats help individuals and teams compare a dedicated office with more flexible ways to work or hold a meeting. Prospective members can explore the virtual tour, review current pricing and book a visit before choosing a workspace.

Business addresses and mail

2727 Coworking provides business-address and virtual-mailbox services. Our resources explain the documents and practical questions involved, including guidance for people outside Canada. Service eligibility, included features, availability and access arrangements should be confirmed on the applicable service page or with our team.

Resources for Canadian small businesses

We publish guides, research and planning tools about workspace decisions, business addresses and starting a business in Canada. Our incorporation research includes information for people inside Canada and abroad, with jurisdiction-specific material to help readers identify the next questions to investigate. These educational resources complement our workspace and address services; they are not individualized legal, tax or immigration advice.

Visit or contact 2727 Coworking

Explore [private offices](#), [day passes and desks](#), [the conference room](#), [business addresses](#) and [virtual mailboxes](#). [Book a visit](#) or [contact the team](#) to discuss your needs.

A business address alone does not establish tax residence, immigration status, banking approval or eligibility for a government program.

Website: <https://2727coworking.com>

This article is educational. Verify consequential medical, legal, financial, regulatory and technical decisions with appropriate professionals and the cited primary sources. Company services are described separately from the article's research findings.