



2727 COWORKING / RESEARCH & PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

Regulated Professions in Quebec: Newcomer Path to a Permit

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 · regulated professions quebec newcomers · office des professions du québec · practice profession quebec foreign credentials

Original article: <https://2727coworking.com/articles/regulated-professions-quebec-newcomers-office-des-professions-order-membership>



In this article

1. First question: is your profession regulated in Quebec?
2. Reserved title versus exclusive practice
3. How the Office des professions and the orders divide the work
4. Step by step: from application to permit
5. Equivalence of diploma and training
6. Temporary restrictive permits and special authorizations
7. French: what the Charter requires
8. The OQLF French exam
9. Temporary licence while you learn French
10. Practising independently after the permit
11. Timeline, costs and where to get help
12. Sources

First question: is your profession regulated in Quebec?

If you trained as an engineer in France, a nurse in the Philippines or an accountant in Brazil, the first thing to establish is not whether your diploma is "good enough". It is whether the work you want to do is **regulated** in Quebec, and by whom.

Quebec.ca lists the main kinds of regulatory bodies ([Québec.ca, recognition by a regulatory body](#)):

Regulator	Examples of occupations
Professional orders	Engineer, nurse, and the other professions with an order
Ministère de l'Éducation	Preschool, elementary and secondary school teachers
Autorité des marchés financiers	Insurance agent, financial planner, mortgage broker
Commission de la construction du Québec	Construction-site trades: electrician, plumber
Emploi-Québec	Pressure vessel inspector, stationary machinery mechanic, electrician or plumber off construction sites
Certain joint committees	Automobile services, security agents

Quebec has **46 professional orders** governing **55 professions** ([Office des professions du Québec, professionals trained outside Québec](#)); together the orders form the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec (CIQ). To check whether your occupation is regulated, Quebec.ca points to [Qualifications Québec](#).

This guide focuses on professional orders, the route most independent professionals (engineers, accountants, architects, psychologists, translators, lawyers and others) must take before they can work under their title. It is general information, not legal or immigration advice. For the broader settlement and business-registration side, see our [guide to starting a business in Montreal as an immigrant](#).

Reserved title versus exclusive practice

Professions under an order come in two kinds, and the difference decides whether you can earn money while your file is pending.

- **Exclusive practice (and reserved title).** Only members may perform the activities. Quebec.ca's example: to work as a nurse you must be a member of the nursing order ([Québec.ca](#)). Section 32 of the *Professional Code* lists the exclusive-practice professions, including advocate, notary, physician, dentist, pharmacist, architect, engineer, land surveyor, nurse, bailiff, geologist and chartered professional accountant (*Professional Code*, s. 32).
- **Reserved title only.** Anyone may do the work, but only members may use the title. Quebec.ca's example: a translator can work in the field but cannot call themselves a certified translator without joining the order ([Québec.ca](#)).

Some members also have specific **reserved activities** that only they may perform (s. 37.1 and 37.2 of the Code).

Why it matters for freelancers. A foreign-trained translator, HR consultant or counsellor can often start freelancing under a descriptive title while the order processes the file, as long as they do not use the reserved title or perform reserved activities. A foreign-trained engineer cannot sign or seal engineering work, and a foreign lawyer cannot give legal advice in Quebec, until admitted.

The risk of guessing wrong. Using a reserved title or performing reserved activities without a permit is an offence. The Code sets fines of \$2,500 to \$62,500 for a natural person (as of October 2026) (*Professional Code*, ss. 188 and 188.1).

How the Office des professions and the orders divide the work

- **The orders** issue permits and keep the roll. The board of directors of an order issues a permit to anyone who meets the conditions of the Code, the order's own Act and its regulations (s. 40), and a person is entered on the roll once they hold the permit and meet the other conditions (s. 46).
- **The Office des professions du Québec** oversees the system. Its function is to see that each order ensures the protection of the public, and it monitors the orders' mechanisms (s. 12). It can also determine, by regulation, which diplomas give access to a permit (s. 12.0.1.1).
- **The Commissaire à l'admission aux professions** receives complaints about admission to a profession and monitors admission processes (s. 16.10).

All from the *Professional Code*. In practice you deal with **your order**: it publishes the requirements, receives the equivalence application, sets exams and issues the permit.

Step by step: from application to permit

Quebec.ca summarizes the approach: contact the body that oversees your profession; most have a section for candidates trained outside Canada that explains the steps and whether further studies are needed, and you go through the order's equivalence process ([Québec.ca](#)).

A typical sequence:

1. **Identify the order** and read its page for candidates trained outside Canada.
2. **Gather documents:** diplomas, transcripts, course descriptions, proof of practice and licences abroad, translations if required.
3. **Check whether a comparative evaluation is required.** Some regulators ask for a Quebec *Évaluation comparative des études effectuées hors du Québec* as part of admission; the order's equivalence page says whether yours does, so check it before ordering one (Quebec.ca).
4. **File the equivalence application** with the order and pay its fee.
5. **Receive the decision:** full equivalence, partial equivalence with prescribed training, exams or a supervised training period, or refusal.
6. **Complete the prescribed steps** (courses, internship, professional exam).
7. **Prove knowledge of French** (see below) or obtain a temporary permit.
8. **Apply for the permit and entry on the roll**, including the declaration of any judicial or disciplinary decisions (s. 45.2).
9. **Pay annual dues and arrange professional liability coverage** as required by your order.

If you disagree with the decision, Quebec.ca says you can ask the order to review your file within the deadlines on its website (Quebec.ca); equivalence decisions must be reviewable by people other than those who made them (Code, s. 93(c.1)).

Equivalence of diploma and training

Section 42 of the *Professional Code* sets out the routes to a permit. A person must ([Professional Code, s. 42](#)):

1. hold a diploma recognized by regulation of the Office; **or**
2. obtain **equivalence of the diploma or training** under the order's equivalence regulation; **or**
3. have the professional competence required by an order regulation and meet its conditions (paragraph 2.1, added by S.Q. 2026, c. 8, s. 7 and in force); **or**
4. hold a legal authorization to practise outside Quebec and meet the conditions of an order regulation.

Each order adopts its own standards for the equivalence of diplomas from outside Quebec and of training for people without the required diploma (s. 93(c)). The result can be:

Outcome	What it means for you
Full equivalence	Apply for the permit once French and other conditions are met
Partial equivalence	Complete specified courses, internship or exam
Refusal	Ask for review, or retrain through a Quebec program

Orders can also assess the current competence of an applicant who met the diploma conditions many years ago (s. 45.3), so a long career gap can add steps.

Temporary restrictive permits and special authorizations

You may be able to work in a limited way before full admission.

- **Temporary restrictive permit (s. 42.1).** An order may issue it to a person who, after an equivalence application, has been told what training is needed, or who must still complete training, a training period or an exam. The order's board decides which professional activities the holder may perform and on what conditions. **Valid for one year, renewable** ([Professional Code, s. 42.1](#)).
- **Temporary permit for those authorized elsewhere (s. 41).** An order may issue, on its conditions, a one-year renewable temporary permit to a person legally authorized to practise the same profession outside Quebec.
- **Special permit (s. 42.2).** For certain professional activities, under a regulation, for a person authorized to practise outside Quebec. Since 2024 an order may also issue one to a candidate who chooses, for a reason the order accepts, not to complete the prescribed training or exam; the permit then covers only the activities the board lists.
- **Special authorization (s. 42.4).** Allows a person legally authorized outside Quebec to use a reserved title or perform reserved activities. It is valid only for the activities or title it specifies, must name the persons or groups for whom the activities may be performed, and lasts up to one year, renewable ([Professional Code, s. 42.4](#)).
- **Restricted permit for a single employer (Charter, s. 40).** With the OQLF's prior authorization, an order may issue a permit to a person already authorized elsewhere that allows practice only for one employer, in a position with no dealings with the public.

These are powers, not entitlements: each order decides whether it issues them and on what conditions, so its foreign-trained candidate page tells you which ones it actually uses.

French: what the Charter requires

Section 35 of the *Charter of the French language* says professional orders shall not issue permits except to persons whose knowledge of French is appropriate to the practice of the profession ([Charter, s. 35](#)). Section 42.3 of the Professional Code makes the permit rules subject to that requirement.

You are **considered to have that knowledge** if you meet one of these conditions ([Québec.ca, legal obligation to know French](#)):

- you completed at least three years of full-time secondary or post-secondary education in French;
- you passed the Quebec French mother-tongue exams in Secondary 4 or 5;
- you obtained a Quebec secondary school diploma (DES) in 1985-1986 or later.

In all other cases you need a **certificate of knowledge of French** issued by the Office québécois de la langue française (OQLF) after its exam. The first condition has no territorial limit: three years of full-time secondary or post-secondary instruction in French counts wherever it was given, for example in France, Belgium or a

francophone African country (Charter, s. 35, para. 2(1)). You prove it to your order with transcripts or an attestation from the school.

The obligation continues after admission: you must maintain appropriate French while you hold the permit, and your order can recommend refresher measures or require the OQLF exam if there are serious grounds to doubt your French (Charter, ss. 35.1 and 35.2).

The OQLF French exam

From [Québec.ca](https://quebec.ca), French knowledge assessment by the OQLF:

Feature	Detail (as of October 2026)
Cost	Free
Length	About three hours
Where	OQLF offices in Montreal; twice a year in Quebec City; no remote option
Format	Four parts, all passed in the same session; a case study tied to a professional situation, discussed with other candidates for the same order
What it tests	French skills, not professional or technical skills
Registration	Through your professional order
If you fail	Retake as many times as needed, but wait three months and retake the whole exam

Practical tips: register early through your order, use the OQLF's preparation resources, and practise discussing work cases aloud with others, since the exam includes a group discussion.

Temporary licence while you learn French

If your French is not yet at the required level but your order recognizes that you acquired the professional skills outside Quebec, the order may issue a **temporary permit under section 37 of the Charter** ([Charter, s. 37](#)).

According to [Québec.ca](https://quebec.ca):

- it lets you practise while you keep learning French;
- it is valid for a maximum of **one year**;
- it can be renewed **up to three times** with the OQLF's authorization if justified by public interest;
- to qualify for each renewal, you must sit the OQLF exam at least once in the twelve months after the permit or renewal is issued;
- the years must be consecutive; when the last permit expires you cannot practise until you pass, although you can keep taking the exam.

In other words, the maximum runway is four consecutive years. Plan French study from the day you file, not the day the permit arrives.

Practising independently after the permit

Once you are on the roll, you can open your own practice. A few points specific to regulated professionals:

- **Professional liability coverage.** The Code requires each order to impose on its members an obligation to maintain security, by insurance, bond or a group plan, against liability for faults in practice (s. 93(d)). Check your order's regulation for the minimum amount and whether you must join its group plan.
- **Practice structure.** Whether you may practise through a corporation or partnership, and under what conditions, depends on your order's regulations. Read them before incorporating; our guide on [when a Quebec freelancer should incorporate](#) covers the general tax side.
- **Where you practise.** Some orders regulate the professional domicile, records storage and confidentiality of the premises. For example, our audit of [virtual and private offices for Montreal lawyers](#) goes through the Barreau's rules.
- **Business and tax registration.** Check whether your practice must register with the Registraire des entreprises and with Revenu Québec for GST/QST, as for any other self-employed business.

Timeline, costs and where to get help

No official source publishes a single timeline or cost, because the Code leaves equivalence standards to each order's regulation (s. 93(c)) and each order sets its own fees and exam calendar. Build your own estimate from:

Step	Who sets time and cost	What to ask
Comparative evaluation (if required)	Quebec government	Is it required by my order?
Equivalence application	Your order	Fee, processing time, documents
Prescribed training	Universities, cegeps, the order	Course availability, part-time options
Professional exam or internship	Your order	Dates per year, fees
French certificate	OQLF (free), through your order	Next exam date
Permit, dues and insurance	Your order	Annual dues, insurance minimum

Where to get help

- Your professional order's page for candidates trained outside Canada.
- [Qualifications Québec](#), to check whether your occupation is regulated.
- The [Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec](#) for the list of the 46 orders.
- The Commissaire à l'admission aux professions, if you have a complaint about the admission process.
- [Quebec.ca's skills recognition pages](#), which also link to financial assistance for skills recognition.

Checklist

- ☐ Confirm the regulator and whether your profession is exclusive practice or reserved title.
- ☐ Read your order's foreign-trained candidate page and download its equivalence regulation.

- [] Ask whether a comparative evaluation is required.
- [] File the equivalence application with complete, translated documents.
- [] Check French: deemed knowledge, or register for the OQLF exam.
- [] Ask about temporary restrictive permits, special authorizations or a Charter s. 37 permit.
- [] Until admitted, work only under non-reserved titles and activities.
- [] Before opening a practice, arrange liability coverage and check the order's rules on structure and premises.

Once licensed, professionals who meet clients in person can rent furnished client-facing private offices by the month at 2727 Coworking in Griffintown.

Sources

1. Having skills acquired abroad recognized if your trade or profession is regulated in Québec (Québec.ca)
2. Professional Code, chapter C-26 (LégisQuébec)
3. Charter of the French language, chapter C-11 (LégisQuébec)
4. Legal obligation to know French to become a member of a professional order (Québec.ca)
5. French knowledge assessment by the Office québécois de la langue française (Québec.ca)
6. Licence to practice and temporary licence issued under the Charter of the French language (Québec.ca)
7. Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec
8. Qualifications Québec: skills recognition
9. Professionnels formés hors du Québec (Office des professions 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/en/immigration/reconnaissance-etudes-experience/faire-reconnaitre-competences-acquises-etranger/by-regulatory-body>
2. <https://www.quebec.ca/emploi/informer-metier-profession/ordres-professionnels/admission-professions/parcours/professionnels-formes-hors-quebec>
3. <https://www.professions-quebec.org>
4. <https://www.qualificationsquebec.com/reconnaissance-competences/english>
5. <https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/C-26>
6. <https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/C-11>
7. <https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/learn-french/professional-order/legal-obligation>
8. <https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/learn-french/professional-order/exam>
9. <https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/learn-french/professional-order/licence-practice>

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.