

PART 1

being an immigrant entrepreneur in Québec



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"It is important to surround yourself with experienced people, to establish a vision of the future, and to pay close attention to every point of sale, because they are your guarantee of a prosperous future for the company."

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If you are an immigrant, starting a business can be a way to contribute to your new country and achieve one of your own dreams. No matter what your personal situation is, you have to be a permanent resident (landed immigrant) or a Canadian citizen in order to create or operate a business in Canada.

Your status

It is very important for you to know what your status is before embarking on a business start-up. If you are uncertain about the status of your immigration file, you can find out from Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

To obtain integration services for immigrants, please consult the ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles website at www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca

"I am a landed immigrant or Canadian citizen and I want to start a business"

If you want to create or start a business, you can get information about a variety of services, training opportunities, activities, etc., from the following business support organizations:

- Info entrepreneurs : 514-496-4636 or www.entreprisescanada.ca
- Services Québec-Entreprises : 514-644-4545 or www.entreprises.gouv.qc.ca
- SAJE : 514-861-7253 or www.sajeaffaires.org
- Service d'aide aux jeunes entrepreneurs Montréal Centre : 514-485-7253 or www.sajemontrealcentre.com
- Centre local de développement (CLD) (local development centre) or Corporation de développement économique communautaire (CDEC) (community

economic development corporation) in your borough: see the list of CLDs and CDECs in Montréal in Appendix 2 or visit one of the following sites: www.acldq.qc.ca, www.mdeie.gouv.qc.ca or www.mamrot.gouv.qc.ca

- Carrefours jeunesse-emploi (CJE) (youth employment centre) for entrepreneurship information: see the list of CJE in Montréal in Appendix 3 or go to the CJE Network website at www.cjereseau.org
- YES Montréal (*Youth Employment Services*) – services for Anglo-phones: 514-878-9788 or www.yesmtl.org
- Compagnie-F – Entrepreneurship for women: 514-381-7333 or www.compagnie-f.org
- Other resources can be found in Appendix 4.

Importance of the official language

French in Québec

In the rest of Canada, the official languages are English and French, but in Québec French is the only official language. The French Language Charter, often called "Bill 101," obliges businesses in Québec to use French in their commercial signage. All companies must also offer both oral and written services in French. Businesses that do not comply with Bill 101 on French signs are in violation of the law and liable to a fine.

In Québec, the language of business is French, but companies may also use other languages.

French courses

There are a number of organizations that assist immigrants in their efforts to learn French. You can enrol in a program that reflects your grasp of the language and your needs. The Québec government places a good deal of importance on learning French. Many free French courses are available, and grants are offered by the ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles (MICC) under certain conditions.



Citizenship and Immigration Canada
1-888-242-2100
www.cic.gc.ca

Immigration-Québec
514-864-9191
www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca



To find out more about the use of French in businesses, general obligations concerning the language of work, commerce and business, violations, fines and sanctions, contact the Office québécois de la langue française
1-888-873-6202
www.olf.gouv.qc.ca

DID YOU KNOW?

According to the Statistics Canada census for 2006, for 79% of the people in Québec, French is the language they first learned at home in childhood and still understand, followed by English and other languages.

Full-time and part-time courses are offered in all the regions of Québec. Anyone can sign up through the MICC website at www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca, in the "Learn French in Québec" section. You can also improve your French directly online at www.francisationenligne.gouv.qc.ca. The school boards offer French courses too.

For more information, visit the ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport website at www.mels.gouv.qc.ca

Recognition of diplomas, trades, permits and competency certificates

Regulated professions and trades

Depending on the profession or trade you want to practise in your business, you may need to obtain authorization from a regulatory organization. This is the case if, for example, you want to practise a profession that is governed by a professional order or a trade in the construction industry.

For information on regulated professions and trades, please go to the Immigration-Québec website at www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca, and look in the "Employment" section. This section also offers information on obtaining an *Évaluation comparative des études effectuées hors du Québec* (Comparative Evaluation for Studies Done Outside Québec).

Professions governed by a professional order

Professional orders are mandated to protect the public, and as such they have the power to set access criteria and standards of practice, to evaluate competencies and diplomas, and

to grant certificates or permits to qualified individuals. A list of professions governed by professional orders can be found in Appendix 5.

If you did your training abroad, you have to submit to a competency recognition process. To recognize your training or diploma, the order may also require you to complete a study program, internship or examination. It is in your best interests to contact the professional order in question before you come to Québec, so you can evaluate the steps you will have to take to obtain a license and register with the order.

Trades in the construction industry

The Building Act requires everyone who wishes to act as a construction contractor to hold a license issued by the Régie du bâtiment du Québec (RBQ). For more information, please refer to the RBQ website at www.rbq.gouv.qc.ca.

Furthermore, to practise a regulated construction trade in Québec, you need a competency certificate issued by the Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ). The certificate attests that you have the skills needed to work on Québec worksites.

The construction industry comprises two major job categories: trades and occupations. Unlike occupations, trades are subject to an apprenticeship process that is established by regulation. There are 26 trades and some 40 occupations. To learn more about construction industry trades and occupations, refer to the Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ) website at www.ccq.org or call 514-341-2686.

Challenges for entrepreneurs during start-up

The decision to start or take over a business may be rooted in a business opportunity, a need for personal achievement, a dream clamouring to be realized or any number of other reasons. Challenges of varying degrees may arise before, during or after the start-up process, so you have to be ready for them in order to respond effectively. Here are a few of the obstacles you might encounter.



Office des professions du Québec
www.opq.gouv.qc.ca
or 1-800-643-6912

Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec
(The association of professional orders of Québec) www.professions-quebec.org
or 514 288-3574

Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ)
www.ccq.org or
514-341-2686

Régie du bâtiment du Québec
www.rbq.gouv.qc.ca
514-873-0976



Immigration-Québec
www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca



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✓ **Financial**

The initial start-up investment is often the biggest obstacle to financing it. There are, however, many financial institutions and organizations that offer loans (under certain conditions) to entrepreneurs who have a good idea and an excellent business plan.

✓ **Informational**

The business start-up process will not necessarily be self-explanatory to you as an immigrant and future entrepreneur. The most important thing is to knock at the right doors. One fast, reliable way to find business information is to phone Info Entrepreneurs at 514-496-4636 or go to www.entreprisescanada.ca

Counsellors at one of the many business start-up organizations (see list in Appendix 2) can also help you find your way – for free!

✓ **Linguistic**

To start a business in Québec, it is crucial to know the province's official language, which is French. If you can't communicate well in French, you can sign up for French courses with a recognized organization.

✓ **Technical**

You will almost always need a business plan to get any type of financing – loans or grants. A business plan is a document that helps you structure your business idea, from the business offer to planning and market studies to market planning, operations management and financial projections. Your business plan is your passport to achieving your business goals.

✓ **Cultural**

What is considered "normal" in one culture may be anything but in another. Your cultural background will affect your reaction to the cultural differences you encounter as you adjust to your new home – and even for many years afterward. If you feel that you are going through culture shock, visit the Canadian International Development Agency at www.acdi-cida.gc.ca for information and advice.

✓ **Networking**

As a future entrepreneur, you need to expand your professional networks in

order to maximize your business opportunities. Part 2 of this guide will provide you with more details on this important aspect of your business success.

Risks and personal implications

Being an entrepreneur requires energy and time. To understand the commitment demanded by entrepreneurship, you need to learn more about it and everything it involves. You should be aware of the personal and professional implications it entails. Are you ready to deal with all these conditions and obstacles? Here is some food for thought to help you figure out whether you are suited for the entrepreneurial lifestyle and whether you have what it takes to make your project a success.

Advantages :

- ✓ Create your own job
- ✓ Take advantage of a business opportunity that allows you to bring your ideas to life
- ✓ Make use of your full potential and feel accomplished
- ✓ Spend your time doing something other than the typical 9-to-5 routine, etc.

Personal implications:

- ✓ Work long hours for the company
- ✓ Dedicate a lot of time to your business project
- ✓ Earn a lower income for a given period, etc.

Professional implications:

- ✓ Understand that the start-up process is slow
- ✓ Take – and take responsibility for – calculated risks
- ✓ Understand that everything is resting on your shoulders
- ✓ Deal with economic difficulties and manage almost constant stress
- ✓ Take on several roles (prospecting, production, development), etc.

Advice: You may need to take a job in another organization if your own business is bringing in little or no income. This will allow you to pay your personal bills. It can also be a good opportunity to get more work experience and develop your network of contacts in Québec, which will be useful in your future business dealings. ●