

Local News

With Quebec accounting for around two per cent of the North American appliance market, reworking production lines “is not feasible,” Hatch said in her submission to the government.

Proposed Quebec language rules will lead to fewer products, higher prices: lawyer

By Jacob Serebrin
The Canadian Press

Proposed Quebec regulations that would require more French markings on consumer products will lead to fewer choices and higher costs for things such as home appliances, according to an industry group and a Montreal lawyer.

Under existing law, permanent markings — such as those that are engraved, embossed or welded — are permitted to be in a language other than French unless they are related to product safety. But draft regulations released last month would end that exception and require French markings if they’re “necessary for the use of the product.”

That means on and off labels, hot and cold settings, or the various spin cycles on a washing machine, for example, would have to be labelled in French, said Eliane Ellbogen, a Montreal-based intellectual property lawyer with law firm Fasken.

Some of her clients, she said in an interview Monday, say they have no other choice but to leave the Quebec market “because it will be impossible to comply with these new provisions.”

“This means that many different types of consumer goods may no longer be available in Quebec and, ultimately, it’s the Quebec consumer who is going to pay the price with product shortages, service delays, delivery delays, higher prices, less competition on the market.”

“This means that many different types of consumer goods may no longer be available in Quebec and, ultimately, it’s the Quebec consumer who is going to pay the price with product shortages, service delays, delivery delays, higher prices, less competition on the market.”

While manufacturers generally put safety warnings on products in multiple languages, other markings are often only in English, she said.

One “extremely concerning” aspect of the regulations, Ellbogen said, is that they would come into effect 15 days after the rules are adopted, with no grace period. That short timeline offers manufacturers little warning before they have to comply, she said, adding the regulations could be adopted in a few months to a year from now.

“Product manufacturers are telling us that this requirement is essentially impossible to comply with, especially in the short timeline that would be required by the draft regulation,” she said.

In a written submission during public consultations on the draft regulations,

Meagan Hatch, vice-president and managing director of the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers Canada, said a survey of her group’s members indicated that around 90 per cent of models in the Quebec market would not comply with the new rules.

“An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated they would be forced to discontinue selling their products in Quebec. For many, the discontinuation would be permanent,” said Hatch, whose association is composed of companies that produce 90 per cent of the appliances shipped for sale in Canada.

With Quebec accounting for around two per cent of the North American appliance market, reworking production lines “is not feasible,” Hatch said in her submission to the government.

In an emailed statement, Hatch said the appliance industry has a strong commitment to the French language, adding that all product literature is available in French.

“If the proposed regulation is passed in its current form, the vast majority of appliances will no longer be compliant in Quebec. These appliances cannot be easily adapted or replaced by others. We urge the government to show flexibility and to work with the industry,” she said.

A spokesman for Quebec’s French Language Minister Jean-François Roberge, said the province’s language watchdog, the Office québécois de la langue française, has documented a drop in the percentage of large

appliances with French markings, from around 80 per cent in 1977 to less than one per cent in 2021.

In other countries, such as Mexico, the Netherlands, Portugal and Poland, appliances are sold with markings in the local language, Thomas Verville wrote.

“The French-speaking world represents more than 320 million people. What’s more, Quebec is an advanced society and a large, lucrative market. If some companies don’t want to do business in Quebec to avoid translating the indications on their products, if they refuse to speak to Quebecers in French, we’re convince that their competitors will take advantage of these opportunities to the benefit of Quebecers,” Roberge said in an emailed statement.

The government has suggested that manufacturers could use stickers to cover English markings with French ones.

But the home appliance manufacturers association says stickers can’t be placed on touch screens or over markings on buttons. As well, stickers could pose a safety hazard if they’re near heat sources.

Other business groups have also expressed concern about the proposed rules. The Conseil du patronat du Québec said Friday that it worries the regulations will push Quebecers away from buying at local brick-and-mortar retailers and toward online stores that sell products destined for other markets.

Mediators

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

The climate in council is difficult for everyone. “We are all affected,” Godbout said.

But the councillor said she’s most concerned about how a difficult workplace culture is affecting municipal operations. “Projects are

moving very little, very slowly at the City of Sherbrooke,” she said. “It’s affecting services to citizens.”

Beaudin too has called out difficult conditions on council, saying hostility from other councillors was a factor behind her extended leave of absence. She’s also taken issue with attacks on social media, threatening legal action

against a citizen who routinely takes aim at the mayor on Facebook.

Godbout said she’s more focussed on the conduct of council members than on citizens and added that she avoids social media.

Beaudin and Godbout met prior to the motion’s passage. Godbout said Beaudin suggested a few tweaks to the

motion, which she agreed to.

Godbout said she’s hoping to attain “more consensus” and “more confidence between people,” as a result of the mediation. Though Godbout said she hopes for positive change, she said she doesn’t expect the process to fix everything. “I don’t believe in miracles.”

Thirty years of volunteering

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

Communities served by the CABMN as well. He has worked with many other income tax service volunteers including Ken Wraight who has been by Rick’s side for a number of years. The two along with Carmen Aubin and Monique Lasnier have become a dream team of knowledge and support to many during tax season.

“As the person responsible for the income tax program offered through the CABMN, I could not be prouder of the team I have volunteering to make

this important service available each year,” said Jennifer McGeean, CABMN Administration Coordinator.

Last year 74 tax files were completed for low income families and individuals. This year the service will operate March 1 to April 15 and anyone who would like more information can call Jennifer at 450-292-3114. The service is open to single individuals or a single individual with one child with an annual income of less or equal to \$35,000 or couples with an annual income less than or equal to \$45,000. There is a \$10 fee

charged to cover printing and other costs. Appointments are necessary at the above number.

Rick Fergusson received a certificate of “long service” from the Canada Revenue Agency Income Tax Assistance Volunteer Program in February. The volunteers joined Jennifer for a lunch on Feb. 15 where they congratulated Rick on this prestigious award.

“I’m a firm believer in giving back to my community,” said Rick Fergusson. “It has been a good experience in connecting with people at the CABMN

organization,” he added.

If one were to calculate the number of hours and dollar value contributed by Rick and the other Income Tax Service volunteers over the years, the total would surely demonstrate the immense contribution that volunteering makes in communities served. The CABMN can proudly say that this is just one example of volunteer efforts made through its organization. Likely Rick would tell you that there is nothing “taxing” about being a volunteer and that the experience is a win-win for all.