
INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Attorney General
Department of Justice Canada

New changes help people make claims in French under Divorce Act

VICTORIA – Amendments to divorce laws and rules will allow people to use both official languages in B.C. Supreme Court divorce matters.

On Dec. 1, 2024, amendments to the federal Divorce Act, as well as changes to the Supreme Court Family Rules, came into force. Together, these updates will give people who speak French the ability to conduct their Divorce Act court proceedings in French, whereas previously they would have been required to privately hire an interpreter.

With these changes, people can file documents in either official language, both online and in person, at any court registry. They can also have proceedings heard in French, have transcripts or orders prepared in French and give evidence in both official languages.

Changes to the Family Rules also allow the use of French for claims made under family law provincial legislation, most notably the Family Law Act, if they also make claims under the Divorce Act in the same case — called joint relief proceedings. By allowing French to be used in joint relief proceedings, it eliminates the need to hold two separate hearings and trials, most often with identical parties, children and evidence or filing two sets of identical documents and presenting the same evidence twice.

The amendments also extend time limits for filing response documents to allow time for parties to translate documents and grant explicit authority for judges to manage bilingual files in judicial case conferences, case planning conferences and trial management conferences to help parties minimize delays.

This project has been supported by the Department of Justice Canada.

Learn More:

For more information about the French version of the Supreme Court Family Rules forms, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/courthouse-services/documents-forms-records/court-forms/sup-family-forms-french-version>

For more information about the Divorce Act, visit: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/d-3.4/>

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