

Driving a vehicle

To be allowed to drive, you must have in your possession: a valid driver's licence, the vehicle's registration and proof of car insurance. The driver must also respect the Highway Safety Code.

The driver's licence

In the six months following your arrival in Québec, you can drive a car or a motorcycle if you own a valid driver's licence, which authorizes you to drive this vehicle category.

After this six-month period, you must acquire a Québec driver's licence. This licence is valid all across Canada and the United States.

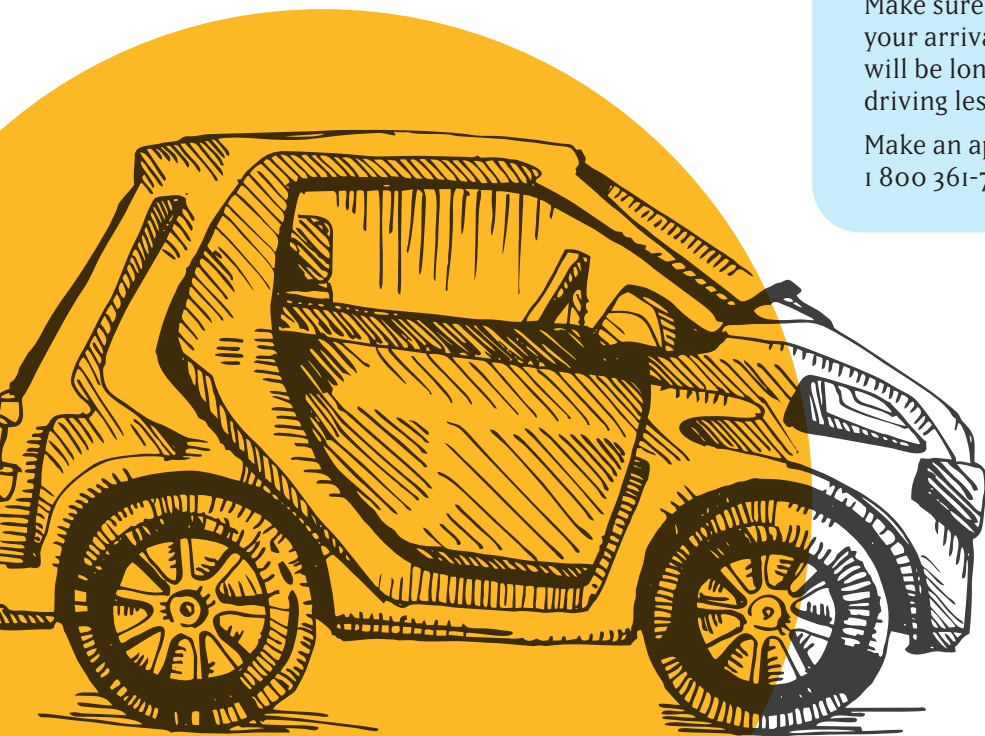
The organization responsible for issuing driver's licences is the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ).

If you have had a driver's licence for a year or more, you can obtain a licence in Québec, which authorizes you to drive a vehicle after passing the SAAQ's theoretical and practical exams.

Important

Make sure to ask for your licence within 12 months of your arrival in Canada. After this deadline, the process will be longer and more costly, as you will have to take driving lessons before passing competency exams.

Make an appointment with an agent at the SAAQ:
1 800 361-7620.



MRC de
L'Islet

If you have not held a driver's licence for more than one year, you will have to follow the usual process, as follows:

- Complete a driving course offered by a recognized school;
- Drive in the presence of a fully licenced driver for at least 12 months after having obtained your learner's licence; and
- Pass both the SAAQ's theoretical and practical exams.

Procedures differ for driving a motorcycle, bus, heavy vehicle, etc. For full details, contact the SAAQ or check its website.

The driver's licence has to be renewed each year, on your birth date. The SAAQ will send you a renewal notice.

Certain countries have met an agreement with Québec to facilitate the transfer of drivers' licences.

The SAAQ's exams are offered in five languages: French, English, Spanish, Arabic and Mandarin.

Information:

www.saaq.gouv.qc.ca
1 800 361-7620

Registration

If you own a vehicle, you must register it and pay annual fees to be allowed to drive it on the road network.

When you pay your registration fees for the first time, the SAAQ will provide a licence plate that must be installed on the back of your vehicle. Then, the SAAQ will send you a renewal notice each year to inform you of the amount due. You will keep the same licence plate.



Insurance

In Québec, two car insurance plans work jointly.

The public plan is run by the Société d'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ). It covers any personal injury you may experience in a traffic accident. In fact, you automatically contribute to this plan when you pay for your driver's licence.

Private plans are managed by insurance companies, which cover damage caused to your vehicle as well as your civil liability. Make sure you have a civil liability car insurance with a minimum coverage of \$50,000 (mandatory).

Several financial institutions and insurance companies provide car insurance plans. It is often cheaper to combine insurance plans (home and car) under one company. Do not hesitate to compare prices.

If you are pulled over by a police officer or are involved in a traffic accident that caused damage and you do not have proper insurance:

- Your driver's licence and your right to obtain one could be suspended.
- Your vehicle may no longer be allowed on the road network.
- You will receive a fine that could amount up to several thousands of dollars.

Information:

immigrantquebec.com
saaq.gouv.qc.ca

The Highway Safety Code

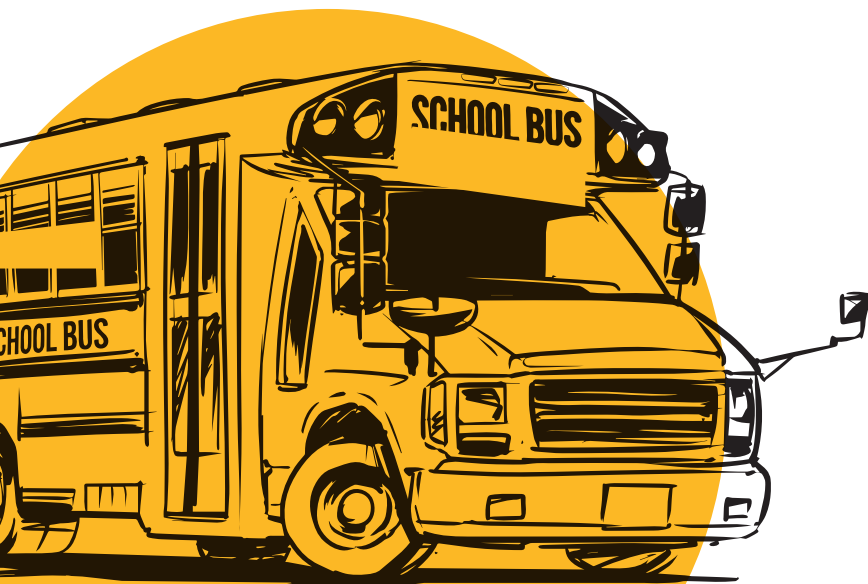
The Highway Safety Code is a law governing the use of vehicles on public roads. All users must comply with its rules, such as the following:

- Respecting speed limits.
- Respecting traffic signs (stop signs, traffic lights, one-ways, etc.).
- Stopping when approaching school buses with flashing lights.
- Wearing a seat belt at all times, be it in the front or in the rear of the vehicle.

Police officers are responsible for enforcing the Highway Safety Code. They can intercept vehicles, issue violation tickets and, if needed, seize vehicles and bring drivers to the police station.

Demerit Points

In Québec, all drivers are subject to a demerit point system. These demerit points add up when the driver is found guilty of offences. When the maximum point threshold is reached, the driver's licence is revoked.



Some rules to comply with

- Be very careful in **school zones**, where the speed limit is reduced. You must also respect signs from school crossing guards, who help children safely cross streets to get to school.
- Before picking up or dropping off children aboard, **school buses** display a stop sign and flash their yellow lights. Stopping is mandatory, whether you are facing or following the bus.
- **Pedestrian crosswalks** are marked with yellow stripes. In these zones, pedestrians have priority over people travelling by car or bicycle, who must yield.
- In Québec, **impaired driving** is a crime. The maximum blood alcohol level tolerated is 0.08 (80 mg of alcohol per 100 ml of blood). Police officers use tests to detect the presence of drugs or alcohol.
- **Turning right on a red light** is authorized in Québec, except on the island of Montréal. However, it is prohibited to do so at certain intersections, for safety reasons. **If turning right is authorized**, the driver must first stop and yield to pedestrians or cyclists. Make sure that the road is clear before turning safely.



How to react to a police interception?

- Stop and park your vehicle on the side of the road.
- Remain in your vehicle. The police will come to you.
- The police officer will explain why you were intercepted.
- You must then hand the officer your driver's licence, registration and proof of car insurance.
- If the officer suspects you of impaired driving, he can ask you to blow into a breathalyzer (device screening blood alcohol concentration), and test movement coordination. Refusal to undergo these tests will automatically lead to the most severe sanctions.



Do not try to bribe a police officer to avoid being issued a ticket. In Canada, bribing is an indictable offence. Likewise, police officers will never ask money from you, as it is illegal for them too.

Roadside Checkpoints

Police officers sometimes set up roadside checkpoints, also called “road blocks”, in order to intercept and check all vehicles passing through. The proper response is the same as the one depicted above. There is nothing to fear, and their presence does not imply danger. For example, you may be casually driving on a road where a checkpoint was set up to ensure that people are not driving under the influence. If you have not broken any rule, the police officers will request for your documents, ask a few questions and let you go.

Tickets

Tickets are issued mainly for violations of municipal by-laws and the Highway Safety Code. If you are issued a ticket, you must fill out and return the form provided to you within 30 days

You have two options:

- Plead guilty and pay the full sum (fine and fees*); or
- Plead not guilty to have your version heard by the judge as your defence.

*Means of payment: online, in person, by phone or by mail. All details are indicated on the ticket.

Information:

MRC de L'Islet, 418 598-3076



Parking

Parking is not permitted everywhere. To avoid being issued a parking ticket, read the signs carefully.

Here are a few examples of parking signs:

- No parking.



- No stopping at any time – even to pick up or drop off someone.



- No parking – this space is reserved for people with disabilities.



- An orange sign on a ground trestle indicating a temporary regulation. This regulation has precedence over regular signs.



- Parking permitted for 60 minutes only, check the restrictions carefully.



Avoid Being Towed!

Before parking and leaving your vehicle, check for no-parking signs. If you do not follow their guidelines, you will have to pay a fine, and your vehicle may be towed.

Winter Driving

Weather affects road conditions, especially in winter. Drivers must therefore be extra cautious.



Québec 511 Service

Québec 511 is a free service. It provides information on the province's road network during all seasons.

You will find information on:

- Winter road conditions;
- Temporary hindrances caused by roadwork;
- Major incidents; and
- The ferry status (open or closed).

Simply call 511, Monday to Friday, 8 AM - 6 PM.

The service is available online at all times: www.quebec511.info

CAA Québec

CAA Québec provides roadside assistance and advice on the sale and buy of a vehicle, maintenance and mechanical repairs, gas, driving and highway safety. CAA can also help you prepare your itinerary for longer trips or to explore other regions of the province, for example.

It is a good reference on driving in Québec all year long.

Information:

www.caaquebec.com

1 800 686-9243

Child Car Safety

The law provides that children must be seated in a car seat adapted to their weight and height until they measure 145 cm or are 9 years old. Any violation to this rule will result in a fine and three demerit points.

Furthermore, the car seat must be in good condition. Do not use a used car seat, as it could have been implicated in an accident, which could make it less safe. Likewise, avoid older seats, whose materials are altered by sunlight and heat.

Respect the expiration date indicated on the seat or the installation guide, for its components become less sturdy with time.

The seat must also be installed correctly:

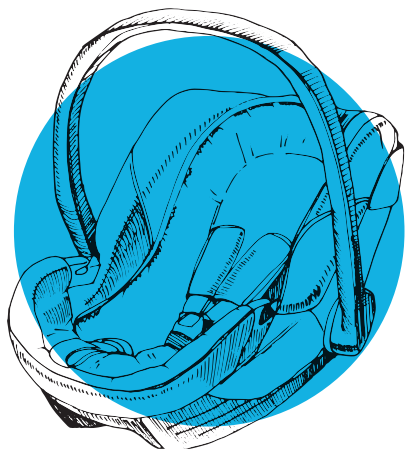
- First, place it on the rear seat (farthest position from the impact zone in case of a head-on collision);
- Install the seat away from airbags; and
- Secure it in place.

To move on from booster seat to seat belt only:

- The law provides that children must be seated in a car seat adapted to their weight and height until they measure 145 cm or are 9 years old.
- When children sit on the rear set, their back must be resting fully on the backrest, and their knees, folded at the edge of the seat, in order to be able to comfortably maintain this position throughout the trip.
- The seat belt must pass across the shoulder (collar bone) and over the hips, not on the neck or stomach.

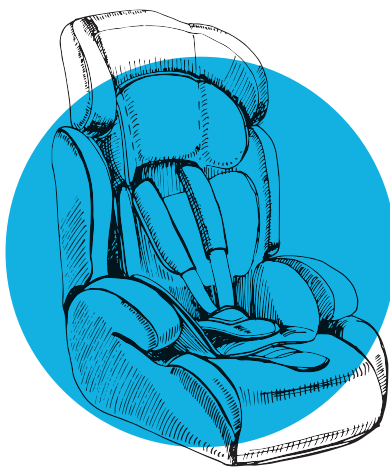
Visit the SAAQ's website to learn more about safety instructions and seat installation:

www.saaq.gouv.qc.ca



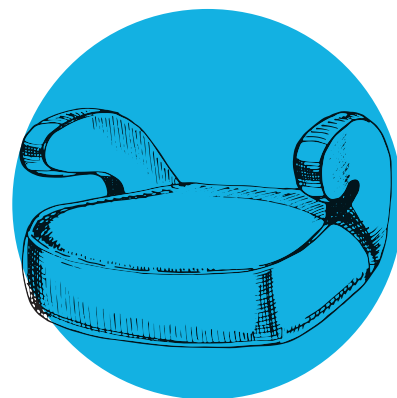
Baby Seat

From birth to at least 10 kg



Toddler Seat

For children weighing at least 10 kg



Booster Seat

For children weighing at least 18 kg