

World Trademark Review *Daily*

**CIRA to launch '.ca' IDNS
Canada - Hogan Lovells**

Domain names

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The [Canadian Internet Registration Authority](#) (CIRA) is considering the implementation of French Internationalised Domain Names (IDNs). CIRA currently offers '.ca' domain names only in ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) using the letters 'A' to 'Z' and the numerals 0 to 9, as well as hyphens. However, it is now planning to enable the registration of '.ca' domain names using the following characters with diacritics:

- é, ë, ê, è
- à, â
- ô
- ù, û, ü
- ç
- î, ï

This would in turn enable '.ca' domain names to be registered in Canada's two official languages, French and English.

Before launching '.ca' IDNs, CIRA is running a public consultation between September 20 and December 13 2011. The consultation is seeking views from interested stakeholders, including registrants, registrars, CIRA members and the Canadian public concerning the introduction of IDNs, as well as the proposed sunrise and landrush registration periods.

CIRA intends to offer a sunrise period for '.ca' IDNs, which would enable registrants of '.ca' domain names to register the equivalent '.ca' domain name as an IDN. In addition, CIRA is consulting on whether owners of registered Canadian trademarks containing characters with diacritics used in French would also be able to apply for a '.ca' IDN on the basis of their exact trademark. The sunrise period would run for a 12-week period and would then be followed by a landrush period, which would give interested parties the opportunity to apply for IDNs not registered or applied for during the sunrise period. Should more than one entity submit an application for the same IDN, the IDN would be allocated on a random basis. After the landrush period has ended, the registration of '.ca' IDNs would be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

CIRA has confirmed that there will be no change to the current registration requirements for '.ca' domain names and that the pricing structure for registering a '.ca' IDN would be the same as non-IDN '.ca' domain names. Currently, a local presence or a registered Canadian trademark is required in order to register a '.ca' domain name.

What has yet to be clarified is whether the proposed sunrise period will give priority to registrants who have held a '.ca' domain name for a certain period of time. For example, giving priority to registrants of domain names registered before a given date, such as January 1 2011. A similar question could also be posed with regard to owners of registered Canadian trademarks and whether such marks would need to have been registered before a specific date.

CIRA has stated that one of the objectives for introducing IDNs is "to continue to develop the '.ca' domain space as a key public resource for the social and economic development for all Canadians". However, given the possible number of IDN variants, critics have suggested that the introduction of '.ca' IDNs will benefit only CIRA, as registrants will be forced to register more than one domain name in order to protect their brand name in the '.ca' domain name space. It will be interesting to see how CIRA responds following the public consultation and what changes, if any, it will make to the IDN launch. What seems certain is that '.ca' IDNs will join the increasing number of IDNs being made available in the global domain name space.

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