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CIRA releases '.ca' IDNs
Canada - Hogan Lovells International LLP

Domain names

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The [Canadian Internet Registration Authority](#) (CIRA) has been [considering](#) the implementation of French internationalised domain names (IDNs) for several months. This included two public consultations, whereby CIRA sought 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.

The public consultations have now been concluded and CIRA has recently announced that IDNs are now available (as of January 13 2013).

Until the introduction of IDNs, CIRA only offered '.ca' domain names in ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange, based on the English alphabet) using the characters 'A' to 'Z' and 0 to 9, as well as hyphens. CIRA has also confirmed that it will enable the registration of '.ca' domain names using the characters 'æ', 'ÿ' and 'œ', which were not originally being proposed. This will in turn mean that the full range of characters used in the French language will be available in the '.ca' domain name space. It will therefore be possible to register '.ca' domain names using the following characters:

- é, ê, ê, è
- â, à, æ
- ô, œ
- ù, û, ü
- ç
- î, ĩ
- ÿ

CIRA has taken on board concerns regarding the potential increase in phishing (the attempt to acquire information such as usernames, passwords and credit card details by masquerading as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication) as well as the confusion that IDNs may in general create. As a result, CIRA will introduce the 'bundling' of character variants. This will result in the registrant of a particular domain name having the exclusive right to register all the potential IDN variants. For example, the registrant of the ASCII version 'preside.ca' would have the option to register the IDN variants 'préside.ca', 'prèsidë.ca', 'prèsidê.ca', etc. This would also mean that only the holder of the IDN 'préside.ca' would have the option to register the corresponding ASCII version 'preside.ca', which, in the absence of such a registration, would presumably be blocked. In the event that a domain name is transferred, voluntarily or involuntarily (eg, further to the result of a dispute), all the variants of the same domain name would also be transferred at the same time.

The 'bundling' solution has in turn dealt with the necessity to have a sunrise or landrush period in order to protect existing registrants of '.ca' domain names, primarily because such registrants will be able to choose to register an IDN variant at any point in time, as only they will have the exclusive right to register these variants. However, due to the complexities of the management of IDNs and the 'bundling' solution, CIRA has decided that it will not be practical for IDNs of the same string to be held by different registrars. Thus, domain names in a 'bundle' will have to be held with the same registrar, as well as being registered to the same registrant entity. This in turn means that if one domain name within a 'bundle' is transferred to another registrar, then all variants in the bundle must also be transferred.

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