



Citizenship and  
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et  
Immigration Canada

# A NEWCOMER'S INTRODUCTION TO CANADA



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Canada

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# A NEWCOMER'S INTRODUCTION TO CANADA



## About This Booklet

Congratulations! You are taking a big step. Moving to a new country offers exciting opportunities and new beginnings!

This book will help you get ready to leave your home country and make a new life in Canada. It was written especially for newcomers. It tells you what documents you will need to bring, what to expect in the first few days and weeks, how to find a place to live, get a Social Insurance Number and a health-care card, and find a job. It also explains what services you can expect to receive from the immigrant-serving organizations across Canada. You will also find useful information about Canada's geography, history, government and way of life, and how to become a Canadian citizen.

You can either read this book from cover to cover, or one section at a time, depending on what you need to know. If you have access to the Internet, you can do more research before you leave for Canada by visiting the Web sites listed.

*A Newcomer's Introduction to Canada* was written to give you helpful information for planning ahead, but it is not a detailed guide. When you arrive in Canada, you will be given another book called *Welcome to Canada: What You Should Know*. It contains specific information on all the practical aspects of living in Canada.

*A Newcomer's Introduction to Canada* will not answer all of your questions, but it is a good place to start.

### Please Note

This booklet contains information that was current at the time of publication. It features information from many sources, and should not be confused with official statements of policy or programming. The Government of Canada is not responsible for information that changes between printings.

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# Chapter 1

## Getting Ready — Before You Leave for Canada



### Essential documents

When you travel to Canada, you will need to have the following documents with you:

- a Canadian immigrant visa and Confirmation of Permanent Residence for each family member travelling with you;
- a valid passport or other travel document for each family member travelling with you;
- two copies of a detailed list of all the personal or household items you are bringing with you; and
- two copies of a list of items that are arriving later.

**Note:** The lists should state how much your personal and household items are worth.

*Tip: Make two copies of these lists — one for you to keep and one for the Canada Customs officer. You can get the Canada Border Services Agency form for this purpose from the Internet at [www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/e/pbj/cf/b4/](http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/e/pbj/cf/b4/).*

- You must also bring with you enough money to cover living expenses such as rent, food, clothing and transportation for a six-month period. You may be asked to show proof of your funds.

Do not pack your documents in a suitcase. You will need to have them available to show to immigration and customs officials.

### Important documents

Depending on your personal situation, you should bring the following important documents with you to Canada:

- birth certificates or baptismal certificates;
- marriage certificates;
- adoption, separation or divorce papers;
- school records, diplomas or degrees for each family member travelling with you;
- trade or professional certificates and licences;
- letters of reference from former employers;
- a list of your educational and professional qualifications and job experience (this is also called a résumé);
- immunization, vaccination, dental and other health records for each family member;

- driver's licence, including an International Driver's Permit;
- photocopies of all essential and important documents, in case the originals get lost (be sure to keep the photocopies in a separate place from the originals); and
- car registration documents (if you are importing a motor vehicle into Canada).

*Tip: If possible, get all of your documents translated into English or French by a qualified translator before you leave for Canada.*



### **What you should know about health care**

Canada has a public health-care system known as “medicare.” It provides insurance coverage for health-care services to all Canadian citizens and permanent residents. (You will be a “permanent resident.”) The federal government sets health-care standards for the whole country, but the programs are run by the provincial ministries of health. More information on the health-care system can be found in chapter 4.

*Tip: Apply for provincial health-care coverage as soon as possible after you arrive in the province where you plan to live.*

**Note:** British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick have a three-month waiting period before you become eligible for medicare coverage. If you are planning to settle in any of these provinces, you should buy private health insurance coverage for the first three months. Insurance companies are listed in the Yellow Pages of all Canadian telephone books, under “Insurance.”

*Tip: Bring a supply of your medications with you to allow you time to find a family doctor in Canada from whom you will have to get new prescriptions.*



## What you can bring into Canada

There are strict laws about what you can bring into Canada.

Cars must meet Canadian safety and pollution control standards. Many cars are not allowed into the country. Contact Transport Canada for more information before you ship your car.

Transport Canada, Vehicle Importation  
330 Sparks Street, Tower C  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N5

Telephone: (613) 998-8616  
(when calling from outside Canada)

1 800 333-0371  
(toll-free, from inside Canada)

Web site: [www.tc.gc.ca](http://www.tc.gc.ca)  
(follow the link Vehicle Importation)



- cultural property, including antique and cultural objects considered to have historical significance in their country of origin (you may, however, bring family heirlooms);
- more than 200 cigarettes (you must pay tax on the excess amount) per person over 18 years of age if you are immigrating to Quebec, Alberta, Saskatchewan or Manitoba, or per person over 19 if you are immigrating to Ontario or any of the other provinces; and
- more than 1.5 litres of wine or 1.14 litres of commercial alcohol (you must pay tax on the excess amount) per person over 19 years of age.

If you are not sure about an item, you can write to or telephone:

Canada Border Services Agency  
Customs, Excise and Taxation  
Information Services  
2265 St. Laurent Boulevard  
Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4K3

Telephone: (506) 636-5064 or  
(204) 983-3500  
(when calling from outside Canada)

1 800 959-2036  
(toll-free, from inside Canada)

Web site: [www.cbsa.gc.ca](http://www.cbsa.gc.ca)

## The following items **cannot** be brought into Canada:

- firearms, explosives, fireworks and ammunition;
- narcotics, other than prescription drugs;
- meat, dairy products, fresh fruits and vegetables;
- plants, flowers and soil;
- endangered species of animals or products made from animal parts, such as the skin, feathers, fur, bones and ivory;



## Getting ready to look for work

If possible, have your documents translated into English or French before you leave for Canada. Essential documents for looking for work include:

- a résumé of your education, work and volunteer experience, and your skills and qualifications;
- diplomas, degrees, certificates and other qualifications;
- letters of recommendation; and
- school records or transcripts.

*Tip: Improving your English or French before coming to Canada would be extremely beneficial.*

Research the labour market in the part of Canada where you plan to settle. The following federally funded Web sites will be helpful:

- **www.directioncanada.gc.ca:** This Web site increases awareness of the opportunities, challenges and barriers awaiting prospective immigrants, so that they may better prepare for the labour market before coming to Canada;
- **www.workdestinations.org:** This Web site contains information on various jobs, working conditions, labour market trends, living conditions, and training and educational opportunities in different regions of Canada. It also lists regulated jobs in Canada. You can find out whether your job is regulated and what you will need to do to get a licence to practise.

- **www.hrsdc.gc.ca:** This Web site offers labour market information, which can help you search for work and make general employment, training and career decisions.
- **www.theworkplace.ca:** This Web site offers practical information and links to Canadian newspapers' on-line "Help Wanted" advertisements.

*Tip: To be better prepared to look for work in Canada, have your credentials evaluated and compared with the Canadian educational system to make it easier for employers to determine whether you meet their job requirements. See chapter 5, page 19 of this booklet for information on international credential evaluation services in Canada.*

*Tip: Professionals in government-regulated occupations should contact the licensing body in their province of destination. (See page 21 for more information.)*



### Getting ready if you are a business immigrant

If you are coming to Canada as a business immigrant, use the Internet to find out about sources of financing, business opportunities, export and investment services, self-employment assistance and information for small businesses. There are many rules for starting a business in Canada. The following Government of Canada Web sites will help you get a head start in your planning:

- **www.cbsc.org:** The Canada Business Service Centre's Web site is your single point of contact for information on government services, programs and rules for business.
- **www.strategis.gc.ca:** This Industry Canada Web site has business information to help you find partners, do market research, find new technologies, and learn about financing opportunities and growth areas in the Canadian economy.
- **www.bdc.ca:** This is the Web site of the Business Development Bank of Canada. It provides financial and consulting services to Canadian small businesses, especially those in the technology and export sectors of the economy. It also offers information on how to start a business and make it succeed.
- **www.strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/incsbfp-pfpec.nsf/en/home:** This is the Web site of the Canada Small Business Financing Program. The program can help you finance your own business.

- **www.contractscanada.gc.ca:** This Web site has information on how and what the Government of Canada buys (both goods and services).
- **www.cic.gc.ca:** This is the Web site of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. It describes the Business Immigration Program. You will find many answers to your questions at this site.

*Tip: When you are deciding how much money to bring into Canada, it helps to research the cost of living in the part of Canada where you plan to live. This information can be found on the provincial and territorial Web sites at [Canada.gc.ca/othergov/prov\\_e.html](http://Canada.gc.ca/othergov/prov_e.html).*



## Communities across Canada

Most newcomers to Canada tend to settle in the three biggest cities — Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver. But many newcomers and many Canadians choose to live in the medium-sized cities, which they feel have as much to offer as the larger cities with a better quality of life.

Among the medium-sized cities are St. John's, Halifax, Québec City, Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Kitchener, St. Catharines, Oshawa, Windsor, Sudbury, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton and Victoria.

All of the medium-sized cities have diverse, multi-ethnic populations ranging in size from approximately 150,000 to one million people, and all have the variety of public and private institutions and services found in the largest cities.

*Tip: To locate the medium-sized cities on a map of Canada, go to pages 26 and 27.*

Some newcomers like the idea of living in smaller cities or towns like Moncton, Fredericton, Red Deer and Kelowna or prefer to live in a rural area. Depending on your skills or professional qualifications, some regions may have better job opportunities than others.

*Tip: Outside the larger cities, the costs of housing, higher education and services are often much lower.*

If you use the Internet, visit the Web sites of each province and territory to see what each has to offer. To find these Web sites, visit [canada.gc.ca/othergov/prov\\_e.html](http://canada.gc.ca/othergov/prov_e.html).

Each Web site has a list of government departments and agencies. In the bigger provinces, some government departments may have their own Web sites, with more detailed information. You may also find a directory of on-line services, a link to educational institutions, and a link to major cities and towns. Most of the Web sites also have a tourism section, where you can discover the special attractions of each province and territory.

The Web site [www.directioncanada.gc.ca](http://www.directioncanada.gc.ca) has links to information on the labour market and the housing market of communities across Canada. It also has useful tips and information about moving within Canada.

You can visit the Web site at [www.directioncanada.gc.ca](http://www.directioncanada.gc.ca) and click on the link Welcome to Canada for federal, provincial and municipal government information.

**Francophone communities:** French is the mother tongue of 6.6 million Canadians. Most Francophones live in Quebec, but almost one million live in Canada's other provinces and territories. The Web site [www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/francophone.html](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/francophone.html) has information on the Francophone communities in each of Canada's provinces and territories. Or check out interesting links to official language organizations at [www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/links\\_liens.asp?Lang=English](http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/links_liens.asp?Lang=English).

*Tip: Research carefully the labour market trends or access to your profession in the province and city where you wish to live.*



### **The Canadian climate: What to expect and what clothes to bring**

Most of Canada has four distinct seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. The temperatures and weather in each season can be different from one part of the country to another. Here is what you can expect.

**Spring:** Spring is a rainy season in most parts of Canada. Daytime temperatures rise steadily, but the nights remain cool. Average daytime temperatures are about 12°C in March, April and early May.

**Summer:** Summer officially begins on June 21, but July and August are summer for most Canadians. In summer, the weather is very warm in most parts of the country. In southern Canada, daytime temperatures are normally above 20°C and can sometimes rise above 30°C.

**Autumn:** The autumn season, or fall, as it's often called, begins in September. The weather cools and the leaves on many trees change colour and fall to the ground. It can also be very rainy at this time of year. In some parts of Canada, especially northern or mountain regions, snow may begin to fall by late October. Average daytime temperatures are about 10°C to 12°C in most of the country. The autumn months are September, October and November.

**Winter:** During the winter months (December, January and February), the temperature in most of the country usually stays below 0°C, day and night. Temperatures in some parts of the country periodically drop below -25°C, while along the West Coast, the temperature rarely drops below 0°C. In most of Canada, snow will be on the ground from mid-December to the middle of March. The higher in elevation and the farther north you go, the longer and colder winter becomes.

*Tip: If you arrive in Canada in the winter, you will need warm clothing such as insulated, waterproof boots; an overcoat; a scarf for your neck; a hat that covers your ears; and gloves or mittens. If you come from a warm climate, buy some winter clothes before you leave for Canada, if possible. Or, be ready to buy winter clothes soon after arriving (note also that winter clothes are more expensive than summer clothes). You may wish to contact an immigrant-serving organization in your new community for help.*



*Tip: You can find detailed weather information for each region of Canada on the Environment Canada Web site: [weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca](http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca).*



## Schools and universities

There is no national school system in Canada. Schools and universities are run by the provinces; therefore, education varies somewhat from province to province. Most elementary and secondary schooling is public, meaning it is free and open to everyone.

Depending on the individual province, primary education starts at pre-kindergarten and continues to the end of grade 6 or 8. This is followed by secondary education or high school. In some provinces this may be divided into junior high (grades 7 to 9) and senior high (grades 10 to 12). Normally, students must complete the required academic courses in high school in order to be admitted to university or college.

The regular school year runs from late August or early September until mid- to late June. New students can usually be registered throughout the school year. Most schools are closed on national holidays. Also, all schools are closed between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day, and most are closed for a week in March for spring break. The longest school holiday occurs over the summer months of July and August.

Universities and community colleges hold their regular classes from late August or early September until April, although some courses are offered from January to April and a smaller number are available over the summer months. University and community college courses are not free and the costs vary among the provinces.

When you register your children at the local school or school board office, you must take with you:

- Canadian immigrant visa (permanent resident card);
- birth certificate or baptismal certificate;
- vaccination certificate;
- any previous school records.

Your children's language and mathematical skills will be assessed, if necessary, and they will be placed in the program the school thinks is best for them.

*Tip: For information about the educational system in Canada, visit the Web site [www.directioncanada.gc.ca](http://www.directioncanada.gc.ca) and click on the "Studying" icon, or visit [www.aucc.ca](http://www.aucc.ca) or [www.accc.ca](http://www.accc.ca).*

*Tip: Education in Canada is available in English and French. Many Canadian parents, even if they do not speak French themselves, believe it is good for their children to be able to speak both English and French. Some put their children in a French immersion program, where children learn most of the regular subjects in French.*

## Chapter 2

### The Day You Arrive in Canada



#### Customs and immigration

You will probably find the entry procedure fairly straightforward because you have a passport and other essential documents (see chapter 1, page 1).

You will be interviewed by a Canada Customs officer. You will need to give the officer a list of all the household and personal items that you will be bringing into Canada. (See chapter 1, page 1.) You should also show the immigrant visa to the customs officer, who will refer you to an immigration officer.

The immigration officer will check your visa and travel documents and ask you questions similar to those on the Immigrant Application Form, to verify that you are of good character and in good health. At this time, you may also be asked to show proof of your funds. If there are no difficulties, the officer will authorize your entry to Canada as a permanent resident by signing your Record of Landing or Confirmation of Permanent Residence.

If you arrive at one of the major Canadian airports, you will get a booklet called *Welcome to Canada: What You Should Know*. It has information on most aspects of life in Canada. It also provides addresses and telephone numbers for:

- immigrant-serving organizations across Canada;
- language training assessment centres (which help eligible adult newcomers find free language classes);
- useful federal and provincial government offices.

#### Reception services

If you arrive in Toronto, Montréal or Vancouver, you will find immigrant reception services in the airport. These services are run by immigrant-serving organizations. They help newcomers get the information and services they need, and this help is often available in several languages. In Montréal, the *Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles* runs this service.

**Tip:** *Welcome to Canada: What You Should Know* and other useful information for newcomers can be found on the Internet at [www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomer](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomer), and at [www.directioncanada.gc.ca](http://www.directioncanada.gc.ca).





## Chapter 3

### Immigrant-Serving Organizations



There are hundreds of immigrant-serving organizations in Canada. Many are staffed by former newcomers to Canada, who understand the challenges that immigrants may face. They usually have people available who speak your language and can accompany you as interpreters. Citizenship and Immigration Canada supports many of these organizations financially, helping newcomers adapt to life in Canada.

Settling in will be much easier if you contact an immigrant-serving organization as soon as you arrive. The people who work for these organizations can help you find a place to live and can answer your questions about shopping, education for your children, transportation, language training and other important matters.

Immigrant-serving organizations can help you:

- find a place to live;
- get your Social Insurance Number and health-care card;
- enrol your children in school;
- get language training;
- find a family doctor;
- find out about government and community services for newcomers;

- look for a job;
- develop a realistic budget; and
- get emergency food aid, if it is needed.

**Note:** In Quebec, the *Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles* is organized into different regions. Each region has a local office, called a *Carrefour d'intégration*, which works with the immigrant-serving organizations to help newcomers adapt to life in Quebec.

Most immigrant-serving organizations offer, or can provide information on, the following Government of Canada programs.



#### **LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)**

LINC is a federal government program for all eligible adult immigrants. It offers:

- free language training for adult newcomers who want or need basic English or French;
- language classes given by school boards, colleges and local organizations;

- the choice of studying part-time, full-time, evenings or weekends, depending on your needs and your schedule; and
- transportation and child-minding, if necessary.

*Tip: Your local immigrant-serving organization can direct you to a LINC Assessment Centre, which will then refer you to organizations offering LINC classes. You can also refer to the book Welcome to Canada: What You Should Know to find a LINC Assessment Centre in your area.*



### Host Program

The Host program is a federally funded program that matches newcomers with a Canadian family or individual. Host volunteers help you:

- overcome the stress of moving to a new country;
- learn about available services and how to use them;
- practise English or French;
- prepare to look for a job; and
- participate in community activities.

*Tip: Your local immigrant-serving organization can direct you to a Host program organization in your community.*



### ISAP (Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program)

ISAP helps newcomers gain access to community services to meet their immediate needs.

Under ISAP, immigrant-serving organizations can:

- refer you to economic, social, health, cultural, educational and recreational services;
- give you tips on banking, shopping, managing a household and other everyday tasks;
- provide interpreters or translators, if you need them;
- provide non-therapeutic counselling; and
- help you prepare a professional-looking résumé and learn job-searching skills.

The Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), a federal government program, pays for these services.

A list of immigrant-serving organizations across Canada can be found on the Internet at [www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomer/welcome/wel-20e.html](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomer/welcome/wel-20e.html).

*Tip: Manitoba, British Columbia and Quebec have programs similar to LINC, the Host program and ISAP, but they may have slightly different names.*

## ELT (Enhanced Language Training)

ELT aims to develop and deliver higher levels of language training and job-specific language training, including labour market understanding or experience across Canada. As a component of the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program, ELT is expected to provide the following:

- Higher levels of language training, Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) or the Standards linguistiques canadiens (SLC) levels 7-10 (English or French) will be developed and delivered to help meet the needs of immigrants who enter the country with basic or intermediate English or French skills but need higher levels of language ability to enter and remain in the labour market;
- Higher levels (CLB/SLC 7-10) of job-specific language training will be developed and delivered to enable immigrants to find and retain jobs commensurate with their qualifications and skills; and
- In order to promote regionalization, CLB/SLC levels 1-10 (English or French) will be developed and delivered in smaller centres without language training infrastructure (specifically the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada [LINC] program). (ELT is not intended to duplicate or substitute for the delivery of LINC);
- All of the above must include a bridge to work component, such as work placements, mentoring, cultural orientation to the workplace, preparation for licensure exams and internships for eligible clients.



## Chapter 4

### Your First Few Days in Canada



#### FINDING A PLACE TO LIVE

##### To buy or to rent

When you first arrive in Canada, you will probably be living in a temporary home. You will soon be looking for a more permanent place to live. Canada has many different types of housing and a wide range of prices. Finding the right place will take some time and effort. Your first decision will be whether to rent a house or an apartment, or to buy a house.

Whether you rent or buy will depend on your personal finances and whether you already have a job in Canada. Most newcomers decide they should first rent a house or apartment. This gives them more time to save money to buy a house and to decide where they want to live.

If you want to buy a house, unless you can pay the full price, you will need to get a long-term loan called a mortgage. Mortgage loans are provided by banks and other financial institutions. They decide whether the borrower has enough income, more assets than debts, and a good credit rating. Most will ask you to pay at least five percent of the cost of the house from your own money.

##### Types of housing

- **Furnished or unfurnished:** Furnished housing should include beds, tables, chairs, lamps, curtains, a stove and a refrigerator. Unfurnished housing may include a stove and a refrigerator, but not always.
- **Room for rent:** This is usually in a house or an apartment that is owned or rented by other people. Everyone shares the kitchen and bathrooms.
- **Bachelor or studio apartment:** These are small apartments designed mainly for one person. They have one large room with a kitchen and a sleeping area, plus a separate bathroom.
- **Other apartments:** Most other apartments have from one to three bedrooms. All will have a separate kitchen, a living room and a bathroom.
- **Duplex:** This is a house divided into two separate apartments. It may be bought or rented.
- **Townhouse:** This is a small house joined to other houses. It may be bought or rented.
- **Condominium:** Condominium ownership means you own the unit you live in and share ownership rights for the common space of the building. Common space includes areas such as corridors, the grounds around the building, and facilities such as a swimming pool and recreation rooms. Condominium owners together control the common areas through an owners' association. The association makes decisions about using and maintaining the common space.

## How to find a place to live

Here's how to look for the right home for you:

- search the classified advertisements in local newspapers;
- become familiar with the public transportation available;
- ask an immigrant-serving organization in your area for advice;
- ask friends and family already living in the area for advice;
- look for "Vacancy" or "For Rent" signs on houses and apartment buildings;
- check bulletin boards in grocery stores, laundromats, health clinics and community centres; and
- ask for advice at your place of worship.



## What if you have a large family?

If you have three or more children, or you have older relatives living with you, you will probably not be able to find a big enough apartment. In that case, you may need to think about renting a house.

## How much will it cost?

You could expect to pay \$450 a month for a room, and between \$1,000 and \$1,500 a month for an apartment or a house. Rental costs vary greatly across cities and across Canada. Housing is more reasonable outside the large cities. An immigrant-serving organization in the area where you plan to settle can help you find affordable housing.

## Signing a lease

Once you agree to rent an apartment or a house, you may be asked to sign a one-year lease. This legal document of one or two pages describes the rental property, the utilities included and the options, such as parking and storage. It may also state whether pets or more people are allowed. Most apartments are leased by the year, although some are rented monthly.

You will probably need to pay the first and last month's rent when you sign the lease.

If your apartment requires a lease, your landlord will give you the lease form to sign. Read it over carefully before you sign it. Pay special attention to the parts that state exceptions and additions. You should know which utilities you will pay for and which ones will be paid for by the landlord. Be sure you know what the monthly rent payment includes. For example, is the electricity included? the water included? the parking included?

Also find out whether you have to pay a fee if you leave before the lease term is over. You cannot usually break a lease agreement. It is also likely you will be asked to provide a Canadian reference or to have a co-signer sign the lease to guarantee your financial commitment.

If you don't understand some of the legal terms used in the lease document, contact one of the groups that help immigrants, or someone you know and trust who can help you. Once you sign the lease, it is a legal document.

*Tip: Plan on spending 35 to 50 percent of your income on housing. This should include the cost of electricity, heating, telephone service and water. To find out more before you arrive in Canada, visit the Web site [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca) or [www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/bureho/reho](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/bureho/reho).*

*Tip: As people in Canada tend to move in the spring and summer months, these are the best times to look for a home; there will be more choices available.*

## APPLYING FOR A HEALTH INSURANCE CARD

One of the most important things you need to do as soon as you arrive in Canada is to apply for a health insurance card. All members of your family, even newborn babies, must have their own card. You can get an application form from the provincial ministry of health office, any doctor's office, a hospital or a pharmacy. If necessary, the immigrant-serving organization in your area can help you fill out the form. To apply for a health card, you will need your birth certificate or Confirmation of Permanent Residence (IMM 5292) and passport. The permanent resident card may also be presented. In most provinces, you will receive coverage as soon as you apply.

*Tip: In Ontario, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Quebec, there is a three-month waiting period before you become eligible for medicare coverage. If you are immigrating to any of these provinces, you should get private, short-term health-care insurance for the first three months. Insurance companies are listed in the Yellow Pages of all Canadian telephone books, under "Insurance."*

Health-care services covered by medicare include:

- examination and treatment by family doctors;
- many types of surgery;
- most treatment by specialists;
- hospital care;
- X-rays;
- many laboratory tests; and
- most immunizations.

Health-care services not covered by medicare, and for which you will have to pay, include:

- ambulance services;
- prescription drugs;
- dental care; and
- glasses and contact lenses.

These services are sometimes covered by workplace benefit packages.

Your health insurance card is mainly for use in the province where you live. If you are visiting another province and have a medical emergency, you can use your card. However, if you move to another province, you will need to apply for a new card.

## **APPLYING FOR A SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER**

To work in Canada, you must have a Social Insurance Number. This is a nine-digit number that you will need to look for a job and to receive government benefits. Sometimes, you will hear people call it the SIN number. You can get a SIN application form through the Human Resources Centre near you. These centres are run by the federal government. You can also get a form through your local immigrant-serving organization or from the post office, or on the Internet at [www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca). The SIN card will be sent to you in the mail. There is a small fee for processing the application.

*Tip: To find the nearest Human Resources Centre, look in the Blue Pages of any telephone book under "Government of Canada — Employment," or go on the Internet at [www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca) and click on Services Where You Live.*



## Chapter 5

### Finding a Job, Building a Future



In Canada, full-time jobs are common. However, a growing number of people have part-time or short-term jobs. Women make up a large portion of the work force and many have important, senior positions.

Canadians may change jobs and careers several times. This is often a personal choice. Sometimes people must change jobs because the economy changes. For these, and other reasons, getting a job is not easy. Many people are looking for work.

Newcomers to Canada rarely enter the job market quickly and often must start with jobs below the skill level they worked at in their home country. Once they have Canadian job experience and their ability in English or French improves, so do their job prospects.

#### **International educational assessment services in Canada**

Even if you have many years of experience, you do not automatically have the right to practise your trade or profession in Canada. In most cases, you will need to have your credentials assessed to see whether you need more training, education or Canadian work experience before being qualified to practise.

You may wish to get your credentials evaluated before you leave for Canada. The following organizations can tell you how to get your credentials assessed.

**The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials Web site** ([www.cicic.ca](http://www.cicic.ca)) has information on academic and occupational credentials for all of Canada and lists nearly 200 professions and trades, in alphabetical order. When you click on your profession or trade, you will find a link to the address and telephone number of the professional or trade association, the addresses and telephone numbers of provincial evaluation services and regulatory agencies, and labour market information (for example, whether there is a demand for people with your particular trade or profession). You will also be able to find out whether your profession or trade is regulated.

The Centre does not grant equivalencies or assess credentials. It gives advice and refers newcomers to sources of help. To contact the Centre by mail, write to:

Canadian Information Centre for  
International Credentials  
95 St. Clair Avenue West, Suite 1106  
Toronto, Ontario M4V 1N6

Tel.: (416) 962-9725

Fax: (416) 962-2800

E-mail: [info@cicic.ca](mailto:info@cicic.ca)

URL: [www.cicic.ca](http://www.cicic.ca)

## **Provincial credential assessment services**

**Provincial assessment services** assess academic credentials for a fee. The assessment will tell you how your education compares with educational standards in the province where you are planning to settle. You can give your assessment to any employer in Canada. It may help you in your job search.

### **Alberta**

#### **International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS)**

Alberta Advanced Education  
9th Floor, Sterling Place  
9942 - 108 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J5  
Canada  
Tel.: (780) 427-2655  
Toll-free in Alberta: 310-0000, ask for 427-2655  
Fax: (780) 422-9734  
Web site: <http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/iqas/iqas.asp>

### **British Columbia**

#### **International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES)**

3700 Willingdon Avenue  
Burnaby, British Columbia V5G 3H2  
Canada  
Tel.: (604) 432-8800  
Toll-free within North America: 1 866 434-9197  
Fax: (604) 435-7033  
E-mail: [icesinfo@bcit.ca](mailto:icesinfo@bcit.ca)  
Web site: <http://www.bcit.ca/ices/>

### **Manitoba**

#### **Academic Credentials Assessment Service – Manitoba (ACAS)**

Manitoba Labour and Immigration  
Settlement and Labour Market Services Branch  
5th Floor, 213 Notre-Dame Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 1N3  
Canada  
Tel.: (204) 945-6300  
Fax: (204) 948-2148  
E-mail: [glloyd@gov.mb.ca](mailto:glloyd@gov.mb.ca)  
Web site: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/immigrate/newcomerservices/7a.html>

### **Northwest Territories\***

#### **International Qualifications Assessment Service**

Alberta Advanced Education  
9th Floor, Sterling Place  
9942 - 108 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J5  
Canada  
Tel.: 1 866 692-7057 (toll-free within the Northwest Territories) or (780) 427-2655  
Web site: <http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/iqas/iqas.asp>

\* The Government of the Northwest Territories provides this service through an interprovincial agreement with the Government of Alberta.

### **Ontario**

#### **World Education Services Canada (WES Canada)**

45 Charles Street East, Suite 700  
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1S2  
Canada  
Tel.: (416) 972-0070  
Fax: (416) 972-9004  
Toll-free: 1 866 343-0070 (from outside the 416 area code)  
E-mail: [ontario@wes.org](mailto:ontario@wes.org)  
Web site: <http://www.wes.org/ca/>

### **Quebec**

#### **Service des évaluations comparatives d'études (SECE)**

Centre de reconnaissance des formations et des compétences  
Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles (MICC)  
255, boulevard Crémazie Est, 8e étage  
Montréal (Québec) H2M 1M2  
Canada  
Tel.: (514) 864-9191 or  
1 877 264-6164  
Fax: (514) 873-8701  
E-mail: [equivalences@micc.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:equivalences@micc.gouv.qc.ca)  
Web site: <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/anglais/education/educational-report.html>

### **Saskatchewan\*** **International Qualifications Assessment Service**

Alberta Advanced Education  
9th Floor, Sterling Place  
9942 - 108 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J5  
Canada  
Tel.: 1 800 999-3965 (toll-free within  
Saskatchewan) or (780) 427-2655  
Web site: <http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/iqas/iqas.asp>

\* The Government of Saskatchewan provides this service through an interprovincial agreement with the Government of Alberta.

### **Other provinces and territories**

For credential evaluation services in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Nunavut or Yukon, you can contact any of the services listed on this page.



### **Employment in regulated professions and trades**

In Canada, about 20 percent of jobs are regulated by the government to protect public health and safety. For example, nurses, doctors, engineers, teachers and electricians all work in regulated professions. People who want to work in regulated jobs need to get a licence from the regulatory body in the province in which they live. If you want to know more about how to enter a particular profession or trade in a particular province,

you should contact the provincial regulatory body for that job. The professions are self-regulating and they administer the provincial laws that apply to their profession. Rules for entering professions also differ from province to province. (For more information, visit [www.cicic.ca](http://www.cicic.ca).)

*Tip: Regulated occupations in Canada usually require many years of education, training and practical experience, and the successful completion of a technical examination. Technical examinations to enter a trade or profession can be very expensive.*

### **Language skills**

It is important to learn English or French as quickly as possible. Many newcomers begin life in Canada by looking for a job that will allow them to learn or improve their English or French. The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program gives eligible adult immigrants the chance to take basic English or French classes at no charge (see chapter 3, page 11).



People with foreign credentials need a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score to enter Canadian colleges and universities. Colleges and universities offering courses in French use various French language tests.

## Job opportunities

- **Service Canada Centres:** Counsellors at these centres can give you free advice and information about job and language training and work creation programs for newcomers. They can help you plan an effective job search and prepare a résumé of your education and experience. Each centre also has listings of available jobs on computer or on bulletin boards.
- **Classified advertisements:** Every daily newspaper in Canada has a classified advertisements section where you will find a variety of jobs listed. In many areas, there are also weekly or monthly employment papers that advertise jobs.

*Tip: Look into taking English or French classes through the LINC program.*

- **Local help:** To help newcomers prepare to enter the Canadian work force or to gain access to their profession or trade in Canada, immigrant-serving organizations have a variety of programs. Some give workshops on job search skills, where participants get an overview of the job market where they live. Participants learn, among other things, how to write a good résumé and how to behave in an interview. In some areas, there are job-finding clubs, mentoring programs, programs to help you get volunteer work experience, and wage subsidy programs.
- **Your personal “network”:** One of the best ways to learn about jobs is to talk to people. They can be people you know well, or people you have just met. Even if they cannot lead you directly to a job, they can provide you with information, ideas and names of other people who might be able to help and encourage you.



- **The Internet:** Many Web sites have information on job opportunities. You can search for a job on-line in any part of Canada. Some sites also give practical advice on how to plan your job search. Others allow you to apply for a job directly on the Internet, or to post your résumé (in English or French). When you do this, your résumé goes into a database that can be searched by employers. Try visiting the following Web sites, run by the federal government.
- **www.directioncanada.gc.ca:** The Going to Canada Immigration Portal is an important resource that provides on-line information and services from a variety of government and non-government sources to help you make informed decisions about coming to Canada.
- **www.hrsdc.gc.ca:** This is the national Web site of Human Resources and Social Development Canada, a federal department.
- **www.jobsetc.ca:** This site will take you through all the steps needed to choose a career and to carry out an effective work search.
- **www.workinfont.ca:** This is a national site for career and labour market information. It will link you to job information for each province and territory. It also includes information on self-employment, education and training.
- **www.SkillNet.ca:** This is a large network of job and career information Web sites. It can link you to full-time and part-time job opportunities.

- **www.canadait.com:** This site is a gateway to job opportunities in the information technology and communications sector. It has links to company directories and associations that will help you find potential employers.
- **www.jobs.gc.ca:** This site posts federal government jobs available across the country and accepts on-line applications.

*Tip: When you arrive in Canada, refer to the pamphlet called "Finding Help in Your Community" in the booklet Welcome to Canada: What You Should Know for a list of the immigrant-serving organizations across Canada. Contact an agency in your area and ask about job search programs for newcomers.*

### Employment laws

Federal and provincial laws protect workers and employers by setting minimum wage levels, health and safety standards, and hours of work. They provide for maternity leave, annual paid vacation and protection of children who are working. There are also human rights laws that protect employees from unfair treatment by employers based on sex, age, race, religion or disability.

### Discrimination

There are laws to protect workers from discrimination. For example, an employer must hire employees on the basis of their qualifications. Employers cannot refuse to hire you because they don't like your skin colour or your religion. This is discrimination. It is also discrimination if you are refused a job because of your age, sex, marital status, disability or sexual orientation.



## DEDUCTIONS AND TAXABLE BENEFITS

Whether you are a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident, when you are hired, your employer will deduct money from your pay cheque to pay for the following.

### Income tax

All Canadian residents who are old enough to work must file an income tax return each year, whether they earned any money or not. That is the law. If you are working for an employer, a percentage of your pay cheque will be deducted and sent to the federal government to cover the income tax that you owe. If too much is deducted, you will get a refund. If you paid too little, you will have to pay more. This money helps pay the cost of government services.

### Canada Pension Plan

A small part of your pay cheque goes into this plan. When you retire, you will receive a monthly pension from the federal government. The amount will vary according to how many years you worked in Canada before retiring and what your salary was. Residents of Quebec pay into the Quebec Pension Plan, which works the same way as the federal plan. These plans also include survivor's pensions for the spouses of deceased pensioners, disability pensions and death benefits.

## **Employment Insurance**

When you are working, a small percentage of your pay cheque will be deducted each month to go into the Employment Insurance Account. Your employer contributes to the account as well. Employment insurance gives money to eligible, unemployed Canadian residents for a short time, while they look for a new job or take some training to learn new skills.

## **Taxable benefits**

Your employer may provide some benefits (for example, life insurance, special medical care, a dental plan or a private pension plan) that are taxable.

## **Union dues**

If you are in a union, and the union has an agreement with your employer, some money will be deducted to pay for the union dues.

## Chapter 6

### General Information about Canada



#### Geography

Canada consists of 10 provinces and three territories in five main regions: the Atlantic region, Central Canada, the Prairies, the West Coast and the North. The culture and population are different in each region.

The **Atlantic** region consists of the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Activities such as fishing, farming, forestry, tourism and mining are important to the Atlantic economy.

**Central Canada** consists of the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. This is the most populated region of the country. Together, Ontario and Quebec produce more than three-quarters of all Canadian manufactured goods.

The **Prairies** include the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Much of the land is flat and fertile, excellent for farming and rich in energy resources. In western Alberta, the Prairies end and the Rocky Mountains begin. The Canadian Rockies include some of the largest peaks in North America.

On the **West Coast**, the province of British Columbia is famous for its mountain ranges and forests. Natural resources such as lumber and fish are important to the economy. Fruit farming is also a major industry, as is tourism.

The **North** consists of Canada's three territories: Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Together, they make up over one-third of Canada's land mass. Northern resources include oil, natural gas, gold, lead and zinc.

#### Distances

Distances in Canada are measured in kilometres. Canada is over 7,000 kilometres from east to west. You would need seven days to drive from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Vancouver, British Columbia. By airplane, the same trip would take about seven hours.

#### Population

Canada has about 32 million people. More than 80 percent of all the people in Canada live in towns and cities within 250 kilometres of the United States border. Ottawa is Canada's capital city, with a population of nearly one million. It is located in the province of Ontario. Canada's largest cities are Toronto, Ontario (5.3 million people); Montréal, Quebec (3.6 million); and Vancouver, British Columbia (2.2 million).

## Map of Canada



Region	Province/Territory	Capital
<b>Atlantic Region</b>	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's
	Prince Edward Island	Charlottetown
	Nova Scotia	Halifax
	New Brunswick	Fredericton
<b>Central Canada</b>	Quebec	Québec
	Ontario	Toronto
<b>Prairie Provinces</b>	Manitoba	Winnipeg
	Saskatchewan	Regina
	Alberta	Edmonton
<b>West Coast</b>	British Columbia	Victoria
<b>North</b>	Nunavut	Iqaluit
	Northwest Territories	Yellowknife
	Yukon	Whitehorse





## The Francophone population

French is the mother tongue of 6.6 million Canadians. Most Francophones live in Quebec, but almost one million Francophones live in Canada's other provinces and territories. About 76 percent of Francophones living outside Quebec live in Ontario and New Brunswick. Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia each have approximately 50,000 Francophones, while Nova Scotia has 35,000 and Saskatchewan has fewer than 20,000. The areas with the smallest French-speaking populations are Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the three territories.

*Tip: For information on Francophone communities outside Quebec, visit the following Web sites: [franco.ca/atlas/](http://franco.ca/atlas/) or [www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/links\\_liens.asp#B](http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/links_liens.asp#B).*

## History

Canada is a land of many cultures and many peoples. Aboriginal peoples have occupied the territory now called Canada for several thousands of years. Everybody else, either by birth or by descent, has been an immigrant — we have all come from somewhere else. It has been said that Canada is a “nation of immigrants.”



There are three main groups of Aboriginal peoples in Canada: the First Nations, the Inuit and the Métis. There are more than 50 different languages spoken by Canada's Aboriginal peoples, most of which are spoken only in Canada. In fact, the name “Canada”

may have come from the word “Kanata,” which means a settlement in the language of the Huron-Iroquois First Nations peoples.

As a country, Canada came into being on July 1, 1867. This event is known as “Confederation.” Before 1867, the French arrived first, then the British. Each brought their own language, system of government, laws and culture. In 1763, after a long war between the British and the French, all of Canada came under British rule and was known as “British North America.”

In the late 18th and into the 19th century, during and after the time of the American Revolution, many African-Americans and United Empire Loyalists fled the United States for Canada, where British ties remained and slavery had been abolished.



During the mid- to late 19th and early 20th century, waves of immigrants arrived from Europe, attracted by the opportunity of a new and better life in Canada. Some settled in towns and cities; others worked in factories, mines and lumber camps. Many were farmers who turned the Prairie region into wheat fields. Asian immigrants from China, Japan and India settled mainly in the western provinces during this time. Many immigrants helped build Canada's national railways, which joined the east and west coasts and opened up the interior for settlement.

After both world wars, thousands of Europeans came to Canada as immigrants and refugees and helped build Canada's post-war economy. Canada's experience

during and after the Second World War raised awareness of the needs of refugees and the desire of families to be together.

Over the last 50 years, people from all over the globe have sought a better life or have sought refuge in Canada, fleeing civil wars, political unrest and natural disasters.



Canada still needs the skills, talents and enthusiasm of newcomers to build our country, together with those who have come before them. All of this has been reflected in Canada's immigration and refugee policies. Today, Canada is home to immigrants from more than 240 countries. Most newcomers decide to become citizens of Canada, after they are settled and have met the requirements of Canadian citizenship.



## Economy

Canada has a diversified economy. Natural resources industries, such as forestry, mining, oil and gas extraction, farming and fishing, are important sources of jobs and export earnings. Canada is also a world leader in the fields of telecommunications, biotechnology, aerospace technologies and pharmaceuticals. More and more jobs involve work in service industries or in information technology. Along with the United States and Mexico, Canada is a partner in the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Canada has a decimal system of currency. The Canadian dollar is the basic unit of money. The most common paper bills are the \$5, \$10 and \$20, but \$50 and \$100 bills are also used. Canadian coins include the penny (one cent), nickel (five cents), dime (10 cents), quarter (25 cents), loonie (\$1) and toonie (\$2).



## **Government**

Canada is a federation, with a parliamentary system of government. Being a federation means that powers and responsibilities are divided between the federal government and the 10 provincial governments. Canada also has three territorial jurisdictions. Canada has three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal (cities and towns). These governments are elected by the citizens of Canada.

### **Federal government (Government of Canada)**

The federal government is responsible for:

- defence;
- foreign policy and foreign relations;
- banking;
- the postal service;
- criminal law;
- immigration; and
- citizenship.

### **Provincial governments**

Provincial governments are responsible for:

- education; and
- municipal institutions.

They also share responsibility with the federal government for:

- health services;
- farming;
- social assistance;
- transportation; and
- the environment.

### **Territorial governments**

The Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut are not sovereign units. They get their powers from the federal parliament, but they have elected assemblies that follow many of the same practices as the provincial governments.

### **Municipal governments**

Municipal governments have functions delegated to them by other levels of government. They are responsible for local matters and services. These include:

- police and fire protection;
- water and sewer services;
- recreation; and
- local public transportation.

If you are interested, the Web site [canada.gc.ca/howgoc/glance\\_e.html](http://canada.gc.ca/howgoc/glance_e.html) has more information about how Canadians govern themselves.

## Bilingualism

Under the *Official Languages Act*, Canada is an officially bilingual country. This means that Canadians have the right to get federal government services in English or French, no matter what part of Canada they are living in.

New Brunswick is the only province that is officially bilingual. New Brunswick residents receive services in both official languages from all of their provincial government departments and agencies.

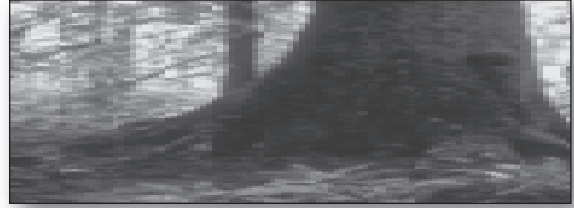
In Quebec, French is the official language and in most cases, provincial and municipal services are provided in French.

In the other provinces and territories, English is the official language, and the availability of provincial services in both official languages varies.

At the municipal level, the availability of services in both official languages varies greatly.

## Multiculturalism

Canada is populated by people who have come from every part of the world. Through the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, the government encourages Canadians to take pride in their language, religion and heritage and to keep their customs and traditions, as long as they don't break Canadian laws.



## Protecting the environment — Sustainable development

Canada has a beautiful natural environment. Because we have lots of land and a small population, most of our country is wild and unspoiled. However, it is becoming harder to preserve our environment as our population and cities grow. Pollution helps cause large-scale environmental problems, such as acid rain. And as more people use and live in natural areas, threats to the environment increase.

Canadians are very concerned about environmental issues. They know that damage to the environment can be hard to fix.

Economic growth is crucial for the future prosperity of Canada. But growth must be managed carefully so that it does not harm the environment. The Canadian government is committed to “sustainable development,” which means economic growth that does not hurt the environment, but helps people.

A healthy environment is important to quality of life. Everyone living in Canada should act in a responsible way, both toward the environment and within their community. This way, future Canadians have the opportunity to live in a country that is clean and prosperous. Both individuals and groups can help Canada develop in a sustainable way.

Here are a few things you can do to help protect quality of life:

- throw waste paper and other garbage in public garbage cans;
- compost, recycle and re-use as many products as possible, such as paper, glass and cans;
- conserve energy and water by turning off lights and taps when you are not using them;
- walk, join a car pool, or use a bicycle or public transit whenever possible;
- use products that are environmentally friendly;
- plant trees or grow a garden, but avoid using chemicals;
- never pour paint, oil or other harmful chemicals down sinks or toilets, into sewers or onto the ground (telephone your local government to find out where you can throw out hazardous materials);
- volunteer at a local organization; and
- educate yourself and your children about environmental issues.

For further information, contact:

Environment Canada  
Enquiry Centre  
70 Crémazie St.  
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H3  
Telephone: (819) 997-2800  
1 800 668-6767  
(toll-free, within Canada)  
Fax: (819) 994-1412  
E-mail: [enviroinfo@ec.gc.ca](mailto:enviroinfo@ec.gc.ca)  
Web site: [www.ec.gc.ca](http://www.ec.gc.ca)

*Tip: Contact your local government to find out about the services and bylaws that protect the environment (for example, garbage disposal schedules, water management and recycling programs). You can find local government telephone numbers in the Blue Pages of the telephone book.*

# The Canadian way of life

## Chapter 7

### The Canadian Way of Life



#### Family life and family law

Many people in Canada find that it takes two incomes to raise a family, even though parents are having fewer children. Most mothers have a job outside the home, and in many families, both parents share the work of shopping, cooking, cleaning the house and looking after the children. Because divorce has become more common, there are many one-parent families in Canada. Most single parents who raise their children on a full-time basis are women. There are also same-sex couples with children.

#### Marriage, divorce and the law

Canadian law views marriage as a legal agreement or contract between a man and a woman. Married people are considered equal partners. Marriage laws apply to all Canadian citizens and permanent residents. Many unmarried couples live together. In most provinces, unmarried heterosexual couples who have lived together for a certain period of time have legal status as “common-law” couples. They may call each other “husband” and “wife,” or they may simply say “my partner.”

Either the wife or the husband can ask for a divorce. This request will normally be approved by the courts if both people have agreed to end the marriage. Divorce will also be approved if one partner has been harmed through cruelty, adultery or a similar injustice.

#### Birth control and family planning

Many people use birth control. It is a matter of personal choice. Women can get a prescription for birth control pills from a doctor. Family planning information is available from provincial health departments and public health offices, as well as from local health clinics. Abortion is legal but is only available from a doctor.

#### Youth and their parents

When children arrive in Canada, they usually learn about Canadian life quickly through schools, television, movies and music. If they need to learn English or French, they often learn it quite quickly.

Parents find out about Canadian life differently, as they search for housing and work. They too may need to learn English or French, but often need more time than their children to do so.

If you have children, you will know that you see the world somewhat differently than they do, because you are older and have more life experience. After immigrating to Canada,

however, you may find that these differences increase, because you are having different experiences of Canadian life. These differences affect the behaviour of all family members and can lead to tension in the family between parents and their children.

Discussing concerns with teachers, doctors, public health workers, social workers, settlement workers, and friends and relatives who have already settled in Canada will help you and your children understand your experiences and make good choices about your future.

### Youth and the law

Youth in Canada who commit a crime are held accountable for their actions. However, they are not dealt with in the same way as adult offenders. This is because they may not have an adult's understanding of their crime. They are also more likely than adult offenders to be reformed and become law-abiding citizens. The law for young offenders is called the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.



### STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Some of Canada's standards for public behaviour may be more conservative than you are used to, while others may seem more liberal. For example, Canadians may seem impersonal and cold to some newcomers; to others, we may seem overly friendly.

### Important social standards

Social practices — not laws — govern many types of behaviour in Canada. Some traditions are well established and are politely but firmly enforced. For example:

- **Lining up or queuing:** People normally line up or queue according to the principle of “first-come, first-served.” They will be angry if you push ahead in a line-up instead of waiting your turn.
- **Not smoking in private homes:** Most Canadians do not smoke. When you are in people's homes, you should always ask their permission to smoke. If they do not smoke themselves, they may ask you to go outside to smoke.
- **Being on time:** You should always arrive on time — at school, at work and for any meeting. People who are often late may be fired from their jobs or suspended from school. Many Canadians will not wait more than 10 or 15 minutes for someone who has a business meeting. For social events, people expect that you will arrive within half an hour of the stated time.
- **Respect for the environment:** Canadians respect the natural environment and expect people to avoid littering (dropping waste paper and other garbage on the street or throwing it out of your car). They expect you to hold on to your garbage until you can find a proper garbage can.
- **Bargaining:** Bargaining for a better price is not common in Canada, but there are some exceptions. For example, almost everyone bargains for a better price when buying a car or a house, or other expensive items such as furniture. People who sell things privately may also bargain.



- **Smart shopping:** Stores compete with one another to attract customers, so it is wise to check and compare prices at different stores before you buy. **Note:** The price marked on goods in stores does not usually include the federal and provincial sales taxes, which add from 7 percent to 15 percent to the cost of an item, depending on the province in which you buy it.

*Tip: If you have questions about social standards or customs, you can ask your local immigrant-serving organization for advice. If you have been matched with a Canadian family under the Host program (see chapter 3, page 12), your host family can help answer your questions as well.*



## SOME CANADIAN LAWS

### Some laws you should be aware of:

- It is illegal to drive without a driver's licence, registration and insurance.
- It is illegal to drive if you have been drinking alcohol.
- The driver and all passengers must wear seat belts at all times when driving in Canada.
- Babies and children who are too small to wear seat belts must be placed in properly installed infant or child car seats, appropriate to the age and weight of the child.
- Children under 12 years of age cannot be left at home alone, or to care for younger children.
- All children aged six to 16 must attend school.
- Smoking is not permitted in federal buildings, in elevators, on Canadian airlines, on buses and on other public transportation, nor in many banks, shops, restaurants and other public places (some municipalities have banned smoking in all public buildings).
- Depending on which part of Canada you live in, you must be either 18 or 19 years old to buy or drink alcohol in any form.
- It is against the law to hit your spouse or children, either in the home or in public.
- It is illegal to use, buy or sell marijuana, heroin, cocaine and other addictive drugs.
- It is illegal to make any kind of sexual remarks or advances if the other person does not like them.

## INTERACTING WITH OFFICIALS

Knowing how to behave and what to expect can be very useful when you are dealing with public officials and people in authority. Usually, there is no need to worry about making mistakes. Except for matters of law, most Canadians do not insist on strict formality. Officials who know that you are a newcomer will make allowances for your inexperience with Canadian ways.

## People in authority

In Canada, a person's authority is related to his or her position and responsibility. Women hold the same kinds of positions as men and have the same kinds of authority. People do not have authority just because of their name, status, social class or sex.

## Public officials

Public officials will normally treat you in a polite but impersonal way. Public officials follow set procedures. They do not make the rules. They may not want to or be able to become involved with your situation. Do not respond to them in a personal or emotional way. Never try to bribe a public official. Bribery and other forms of corruption are illegal and will offend most Canadians.



## Police officers

The police are part of the community and are accountable to the public. They may be either men or women. They are trained to serve and protect the public, including you. Police operate within strict regulations and follow established procedures. Canadians expect honesty and fairness from the police.

**Calling the police:** Most cities and towns have an emergency number for the police. Call this number if you or someone else is hurt or in danger, or if you see a crime taking place. In most parts of Canada, the emergency number is 911. Emergency numbers are always printed inside the front cover of the telephone book.

What if you are questioned by a police officer?

- Call the police officer "officer."
- Accept the police officer's authority; do not try to argue.
- Be ready to show identification if a police officer asks you for it. If you are stopped by the police while driving a car, the officer will probably ask you for your driver's licence, proof of insurance and car registration.
- Tell the officer the facts about what has happened. Do not offer your own opinion.
- Never try to give money to a police officer. Canadians do not bribe police officers. It is a serious crime to do this.

What if you are arrested by a police officer?

- Police officers must tell you who they are and show you their badge number.
- They must explain why they are arresting you and tell you what your rights are.
- They must allow you to call a lawyer right away. If you don't have a lawyer, they must give you the Legal Aid telephone number and let you call.
- You do not have to give any information, other than your name and address, until you have talked to a lawyer.

# Chapter 8

## Your Rights and Obligations



As a newcomer, you should be aware of your rights and obligations. Having the right to participate in Canadian society also means that you have a responsibility to respect the rights and freedoms of others and to obey Canada's laws.

### Personal rights and freedoms

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* describes the basic principles and values by which Canadians live. The Charter is part of Canada's Constitution. The Charter protects you from the moment you arrive on Canadian soil. It gives everyone in Canada the following fundamental rights and freedoms:

- the right to life, liberty and personal security;
- freedom of conscience and religion;
- freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
- freedom to hold peaceful meetings;
- freedom to join groups;
- the right to live and work anywhere in Canada;

- protection from unreasonable search or seizure and arbitrary detention and imprisonment;
- the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty;
- the right to have a lawyer;
- the right to a fair trial, through due process of law; and
- the right to equal protection and benefit under the law, without discrimination.

### Children's rights

In Canada, you are required by law to properly care for your children. Police, doctors, teachers and children's aid officials will act when children are being abused. This includes any form of harm and abuse — physical, psychological or sexual. All forms of child abuse are severe crimes. In serious cases of abuse, children can be taken away from their parents.



**Physical abuse** is any intentional physical contact that causes injury. For example, spanking a child long enough or hard enough to cause bruises, or spanking with anything other than an open hand, is a form of abuse. Some cultural practices, such as female circumcision, are also considered physical abuse and are against the law.

**Psychological abuse** includes terror and humiliation.

**Sexual abuse** includes any form of sexual contact between an adult and a child.

Neglect is also a form of child abuse. Parents who fail to protect and provide for their children are guilty of neglect. By law, children under 12 cannot be left alone to look after themselves or younger siblings.

Kids' "helplines" are available for children who need someone to help them or just to talk to.

### **Women's rights**

In Canada, women have the same legal status, rights and opportunities as men. Most Canadian men respect women as equals — socially, in the workplace and in the home. Violence against women is against the law. Women who are abused can seek help for themselves and their children in local shelters. They are also entitled to legal protection to keep them safe.

### **Senior citizens' rights**

A senior citizen is someone 65 years of age or older. It is common in Canadian society for healthy senior citizens to live on their own, instead of living with their children. Older people who need special care often move to a retirement or nursing home that provides trained staff and health-care

workers. However, many Canadians still care for older family members in their own home.

**Old Age Security:** The Old Age Security (OAS) program ensures a basic income to all people in Canada 65 years of age or over who meet the residency requirements. Usually, OAS is paid after a person has lived in Canada at least 10 years, although people who have lived or worked in countries with which Canada has an agreement may qualify after as little as one year. Low-income people who get OAS may also qualify for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and their spouses (or widows) may also qualify for the Spouse's Allowance if they are between 60 and 64 years of age.



**The Canada Pension Plan** pays benefits to contributors in the event of retirement or disability, as well as benefits to surviving spouses and orphans in the event of death of a contributor. All workers in Canada contribute to the plan.

*Tip: You may also be eligible for old age security benefits from your former country.*



### Becoming a Canadian citizen

Once you have been in Canada for at least three years, you may apply to become a Canadian citizen. Immigrants who become citizens have the same rights as citizens who were born in Canada. As a citizen you can:

- vote and be a candidate for political office in federal, provincial and territorial elections;
- apply for a Canadian passport;
- enter and leave Canada freely;
- enjoy full economic rights, including the right to own any type of property; and
- be eligible for some pension benefits.

An adult applying for Canadian citizenship must:

- be at least 18 years old;
- be a permanent resident of Canada who entered the country legally;
- have lived in Canada for three of the four years before applying for citizenship;
- speak either English or French;
- know something about Canada's history, geography, system of government and voting;
- know the rights and responsibilities of citizenship;
- apply for citizenship and pass the citizenship test; and
- take the oath of citizenship.

You cannot become a Canadian citizen if you:

- are considered a risk to Canada's security;
- are under a deportation order;
- are in prison, on parole from prison or on probation; or
- have been found guilty of a serious crime within the past three years.

### Responsible and active citizenship

For many Canadians, being a good citizen means getting involved in their community. Regardless of your interests, contributing to your society is rewarding and is appreciated by others who, like you, are proud to make Canada their home.

*Tip: Getting involved in volunteer activities is also an excellent way to meet new people, make friends, practise English or French, and learn about Canadian customs.*

## Afterword

We hope this booklet has answered some of your questions about Canada, about adapting to life in Canada and about the Canadian way of life. As you prepare to leave for Canada, refer again to the tips and checklist provided in this booklet.

### Before You Leave Checklist:

- Have you gathered all of your essential and important documents? Have you had them translated into English or French?
- Have you considered buying health insurance for the time you are travelling and for the short period before you become eligible for Canada's medicare system?
- Do you know what you can and cannot bring into Canada?
- Have you prepared yourself for finding work in Canada?
- Have you researched Canada's labour market in general? Have you used the Internet to learn about finding work in Canada?
- Have you considered living in one of Canada's smaller or medium-sized cities, or in a rural community? Have you used the Internet to learn about these choices?
- Have you considered the season and climate you will find when you arrive, and the clothing that you will need?
- Have you considered contacting an immigrant-serving organization soon after you arrive in Canada?
- Have you considered taking English or French lessons through the LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program?

The best way to adjust to your new home will be to get involved! Try to speak English or French as much as possible, even if you make mistakes. Ask questions when you need help. Most people are pleased to help and will understand your needs. With time, you will feel more and more at home. Canada and Canadians will welcome you and your family into the larger Canadian family. Good luck on your journey!

*Welcome to Canada — your new home*