

FOREWORD

You are going to Canada as an immigrant, a move that will have a profound impact on your life, as well as your family's. Your preparedness will count a lot towards the achievement of the objectives of your migration.

It is important that you comply with minimum government travel requirements to avoid unnecessary inconvenience when exiting the Philippines or entering Canada. Equally important is your awareness of regulations governing your permanent residence, as well as your knowledge of primary settlement concerns in Canada so that you may proceed with confidence in your daily activities.

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas prepared this guide to provide you with information that will help ease your adjustment abroad. It is our way of wishing you a safe trip and a successful settlement overseas.

Huwag po sana ninyong kalimutan na sundin ang mga batas at igalang ang kultura at tradisyon ng bansang inyong pupuntahan, patuloy na ipagmalaki at panatilihin ang pagiging Pilipino, at maging bahagi sa pag-unlad ng ating bansang Pilipinas.

Secretary Imelda M. Nicolas
Chairperson
Commission on Filipinos Overseas

CANADA: NEW COUNTRY, NEW LIFE

The process of adjusting to a new life in a new country varies greatly from person to person. As you become established and independent in Canada, you realize that there is no one way of integrating fully and successfully. Some migrants can settle quickly, sometimes within the next six to 12 months upon their arrival. Others take years.

How quickly you settle into your new environment depends on various factors such as your English proficiency, immigration status, health status, and ability to find a job.

Most of you will need some help to settle successfully. As soon as you arrive, you will need a place to live, money for everyday living and information on services available to help you get started, such as education, employment, transport, language, health and support network services.

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 varies in different regions.

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.

Climate

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 color 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.

Population

Canada has about 33.9 million people as of 2009. More than 80 percent of all the people in Canada live in towns and cities within 250 kilometers 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).

Language

Canada's two official languages are English and French. 59.7% of the population speaks English as first language, while 23.2% of the population speaks French.

Public Holidays

January 1	New Year's Day
Friday before Easter Sunday	Good Friday
Monday on or before May 24	Victoria Day
July 1	Canada Day
First Monday in September	Labour Day
Second Monday in October	Thanksgiving
November 11	Remembrance Day
December 25	Christmas
December 26	Boxing Day

Each province has its own provincial holiday(s). The observance of individuals' religious holidays is widely accepted as well.

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 — all come from somewhere else. It has been said that Canada is a "nation of immigrants."

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 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 the 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 and territories. Most newcomers decide to become citizens of Canada, after they have settled and 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. The Canadian economy is dominated by the service industry, which employs about three quarters of Canadians.

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). US\$1 is equivalent to Canadian \$0.98 as of February 2011.

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 has three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal (cities and towns). These governments are elected by the citizens of Canada.

Of the three, you are likely to have direct contact with Municipal governments as they are responsible for local matters and services. These include:

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

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.

GETTING READY FOR TRAVEL

Essential Travel Documents

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

- Passport (must be valid for at least six months before travel);
- Canadian immigrant visa and Confirmation of Permanent Residence (COPR) for each family member traveling with you. Note: Make sure that neither you or your dependents have signed the COPR prior to landing in Canada and that the perforated portion of the document is still intact;
- Emigrant registration sticker issued by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) and if spouse/partner of a Canadian citizen, original CFO Guidance and Counseling Certificate;
- Plane ticket;
- 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. The lists should state how much your personal and household items are worth;
- Department of Social Welfare and Development Travel Clearance - for minors (17 yrs. old and below) traveling abroad alone or with someone other than the parents;
- Exit Clearance for resigned, recently retired and on-leave employees and officials from the government sector stating that they are cleared of accountabilities from the government offices they were recently or still connected with; and
- Other documents (i.e., National Statistics Office - issued birth/ marriage certificates, employment/ education credentials, adoption or separation papers, school and health records, professional certificates and licenses, résumé, letters of reference from former employers)

Tip: You must also bring with you enough money to cover living expenses such as rent, food, clothing and transportation for a six-month period. When you are deciding how much money to bring, 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 websites at <http://canada.gc.ca/>. 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.

Notes on Landing: It is essential that the principal has landed in Canada before his/her dependents are allowed entry.

Prohibited Items to Bring in Canada

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

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

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

Travel Funds

Travelers like you are allowed to bring out of the country any amount in dollar bills or traveler's cheques purchased from commercial banks or obtained from any source, as well as Philippine currency not exceeding P10,000.00. It is safest to carry traveler's cheques which can be replaced if lost or stolen. You should have enough cash, however, for incidental expenses. Make sure the bills are in relatively small denominations (\$1, \$5, \$10 and \$20). You may have difficulty in getting a \$100 bill changed in most stores.

Baggage Allowance

Ask your airlines about free baggage allowance, restrictions on carry-on items, and charges for overweight or excess baggage. As such, you will have to anticipate added costs, if any, and adequately prepare for them. Generally, the following baggage allowance applies for travel to Canada:

- Two pieces of check-in baggage per passenger. Each piece must not exceed 62 inches in total dimension (length + width + height) and weigh no more than 23 kgs. or 50 lbs.;
- One carry-on bag per passenger (not counting lady's hand-bag or brief case / attaché case). It must not weigh more than 7 kgs. and must not exceed 45 inches in total dimension. It must fit under the seat or in the overhead rack.

Travel Tax

If you are a Filipino citizen, a permanent resident alien or a new migrant alien, who has stayed in the Philippines for a period of one year, you are required to pay a travel tax of P2,700 (Business Class passenger) or P1,620 (Economy Class passenger). Payment can be made through an airline office or travel agency or directly to the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority or to the TIEZA counter at the airport. The travel tax can also be paid abroad by the relative or person who buys the plane ticket for you. Tickets pre-paid abroad must be issued by the airline in the Philippines.

Travel tax exemptions may be granted to children aged below two years, while reduced travel tax rate may be granted to those aged two to 12 years. A fee of P200 is required to obtain a travel tax exemption certificate.

If you are already a permanent resident abroad who is visiting the Philippines, you are exempt from paying the travel tax. You will need to present the following documents to the TIEZA to get a certificate of exemption:

- Passport showing the latest date of arrival in the Philippines
- Original and photocopy of the proof of permanent residency in Canada (e.g. permanent resident card)

DAY OF DEPARTURE

On the day of your departure, observe the following so you would have a convenient and hassle-free travel:

- Be at the airport at least 4 hours before your scheduled flight.
- Submit yourself and your baggage for security check.
- Check in at the airline counter. Keep your boarding pass and baggage claim stubs. Visa documents should not be inside the check-in luggage.
- Pay the terminal fee of P550.00 and security fee of P200.00 of at the terminal fee counter. Children aged two years and below are exempted from paying these fees.
- Present your travel documents at the Philippine immigration counter.
- Proceed to the waiting lounge/ designated gate.
- Board the plane when your boarding call is made.

ARRIVAL IN CANADA

When you arrive in Canada, you will be greeted by an officer from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). The CBSA is responsible for border and point of entry activities in Canada. The officer will ask to see your passport and other travel documents. Make sure that they are not packed in your luggage, and that you have them with you. This will help speed up your entry to Canada.

You must present the following documents upon your arrival:

- Your valid passport and/or travel documents. Your passport must be a regular, private passport. You cannot immigrate to Canada with a diplomatic, government service or public affairs passport.
- Your valid permanent resident visa and your COPR. The officer will make sure you are entering Canada before or on the expiry date shown on your permanent resident visa. Please note that this document cannot be extended, therefore you should use it before it expires.
- Proof that you have sufficient funds to support yourself and your family when you arrive in Canada.

The officer will ask you a few questions to make sure you still meet the requirements to immigrate to Canada. They will be similar to the ones you answered on your Application for Permanent Residence in Canada. The officer will confirm that you still meet the requirements for admission to Canada. This should only take a few minutes.

You will not be allowed into Canada if you give false or incomplete information, or if you do not satisfy the officer that you meet the requirements for entry into Canada.

If there are no problems at the point of entry, the officer will authorize you to enter Canada as a permanent resident. The officer will also confirm your Canadian mailing address. Your permanent resident card will be mailed to you at this address.

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); and

- useful federal and provincial government offices.

Note: 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

Disclosure of funds

If you arrive in Canada with more than C\$10,000, you must disclose this information to the CBSA officer. If you do not disclose this information, you could be fined or put in prison. These funds could be in the form of:

- cash;
- securities in bearer form (for example, stocks, bonds, debentures, treasury bills); or
- negotiable instruments in bearer form, such as bankers' drafts, cheques, travelers' cheques or money orders.

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.

Domestic Leg of Your Journey

If your final destination is another city or province and you are boarding on another plane, please ask your flight attendant prior to disembarkation if you would need to personally check-in your luggage with your next carrier.

GETTING SETTLED IN CANADA

PRIORITY NEEDS

Aside from getting the Permanent Resident Card, most immigrants have the following priorities:

1. SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER (SIN)

The Social Insurance Number is a nine-digit number that is required in order to work in Canada and have access to government programs and benefits. It also serves as an identification number for each person. It is used for filing of income taxes, applying for employment and availing of social security benefits, among others. You can apply for a SIN at your nearest Service Canada centre or the Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) office in your area. No fee is being charged for first time applicants. For complete information on SIN, you may visit the website: www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/sin.

2. HOUSING

Initial Accommodations

Like most new Filipino immigrants, you will probably live temporarily with relatives or friends. Eventually, you might want to rent your own apartment or even consider buying a house as soon as you have a stable job. One thing to remember is that in Canada, only the very wealthy can afford a domestic helper or worker. Everyone shares in the housework. Deeply ingrained Filipino hospitality may deter your hosts from asking you to help. They will appreciate it though if you volunteer.

How to find a place to live

Here are ways of looking for the right house for you:

- search the classified advertisements in local newspapers;
- look for “Vacancy” or “For Rent” signs on houses and apartment buildings;
- check bulletin boards in grocery stores, laundromats, health clinics and community centres;
- 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; and
- ask for advice at your place of worship.

How much will it cost

You could expect to pay Canadian \$450 a month for a room, and between Canadian \$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.

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

Tip: Before signing a lease, pay attention to contract provisions regarding exceptions and additions, i.e., the utilities included and the options, such as parking and storage. You should know which utilities you will pay for and which ones will be paid for by the landlord. The content may also state whether pets or more people are allowed.

3. EMPLOYMENT

Getting ready to look for work

If possible, have your documents translated into English or French before you leave for Canada. Essential documents in 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: Research the labour market in the part of Canada where you plan to settle. The following federally funded websites will be helpful:

- www.directioncanada.gc.ca. This website 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 website 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 license to practice.
- www.hrsdc.gc.ca. This website offers labour market information, which can help you search for work and make general employment, training and career decisions.
- www.theworkplace.ca. This website offers practical information and links to Canadian newspapers’ on-line “Help Wanted” advertisements.

Other helpful websites

- www.jb.ge.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca
- www.canadajobs.com
- www.canjobs.com
- www.monster.ca
- www.workopolis.com
- www.careerexchange.com
- www.employcanada.com
- www.hotjobs.ca
- www.jobboom.com

Professionals in government-regulated occupations should contact the licensing body in their province of destination.

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. Improving your English or French before coming to Canada would also be extremely beneficial.

International educational assessment services in Canada

Even if you have many years of experience, you do not automatically have the right to practice 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 practice. The following organizations can tell you how to get your credentials assessed:

- **Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials.** The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials 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. For more information, you may contact:

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
URL: 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
Website: <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
Website: <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
Web site: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/immigrate/newcomerservices/7a.html>

Northwest Territories

(The Government of the Northwest Territories provides this service through an interprovincial agreement with the Government of Alberta.)
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
Website: <http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/iqas/iqas.asp>

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
Website: <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
Website: <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/anglais/education/educationalreport.html>

Saskatchewan

(The Government of Saskatchewan provides this service through an interprovincial agreement with the Government of Alberta)
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
Website: <http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/iqas/iqas.asp>

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 license 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.

4. SCHOOLING

Public education is run by the provinces and territories and is paid for through taxes. Public education is free and available to every child in Canada.

Elementary and High School

The typical school year in Canada starts in the first week of September and ends in the first week of June. Each province observes its own elementary and secondary school system. The elementary-secondary education in most provinces extends over Grade 12. Elementary education generally starts from Kindergarten to Grade 6, while Junior High School is normally Grade 7 to 8. Senior High School is from Grades 9 to 12, depending on your province of residence. By Canadian law, children must attend school between the ages of six to sixteen. Educational programs known as pre-school or kindergarten are also offered for children under six years old.

Enrolling your child in school

Prepare the following documents, which may be required for your child's application / enrollment:

- Confirmation of Permanent Residence
- Birth certificate or baptismal certificate
- Vaccination certificate
- Any previous school records

Planning ahead for your child

A Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) is one of the easiest and best ways to fund the future of your child. All you need to do is ensure that your child has a valid Social Insurance Number (SIN) and open an RESP. You can then use the plan to save for your child's education while deferring taxes on the earnings.

Admission to Universities

Admission to universities generally requires high school diploma with specific courses and academic standing. A bachelor's degree (BA, BS, etc.) usually takes three or four academic years of eight months each.

Admission to Community Colleges

Public community colleges established in all provinces serve as an alternative to university education. Admission to these colleges requires completion of secondary education. Ineligible applicants with "mature students" status may be reconsidered for enrollment. Community colleges are also called:

College of Applied Arts and Technology

- Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences
- Technical/Vocational and University-Oriented Colleges
- Colleges d'Enseignement General et Professionel or CEGEPs

5. HEALTHCARE

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.

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. 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
- most immunizations

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

- ambulance services

- prescription drugs
- dental care
- 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.

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."

6. TRANSPORTATION

Most cities have public transportation systems such as buses, street cars, subways, trains and taxis. Designated bus stops are usually located near street corners and have signposts that show the number of buses that stop. Drivers will always stop at these bus stops when they see someone waiting. Subways are also used by commuters.

Driving

Your Philippine driver's license may be used in Canada for up to three (3) months. It is advisable to carry an International Driving Permit (IDP) aside from your license in case of problems with traffic officials or the police. It is, however, necessary to apply for a driver's license in the place where you intend to reside. The license not only authorizes you to drive a motor vehicle, but also serves as one of your most important personal identification cards.

In Canada, you must have at least four years driving experience before you can take a road test to secure a license with full driving privileges (Class G). You must have the necessary documentation from the Philippine Land Transportation Office to attest to your driving experience. Otherwise, you will only be entitled to either a student driver's license (G1) or a license with certain restrictions (G2). This document is the LTO certification for use abroad which allows you to apply for a Class G Canadian Driver's License within two months upon your arrival in Canada.

Car Insurance

To lower car insurance premium payments, it is helpful to get a certification from your car insurance companies in the Philippines showing that you have built a consistent accident- and conviction-free track record while driving in your home country. Driving in Canada is taken very seriously since any violation can easily be traced. Car insurance premiums tend to increase if your record shows you have violated traffic regulations.

7. BANKING AND REMITTANCES

Most banks in Canada offer certain privileges to newly landed immigrants including free banking, high interest yielding savings account, and credit cards with no annual fees as well as fast and accessible modes of remittances.

When remitting fund to the Philippines,

- Do not send personal checks or cash. Send remittances in the form of cable or telegraphic transfer, bank draft, mail payment order or mail transfer, and international money order.

- Bank to bank remittances can be transacted through any of the foreign correspondent banks of your bank in the Philippines.
- In filling up the bank's remittance form, write the full name, complete address and telephone number of your beneficiary. Write the bank account number and indicate if it is a peso or a dollar account. If your beneficiary has no bank account or the number is not known to you, just indicate the name of the bank and branch where you want him/her paid.
- Get a copy of the bank's receipt of your remittance and send a photocopy to your beneficiary.
- Be sure to provide the following information to your beneficiary:
 - name and location of the bank through which you sent the remittance;
 - the exact date when it was sent;
 - the form of remittance;
 - the name of the receiving Philippine bank and its branch/location; and
 - the amount and type of currency remitted.

IMMIGRATION CONCERNS

Types of Immigrants

- **Skilled workers and professionals.** Skilled workers are selected as permanent residents based on their education, work experience, knowledge of English and/or French, and other criteria that have been shown to help them become economically established in Canada. The province of Quebec is responsible for selecting its own skilled workers.
- **Canadian experience class.** Temporary foreign worker or a foreign student who graduated in Canada, often have the qualities to make a successful transition from temporary to permanent residence.
- **Business immigrants.** The Business Immigration Program seeks to attract experienced business people to Canada who will support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy. Business immigrants (Investors, Entrepreneurs or Self-employed) are expected to make a C\$800,000 investment or to own and manage businesses in Canada, and must meet certain experience and/or net worth criteria.
- **Provincial nominees.** Persons who immigrate to Canada under the Provincial Nominee Program have the skills, education and work experience needed to make an immediate economic contribution to the province or territory that nominates them. They are ready to establish themselves successfully as permanent residents in Canada. To apply under the Provincial Nominee Program, applicants must be nominated by a Canadian province or territory.
- **Family class.** The spouse, common-law partner, conjugal partner, dependent children (including adopted child) or other eligible relative (such as a parent or grandparent) of a landed immigrant can be sponsored and become permanent residents.

Permanent Resident Card

Your permanent resident card replaces your Confirmation of Permanent Residence (Form MM1000). If you have supplied the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) with a complete final address before or upon your arrival in Canada, this card will be mailed to you within 30 days from date of your arrival.

If you do not have a final address yet, provide the CIC with this address within 180 days from date of arrival or you will have to apply for this card personally and pay 50 Canadian dollars.

This card is valid for five years and may be renewed. For more information on your permanent

resident card, you may call the Permanent Resident Card Call Center at tel. no. 1-800-255-4541 in Canada.

Residency Obligation

A permanent resident is required to have a total of 730 days of physical presence in Canada for every five-year period to comply with his or her residency obligation.

It is also possible for permanent residents to comply with this residency obligation even if they are outside of Canada but it should be under the following conditions:

- Accompanying a Canadian citizen spouse, common-law partner or parent of a minor
- Employed full-time by a Canadian business or in public service of Canada or one of its provinces
- Accompanying a permanent resident spouse, common-law partner or parent employed full-time by a Canadian business or in public service of Canada or one of its provinces

Non-compliance with residency obligations may lead to loss of permanent resident status. Appeals may be applied at the Immigration Appeal Division (IAD) of the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Citizenship

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
- be eligible for some pension benefits

The following are requirements to apply for Canadian citizenship:

- be 18 years of age or more
- be a permanent resident of Canada
- have lived in Canada for at least three of the four years before applying
- be able to communicate in English or French
- demonstrate knowledge about Canada and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship
- pass citizenship test
- take oath of citizenship

If you have children under 18 years of age who are also permanent residents of Canada the three year residency requirement is not necessary. When applying for your child, you must already be a Canadian citizen or applying to become a citizen.

You cannot become a Canadian citizen if:

- you are under a deportation order
- you have been charged with or convicted of an indictable criminal offense in the past few years
- you are or have recently been in prison or on probation
- you are under investigation for war crimes
- your citizenship has been revoked

Family Sponsorship

If you are a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada, you can sponsor your spouse, common-law partner, conjugal partner, dependent child (including adopted child) or other eligible relative (such as a parent or grandparent) to become a permanent resident.

If you sponsor a relative to come to Canada as a permanent resident, you are responsible for supporting your relative financially when he or she arrives. As a sponsor, you must make sure your spouse or relative does not need to seek financial assistance from the government.

Note: If you are within Canada, you can call the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) call centre for immigration and visa questions through telephone 1-888-242-2100.

THE CANADIAN WAY OF LIFE

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:

- 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
- 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.

Senior citizens' rights

A senior citizen is a person who is 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.

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 for 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.

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 lineup instead of waiting for your turn.
- Not smoking in private houses: Most Canadians do not smoke. When you are in people's houses, 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.

Some Canadian Laws

Some laws you should be aware of:

- It is illegal to drive without a driver's license, 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.

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 do not like your skin colour or 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. 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 the number of years you worked in Canada before retiring and the amount of your salary.

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.

Goods

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.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

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.

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, and preparation for licensure.

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 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 (i.e., life insurance, special medical care, dental or 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.

APPENDIX

PHILIPPINE DIPLOMATIC POSTS

EMBASSY OF THE PHILIPPINES-OTTAWA

130 Albert Street, Suite 606
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5G4 CANADA
Tel. No. (+613) 233-1121
Fax No. (+613) 233-4165
Duty Officer: (+613) 614-2846
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Website: www.philippineembassy.ca

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Duty Officer: (+1604)613-0942
Email: vancouver.pcg@dfa.gov.ph, vancouverpcg@telus.net
Website: www.vancouverpcg.net

REFERENCES

<http://www.settlement.org>

<http://www.cic.gc.ca>

HANDBOOK FOR FILIPINOS MIGRATING TO CANADA

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