

WELCOME to Alberta

VISAS

Information for Newcomers



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Welcome to Alberta: Information for Newcomers

Career practitioners, educators and immigrant-serving agencies

This edition of *Welcome to Alberta* is for all newcomers, including temporary foreign workers, who have just moved to Alberta or are interested in settling here. It provides general information to help newcomers

- find a place to stay
- apply for a social insurance number
- register for health care
- improve English language skills
- enrol children in school
- find work
- get a driver's licence
- stay in Canada
- enjoy Alberta

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Information in this publication was accurate, to the best of our knowledge, at the time of printing. However, legislation, labour market information, websites and programs are subject to change, and we encourage you to confirm with additional sources of information when making career, education, employment and business decisions. **All photos in this booklet are for illustrative purposes only.**

Congratulations on choosing Alberta as your new home!

Whether you are moving to the province from across the country or from across the world, there are many programs and services in place to help you create a new life here.

Moving to a new country or province can be both exciting and stressful. This book provides information about your first few weeks and months in Alberta that will help you get settled in your new community. Although this book cannot answer all your questions, it does provide contact information for government departments and other key organizations.

There are several ways to use the book. You can

- read it from beginning to end
- use the Table of Contents to find specific information
- go to the websites in each section to learn more, if you have access to a computer
- refer to the websites and telephone numbers listed in **Useful Contacts**, p. 79

Because programs and services for newcomers are reviewed and changed regularly, some information in this book may not apply to you. The information in this guide is current as of October 2013. For more recent or detailed information, go to the websites or call the telephone numbers listed throughout the publication or in the **Useful Contacts** section. If you do not have a computer, see **Accessing Computers and the Internet**, p. 12, for information about free computer access.

Note to temporary foreign workers


The chapter **Temporary Foreign Workers**, p. 15 provides some information about how your immigration status may affect your life in Alberta. Look for this symbol  throughout the publication for information specific to temporary foreign workers. The chapters **When You Arrive** and **Important Things to Do and Know** will also help you during your first weeks and months in your new community.




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When You Arrive

Below is a list of things you will need to do during your first weeks in Alberta. You can do them in any order. Each item on the list refers you to a section of the book for more information.

ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

- Find a temporary place to stay: see p. 5.
- Find out where to shop for food: see p. 35.
- Apply for a social insurance number:
see p. 6.
- Open a bank account: see p. 31.
- Register for free public health insurance:
see p. 38.
- Explore the community: see p. 7.
- Enrol children in school: see p. 54.
- Find out about English language classes:
see p. 55.
- Find out how to have your qualifications
assessed: see p. 45.
- Look for work: see p. 47.
- Learn how to dress for winter: see p. 21.

DID YOU KNOW? If you were given a *Medical Surveillance Undertaking* form before you came to Canada, and you were told that you must have a follow-up medical examination after arriving, it is because you have an inactive infectious disease. You must report, by telephone, to the public health authority where you live within 30 days of entering Canada. This is very important both for your health and for the health of other Canadians.

TIP

Staff at an **immigrant-serving agency** may be able to help you with the items on the arrival checklist.

For more information, see **Useful Contacts**, p. 80.



Edmonton city skyline



Olympic Plaza, Calgary

Important Things to Do and Know

In this chapter you will find information about important things you may need to do or know during your first few days and weeks in Alberta. This information will help you settle into your new life. You will also find lots of useful information and links at Alberta's official immigration website, albertacanada.com/immigration.

Finding a temporary place to stay

When you arrive, you will need a place to stay. If you cannot stay with family or friends, there are other options.

- **Hotel or motel**

You can rent a room on a day-to-day basis. Some hotels and motels offer lower rates by the week. The range of cost per night for **double occupancy** (two people) in a hotel or motel in Alberta varies by location:

- Calgary—\$140 to \$260
- Edmonton—\$130 to \$190
- Fort McMurray—\$180 to \$215
- Lethbridge—\$115 to \$140

For more information about hotels and motels, call Travel Alberta at 1-800-252-3782 toll-free or go to the website at travelalberta.com.

- **Bed and breakfast**

“Bed and breakfast” means a bedroom for rent in someone's home, on a day-to-day basis. The cost includes breakfast. Bed and breakfast rates for double occupancy range from \$92 to \$141 per night. Go to bbalberta.com for more information.



Important Things to Do and Know

- **Hostel**

Hostelling International runs hostels in Edmonton and Calgary and in Alberta's mountain parks.

Shared rooms start at about \$22 to \$32 per person and include the use of a shared kitchen. At hostels in Edmonton and Calgary, single rooms have card key access and shared rooms provide lockers, so your belongings are secure when you are out. Go to hihostels.ca for more information.

- **YMCA**

In Edmonton, men and women of all faiths can stay at the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) at a rate of \$35 to \$69 per person per day. Call 780-421-9622 or go to edmonton.ymca.ca and click on Downtown YMCA Housing.

- **Post-secondary residences**

Some Alberta universities and colleges offer temporary housing to non-students at rates between \$75 and \$120 (double occupancy) per day. To find a university or college in your community, go to iae.alberta.ca and click on Post-Secondary.

TIP

For help finding a temporary place to stay, you can

- call 211 in Edmonton and Calgary for the Information and Referral Service. You can talk to a referral specialist who will help you connect with many non-emergency social, health and government services. This service is free, confidential and available in several languages.
- ask staff at an immigrant-serving agency. See **Useful Contacts**, p. 80.

Getting a Canadian social insurance number

A social insurance number (also called a SIN) is a nine-digit number used to administer Canadian government programs. You must have a social insurance number to work, to open a bank account and to apply for government benefits. Employers cannot legally pay you without this number.

Applying for a social insurance number

- You must apply in person at a Service Canada Centre.
- You will need to submit a **primary document** (an official document that proves your identity and status in Canada) such as your permanent resident card or work permit. You must submit the original of this document.
- If the name on your primary document is different from the name you use on other documents, you will need to submit a **supporting document** with that name. You must submit the original of this document.
- For more information about applying for a social insurance number, you can
 - call Service Canada at 1-800-206-7218 toll-free (press 3 for information about social insurance numbers)
 - go to serviccanada.gc.ca. Click on A to Z, click on S and then click on Social Insurance Number.

Using your Social Insurance Number safely

- Memorize your social insurance number. If you have a social insurance number card, keep it in a safe place. Do not use it as personal identification.
- Do not give out your social insurance number to people who do not need it. Legally, you only need to give your social insurance number to
 - your employer. Provide your number or show your proof of application to your employer.
 - your bank or financial institution. Provide your number when you apply for an account.
 - the government. Provide your number when you access programs and benefits.
- If you have a social insurance number card and it has been lost or stolen, contact Service Canada.

Note: As of March 31, 2014, social insurance number cards are no longer being produced.

Carrying identification

It is important to carry identification (ID) with you. Canadians are often asked to show their ID to confirm their identity, age or address. For example, you may need to show your ID when using a credit card or a cheque to pay for purchases, when accessing health-care services and when renting accommodation. Until you receive your Canadian ID (for example, your permanent resident card), you can carry ID from your previous residence.

It is best to carry two pieces of ID with you. One piece should be **photo ID**, which can include

- your driver's licence or photo identification card (see **Driving and Vehicles**, p. 64)
- a photocopy of your permanent resident card
- a photocopy of your current and valid passport if you have not yet received your permanent resident card

Your second piece of ID, which does not need a photo, can include

- your health insurance card (see **Personal Health Card**, p. 38)
- a major credit card (see **Using and Building Credit**, p. 33)
- an employee card
- a photocopy of your birth certificate
- a bank debit or account card with your name and signature
- a utility bill with your name on it

Keep the following documents in a safe place and do not carry them with you:

- social insurance number card (if you have one)
- passport
- confirmation of permanent residence
- permanent resident card
- work permit

Getting around

Maps

Looking at a map is a good way to learn about your new community.

- Many Alberta cities offer free maps online. For a list of all Alberta cities and towns, with links to municipal websites, go to albertacanada.com/immigration/choosing. Click on The Province and then click on Explore Alberta.
- Your city or town may offer free or inexpensive street maps at a tourist information office. To find a tourist information office, look under Visitors, Visitor Information or Tourist Information in the blue pages of your local telephone book.
- You can buy a street map at some gas stations and at stores that sell magazines and newspapers.

Public transit

Cities in Alberta operate public transit systems using buses. Calgary and Edmonton also have transit train systems (light rail transit, or LRT, in Edmonton and the CTrain in Calgary).

Here are some important things to know about using public transit in Alberta:

- Buses drop people off and pick them up at bus stops. Buses do not usually stop to let people on or off between bus stops.
- Bus stops are clearly marked by signs with the route numbers for all of the buses that stop there. Larger stops may also have route maps posted.
- Most bus stops and bus shelters are outdoors and not heated. When you take the bus, it is important to dress for the weather, especially in winter.
- When the bus comes, people stand in line and get on one at a time.
- You will need exact change for the fare. Bus drivers will not make change.
- You can buy monthly passes and books of tickets. Some transit systems also offer fee reduction programs. See **Did You Know?**, p. 76.



- You pay the same fare, no matter how far you travel within the city. If you need to transfer to a second bus or from a bus to the LRT or CTrain, ask the driver for a transfer slip. This is a piece of paper that records the time at which you paid your fare. A transfer slip allows you to use the transit system for the next 90 minutes on the same fare (travelling in either direction).
- Always pay the fare when you get on the bus or LRT or CTrain. Transit inspectors may ask you to show your bus pass, receipt or transfer. There is a fine for using transit without paying the fare.
- Some transit systems have special buses for people with disabilities.

For more information about public transit in your community

- go to your city's transit website. To find the transit website for your city, go to the Canadian Urban Transit Association website at cutaactu.ca. Click on Classifieds, click on Links and then click on Transit Systems. In the Alberta list, click on the name of your city.
- ask staff at an immigrant-serving agency. See **Useful Contacts**, p. 80.
- look under Bus or Transit in the blue pages of your local telephone book

Walking

The following laws and tips will help you walk safely in cities and towns:

- Walk on the sidewalk. If there are no sidewalks, walk on the left side of the road, facing traffic.
- Cross the street only at street corners or marked crosswalks. Obey the traffic lights. Failing to do so is known as jaywalking, which is illegal and can result in a fine.
- Drivers are supposed to stop at crosswalks to let pedestrians (people walking) cross, but they do not always do so. Look carefully and be sure vehicles have stopped *before* you begin crossing the street.



Calgary bus stop

Courtesy of Calgary Transit



Courtesy of Edmonton Transit System (ETS)

Edmonton LRT



Courtesy of Calgary Transit

Transfer slip

Bicycling

Albertans of all ages ride bicycles to work and school or for recreation. When you ride a bicycle, obey these laws:

- Wear an approved bicycle helmet if you are 17 years of age or younger. (Adult riders are also encouraged to wear helmets.) An approved helmet meets specific safety standards and will have a sticker or mark from a safety standards organization such as the Canadian Standards Association or the American National Standards Institute.
- Keep right or in the right lane. If you are riding with someone, ride single file (not side by side).
- Obey all traffic signs and lights. Use hand signals when turning.
- Get off and walk your bicycle when using crosswalks and sidewalks.
- Equip your bicycle with a bell and make sure the brakes will stop the bicycle on clean, dry, level pavement.
- If you ride at night, equip your bicycle with a white headlamp, a red tail lamp and at least one red rear reflector.
- Bicycles designed for one person must carry only one person. A bicycle with a baby or child seat is equipped for two people.



Right Turn



Left Turn

Taxis

Taxis are more expensive than public transit. Keep the following in mind when you use a taxi:

- Taxis in Alberta are metered—all taxis within the same city charge the same rate, which is shown on the meter. Rates may vary from city to city. Taxis and limousines at airports charge a flat rate based on the area or zone to which you are going. Albertans do not bargain for taxi fares.
- A tip of 10 per cent is expected but not required.
- You can find taxis at airports, hotels, large public buildings, shopping centres and hospitals.
- For trips to and from the airport, shuttle buses are often less expensive than taxis.
- To call for a taxi, look under Taxicabs in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book. See **Using Telephones and Directories**, p. 10.

Driving

For information about driving in Alberta, see **Driving and Vehicles**, p. 64.



Important Things to Do and Know

Using telephones and directories

Almost every home and business in Alberta has a telephone. Many Albertans also use cellphones (cellular or mobile phones).

Local calls

To make a local call (to a number in the same community or local area, such as Edmonton and surrounding communities), dial the 10-digit telephone number (area code and telephone number):

780 - 000 - 0000	
Area Code	Telephone Number

Alberta currently has three area codes: **780, 403, 587**. When you make a local call from someone's home, the call is free and you can talk as long as you like. When you make a local call from a pay phone or a hotel or motel room, you will be charged for the call.

Follow these instructions to make a local call from a public pay phone:

- Pick up the receiver.
- Deposit the required change or use a major credit card or a pay phone card (a prepaid phone card for use on public pay phones). Phone cards are available at many locations, including Canada Post outlets, gas stations, grocery stores and drugstores (pharmacies).
- Dial the area code and telephone number.
- If your call is answered, talk for as long as you like.
- If the line is busy, hang up and your money will be returned.



Long-distance calls

Follow these instructions to make a long-distance telephone call:

- For numbers in North America and the Caribbean, press **1** and enter the area code and telephone number:

1 - 403 - 000 - 0000		
Long Distance	Area Code	Telephone Number

- For numbers in other areas, press **011** plus the **country code** and the number. Country codes are listed in the front pages of the telephone book. You can also press **0** and ask the operator for the country code.

You can pay for long-distance telephone calls in the following ways:

- Use a long-distance calling plan for your home or cellphone. You are billed monthly for the calls you make.
- Use a prepaid phone card. These are available at many locations, including gas stations and grocery stores. They are often less expensive than using calling plans or paying with credit cards.
- Press **0** instead of **1** to make a collect call. The person you are calling pays for the call.
- Use a credit card at a pay phone.

Toll-free calls

Toll-free calls are long-distance calls you can make for free. Toll-free numbers often begin with **1-800**, **1-866**, **1-877** or **1-888**. Many businesses and government departments have toll-free numbers.

You can reach any Alberta government number outside your community toll-free by dialing 310-0000 and, after the prompt, entering the 10-digit number you are trying to reach. Within your community, dial the regular 10-digit number as you would with any other telephone call.

Telephone books and directories

Telephone books (also called phone books and telephone directories) are divided into sections:

- The front pages list emergency telephone numbers and important numbers for community services such as hospitals.
- The first several pages provide information about telephone services.
- The **blue pages** alphabetically list telephone numbers for municipal, provincial and federal government offices and programs.
- The **white pages** alphabetically list telephone numbers for individuals (by family name) and businesses in the community.
- The **yellow or business pages** may be a separate section or a separate book. These pages list business names and telephone numbers alphabetically by service (for example, Banks, Day Care Centres, Department Stores and Electric Contractors).

You can also find telephone numbers for people and businesses in the following online directories:

- **411.ca**
- **YellowPages.ca**

For help finding telephone numbers for social, health and government services

- call **211** in Edmonton or Calgary
- go to **informalberta.ca**

Getting telephone service

For telephone service in your home, you can use a landline (fixed line), a cell phone or both. You may decide to buy a bundle (group) of services from a single company that provides local telephone, long-distance, cable television and Internet services for a fixed rate. You can also buy these services separately.

Ask friends and family about the telephone companies or services they use. Learn the details about a service before you sign a contract. To find companies that offer telephone services in your community, look under both Telephone Service and Cellular Telephones in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.



DID YOU KNOW? Many people, businesses and programs in Alberta use voice mail, an automated message-taking system. If you hear a recorded message when you call a number, leave your name, your telephone number and a brief message after the tone. Ask that your call be returned later. When leaving your telephone number, include your area code.

DID YOU KNOW? When calling long distance, you may need to press **0** to go through the operator if you want to

- make a collect call
- charge the call to a different number
- call long distance from some pay phones



Calling 911 in an emergency

In most of Alberta, dial **911** to call for emergency help, including firefighters, police or ambulance services, under the following circumstances:

in life or death situations

- in case of a serious injury or accident
- during a crime in progress

To find out if your community uses 911 or a different emergency system, look on the inside cover or first page of the telephone book.

Call 911 only in a **real emergency**:

- Waking up to the sound of someone breaking into your home in the middle of the night is an emergency. A break-in that occurs while no one is in the house is not an emergency.
- You can be fined for a non-emergency call to 911.

When you call 911, tell the person who answers

- **what the emergency is and what kind of help you need.** For example, "My child is having trouble breathing" or "I need an ambulance."
- **where the emergency is.** For example, "I'm at the corner of (name) Street and (name) Avenue" or "Please come to (address)."
- **your name, address and telephone number**

Teach your family members about using 911. You will have to pay for non-emergency ambulance trips unless the person needing the ambulance is over 65 years of age.

Even if you can only say "FIRE," "POLICE" or "HELP," call 911 and stay on the line until help arrives.

Accessing computers and the Internet

You will find a lot of useful information about your community, including information about many government programs, on the Internet. This includes government forms that you can download and print.

You can access a computer for free in your community at

- public libraries
- many Alberta Works Centres. See **Useful Contacts**, p. 79.
- many immigrant-serving agencies. See **Useful Contacts**, p. 80.

You can also access computers at Internet cafés, but you will have to pay for this service. At many cafés and in public places such as libraries, you can use the Internet for free if you bring your own laptop computer with you.

For a monthly fee, telephone and cable television companies provide Internet connections to home computers. For Internet service, look under Internet Service Providers in an online directory or the business pages of the telephone book.

Using public libraries

The library in your community is a useful source of information and services. At your public library, you can

- use a computer for free
- get help finding information
- borrow books, CDs, DVDs and magazines, often in languages other than English
- take part in a variety of programs, from reading clubs for children to classes for adults on a range of topics

You can use the library without joining if you do not want to borrow material. If you want to borrow material, you can join the library for a small annual fee. Some public libraries have fee reduction programs. See **Did You Know?**, p. 76.

To find a library in or near your community, go to the Alberta Municipal Affairs website at municipalaffairs.alberta.ca. Click on the Municipalities & Communities tab, click on Public Library Service and then click on Directory of Alberta's Public Libraries.

Sending mail

You can send mail by Canada Post or with a private courier (delivery) company.

The cost of sending a letter or parcel usually depends on

- where you are sending it
- the size and weight of the envelope or parcel
- how soon you want it to reach its destination

You can buy stamps and mail your envelope or parcel at a Canada Post outlet or wherever you see this symbol.



Canada Post outlets may be in a post office or drugstore. You can also place properly stamped mail in the large red Canada Post boxes on street corners and near public buildings. Go to canadapost.ca to find a post office, a postal code, or postal rates and services.

DID YOU KNOW? It is not a good idea to send cash through the mail. If you want to send money home, try these suggestions:

- Ask friends and family how they send money home.
- Ask staff at an immigrant-serving agency. See **Useful Contacts**, p. 80.
- Ask at your bank.
- Look under Money Order & Transfer Service in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.

Copied with the permission of Canada Post



To address a letter or parcel

- print the name and address you are sending to in the centre of the front of the envelope or parcel, in the following order:
 - first and last name or company name
 - street number and street name
 - post office box, if there is one
 - city and two-letter province code (for example, AB for Alberta)
 - country (if other than Canada)
 - postal code (be sure to include this)
- print your name and address in the upper left corner
- put the stamp in the upper right corner

Sample Addressed Envelope

Your name 123 Any Street Edmonton, AB T1T 1T1	Postage Stamp
Recipient's name 456 Other Street SW Calgary, AB T1T 1T1	



Important Things to Do and Know

Improving your English language skills

In many Alberta communities, you will meet people who speak your language. But if you want to succeed at work and school or take an active part in the community, you and your children will need to speak, write and read English well.

For more information, see **English as a Second Language**, p. 55.



Contacting an immigrant-serving agency

Immigrant-serving agencies provide information and guidance to newcomers to Alberta. Staff at immigrant-serving agencies often speak several languages. Many are immigrants and refugees themselves, so they understand what it is like to arrive in a new country.

An immigrant-serving agency may be able to help you

- find translation services and interpreters
- get information about a place to live
- connect with your community (others you know from your home)
- fill out forms and applications
- find English language classes
- access the Internet
- find information about assessing your qualifications
- find work
- seek counselling and get help with problems

To find an immigrant-serving agency near you

- see **Useful Contacts**, p. 80
- go to **work.alberta.ca**. Under Immigration, click on settlement. Here you will find programs and services for immigrants listed under employment support, English language training, settlement services and temporary foreign workers.
- go to the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies website at **aisa.ca**

Immigrant-serving agencies do not all provide the same programs and services. If you visit an agency that cannot help you, its staff will be able to refer you to someone who can.

DID YOU KNOW? Immigrant-serving agencies may also be referred to as settlement agencies.



Temporary Foreign Workers

As a temporary foreign worker, you have come to Alberta to live and work here temporarily to help Alberta deal with labour shortages. The temporary foreign worker advisory office and helpline and other support services are available to help you succeed at work and in your new community.

Here are some things you should know if you are a temporary foreign worker in Alberta:

- You need a social insurance number: see p. 6.
- You are protected by Alberta's employment standards laws: see p. 48.
- You are protected by Alberta's health and safety laws: see p. 49.
- You may be eligible for Alberta workers' compensation benefits if you are injured at work and are working in an industry covered by legislation: see p. 49.
- You may be eligible for employment insurance if you meet the requirements (for example, number of hours worked): see p. 49.
- Standard deductions will be taken from your paycheque for items such as income tax: see p. 48.
- Employers cannot deduct the following from your paycheque, even if they get your permission in writing to do so:
 - the costs of your airfare, health care and accommodation if your agreement with your employer requires your employer to pay these costs
 - the costs or fees associated with the use of an employment agency

Temporary Foreign Workers: A Guide for Employees provides more information about working in Alberta. It is available in several languages. To get a copy, go to work.alberta.ca. Under Immigration, click on Temporary Foreign Workers.



Changes to your work situation

The following conditions and issues may arise in your work situation.

- **Termination**

If you do not meet the employer's expectations as outlined in the job contract, your employer has the right to terminate your employment, giving you the required notice or pay in lieu of notice.

- **Finding new employment**

You may choose at any time to find another employer. Your new employer is required to obtain a Labour Market Opinion from the Government of Canada, and you must apply for a new work permit that reflects your changes in employer, location and job description.

- **Changing the conditions on a work permit**

As a temporary foreign worker, you may apply to extend your stay or change the conditions of your stay or the type of temporary status. It is important to apply for your renewal before your current documentation expires. You can obtain an application online at cic.gc.ca or by calling 1-888-242-2100 toll-free.



- **Sending a temporary foreign worker home**

You are entitled to remain in Canada for the full term of your work permit. An employer or employment agency cannot force you to return home if your work contract is terminated before the end of the work permit, or if you decide to find a job with another employer. However, you cannot automatically begin to work for another employer. For more information, call the temporary foreign worker helpline at 1-877-944-9955 toll-free.

- **Reporting violations**

It is against the law for an employer to bully you or threaten to send you back to your country to prevent you from reporting a violation. An employer or employment agency that engages in such behaviour may be subject to prosecution under the Criminal Code. To report an abuse of this kind, contact a temporary foreign worker advisory office or the temporary foreign worker helpline at 1-877-944-9955 toll-free.

- **Use of a representative**

If you choose to use someone to help you with your application for a work permit, you are still responsible for the accuracy of the information provided. You can find further information about the use of representatives at cic.gc.ca or by calling 1-888-242-2100 toll-free.

- **Terms and conditions of a work permit**

You must comply with all terms and conditions imposed on your work permit.



Temporary foreign worker advisory office and helpline

The Government of Alberta's temporary foreign worker advisory office and helpline can help you know your rights and responsibilities as a temporary foreign worker. They can help you find solutions for working conditions that are unfair, unsafe or unhealthy.

Services provided by the temporary foreign worker advisory office and helpline are confidential and available in over 170 languages. All complaints from temporary foreign workers are taken seriously and referred for investigation.

Once your needs (or the needs of a group of temporary foreign workers) are assessed, services provided may include

- booking one-on-one appointments
- hosting information sessions for temporary foreign workers across Alberta
- updating information on available federal and provincial programs and not-for-profit organizations
- helping with completing and submitting required forms
- making referrals to appropriate enforcement agencies if there are allegations of mistreatment
- working with immigrant-serving agencies across the province to help you adapt to living and working in Alberta

You can contact a temporary foreign worker advisory office (Monday to Friday) in person, by email or by phone.

- North Location (Edmonton)
3rd Floor, City Centre
10242-105 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 3L5
780-644-2584
- South Location (Calgary)
6th Floor, John J. Bowlen Building
620-7 Avenue SW
Calgary, AB T2P 0Y8
403-476-4540
- Email: tfwadvisory.office@gov.ab.ca
- Temporary foreign worker helpline: 1-877-944-9955 toll-free or 780-644-9955 in Edmonton and area

Temporary foreign worker support services

Temporary foreign worker support services can help you get used to living and working in Alberta and find ways to take part in Canadian society.

You, your spouse and your children may use these services to get practical help with everyday living in Alberta, including

- getting to know the community
- information about roles and responsibilities when living and working in Alberta
- referrals to resources and services in the community, such as banking, shopping, housing, transportation, health, cultural, educational, recreational and legal services

To find support services in or near your community, go to work.alberta.ca. Under Immigration, click on Temporary Foreign Workers and then click on Information for Workers.



Staying in Canada

As a temporary foreign worker, you cannot apply for Canadian citizenship.

You must apply to Citizenship and Immigration Canada to change or extend your work permit if

- your job changes or is extended
- you are offered a different job
- you wish to stay in Canada as a visitor after your work permit expires. You will need to apply several months before your work permit expires.



Applying for permanent residence: Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program

The Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program is a permanent residence program operated by the Government of Alberta. The program helps employers attract and keep employees for eligible occupations. Depending on your occupation and skill level, you may be eligible to apply on your own or with your employer. If you are nominated by the Government of Alberta, you and your family (spouse or common-law partner and dependent children) may apply for a permanent resident visa through Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The basic application steps are as follows:

- Review the website below to find out which stream or category is the right fit for you.
- Submit an application to the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program. In some cases, your employer will submit an application with you.
- You (as well as your employer, where applicable) will be assessed to determine whether you meet the program criteria.
- If you (and your employer, where applicable) meet the criteria, you will be issued a nomination and you can apply to Citizenship and Immigration Canada for permanent residence as a provincial nominee.

For more information and application details, go to work.alberta.ca. Under Immigration, click on Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program.

Applying for permanent residence: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

For more information about applying for permanent residence from within Canada, contact Citizenship and Immigration Canada

- call 1-888-242-2100 toll-free
- go to cic.gc.ca. Point to the Immigration tab, click on New Immigrants tab and then click on Get a Permanent Resident Card.



Calgary skyline & Centre Street bridge



About Alberta

Alberta is Canada's fourth-largest province. It is an area of great natural beauty, from the Rocky Mountains in the west and the forests in the north, to the southern prairies and central parkland.

Alberta facts

- Alberta covers an area of 661,100 square kilometres (255,000 square miles).
- Alberta's population is 4,025,074 (July 2013).
- Edmonton, located in the centre of the province, is the capital.
- Calgary is the largest city.
- About one-third of the population lives in Edmonton and the surrounding area, one-third lives in Calgary and one-third lives in the rest of the province.
- Alberta is in the mountain time zone. When it is 7 p.m. in London, England, it is noon in Alberta.
- Alberta follows the North American standard for daylight time. Clocks are turned forward by one hour on the second Sunday in March and turned back on the first Sunday of November.

To find out more about communities in Alberta, go to albertacanada.com/immigration/choosing and click on The Province. On this page, you will find links to information about rural and urban communities in Alberta.



Alberta weather

With 1,900 hours of sunshine in the north and 2,300 hours of sunshine in the south annually, Alberta is Canada’s sunniest province. Alberta has four distinct seasons.

Local radio, television and newspapers give daily weather forecasts. For forecasts online, go to the Environment Canada website at weather.gc.ca and click on AB.

Alberta’s weather changes quickly and can sometimes be extreme:

- During the winter, chinooks (strong, warm winds) near the southern mountains can cause temperatures to rise as much as 20°C in less than an hour.
- Blizzards (severe snowstorms), heavy snowfall and high winds can make it difficult to stay warm outdoors and travel from place to place. Schools are sometimes closed during extreme winter weather.
- During the summer, thunderstorms bring lightning, heavy rain and occasional hail (small chunks of ice) and tornadoes (funnel-shaped clouds).

Radio and television stations announce weather watches and warnings, as well as school closures, during extreme conditions. For information about staying safe during extreme weather, go to the Environment Canada website at ec.gc.ca. Click Explore the Topics and then click on Hazardous Weather.

TIP

As in many other places around the world, mosquitoes are common in the warm weather of an Alberta summer. Some mosquitoes carry the West Nile virus. Most people infected with this virus have no symptoms, while some (especially seniors) may develop flu-like symptoms. Fewer than one per cent of those infected develop more severe symptoms. To reduce the risk of contracting the virus, apply a repellent containing DEET when you are outdoors. At dusk and dawn, wear long-sleeved tops and long pants.

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Month	March to May	June to August	September to November	December to February
Average Temperature	-6.5°C to 11.3°C	15°C to 23°C (occasional highs of 30°C)	-8.5°C to 12°C	-8°C to -25°C (occasional lows of -30°C)
Day/Night	hours of daylight increase	long days, short nights	hours of daylight decrease	short days, long nights
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ snow melts ▪ rain ▪ occasional wet snow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ rain and thunderstorms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ rain ▪ some snow ▪ snow stays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ snow ▪ occasional blizzards



What to wear in winter

Winters in Alberta can seem very cold if you are from a warm country or province:

- Temperatures often stay well below 0°C for many days.
- Wind can make the temperature feel even colder, an effect known as wind chill.
- Skin can be injured when it is exposed for too long in very cold weather. This is known as frostbite. Symptoms include reddened skin and a feeling of numbness, burning and tingling. To treat frostbite, move out of the cold, soak the affected skin in warm (not hot) water and get medical help.

Many Albertans enjoy being outdoors during the winter. They stay warm by wearing many layers of clothing and keeping their head covered (most body heat is lost through the head). Here is a list of the winter clothes you will need:

- a thick, windproof coat with enough room for layers underneath
- boots with warm lining and rough soles to prevent slipping
- a hat or toque that covers your ears
- lined gloves or mitts
- a scarf or ski mask to wear over your nose and mouth to protect your lungs from very cold air
- warm underwear and layers of clothing made of wool, goose down or fleece if you are going outside for longer than a few minutes on very cold days

For more information about Alberta's weather and geography, go to albertacanada.com/immigration. Click on Choosing Alberta, click on The Province and then click on Climate and Geography.



Edmonton

Courtesy of Edmonton Economic Development Corporation

Alberta's cost of living

The cost of living in Alberta varies across the province. It is generally more expensive to live in Calgary and Edmonton than in rural centres, with the exception of Fort McMurray.

Minimum hourly wage (as of September 2013; reviewed annually)

- \$9.95, or about \$20,700 per year

Average hourly wage (as of August 2013)

- \$27.37, or about \$56,930 per year

Average monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment

(as of April 2013)

- Calgary—\$1,202
- Edmonton—\$1,077
- Fort McMurray—\$2,229
- Lethbridge—\$864

Average housing price (as of May 2013)

- Calgary—\$552,307
- Edmonton—\$450,159
- Fort McMurray—\$838,416
- Lethbridge—\$355,984

Average price of basic grocery items (as of June 2013)

- bread (one loaf or 570 grams)—\$2.90
- eggs (12)—\$2.96
- milk (1%, two litres)—\$3.64 (deposit and recycling fee included)
- apples (one kilogram)—\$3.68

Price of adult monthly transit pass (as of May 2013)

- Calgary—\$94
- Edmonton—\$89
- Fort McMurray—\$45
- Lethbridge—\$76





Alberta Legislature Building, Edmonton



Government

There are three levels of government in Alberta:

- federal (Government of Canada)
- provincial (Government of Alberta)
- municipal (local city, town or village)

Canadian citizens elect all three levels of government.

Canada is a federation. The federal government, 10 provinces and three territories share powers and responsibilities:

- Federal government responsibilities include defence, foreign policy, immigration and citizenship.
- Provincial government responsibilities include education and regulating trades and professions.
- Federal and provincial governments share responsibility for health services, social programs, farming, transportation and the environment.
- Municipal or local government responsibilities include police and fire protection, water and sewer, recreation and public transit.

Languages and multiculturalism

Canada has two official languages: English and French. Albertans need to speak, read and write English well to succeed at work or school. For more information about English language learning, see **English as a Second Language**, p. 55.

Multiculturalism, the belief that all Canadians are equal regardless of their heritage or ancestry, is governed by the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*. Albertans from every part of the world take pride in their heritage and observe their traditions, as long as they do not break Canadian laws. Aboriginal people—First Nations, Métis and Inuit—also express pride in their heritage and their long tradition of living in what is now Alberta.

TIP

To find out more about government in Canada, go to the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website at cic.gc.ca. Point to the Immigration tab, click on Immigrate, click on Prepare to Work and Live in Canada and then click on Get to Know Canada.

Social customs

Like every country, Canada has social customs that are followed and expected by most people. Here are some examples of those customs:

- **Introductions**

When introduced, people usually smile and say, “Hello, how are you?” or exchange a similar greeting. Some people extend their right hand so that you can shake it. To shake hands, grip the other person’s hand firmly but not tightly, and gently pump two to three times.

- **Personal distance**

In social and business settings, people stand 60 to 100 centimetres (about two to three feet) away from each other. Standing closer may make people uncomfortable.

- **Eye contact**

It is OK to make eye contact with the person you are talking to, even if that person is a different gender or age or an authority figure, such as a teacher or supervisor.

- **Being on time**

People are expected to be on time for work, school, medical appointments and business meetings. They may lose their jobs or be suspended from school if they are often late. Many people will not wait more than 10 or 15 minutes for someone who is late for a business meeting. In social settings, people are usually expected to arrive on time or no later than a half -hour past the time given in the invitation.

- **Public behaviour**

Violence and loudness in public places, including loud conversations, name-calling and spanking children, are not acceptable. Hitting or threatening another person, including family members, is against the law. See **Human Rights, Laws and Police** on p. 58 for more information.

- **Personal questions**

Unless you know someone well, it is not polite to ask personal questions such as

- How much money do you make?
- How much did you pay for your house or car?
- Why aren’t you married?
- Why don’t you have children?
- How old are you?
- How much do you weigh?

- **Lineups**

People line up at bus stops, banks, stores and restaurants and in many other places and situations. They expect to be served on a first-come, first-served basis. If there is no lineup, they take turns rather than pushing ahead. People may become angry if you step into the middle of a lineup instead of taking your turn or push against the person ahead of you.

- **Holding hands**

Men and women, as well as young children and their family members, often hold hands or walk arm in arm in public. Two men or two women holding hands is not common, but it is acceptable.



- **Volunteering**

Many Albertans volunteer (donate their time and skills) to support a variety of not-for-profit organizations, from hospitals and schools to arts and sports groups. Volunteering is a way to get to know your new community and the people in it. When volunteering, you can use your skills and experience to help others. In Alberta, organizations may interview volunteers to find roles that match their interests and abilities and make sure the people they serve are safe. To find out more about volunteering, go to the Volunteer Alberta website at volunteeralberta.ab.ca.

- **Respecting the environment**

Canadians expect people not to litter—not to leave garbage in the street or on the ground or throw it out of a car. In many communities, you can be fined for littering. You are expected to put your garbage in a garbage can, available in most public places.

In Alberta, many items can be recycled, from paper and bottles to car tires and electronics. Most communities provide recycling depots where people can leave items in marked bins for recycling. In many communities, people can put recycled items out in blue boxes or blue plastic bags on scheduled days to be collected from their home. Learn more about recycling in your community at the Alberta Recycling Management Authority website at albertarecycling.ca.

- **Smoking**

Alberta has a provincewide smoking ban, which means smoking is not allowed in any public place or workplace, including restaurants, outdoor bus and taxi shelters, public vehicles and washrooms. Smoking is not allowed within five metres of a doorway, window or air intake of a public place or workplace. It is a good idea to ask permission before lighting a cigarette in someone's home or car. For more information, go to the Alberta Health website at health.alberta.ca and click on Tobacco Reduction Strategy at the bottom of the page.

TIP

To find out more about Canadian social customs and life in Alberta, ask friends and family members what they have learned. You can also talk to staff at an immigrant-serving agency. See **Useful Contacts**, p. 80.



Courtesy of City of Edmonton

Recycling truck

Courtesy of Volunteer Alberta





A Place to Live

It can be challenging to find a place to live. It takes time to find out which neighbourhoods you like and what type of housing you can afford. If you are like many newcomers, the place you live at first may not be the home you eventually settle in.

Types of housing

In Alberta, each level of a building above ground is called a storey. For example, a two-storey house has two levels above the ground. In an apartment building, the first storey is usually called the first floor.

Most Alberta houses have a basement, a level partly below ground. A basement is not the same as a cellar. Basements are heated and often have windows. Many basements are finished and used as living areas. Basements often have bedrooms, bathrooms, laundry rooms and sitting or family rooms.

There are many types of housing in Alberta. With the exception of rooms for rent, the following types of housing can be either rented or purchased:

- A **room for rent** is a single room in a house or an apartment where everyone shares the kitchen, bathroom and living area. Rooms for rent are often furnished. **Room and board** means that a furnished room and meals are included in the rent.
- **Apartments** or **suites** may be in a high-rise building with many storeys, in a walk-up or low-rise building with three or four storeys, or in a house. Many suites have one or two bedrooms. Studio or bachelor suites have only one room. Basement suites often rent for less money.
- **Townhouses** or **row houses** are several houses joined together. Many have basements and small yards.
- A **duplex** is a house divided into two separate units, each unit with its own entrance.



- **Mobile homes** are factory-made houses that can be moved from one piece of land to another. Although mobile homes are usually less expensive to purchase than a house, you also have to buy or rent land to put them on.
- **Detached houses** or **single family houses** are not attached to any other buildings. They usually have basements and yards. A one-storey detached house is often called a **bungalow**.

DID YOU KNOW? If you have a low income and need help with your rent, you may qualify for **subsidized housing**, which is also known as **low-income housing**. For more information, talk to staff at an immigrant-serving agency or go to programs.alberta.ca. Under More Audiences, click on Lower-Income Earners.



Renting a home

Follow these suggestions when you are looking for a place to rent:

- Ask your friends and family about places to rent.
- Look for Vacancy and For Rent signs.
- Look for ads on notice boards in grocery stores and community centres in neighbourhoods you like.
- Ask staff at an immigrant-serving agency about home-finding services in your community. For a small fee, a home-finding service will help you find a place to rent.
- Pick up a free copy of the local home-rental publications that are often available at grocery stores, malls or drugstores.
- Look in the classified section of local newspapers.
- Check online classified listings.

When you see an ad that interests you, call the number in the ad and ask the following questions:

- Is the apartment or house still for rent?
- How much is the rent?
- Are utilities (water, heat and electricity costs) included? If not, how much do they usually cost per month?
- How much is the security deposit? Before you move in, you will probably have to pay a security (or damage) deposit to your landlord (the owner or owner's agent). By law, the amount must not be more than a full month's rent. The landlord keeps the money until you move out. If you do no damage, pay the rent each month and clean the house or apartment before you leave, the landlord must return the security deposit, with interest, when you move out.

TIP

Garage sales, rummage sales, flea markets and thrift or second-hand stores are good places to buy low-cost furniture and household items. Look for ads on notice boards in your community and in the classified section of local newspapers.

TIP

If you are not comfortable speaking English, ask an English-speaking friend to call the landlord for you and to go with you to see the apartment or house.

If the apartment or house seems to be a good one for you, make an appointment to view it.

When you view the apartment or house, make sure that

- all the rooms are clean and in good repair
- the appliances (fridge, stove) and fixtures (smoke alarms, lights, shower) work properly
- locks on windows and doors work properly
- you would feel safe living there

Before agreeing to rent the place to you, the landlord may ask you for

- identification
- proof that you can pay the rent, such as a letter from your employer confirming that you will be or are employed, a pay stub (see **Your Paycheque**, p. 48) or a bank statement
- a reference from a person who knows you and will tell the landlord that you will be a good tenant (renter)

If the landlord agrees to rent to you and you pay the security deposit, the landlord cannot rent the apartment or house to anyone else.

DID YOU KNOW? In Alberta, it is against the law for landlords to refuse to rent to people because of their race, religion, colour, gender, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, family status, source of income, physical disability, mental disability or sexual orientation. If a landlord refuses to rent a place to you for any of these reasons, you can complain to the Alberta Human Rights Commission. For more information, see **Human Rights**, p. 58.



Moving in

Signing a lease or rental agreement

You and the landlord must agree on the terms (rules) you will both follow. Although this agreement can be spoken or written, a written agreement is always better. If there is a dispute, a written agreement will protect both you and the landlord.

Before you sign the agreement, make sure it describes

- the type of tenancy lease: **fixed term** (for example, from January 1, 2014, to December 31, 2014) or **periodic** (for example, month to month).
- how much rent you pay, and when and how it is to be paid (for example, the first of each month by postdated cheque)
- how long you will rent the property (for example, six months or one year)
- who pays for utilities and services such as electricity and cable television
- who pays for repairs
- any specific rules (for example, no pets)

TIP

Never sign any document you do not understand. If you do not understand the lease, ask an English-speaking friend or staff at an immigrant-serving agency to help you. See **Useful Contacts**, p. 80.



Connecting utilities

Utilities such as electricity, water and natural gas services may be included in the rent. If utilities are not included in your rent, arrange to have services connected for the day you move in.

Several different companies provide electricity and natural gas. To find the provider in your area

- ask your landlord, friends, family or staff at an immigrant-serving agency who to call
- go to ucahelps.alberta.ca. Click on Choices and Rates and then Regulated Rate Search Tool.

Until you have established a credit history (proven your ability to pay your bills on time every month) you may have to pay a deposit or prove you can pay for the service before the utility company will connect your utilities. To learn more, see **Using and Building Credit**, p. 33.

It is important to pay your utilities on time every month. If you do not pay on time, you will pay a late fee or penalty and risk being disconnected.

For information about phone services, see **Getting Telephone Service**, p. 11.

Making an inspection report

By law, you and your landlord must complete an inspection report form within one week before or after the day you move in. It is very important to describe in writing all of the existing damage and necessary repairs so that the landlord cannot charge you for them when you move out.

DID YOU KNOW? Except in an emergency, the landlord **cannot** enter your home without your permission. With 24 hours' written notice, the landlord can enter your home to inspect for damage, make repairs, show your home to buyers or show it to renters if you have been given notice to move.

Landlord and tenant rights

Alberta's *Residential Tenancies Act* outlines the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants.

Landlords must

- provide their name, address and telephone number so that you can send notices (for example, about moving out) to them
- pay you interest on the security (damage) deposit at a rate set each year by the Government of Alberta
- provide a reasonably safe, comfortable place for you to live
- give you at least three months' notice in writing before increasing the rent in a periodic (month to month) tenancy
- not increase the rent until a minimum of one year has passed in a fixed-term tenancy (lease)
- give you an acceptable reason for asking you to move out if you pay monthly rent, unless you do not carry out your responsibilities (for example, do not pay rent on time)



As the tenant, you must

- pay the rent on time
- keep your rental unit clean and in good repair
- report any damage to your unit
- not interfere with the landlord's rights or the rights of tenants in other units
- not break criminal laws in or around the rental unit (for example, cause damage or carry on illegal trade)
- follow the rules in the lease, such as rules about pets or the number of people who can live in the unit
- give the required notice in writing if you are going to move out

For more information about landlord and tenant relations, go to servicealberta.ca and click on the Landlords/Tenants tab. Some communities in Alberta provide dispute resolution services and advice for landlords and tenants. You will find links to these resources on the Landlords & Tenants web page. Look under Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service and also under External Links - Landlords & Tenants.

DID YOU KNOW? The *Residential Tenancies Act* applies to tenants who rent apartments, houses and other self-contained places. If you share living quarters with your landlord, either in a room-for-rent, room-and-board or roommate situation, this Act does not apply to you. In these situations, it is a good idea to get an agreement in writing that outlines your rights and obligations and those of the landlord.



Moving out

When you move out of your rental housing, you must

- give notice in writing to tell the landlord when you will be moving out. For a periodic (month-to-month) tenancy, you must give at least one month's notice. For a fixed-term tenancy (lease), the tenancy ends at noon on the last day of the lease. Talk to your landlord to find out whether you may be able to get out of the lease early.
- have utility services disconnected when you leave (if they are not included in the monthly rental fee). If you do not, you will be charged for these services even after you move out.
- clean all rooms and appliances. Ask your landlord what must be cleaned before you move out.

TIP

For more information about buying or renting a home, go to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation website at cmhc.ca. Click on the Consumers link, and then click on the link for Renting a Home or for Buying a Home.





Buying a home

The average housing price in Alberta is \$383,630 (as of June 2013). Unless you can pay the full price, you will need a mortgage to buy a home.

A mortgage is a long-term loan that you can get from a bank or credit union. The amount of money you can borrow depends on your

- income
- credit history
(see **Using and Building Credit**, p. 33)
- other assets (things you own)

You will generally need a down payment (cash you must pay) of at least five per cent of the cost of the home.

Some people buy a condominium as their first home. A condominium (or condo) is a form of ownership. In a condo, you own your unit and you also jointly own common property with the other unit owners in your complex. Condos are often apartments or townhouses.

For more information about condos, go to **servicealberta.ca**. Click on the Consumer Information tab and then click on Consumer Tips.

To find homes for sale in your community, go to websites such as the real estate (property) Multiple Listing Service at **realtor.ca** or ComFree (Commission-Free) Private Sales at **comfree.ca**. Or pick up one of the free real estate guides available in larger centres.

Protecting your property and belongings

If you buy your home, a homeowner's policy insures your property and personal belongings. An insurance policy will pay for most of the costs to replace or fix property and belongings lost or damaged by fire or theft.

If you rent your home, a home renter's insurance policy insures your belongings. Your landlord will not pay for your lost or damaged belongings. The owner of the rental property insures the building, but not your personal belongings.

When you buy an insurance policy, you pay an annual fee to an insurance company based on the value of the belongings and/or property you are insuring. If you rent, you will need a home renter's insurance policy. If you buy a home, you will need a homeowner's policy.

Insurance policies vary from one company to another. All policies have a deductible, usually at least \$500, which means you will be paid only for loss or damages above that amount. Compare rates and coverage from several insurance companies before choosing your policy.

To find out more about insurance

- contact an insurance broker or agent. To find a broker, go to the Insurance Brokers Association of Canada website at **ibac.ca** and click on Find a Broker.
- contact the Insurance Bureau of Canada
 - Call 1-800-377-6378 toll-free or 780-423-2212 in Edmonton
 - Go to **ibc.ca**

TIP

Read your insurance policy carefully. Ask your insurance agent or broker to explain anything you don't understand. Never sign a document you don't understand.



Bank note images used and altered with permission of the ©Bank of Canada

Money, Banking and Shopping

In Canada, there are two types of money: printed paper notes, called bills, and coins.

Exchanging money

If you have arrived in Alberta with money from another country, you will need to exchange those funds for Canadian money. Although U.S. dollars are widely accepted in Alberta, you will pay a high rate of exchange at stores.

Main branches of major banks may have exchange services. Look under Banks in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book. There may also be a foreign currency exchange service in your community. Look under Foreign Exchange Brokers in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.

TIP

AlbertaCanada.com has information to help you learn about managing your money, banking and shopping in Alberta. Look for *Welcome to Alberta: A Consumer's Guide for Newcomers*, a publication that explains how to buy things, how to pay for them and what your rights are as a consumer. Go to albertacanada.com/immigration/living and click on Money and Banking.

Opening a bank account

In Canada, the banking industry is regulated by law. Canadian banks are very safe places to keep your money. Most adult Canadians have at least one bank account. Most Albertans keep their money in a bank, a credit union or the Alberta Treasury Branch.

You must pay a service charge for most banking services. Financial institutions offer services such as

- chequing, savings and other types of accounts
- utility, telephone and credit card bill payment services by telephone, online or at an automated banking machine (ABM), also known as an automated teller machine (ATM)
- safety deposit boxes
- debit cards and credit cards
- loans
- money orders and traveller's cheques



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Some banks exist only online—this is known as branchless banking. These virtual (online) banks do not charge service fees and offer chequing and debit transactions for free. Some online banks take part in a points program that allows you to earn credits toward future purchases. You can ask family and friends about virtual banks they use or search online under Branchless Bank, No Fee Banking and Virtual Bank.

To choose a bank, credit union or treasury branch, you can

- ask friends and family where they bank
- go to the Canadian Bankers Association website at cba.ca and click on the Banks in Canada tab
- visit a few financial institutions and ask about their services

When you open an account, you will need to provide

- photo identification (ID). See **Carrying Identification**, p. 7.
- a second piece of ID
- your social insurance number (see **Getting a Canadian Social Insurance Number**, p. 6) for income tax purposes

To open an account, you do not need to

- have a job
- deposit a certain amount of money into your account

Types of bank accounts

There are three basic types of accounts: chequing, savings and a combination of the two. Financial institutions pay you interest on the amount of money you keep in a savings or combination account.

Many Albertans use cheques and chequing accounts to

- pay rent
- send payments by mail
- arrange for direct deposit of funds into their account

Personal cheques are not widely accepted at Alberta businesses. At many businesses you must pay with cash, a debit card or a credit card. If you use a cheque to pay for a purchase, you will likely be asked to show two pieces of ID.

Debit (bank) cards

When you open an account, you will be given a debit (bank) card. A debit card is a widely accepted form of payment at businesses.

You can also use your debit card to do your banking

- at an automated banking machine (ABM)
- by telephone
- online at the bank or credit union's website

Ask staff at your bank or credit union how to use these services. You can also do your banking in person at your bank.

Personal identification number (PIN)

You will need to choose a personal identification number (PIN) to use with your bank card. This security number prevents other people from using your card to take money from your account. You must use the PIN every time you use your card.

Follow these tips when choosing and using your PIN:

- Pick a number that is hard for others to guess. Avoid using your birthday, telephone number, address or age for your PIN.
- Learn the number. Do not write your PIN down anywhere.
- Do not share your PIN with others.
- Do not let others see you enter your PIN when using your bank card.

Automated banking service charges

You will usually pay a service charge to use an automated banking machine (ABM). The amount depends on the type of ABM you use. You will pay

- the **lowest** service charge using ABMs at your financial institution or one of its branches
- a **higher** service charge using ABMs at other financial institutions that show the Interac sign
- the **highest** service charge using ABMs that do not show the Interac sign

DID YOU KNOW? Using a method called **direct deposit**, employers and government benefit programs can electronically deposit payments directly into your bank account.

Using and building credit

Many Albertans borrow money to buy large items such as houses and cars, as well as smaller items such as clothing or household items. By using credit wisely, they build a favourable credit history or credit rating.

It is important to get a credit card. You will need one to purchase goods and services from many businesses—from renting a car to renting a movie. You can also use it to help you establish your credit history.

Even if you have used a worldwide credit card such as Visa or MasterCard for many years, you may not be given a Canadian credit card when you move to Canada from another country because you do not have a credit history here. If possible, do not cancel your credit card when you come to Canada. You may still be able to use it while you build your credit history.

To build your Canadian credit history or credit rating

- pay your bills, such as telephone or utility bills, on time
- use a Canadian credit card and pay the balance (what you owe) monthly

Credit cards

Both financial institutions and businesses such as stores offer credit cards. It is better to apply for a credit card at your financial institution. Bank credit cards usually charge a lower rate of interest on the money you borrow than store credit cards. If you use either one to build your credit history, try to pay the balance every month.

At first, your bank may give you a card with a low spending limit. Or the bank may give you a secured credit card, which means you must deposit a sum of money equal to the amount you can borrow on your card. When you have built your credit history, ask your bank to increase your credit limit or give you a regular credit card.

DID YOU KNOW? Going into debt, taking out a loan and using credit are different ways of borrowing money.

Using payday loans and cheque cashing companies

It is not a good idea to borrow money from a payday loan company or cheque cashing company. This is a very expensive way to borrow money. Licensed payday lenders can legally charge up to \$23 per \$100 borrowed. A \$300 loan for 14 days typically costs \$69 in interest and fees—equivalent to **599 per cent annual interest**. The loan must be paid back out of your next paycheque. Taking out a payday loan and paying it back will not build your credit history.

To learn more about payday loans, go to servicealberta.ca. Click on the Consumer Information tab and then click on Consumer Tips. Scroll down to click on Payday Lending.

To find more information online about banking and credit, go to the following websites:

- Service Alberta at servicealberta.ca. Click on the Consumer Information tab, click on Reality Choices and then click on Dealing With Credit.
- Money Mentors at moneymentors.ca
- Financial Consumer Agency of Canada at fcac-acfc.gc.ca. Click on the Consumers tab.
- Canadian Bankers Association at cba.ca

TIP

Use credit cards wisely:

- Pay the balance in full each month.
- Limit the number of cards you have.
- Ask for the lowest possible interest rate.



Preventing identity theft

Identity theft happens when someone uses your personal information to commit a crime such as theft or fraud.

To prevent identity theft, follow these guidelines:

- Do not reveal your bank account PIN to anyone.
- Do not give out personal information on the telephone, through the mail or over the Internet unless you know the other person well or you made the initial contact.
- Ask how your personal information will be used before you reveal it.
- Do not use passwords that are easy to guess (for example, your mother's maiden name, your address, your birthdate or the last four digits of your telephone number).
- Remove mail promptly from your mailbox.
- Pay attention to when bills usually arrive each month. If bills do not arrive on time, call the company to find out whether your bill has been mailed.
- Keep items with personal information (for example, bills, income tax forms, receipts) in a safe place and shred them when you do not need them anymore.
- Shred mail or personal documents you no longer need.
- Carry as few identification and credit cards as possible.
- If you still have a social insurance number card, keep it in a secure place.

If you think your identity has been stolen, take these steps:

- Report the theft to the police.
- Tell your bank or credit union and credit card issuers.

If you think someone is using your social insurance number, call Service Canada at 1-800-206-7218 toll-free.

To find out how to protect yourself from identity theft, go to servicealberta.ca. Click on the Consumer Information tab and then click on Fraud Awareness.

Paying taxes

Each level of government—federal, provincial and municipal—collects taxes to pay for services such as roads, schools and health care.

Income tax

For each calendar year, you must submit a personal income tax return (form) by April 30 of the following year. In February, March and April, community organizations and immigrant-serving agencies may offer free information sessions on how to complete tax returns.

The amount of income tax you must pay depends on your taxable income. You must report all of your sources of income on your tax form.

If you are employed, you must allow your employer to deduct income tax from your pay and submit it to the Canada Revenue Agency. Your employer must mail a T4, *Statement of Remuneration Paid* form, to you each year by the end of February. It will include information about your employment income for the year and amounts deducted for income tax, Canada Pension Plan and employment insurance (see **Knowing Your Rights and Responsibilities on the Job**, p. 48).

If you are self-employed or own a business, you must make arrangements to pay income tax directly to the Canada Revenue Agency.

In order to complete and file your tax return, you will need a tax package, which includes a general guide and forms book, an income tax return and schedules. You can get a free tax package at any Canada Post outlet from February to May or by contacting the Canada Revenue Agency (see the **Canada Revenue Agency** chart, p. 35).

The pamphlet *Newcomers to Canada* (T4055) explains the Canadian tax system and how to complete your first income tax return. To order this publication, see the **Canada Revenue Agency** chart, p. 35. To find out more about when and how to file your income tax return, go to cra-arc.gc.ca/newcomers.

After completing an income tax return, you may find that either you need to pay the government for additional taxes owing or you have paid too much tax and will get a refund.

Goods and Services Tax

The federal government collects a five per cent sales tax called the goods and services tax (GST). GST is added to the price of everything you buy except for basic groceries, rent, used goods and some services (for example, many health-care and education services).

If your income is low, you may qualify for a goods and services tax/harmonized sales tax (GST/HST) credit. To receive this credit, you will need to complete the *GST/HST Credit Application for Individuals Who Become Residents of Canada* (form RC151). To continue receiving the credit, you (and your spouse or common-law partner) must file an income tax return for each year you are residents of Canada. For a copy of the application form, or for more information, see the **Canada Revenue Agency** chart, below.

Canada Child Tax Benefit

If you have children who are under 18 years of age, you may be eligible for the Canada child tax benefit. Parents who are eligible for this benefit receive tax-free monthly payments to help with the cost of raising children. The amount depends on your family's net income. To apply for this benefit, complete a *Canada Child Benefits Application* (form RC66) and submit it, along with any required documents, to the Canada Revenue Agency. You may also need to complete and submit the form *Status in Canada/Statement of Income* (form RC66SCH).

To find out more, read *Canada Child Benefits* (T4114). For a copy of this pamphlet or to order forms, see the **Canada Revenue Agency** chart, below.

Property tax

If you own a home, commercial building or land, you will have to pay property taxes to the municipal (local) government. The amount you pay depends on the value of your property and where you live. Property tax assessments are mailed to property owners once a year. Renters do not pay property taxes.

DID YOU KNOW? Alberta has no provincial sales tax.

Shopping

In Alberta, many stores are open seven days a week. Some stores are open only in the daytime, while others are open in the evening too, or even 24 hours a day.

Small grocery or convenience stores that are open all night or attached to gas stations are often more expensive than larger grocery or department stores. You may want to take public transit to a large grocery store or ask friends and family for suggestions about where to shop. In addition to food, some large grocery stores sell household items and clothing.

Most grocery stores and other large stores have rows of cashiers or checkouts at the entrance to the store. You bring your purchases to this area, line up and pay for everything at the same time. When you pay for your purchases, you are given a paper receipt, which you will need to keep if you want to return or exchange what you have purchased. Some stores have self-service checkouts where you scan the universal bar code on your purchases and manage the payment yourself.

The Canada Revenue Agency

For information about	Online	Call toll-free
• tax packages, forms and publications	cra.gc.ca	1-800-959-8281
• income tax	cra.gc.ca	1-800-959-8281
• GST/HST credit	cra.gc.ca	1-800-959-1953
• child tax benefit	cra.gc.ca	1-800-387-1193
• online course: Learning About Taxes	cra-arc.gc.ca/educators	



Like many Albertans, you may decide to shop at a mall, where all the stores are in one large building or area. It is important to pay for your purchases before you leave each store or you may be suspected of shoplifting (theft).

Although Canada follows the metric system, the price of many goods sold by weight or volume (for example, meat and vegetables) is shown in both metric and imperial units.

	Metric	Imperial
Length	1 metre	1.1 yards
Weight	1 kilogram	2.2 pounds
Volume	1 litre	0.88 quarts or 0.22 gallons

Bargaining or bartering

The price of an item is usually marked on the item itself or the shelf it is on. Canadians do not usually bargain or barter over the price of most items. However, Canadians **do** barter over the price of

- houses
- vehicles
- major appliances, such as stoves or washing machines
- used items, for example, at garage sales or in second-hand stores

Refunds and exchanges

Stores are not required to refund your money for purchases you want to return. If you have a receipt for the purchase and return the item within a certain period of time, the store may give your money back, allow you to exchange the item for something else or give you credit toward a future purchase. Stores will not accept returned underwear, bathing suits, jewellery or items of clothing that have been worn or damaged. If you are unsure whether you can return or exchange your purchase, ask the cashier.

Shopping tips

Try these suggestions to save money when you shop:

- Make your own meals from basic ingredients, as this is usually less expensive than buying prepared foods.
- Although farmers markets sell fresh, often organic, produce from local farms, they can be more expensive than grocery stores.
- Stores often advertise sales in newspapers and on television. Sale prices may be up to 50 per cent lower than regular prices.
- Second-hand stores sell used items in good condition at greatly reduced prices.
- Homeowners sometimes have garage sales or yard sales to sell items they no longer need. Watch for notices in newspapers and near traffic intersections in your neighbourhood.

For more information about shopping wisely, see these resources:

- **servicealberta.ca**. Click on the Consumer Information tab, click on Reality Choices and then click on Shopping for Satisfaction.
- *Stretch Your Dollars: Budgeting Basics*. To order your free copy, go to the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website at **alis.alberta.ca/publications** or call the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton.



Health Care

Under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan and the Hospitalization Benefits Plan insured physician and hospital services are paid for in Alberta and elsewhere in Canada.

Residents of Alberta, including provincial nominees and temporary foreign workers, may be eligible to receive hospital and medical services through the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. You are an eligible resident if all of the following conditions are met:

- You are legally entitled to remain in Canada and make your permanent home in Alberta.
- You are committed to being physically present in Alberta for at least 183 days in a 12-month period.
- You are not claiming residency or receiving health benefits in another province, territory or country.
- You are deemed by the regulations to be a resident, not including a tourist, transient or visitor to Alberta. You are deemed to be a resident if you meet the above requirements and are a temporary foreign worker, a student or a dependant. You must intend to stay in Canada for 12 or more consecutive months.

DID YOU KNOW? If you are an eligible Alberta resident, you may be covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan as soon as you arrive in Alberta, but you must register for the plan within three months of arriving. If you must pay for insured medical expenses before you are registered, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan may pay you back, provided you were eligible for coverage when you received the services. For more information, go to health.alberta.ca, click on Health Care Insurance, click on Register for AHCIIP and then click on Moving to Alberta.

Note to temporary foreign workers

You may be eligible to receive hospital and medical services through the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan.



Registering for health insurance

As a newcomer, you should register for the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan within three months of your arrival.

To register, you must complete and submit an application form and provide documents to prove your identity, that you are legally entitled to be in Canada and that you are an Alberta resident. The documentation required will vary depending on your status in Canada. To get an *Application for Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan Coverage* form

- go to **health.alberta.ca**. Click on Health Care Insurance and then click on Forms & Brochures.
- call 310-0000 toll-free in Alberta (enter 780-427-1432 after the prompt) or 780-427-1432 in Edmonton
- visit an Alberta registry agent office with Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan registration services. To find a registry agent near you, call 310-0000 toll-free in Alberta (enter 780-427-1432 after the prompt) or 780-427-1432 in Edmonton. Or go to **health.alberta.ca** and click on the Health Care Insurance tab, click on Register for AHCIP and then click on Where to Register.
- write to
Alberta Health
Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan
PO Box 1360, Station Main
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2N3

Personal Health Card

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan issues a personal health card for each family member covered under the plan. You must present your personal health card when you visit doctors' offices, laboratories, hospitals and health clinics. You may also be asked to show photo identification.

Other people are not permitted to use your health card or number. To report suspected misuse of a personal health care number or card, call 1-866-278-5104 toll-free in Alberta.



Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan Coverage

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan pays for

- insured services provided by a physician
- standard ward hospitalization
- drugs received while in hospital
- medically required surgery
- some podiatrist and optometrist treatments

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan does not pay for

- cosmetic surgery
- experimental procedures
- semi-private or private hospital rooms
- routine eye exams for residents age 19 to 64
- routine dental care, dentures, eyeglasses and hearing aids
- prescription drugs

Ask your doctor or health-care provider about coverage before you access health services. For more information about what the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan covers, go to the Alberta Health website at **health.alberta.ca**. Click on the Health Care Insurance tab and then click on What Is Covered. For more information about what the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan does not cover, click on What Is Not Covered.

Getting additional health care coverage

Many Albertans have private health insurance plans that pay for services not covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan, either through their employer or purchased individually from Alberta government-sponsored plans or from private insurers.

The Alberta government also helps low-income families and people with special needs to pay for some health-care services not covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan.

Non-Group Coverage and Coverage for Seniors

These government-sponsored health benefit plans provide limited coverage for some services not paid for by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. There is a monthly fee for non-group coverage, but coverage for seniors (Albertans age 65 or older and their spouse and dependants listed on their account) does not have any fees. Some of the eligible benefits are prescription drugs, ambulance services, private and semi-private hospital rooms and home nursing care. For more information, visit health.alberta.ca. Click on the Services tab, click on Drug Coverage & Services and then click on Supplementary Benefits.

Private insurance plans

Albertans can buy additional health insurance coverage from private health insurance companies. This can help with costs for services that are only partially covered or not covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan or Alberta government-sponsored plans from Alberta Blue Cross. For information about individual insurance programs, talk to your employer or look under Insurance in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.

Alberta Child Health Benefit

If your family has a low income, you may be eligible for the Alberta Child Health Benefit plan. The benefit plan pays for health services such as eyeglasses, prescription drugs, dental care, emergency ambulance services and diabetic supplies that are not available through the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. The benefit plan applies to children up to age 18, and up to age 20 if they live at home and are attending high school. There is no cost to enrol.

Alberta Adult Health Benefit

The Alberta Adult Health Benefit plan helps individuals and families with high ongoing prescription drug costs in relation to their income, as well as pregnant women with limited income. It is also available for individuals and families who leave the Income Support program or the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program because of employment or Canada Pension Plan disability income. The plan pays for health services such as prescription drugs, eyeglasses, dental care, emergency ambulance services and diabetic supplies that are not available through the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan.

For more information about Alberta's child and adult health benefit plans

- call 1-877-469-5437 toll-free or 780-427-6848 in Edmonton
- go to the Alberta Human Services website at humanservices.alberta.ca/financial-support. Click on Health Benefits.

Note to temporary foreign workers

Temporary foreign workers are not eligible for the Alberta Child Health Benefit or the Alberta Adult Health Benefit plans.



Alberta Aids to Daily Living

The Alberta Aids to Daily Living program helps Albertans who have a long-term disability or a terminal illness pay for basic medical equipment and supplies. The plan pays for items such as wheelchairs, hearing aids and artificial limbs. Alberta Aids to Daily Living is a cost-sharing program, which means that Albertans receiving the benefit pay 25 per cent of the benefit cost to a maximum of \$500 per individual or family per year. Low-income Albertans and those receiving income assistance are exempt from paying the cost-sharing portion.

To be eligible for this program, you must meet all of the following conditions:

- You must need help because of a long-term disability or chronic or terminal illness of six months or longer.
- You must be a resident of Alberta.
- You must have a valid Alberta personal health card.

For more information

- call Alberta Aids to Daily Living at 310-0000 toll-free (enter 780-427-0731 after the prompt) or 780-427-0731 in Edmonton and area
- go to the Alberta Health website at health.alberta.ca. Click on the Services tab and then click on Alberta Aids to Daily Living.

Using health care

Through the health services system in Alberta, you have access to hospitals, continuing care facilities, community health services, public health programs and physicians.

HealthLink Alberta

To learn more about the health services available in your area, call HealthLink Alberta or visit MyHealth.Alberta.ca. This service provides free health information and advice, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can talk to a registered nurse on the telephone or find information through the website.

Go to MyHealth.Alberta.ca for

- information about health services and programs
- links to services and physician directories
- information on health topics

Call HealthLink Alberta at

- 1-866-408-5465 toll-free in Alberta
- 403-943-5465 in Calgary
- 780-408-5465 in Edmonton

This phone service is free and confidential. HealthLink Alberta staff can arrange for an interpreter.

DID YOU KNOW? Some cities have walk-in clinics where you can see a doctor without making an appointment. If you have a health problem that should be cared for right away but is not life threatening, you can go to a walk-in clinic instead of a hospital emergency department. Although walk-in clinics are usually open later than other clinics, they are not typically open 24 hours a day. To find a walk-in clinic near you, look under Clinics in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.



Physicians

In Alberta, physicians (medical doctors) are either family doctors or specialists. Male and female physicians treat patients of both genders. Family doctors treat most medical problems. Specialists treat specific types of health problems. To see a specialist, you usually need to be referred by a family doctor.

You may be able to find a family doctor who speaks your first language. There are several ways to find a family doctor:

- Ask friends and family, members of your community, neighbours and staff at immigrant-serving agencies which doctors they might recommend.
- Go to the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta website at cpsa.ab.ca and click on Find a Physician. You can search by a physician's name, languages spoken, location or interests.
- Call HealthLink Alberta (see p. 40) and ask for the names of physicians in your area who are accepting new patients.
- Look under Physicians and Surgeons in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.

Going to see your doctor

- Call the doctor's office to make an appointment.
- Arrive at the doctor's office on time.
- Bring your Alberta personal health card. You may be asked for photo identification as well. You are responsible for paying the cost of services not covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan.
- Expect to answer the doctor's questions and describe any health problems you have. If the doctor does not speak your first language and you are unsure about speaking English, you may want to bring an interpreter with you.
- Expect the doctor to give you a physical examination before prescribing treatment and/or drugs.



Emergency medical services

An emergency is a health problem that requires immediate care (for example, a heart attack). In an emergency, sick or injured people should be taken to a hospital emergency department right away. The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan pays for treatment in emergency departments.

For the location and hours of the emergency department nearest you, contact HealthLink Alberta or look on the first page of the telephone book. Keep this information near your phone.

For some emergencies, you can take a sick or injured person to an emergency department in a taxi or private vehicle. If you need an ambulance, call 911 or the emergency number for your area. See **Calling 911 in an Emergency**, p. 12.

Ambulance costs, which can be quite expensive, are not paid for by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. Ambulance costs may be covered, in whole or in part, by

- supplementary government-sponsored health benefit plans, such as non-group coverage or coverage for seniors
- Alberta Human Services, if you are eligible for Income Support, the Alberta Child Health Benefit plan or the Alberta Adult Health Benefit plan
- private insurance plans
- vehicle insurance plans, if you are involved in a collision
- some employee benefit plans

You will not be refused ambulance service if you cannot afford to pay.



Filling a prescription

If a doctor prescribes medication (drugs) for you, take the prescription to a drugstore (pharmacy). The pharmacist will prepare your medication and explain when and how to take it. Prescription drugs, which are not covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan, can be expensive. Part of the cost may be covered if you have private health insurance, or health benefits coverage through non-group coverage or coverage for seniors or through another health benefit plan.

Hospitals

People can be admitted to hospital if they are referred by a family doctor, specialist or emergency department doctor.

Hospital social workers can help patients with non-medical problems (for example, arranging child care or out-of-hospital care). A social worker may also be able to arrange for an interpreter.

Hospital gowns are provided for patients to use free of charge, but many patients bring their own nightclothes, slippers and housecoats. Hospital expenses, such as meals and a bed in a ward, are paid for by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. Additional costs for private or semi-private rooms may be covered by supplementary government-sponsored health benefit plans or private insurance plans.

Most hospitals have rules about visiting hours and the number of visitors allowed. For their own protection, young children may not be allowed to visit in some areas of the hospital.

DID YOU KNOW? If you were given a *Medical Surveillance Undertaking* form before you came to Canada, and you were told that you need a follow-up medical examination once you arrived, it is because you have an inactive infectious disease. You must report, by telephone, to the public health authority where you live within 30 days of entering Canada. This is very important both for your health and for the health of other Canadians.

Public health services

Public health offices and community health centres are different from doctors' offices and walk-in clinics. They are staffed by public health nurses and other health-care workers who offer free services, such as immunization (vaccination by injection), and health information on topics such as child care, family planning and nutrition. They also offer health programs for children, babies and pregnant women. They may be able to arrange for an interpreter.

To find your nearest public health office or community health centre

- call HealthLink Alberta (see p. 40)
- go to the **MyHealth.Alberta.ca** website. Click on Health Care Locator and then click the type of facility you're looking for.
- talk to someone at an immigrant-serving agency (see p. 80)

Immunization

Everyone who comes to Alberta from another country should be immunized for protection against certain diseases. If you have immunization records from your previous residence, show them to a nurse at a public health office or a doctor in your area.

All children in Alberta are immunized free of charge by nurses at public health offices or schools. You will be asked for permission before your child is immunized.

Using other health services

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan provides limited coverage for eye examinations and procedures and for some mental health and addiction services. It provides no coverage for routine dental services. When the charge for a service is greater than the benefit limit, patients must pay the difference in cost. Costs for some of these services may be covered if you have additional health insurance from a private insurer, your employer or non-group coverage or coverage for seniors. When in doubt, discuss treatment costs with your health-care provider or doctor before using his or her services.

Eye doctors (optometrists)

If you have a problem with your eyes, see your family doctor or optometrist. If necessary, your doctor or optometrist will refer you to an eye specialist (ophthalmologist).

If you need eyeglasses, make an appointment with an optometrist. To find an optometrist near you

- go to **optometrists.ab.ca** and click on Find an Optometrist
- look under Optometrists in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan pays for a limited number of eye examinations and diagnostic procedures each benefit year for Albertans aged under 19 and over 64. For Albertans aged 19 to 64, eye examinations and procedures are not covered unless they have a medical condition or an episode of illness or trauma. The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan does not provide coverage for eyeglasses.

Costs for eyeglasses and routine eye examinations may be covered if you have private health insurance or health benefits coverage through the Alberta Child Health Benefit plan, the Alberta Adult Health Benefit plan or another benefits program.

Dentists

If you are experiencing problems with your teeth or gums, you will need to see a dentist.

To find a dentist

- ask people you know or staff at immigrant-serving agencies which dentists they might recommend
- contact the Alberta Dental Association and College:
 - Call 1-800-843-3848 toll-free or 780-432-1012 in Edmonton.
 - Go to **abda.ab.ca** and click on Find a Dentist.
- look under Dentists in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book



Mental health and addiction services

If you or someone you know is suffering from emotional distress, there are many ways to get help:

- Call the Mental Health Help Line at 1-877-303-2642 toll-free. You can talk to a mental health professional at any time of the day or night. You do not have to give your name.
- Call HealthLink Alberta (see p. 40) to talk to a registered nurse. This 24-hour service is free and confidential.
- Look in the front pages of the telephone book for distress line services in your area.
- Talk to a family doctor or public health nurse. Health professionals will not discuss your case with others without your permission.
- Ask staff at an immigrant-serving agency for a referral.

If gambling, alcohol, tobacco or drug use is causing problems for you, a family member or a friend

- talk to your family doctor
- contact a self-help group such as
 - Alcoholics Anonymous at **aa.org**
 - Narcotics Anonymous at **na.org**
 - Alberta Gamblers Anonymous at **albertaga.net**
- call Alberta Health Services' Addiction Helpline at 1-866-332-2322 toll-free for information and referral. This service is free and confidential.

For more information about mental health and addiction services, go to **albertahealthservices.ca**.





Employment

Many newcomers to Alberta take a job to support their family and gain experience. Then they continue to look for a job that matches their skills and experience. You may be able to find a job in your occupation but at a lower rate of pay or level of practice than you are qualified for. It may take some time for you to find the work you want.

Working in Alberta

Working in Alberta may be very different from what you are used to. In this section, you will find information about the Alberta workplace and what employers are looking for in the people they hire.

English language skills

Alberta employers want the people they hire to have strong English language skills. For more information, see **Improving Your English Language Skills**, p. 14.

TIP

You may need to have your education and training credentials translated. To find a translator, call 780-434-8384 in Edmonton or go to the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta website at atia.ab.ca.

Workplace culture

Alberta employers expect employees to be

- **reliable.** Employers expect you to arrive at work on time and to meet your deadlines. If you need to miss work, it is important to tell your employer as far in advance as possible of when you are expected at work.
- **friendly, courteous and respectful** to customers, supervisors and co-workers. Women and men from many different backgrounds are expected to work together and treat one another with respect, no matter what position they hold in a company.
- **responsible.** If you do not know how to do something, ask. If you do not understand instructions, ask. When you need help, ask. When you make a mistake, accept responsibility for it.
- **co-operative and helpful.** Employers want employees who have a positive attitude and work well with others.

- **efficient and self-directed.** Employers expect you to do what you say you will do in the time you are given. If you see something that needs to be done, do it without waiting for someone to ask you to do it. If you are not sure, ask.
- **flexible and adaptable.** Employers want workers who are willing to learn on the job. They also want workers who can accept unexpected changes, such as working on a different team.
- **honest and trustworthy.** Employers need to be able to trust their employees.
- **familiar with Canadian social customs.** See **Social Customs**, p. 23.

The following publications will help you learn more about Alberta workplace culture:

- *Job Smart: Tips for Staying Employed*
- *Workability: What You Need to Get and Keep a Job*
- *Working in Alberta: A Guide for Internationally Trained and Educated Immigrants*

For free copies of these publications

- call the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton
- download or order them at alis.alberta.ca/publications

You can also check out the ALIS Tips *How to Succeed at Work and New Job? Here's How to Make a Good First Impression*. Go to alis.alberta.ca/tips.

DID YOU KNOW? Alberta's *Human Rights Act* prohibits discrimination in employment based on the protected grounds of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religious beliefs, gender, age, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, family status, source of income and sexual orientation. For more information, go to the Alberta Human Rights Commission website at albertahumanrights.ab.ca.

Qualifications

To work in a licensed trade or profession in Alberta, you may need to prove that the qualifications (education and training credentials) you have are equal to Canadian and Alberta qualifications.

Certification and registration requirements for employment in Alberta

Your profession or trade may have a regulatory organization in Alberta that can advise you about your qualifications and help you look for work in your area. For more information about Alberta requirements, go to alis.alberta.ca/certinfo.

To find out about working in your profession in Canada, contact the professional organization that regulates your field. Go to the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials website at cicic.ca. Click on Working in Canada and then click on Professional Organizations in Canada.

To learn about working in any of the more than 50 designated trades in Alberta, including Red Seal trades, go to the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training website at tradesecrets.alberta.ca and click on Trades & Occupations.

International Qualifications Assessment Service

The International Qualifications Assessment Service is an Alberta government service that compares educational qualifications from other countries to Alberta standards. When your credentials have been assessed, you will be given an International Qualifications Assessment Service certificate that you can use to help you get a job, join a professional licensing organization or qualify for an education program.

To contact the International Qualifications Assessment Service

- call 310-0000 toll-free (enter 780-427-2655 after the prompt) or 780-427-2655 in Edmonton
- go to work.alberta.ca. Under Immigration, click on International Qualifications Assessment.



Foreign Credentials Referral Office

The Foreign Credentials Referral Office is a federal government information and referral service. Staff there will help you find agencies that can assess your credentials.

To contact the Foreign Credentials Referral Office

- call 1-888-854-1805 toll-free
- go to **cic.gc.ca**. Point to the Immigration tab, click on Immigrate, click on Prepare to Work and Live in Canada and then click on Get Your Credentials Assessed.
- visit a Service Canada Centre. To find a Service Canada Centre in your area, go to **servicecanada.gc.ca**. Click on Find a Service Canada Office (near the bottom of the page, under Contact Us).

Training and education

You may need additional training or education to meet the Canadian or Alberta standards for regulated professions and trades. You may be eligible for programs that will help you pay for the costs of improving your qualifications and your chances of finding work.

Immigrant Access Fund

If you are a foreign-trained professional or tradesperson, you may be eligible for a loan from the Immigrant Access Fund. This fund offers loans of up to \$5,000 to help immigrants become accredited to work in Alberta. Eligible costs include

- tuition fees with a recognized post-secondary institution
- the cost of books and course materials
- exam fees
- a living allowance during study time
- travel expenses to write exams
- qualifications assessments
- professional association fees

To find out more about the Immigrant Access Fund

- call 1-855-423-2262 toll-free
- go to **iafcanada.org**

Improving your skills

If you do not have the education and experience you need to work in Alberta, you may need to take upgrading. This term refers to education and training programs for adults who want to improve their skills and their ability to find work.

Alberta Works

Alberta Works is a government program that may be able help you get academic upgrading, take English as a Second Language courses or obtain job skills to find and keep a job. You may also be eligible to have the cost of your tuition, books and supplies covered. If you are in an approved full-time studies program, you may qualify for Income Support to cover basic costs of living as well as the cost of tuition, books and supplies.

To find out more, contact the Alberta Supports Contact Centre:

- Call 1-877-644-9992 toll-free in Alberta.
- Call 780-644-9992 in Edmonton.
- Go to **humanservices.alberta.ca/albertaworks**.

Work Foundations

Work Foundations is a government program that provides full- and part-time basic skills training and academic upgrading. The program is for low-income Albertans who lack academic, language or employability skills to get a job or further training.

To contact Work Foundations

- call the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton
- go to **humanservices.alberta.ca/working-in-alberta**. Click on Employment and Career Resources and then click on Work Foundations.

Note to temporary foreign workers

Temporary foreign workers are not eligible for Alberta Works or Work Foundations programs and services.

Getting help to find work

Government services and community agencies will not find a job for you, but they do offer many programs and services that will help you find work. You do not need to pay for job search services. The following services, and many others, are available for free:

- career and work search advice
- help writing resumés (summaries of your qualifications) and applying for jobs
- pre-employment and other programs that will help you find a job

For help with the job search process

- call the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton
- talk to a career counsellor or take a job search workshop at an AlbertaWorks Centre. To find an Alberta Works Centre in your area, call the Career Information Hotline or go to humanservices.alberta.ca/offices.
- get feedback on your resumé. Go to alis.alberta.ca/hotline. Click on e-Resumé Review Service.
- find job postings and job search resources at alis.alberta.ca/jobs
- talk to staff at an immigrant-serving agency. To find an immigrant-serving agency in your area, go to work.alberta.ca. Under Immigration, click on Settlement and then click on Employment Support.



The following Alberta government publications may also help you learn more about how to look for work:

- *Working in Alberta: A Guide for Internationally Trained and Educated Immigrants*
- *Advanced Work Search Techniques*
- *Work Search Basics*

For free copies of these publications

- call the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton
- download or order them at alis.alberta.ca/publications

TIP

If you are thinking about looking for work in another occupation, it is a good idea to plan ahead. For information about career planning and occupations

- go to the Alberta Learning Information Service website at alis.alberta.ca. Click on Occupational Profiles to find current and detailed information on more than 500 occupations in Alberta.
- call the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton
- talk to counsellors at an Alberta Works Centre. See **Useful Contacts**, p. 79.



Knowing your rights and responsibilities on the job

Employment standards

Alberta's Employment Standards Code and Regulation set out minimum workplace standards for

- paycheques
- minimum wage
- hours of work and overtime
- days of rest and daily rest periods
- vacations and vacation pay
- general holidays
- maternity and parental leave
- employment of people under 18 years of age
- statements of earnings and deductions
- ending employment

To find out more about Alberta's employment standards

- order or download a free copy of *Your Rights and Responsibilities at Work* at alis.alberta.ca/publications
- call Employment Standards at 1-877-427-3731 toll-free or at 780-427-3731 in Edmonton
- go to work.alberta.ca. Under Working in Alberta, click on Employment Standards.

Your paycheque

By law, your employer must pay you at least once every month. Most employers pay workers by cheque or direct deposit (an electronic deposit to your bank account) every two weeks or twice a month.

The Alberta Employment Standards Code allows the following deductions to be made from employee earnings:

- income tax payments
- Canada Pension Plan contribution
- employment insurance contribution

For any other deductions, your employer must have your written permission. These deductions could include payments for things such as parking or payments to employee pension plans and company dental plans. Usually, employers tell you about these deductions and get your permission before you start work. The sample pay stub below shows typical deductions.



Note to temporary foreign workers

Newcomers to Alberta, including temporary foreign workers, have exactly the same rights and responsibilities as other Alberta workers.

Sample Pay Stub



ABC RECYCLING PRODUCTS

123 Privett Road, Edmonton, AB T5J 4S7

Name: Jack G. Candle
301 Stoney Run Road
Edmonton, AB, T5K 5G9

Wage Rate: \$12.00 per hour*
Overtime Rate: \$18.00 per hour
Pay Period: February 17 – 21, 2014

Earnings:	Hours	Earnings	
Regular Hours	30	\$360.00	
Overtime	4 (banked)		
Time off in lieu (taken February 20)			
4 banked hours x \$12.00/hour	4	\$48.00	
General holiday pay			
8 hours x \$12.00/hour	8	\$96.00	
Vacation pay		\$16.32	
Total Earnings			\$520.32
Deductions:**			
Income Tax		(\$60.00)	
EI		(\$15.00)	
CPP		(\$20.00)	
Total deductions			(\$95.00)
NET PAY			\$425.32

* For the most current minimum wage information, go to work.alberta.ca and choose Employment Standards.

** Deduction amounts are examples only.

Employment insurance*

Employment insurance (EI) provides temporary financial help for unemployed Canadians and temporary or permanent residents. To qualify for EI, you must have

- paid into EI
- worked for the required number of insurable hours
- applied for EI

When you leave a job, your employer must provide a record of employment that states your wage, the number of hours you worked and why you no longer work for that employer. When you apply for EI, you must provide a record of employment from each of your employers during the last 52-week period.

If you are unable to obtain a record of employment, file your application and let Service Canada know that you are unable to obtain a record of employment from your employer.

To find out more about EI benefits

- go to serviccanada.gc.ca. Click on Apply for Employment Insurance.
- call 1-800-206-7218 toll-free
- visit a Service Canada Centre. To find a Service Canada Centre in your area, go to serviccanada.gc.ca. Click on Find a Service Canada Office (near the bottom of the page, under Contact Us).

* Source: serviccanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/index.shtml

Occupational health and safety

Alberta law requires all work sites to protect workers, including temporary foreign workers, from hazardous working conditions. Employers must ensure the safety of all of their employees and all workers on their work site. Workers must take reasonable care to protect themselves and others around them. Workers also have a duty to refuse work that they believe presents an imminent danger. If you believe this to be the case and you or someone else would not normally work under those conditions, you must refuse to carry out the work. Then let your employer (normally, your supervisor) know as soon as you can. If your employer does not fix the problem, you can file a complaint by calling the Occupational Health and Safety Contact Centre at 1-866-415-8690 toll-free or 780-415-8690 in Edmonton.

To find out more about occupational health and safety, go to work.alberta.ca. Under Working in Alberta, click on Occupational Health and Safety (OHS).

Note to temporary foreign workers

Alberta law protects temporary foreign workers from unsafe and unhealthy working conditions.

Workers' compensation

If you are injured on the job, you may be eligible for benefits through the Workers' Compensation Board – Alberta. For more information or to report an injury

- go to wcb.ab.ca/workers and click on Report an Injury
- call 1-866-922-9221 toll-free, 780-498-3999 in Edmonton or 403-517-6000 in Calgary



Being self-employed

Many Alberta newcomers own and operate their own businesses. All three levels of government offer programs and services to support people who want to start a business.

The Business Link

The Business Link offers help and advice on topics from startup to taxation. For more information

- call 1-800-272-9675 toll-free, 780-422-7722 in Edmonton or 403-221-7800 in Calgary
- go to canadabusiness.ab.ca



Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS)

Go to alis.alberta.ca/selfemployment for information about starting your business and about financial assistance available to small businesses through agencies such as the Business Development Bank of Canada and Western Economic Diversification Canada.



Finding child care

You may need child care for your young children while you are at work or attending school. Child care options range from informal, unlicensed care by relatives, babysitters or nannies (in their home or the child's home) to more formal, licensed programs.

Licensed and approved child care programs must meet government laws and standards, and programs are monitored and inspected regularly. There are several licensed child care options:

- **Daycare programs** for children under the age of six provide care and learning-through-play activities.
- **Out-of-school care programs** for children six to 12 years of age. These programs typically operate before and after school hours and offer full-day care on non-school days.
- **Pre-school programs** for pre-school-aged children.
- **Group family child care programs** provide child care to 10 or fewer children in the provider's home.
- **Approved family day homes** provide care for six or fewer children, including the caregiver's own children, in the provider's home.

If your child has a special need, such as ongoing medical care or a disability or developmental delay, you can get help to find suitable child care:

- Call 310-0000 toll-free to be connected to your local Child and Family Services.
- Go to humanservices.alberta.ca/disability-services. Click on Family Support for Children With Disabilities.

DID YOU KNOW? There is no law in Alberta that specifies at what age children can be left alone. When considering leaving a child unsupervised, age and maturity are important factors in assessing whether care and supervision are adequate. When a child under age 12 is left alone, parents or guardians are expected to arrange care or supervision for that child. If a parent is not providing adequate care, government may intervene to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

Child care subsidy

If your child attends a licensed, approved daycare program, you may qualify for a child care subsidy. The amount depends on your family income, your reason for needing child care and the size of your family.

To find out more about the child care subsidy

- call 1-866-714-5437 toll-free
- go to humanservices.alberta.ca/family-community. Click on Child Care and then click on Subsidy.



DID YOU KNOW? You may be eligible for the universal child care benefit, a federal government benefit for families with children under age six. To find out more, contact the Canada Revenue Agency at 1-800-387-1193 toll-free or go to cra.gc.ca. Click on Apply for Benefits and then click on Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB).



Education



Alberta takes pride in its high-quality education system. In international test results, Alberta students consistently earn high scores in sciences, reading and writing, and mathematics. Many adults take advantage of the wide range of educational opportunities that are available, from English language classes to post-secondary studies.

Alberta's school system

Each province and territory in Canada has a different school system. The following information applies to Alberta's school system.

By law, children living in Alberta must attend school from ages six to 16. Publicly funded education is available for children and young people aged 4½ to 19.

To qualify for an Alberta high school diploma, students must pass a subject-based provincial examination in English, mathematics, social studies and sciences. Most students who plan to pursue a post-secondary education (for example, at college or university) graduate from high school with a diploma. Students are expected to find out which high school courses are prerequisites (required) for the post-secondary programs they are interested in and to complete those courses.

Typical Age and Grade Level (Alberta)

Child's Age	Grade Level	School Category
4 1/2 on or before March 1	Kindergarten (optional)	Elementary
6 to 11	Grade 1 to 6	Elementary
11 to 15	Grade 7 to 9	Junior High
15 to 18	Grade 10 to 12	Senior High

Most children attend public, separate, francophone or charter schools that are all part of the publicly funded school system:

- **Public schools** provide basic education and are universally accessible to children of Alberta residents.
- **Separate schools** reflect the constitutionally protected right to religious education for either Roman Catholics or Protestants, when either group is the religious minority in a community. These schools provide basic education for Roman Catholic or Protestant students who are Alberta residents. With the exception of two communities, most separate schools are Roman Catholic schools.
- **Francophone schools** provide an education in French that is intended to develop language, identity, culture and a sense of belonging to the francophone community. Parents whose first language is French have a constitutional right to have their children educated in French, where there are enough students to make this possible.
- **Charter schools** offer innovative or enhanced education programs that use different teaching methods or learning environments than those in regular public schools. Charter schools follow programs of study approved by Alberta Education. Students are required to write provincial achievement tests and Grade 12 diploma exams.

The public school system is funded by provincial taxes. In order to receive a publicly funded education, where no fees are charged, you must meet the following two requirements:

- You (the parent) or your child must be a Canadian citizen, permanent resident or **temporary resident**.*
- You (the parent) must reside in Alberta.

If you are a step-parent and your spouse or partner (the biological or adoptive parent of your stepchild) is **not** a Canadian citizen, permanent resident or temporary resident, you may be required to provide additional documentation (like a study permit) in order for your stepchild to receive a publicly funded education.

* Temporary residents, as defined by Alberta Education, include people with study permits (minimum one- to two-year duration), federal temporary resident permits or temporary work permits (temporary foreign workers), refugee claimants, and those with diplomatic status. They do not include visitors.

While most students do not have to pay tuition fees, you may have to pay fees for things such as transportation, textbook rentals or art supplies. These costs can be more than \$100 per year. If you cannot afford to pay, school boards may waive (not ask you to pay) your fees.

Schools in the publicly funded system are operated by locally elected school boards. To find a local school board, see **Enrolling Your Child**, p. 54.

Private schools in Alberta set their own standards for enrolment, often based on religious or educational philosophy. You can send your child to a private school, but you will have to pay some or all of the costs. It is important to find out from the school what the costs will be and whether your child will earn credits toward an Alberta High School Diploma at the school.

The school year

For most schools, the school year starts early in September and continues until the end of June. Most schools operate on the following schedule:

- The school day usually starts between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. and ends between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m., Monday to Friday.
- Schools are closed on weekends and general (statutory) holidays (see p. 77). They are also closed between Christmas and New Year's Day, and for one week called spring break in March or April.
- Each school is closed for another four days in the school year: two for professional development days and two for teachers' conventions. On these days, students do not go to school because teachers are attending work-related events.

Before enrolling your child in a school, ask about the school calendar and schedule. Some schools follow a different schedule from that described above. For example, some schools give students every second Friday off while teachers participate in professional development.



TIP

It is important to arrange child care for children under 12 after school, during school closures and on general (statutory) holidays and professional development days if no adult or older sibling is available to supervise them.

Enrolling your child

You may be able to choose which school your child attends. If you choose a school outside your neighbourhood, your choice may depend on whether transportation or space is available for your child. Contact your local school board to find out what school you can enrol your child at and to learn more about schools and programs such as English as a Second Language classes, instruction in languages other than English, and sports or arts programming.

To enrol your child, take your child, an interpreter (if you need one) and the following documents to the school:

- identification such as your child's birth certificate, or passport or permanent resident status documents for yourself and your child
- school documents from your home country or province/territory (translated, if necessary), such as report cards, course outlines and examples of your child's school work
- your child's immunization record

The school principal or other school staff will talk with you and your child and enrol your child in the appropriate grade. To contact a local school board or to find a school

- go to education.alberta.ca. Click on Parents and then click on School Choice.
- look under Schools in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book

DID YOU KNOW? English as a Second Language (ESL) programs help children learn English more quickly and adjust to life in Alberta. To find out about ESL programs for your child, contact your local school board.

School culture in Alberta

You may notice differences between schools in Alberta and schools in your home country or province/territory:

- Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's education. Most schools expect parents to attend meetings with teachers and also invite parents to attend other events, such as concerts, sports activities and science fairs.
- Teachers are generally informal with students.
- Teachers invite students to express their own opinions.
- There is no tolerance for bullying in Alberta schools. See **Bullying**, p. 62.

TIP

During severe weather warnings, listen to a local radio and television station for announcements about school closings and changes to school bus schedules or check the school's website.



English as a Second Language

If you need to improve your English language skills, it is important to take classes in English at a level that is right for you. An assessment (measure) of your English language skills is a good way to find out what level of English language classes you should take. You will be assessed by a person who is trained and certified. Assessments are based on a national standard. This service is free to most newcomers.

English language classes may be free through federal or provincial government programs or there may be a cost. If there is a cost, it will depend on your level of English language use and your immigration status. Your spouse and children may also be able to take free English classes. Classes range from English for new learners to technical language programs.

DID YOU KNOW? Several names are used to describe English language classes, including

- ESL—English as a Second Language
- EAL—English as an Additional Language
- ELL—English Language Learning

Note to temporary foreign workers

Temporary foreign workers are not eligible for government-sponsored language learning programs.



English language assessment

To have your English skills assessed

- ask staff at an immigrant-serving agency for a referral to an assessment service. See **Useful Contacts**, p. 80.
- contact an assessment service in one of the following communities. For contact information, see **Useful Contacts**, p. 83.
 - **Calgary**—Immigrant Services Calgary Society – Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment Referral Centre (ILVARC)
 - **Edmonton**—Catholic Social Services – Language Assessment, Referral, and Counselling Centre (LARCC)
 - **Fort McMurray**—Keyano College – Continuing Education
 - **Lethbridge**—Southern Alberta Language Assessment Services
 - **Medicine Hat**—Karen Ziemann Consulting
 - **Red Deer**—Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE)

Counsellors at these centres may speak your first language. Tell them about your education, experience, needs and interests. They will refer you to appropriate ESL classes or other education or upgrading programs.

English language drop-in centres

To find English language drop-in services, call

- **Calgary**—Calgary Immigrant Educational Society
403-235-3666
- **Edmonton**—Cultural Connections Institute – The Learning Exchange
780-944-0792
- **Taber**—Taber & District Community Adult Learning Association
403-223-1169



Post-secondary education

In Alberta, adults of all ages take post-secondary education programs to earn credentials and improve their knowledge and skills. Post-secondary educational institutions include the following:

- **Universities** offer undergraduate and graduate degree programs that prepare people for work in fields such as business, law or medicine.
- **Public colleges** offer certificate, diploma, academic upgrading, university transfer, apprenticeship, continuing education and applied degree programs.
- **Private colleges** offer certificate, diploma, academic upgrading, university transfer, continuing education and some degree programs. Private colleges are often affiliated with a religious organization.
- **Polytechnic institutes** offer certificate, diploma, applied degree, apprenticeship and continuing education programs. Most courses are related to trades or technical work.
- **Private vocational schools** provide training for specific occupations such as auctioneer, bartender, model or computer-aided-drafting technician.
- **Apprenticeship training** is a combination of classroom instruction and on-the-job training in a trade. In Alberta, more than 50 trades (cook, baker, hairstylist, electrician, plumber, agricultural mechanic, machinist, etc.) have apprenticeship training programs. You can find more information about apprenticeship at tradesecrets.alberta.ca.

For a complete list of all accredited post-secondary institutions in Alberta, go to iae.alberta.ca.

Click on the Post-Secondary tab and then click on Post-Secondary Institutions.

TIP

You may need to have your education and training credentials translated. To find a translator, contact the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta:

- call 780-434-8384 in Edmonton
- go to atia.ab.ca

Before enrolling in any post-secondary program, it is important to find out

- what Alberta employers think about the program
- what the entrance requirements are
- how much it costs (tuition, supplies and books)
- how long the program takes to complete

Post-secondary institutions and programs have different entrance requirements. To be admitted, you may need

- a high school diploma or an equivalent combination of education and experience
- a minimum average in specified high school courses
- a specific level of English language skills

Many post-secondary institutions also offer distance learning and online programs.

For information about post-secondary institutions and programs

- call the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton
- go to alis.alberta.ca/post-secondary. Click on Exploring Schools & Programs and then click on Educational Programs.
- go to iae.alberta.ca and click on the Post-Secondary tab



Paying for post-secondary education

Student Aid Alberta provides financial assistance to eligible Alberta post-secondary students to help them meet the basic costs of learning and living while they pursue their post-secondary education. This may include student loans, scholarships, grants or bursaries. Financial assistance is available to those who need it to ensure students spend their time focusing on their studies instead of their bills.

For more information, go to studentaid.alberta.ca.

Continuing education

In a continuing education program, you can take upgrading, improve your English language skills or learn a new skill for fun.

Community Adult Learning Councils offer or support part-time, non-credit adult learning opportunities, including adult literacy and English as a Second Language classes.

To find out more

- go to iae.alberta.ca. Click on the Post-Secondary tab and then click on Community Learning.
- call Community Programs at 310-0000 toll-free (enter 780-427-5624 after the prompt) or 780-427-5624 in Edmonton

Colleges, schools boards and community leagues often provide evening classes for people interested in learning about a wide variety of subjects, from baking and dancing to carpentry and chess.

For more information

- go to iae.alberta.ca. Click on the Post-Secondary tab and then click on Post-Secondary Institutions.
- contact your local school board. See **Enrolling Your Child**, p. 54.
- conduct an online search for continuing education or adult education

TIP

If you are interested in programs to improve your skills and your ability to find work, see **Improving Your Skills**, p. 46.





Law Courts Building, Edmonton



Courtesy of Calgary Police Service

Municipal police officers

Human Rights, Laws and Police

Canada has a system of laws made by federal, provincial and local governments. The purpose of these laws is to provide a system of rules that reflect the values and beliefs of Canadian society. The laws apply to everyone, including police, judges and members of the government.

Human rights

Human rights in Alberta are governed by two federal laws and one provincial law:

- the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- the *Canadian Human Rights Act*
- the *Alberta Human Rights Act*

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees that basic human rights and freedoms are followed in Canadian law and in the justice system.

The Charter guarantees

- fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of speech, thought and religion
- equality rights to ensure people have equal protection under and benefit from the law
- legal rights, such as the right to be presumed innocent of a crime until proven guilty in court
- mobility rights, such as the right to travel, live and look for work anywhere in Canada

To learn more about the Charter, go to canadianheritage.gc.ca. Scroll down and click on A-Z Index, click on Human Rights and then click on *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.



Courtesy of Tourism Calgary

Calgary City Hall and Municipal Building from Olympic Plaza

Canadian Human Rights Act

This Act applies to federally regulated employers, unions and service providers who offer goods, services, facilities or accommodations to the public. The Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability and conviction for which pardon has been granted.

The Canadian Human Rights Commission investigates complaints of discrimination (unfair treatment for one of the above reasons) under this Act. For more information

- call 1-888-214-1090 toll-free
- go to www.chrc-ccdp.ca

Alberta Human Rights Act

The *Alberta Human Rights Act* applies to provincially regulated employers and service providers, including landlords. The Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation.

The Alberta Human Rights Commission investigates complaints of discrimination (unfair treatment for one of the above reasons) under this Act. To find out more

- call the confidential inquiry line at 310-0000 toll-free and enter one of the following 10-digit regional office numbers after the prompt:
 - 780-427-7661 north of Red Deer
 - 403-297-6571 from Red Deer south
- go to albertahumanrights.ab.ca

Making a human rights complaint

If you believe you are being treated unfairly because of your race, religious beliefs, colour, gender or any other protected ground (listed above), you can call the Alberta Human Rights Commission or the Canadian Human Rights Commission to find out if you can make a complaint. Your call will be confidential (it will not be discussed with others). If you decide to make a complaint, do it as soon as possible after the incident. After 12 months have passed, a commission cannot accept your complaint.

Criminal law

Criminal laws protect individuals and Canadian society in general. In Canadian criminal law, anyone charged with a crime is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Criminal laws deal with crimes such as murder, assault, theft, and trafficking and possession of illegal drugs. The police investigate criminal offences.

People may have to go to court if they have been accused of a crime, witnessed a crime or been a victim of a crime. They are given a document saying when and where they must appear in court. If they fail to appear in court at that time, they are breaking the law.

The government pays the cost of prosecuting criminal charges in court. This includes the cost of an interpreter if one is needed. If someone accused of a crime is found guilty, the court may decide to send that person to jail.

DID YOU KNOW? Language problems or ignorance of the law cannot be used as a defence by someone charged with a crime.

Civil law

Civil laws are used to settle private arguments or disagreements between individuals, businesses and organizations. For example, if people disagree over who owns a piece of property, they can go to civil court to settle the disagreement. If a tenant and a landlord disagree over a security deposit, civil laws determine who is right. Individuals pay civil court costs, including the costs of a lawyer and an interpreter if one is needed.



Police

Police in Canada are separate from the government and from the military. They are governed by strict regulations and procedures. Their role in Canadian society is to serve and protect people. You can ask police officers for help in many situations: if you have been assaulted, if something is stolen or if you see a crime being committed.

Police services in Alberta

- are local (municipal police service), national (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) or Aboriginal (First Nations police)
- include male and female staff
- work with communities to promote safety and prevent crime

If you are arrested

- police officers must show you their badges and tell you who they are
- police officers must tell you why you are being arrested
- you do not have to give police any information, other than your name and address, until you talk to a lawyer
- you have the right to a translator

Police cannot enter your home without legal grounds to do so (such as a warrant to search your home) or reasonable grounds to suspect that a crime has taken place (for example, a child is being abused in the home).

If you are charged with a criminal offence, the police have the right to take your photograph and fingerprints. The police also have the right to demand a breath or blood sample if they believe you have been driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs.

If the police want to keep you in jail, they must get a court order, usually within 24 hours of your arrest. If the court decides to release you, you must follow the conditions imposed by the court. For example, you may have to surrender your passport or pay bail (money that is returned to you if you follow the conditions of the court order).

If you believe the police have treated you unfairly, you can complain.

To make a complaint about police in your community call your local police chief or police commission. Look under Police or Police Commission in the blue pages of the telephone book.

To make a complaint about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), contact the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP:

- Call 1-800-665-6878 toll-free.
- Go to www.cpc-cpp.gc.ca.

DID YOU KNOW? To reach police in an emergency, call 911. See **Calling 911 in an Emergency**, p. 12. Some areas in Alberta do not have 911 service. In these areas, call the number for the local police service.

DID YOU KNOW? It is a serious crime to offer a police officer money or services (a bribe) in exchange for special treatment.



Courtesy of Calgary Police Service

Municipal police officer

Lawyers

If you are charged with a crime or are involved in a civil dispute, you will probably need a lawyer to advise and represent you. To find a lawyer

- call the Law Society of Alberta's Lawyer Referral Service at 1-800-661-1095 toll-free or 403-228-1722 in Calgary
- look under Lawyers in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book
- ask at an immigrant-serving agency

Lawyers' services can be expensive. If you have a low income, contact the following organizations:

- **Legal Aid** provides lawyers for people with low incomes. For more information
 - call the Legal Services Centre at 1-866-845-3425 toll-free
 - go to the Legal Aid Alberta website at legalaid.ab.ca
 - look under Legal Aid in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book
- **Community legal clinics** in several Alberta communities offer legal advice for people with low incomes. To find a clinic near you, go to the Pro Bono Law Alberta website at pbla.ca/individual.
- **Law students** provide free legal advice or representation on some legal matters. For more information, call
 - Student Legal Services of Edmonton at 780-492-2226 or go to sloedmonton.com
 - Student Legal Assistance at 403-220-6637 in Calgary or go to slcalgary.com

Victim services

A victim of a crime is a person who suffers as a result of a crime. Anyone can become a victim of crime. If you are the victim of a crime, support is available. You have nothing to be ashamed of.

Victim services units across Alberta offer free information, referrals and support to victims of crime. Victim services provides victims with information about

- preparing a Victim Impact Statement. Victims of a crime write to tell a court how the crime has affected them and the people close to them. This statement is used in court only if the accused person is found guilty.
- requesting restitution. This is a way for offenders to repay victims for the financial loss they have suffered. The judge may order repayment to cover things such as damage, destruction, loss of property and psychological or bodily harm.
- accessing financial benefits. In Alberta, victims who have been emotionally or physically injured as a result of a violent crime are eligible to apply to the Victims of Crime Financial Benefits Program. The program provides benefits based on the extent of the victim's injuries, which must be verified by a medical professional. The victim must report the crime to police within a reasonable period of time.

For more information

- call 310-0000 toll-free (enter 780-427-3460 after the prompt) or 780-427-3460 in Edmonton. Request a copy of the booklet *Victims of Crime Protocol: What Victims of Crime Can Expect From the Criminal Justice System*. This booklet has information about what victims of crime can expect from the police, Crown prosecutors, victim service units and provincial and federal correctional authorities.
- go to victims.alberta.ca and click on Help for Victims of Crime. On the website you will find
 - the *Victims of Crime* handbook, available in 13 languages. Under More Publications (near the bottom of the page), click (More Items...).
 - *Help for Victims of Crime*, a guide for adults with basic reading skills
 - a list of police and community programs to help victims of crime

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RCMP officer (national)



Human Rights, Laws and Police

Families and the law

In Canada, laws protect all family members, including children, spouses and older people.

Children and parents

Parents have the right to make most decisions about how to raise their children. They also have legal responsibilities toward children under 18:

- Parents must provide their children with food, clothing and shelter.
- Parents should treat their children equally. Girls are valued the same as boys and have equal rights.
- Parents must provide adequate care and supervision for children. Alberta law does not state an age at which children can be left without supervision. However, many Albertans expect families to arrange care or supervision for children under the age of 12 if they are left at home for more than a few minutes.
- By law, children from ages six to 16 living in Alberta must attend school.

DID YOU KNOW? In Alberta, people 18 and older are legally adults.

In Alberta, children under 12 years of age are not allowed to work at any time, in any occupation. Adolescents under age 15 can work in certain jobs, including as a restaurant server, retail clerk or newspaper deliverer. There are also some restrictions about where and when young people under 18 can work. For more information, contact Employment Standards:

- Call 1-877-427-3731 toll-free or 780-427-3731 in Edmonton.
- Go to work.alberta.ca. Under Working in Alberta, click on Employment Standards. Under Standards and Definitions, click on Employees Under Age 18.

TIP

Report child abuse by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-387-5437 toll-free. You do not have to give your name. It is the law in Alberta to report any situation or incident in which you believe a child is being abused.

Child abuse

It is illegal to abuse children physically, emotionally, psychologically or sexually. All forms of child abuse are serious crimes, including neglect, sexual contact, female circumcision and spanking that causes bruising. If child protection laws have been broken, children can be taken away from one or both parents.

For more information about child abuse, see **Family Violence**, p. 63.

Bullying

Bullying is behaviour that makes the person being bullied feel afraid or uncomfortable. Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person repeatedly and on purpose. People being bullied have a hard time defending themselves. Many children have a good idea of what bullying is because they see it every day.

Bullying includes

- verbal abuse (name calling)
- social gossip (telling lies about a person or spreading mean rumours)
- physical violence (shoving, hitting, kicking)
- cyberbullying (using websites, cellphones or email to hurt another person)

For help and information about bullying

- talk to trained counsellors at the Alberta Bullying Prevention Helpline, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call 1-888-456-2323 toll-free in Alberta. Help is available in more than 170 languages.
- go to bullyfreealberta.ca
- encourage your teens to go to b-free.ca or call 1-888-456-2323 toll-free in Alberta
- encourage your children to go to teamheroes.ca and play an online game about stopping bullying

Adults in marriages and common-law relationships

In Canada, women and men are considered equal partners in marriage and common-law relationships. Either the wife or the husband can ask for a divorce. Spouses seeking a divorce should each consult a lawyer (see **Lawyers** on p. 61).

For more information about divorce, go to **programs.alberta.ca**. Under Life Events, click on Getting Divorced.

A husband or wife who is sponsored by a spouse as a landed immigrant cannot be deported because of marital separation or divorce.

When a marriage or common-law relationship ends, both parents continue to share legal and financial responsibility for their children and, sometimes, for each other. Child Support Services is a free service that helps parents (single parents or parents in a blended family) with a limited income get child support agreements and court orders. For more information

- call 310-0000 toll-free and ask for the Child Support Services office nearest you, or call 780-415-6400 in Edmonton or 403-297-6060 in Calgary
- go to **humanservices.alberta.ca/css**



Family violence

Family violence is a serious issue that affects all members of a family, including children. Family violence includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, financial and spiritual abuse. Family violence harms children even if they are not directly abused or if they are in a different place when the violence happens. Physical and sexual violence against anyone, including family members, whether inside or outside the home, is a crime.

A victim of family violence has the right to

- be treated with courtesy, compassion and respect
- be safe from violence
- have the maximum protection from harm or abuse permitted by law
- seek information about legal rights and help from community resources
- access a court protection order, restraining order or peace bond from the courts, or an emergency protection order if the immediate safety of a family member is a concern

If you are in an abusive relationship, you have the right to leave.

Women and children who are victims of family violence can go to a women's shelter. Women's shelters offer safe accommodation, food, essential transportation, clothing, crisis counselling, housing assistance, children's programming and information free of charge. To locate the shelter nearest you, contact the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters:

- Call 1-866-331-3933 toll-free.
- Go to **acws.ca**. Point to Shelters and click on Find a Shelter.

For help and information about family violence

- call the 24-hour Family Violence Info Line at 310-1818 toll-free in Alberta. Help is available in more than 170 languages.
- go to **familyviolence.alberta.ca**

TIP

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.





Driving and Vehicles

Many Albertans drive and own vehicles. You can get from place to place in most Alberta cities using public transit, so you do not need to own a car to travel within your community. But even if you do not plan to own a car, it is wise to get an Alberta driver's licence.

Getting an Alberta driver's licence

An Alberta driver's licence is important to have for the following reasons:

- It is a widely accepted piece of photo identification (ID). See **Carrying Identification**, p. 7.
- You may need to drive for work.
- If you have a licence from another country or Canadian province or territory, it may only be valid for a limited time. If you are
 - an immigrant with legal presence in Canada or a Canadian citizen residing in Alberta, you must obtain an Alberta driver's licence within 90 days of arriving in the province, regardless of whether you travel outside Alberta during those 90 days.
 - a Canadian citizen or permanent resident working in Alberta but have your residence outside the province, you may continue to use the valid licence from your home province or territory. However, if you have a vehicle in Alberta for longer than 183 days, you must register that vehicle in Alberta.
 - staying in Alberta as a full-time student or you are working here as part of a co-op program of study, you may use your valid driver's licence from your home country or province or territory.

To get a driver's licence, you will need to visit an Alberta registry agent. To find an Alberta registry agent near you, go to servicealberta.ca. Click on the Registries tab and then click on Find a Registry Agent.



Courtesy of Service Alberta

You must bring at least two pieces of ID with you to the registry agent, at least one of which must be photo ID. You must also show proof that you are entitled to live in Canada and that you are an Alberta resident. All identification documents must be originals—photocopies are not accepted. Examples of acceptable ID include

- photo ID, such as a valid driver's licence from another jurisdiction, a passport, a Nexus card or a permanent resident card
- non-photo ID, such as a birth certificate, a utility bill or a government assistance document (for example, an Income Support document). This ID must contain at least two of the following: your full name, physical address, date of birth or signature.
- proof of Canadian legal presence, such as a work visa, a Canadian birth certificate, a Nexus card or a permanent resident card
- proof of Alberta residency, such as gas, electricity or cable utility bills showing your name and physical address; a signed third-party lease or rental agreement; or a letter from an Alberta-based employer stating that you are an employee and an Alberta resident

For more information about driver's licence ID, go to servicealberta.ca. Click on the Drivers/Vehicles tab and then click on Identification and Residency Requirements.

Note to temporary foreign workers

Bring your work permit (the original, not a copy) with you when you apply for a licence. Your work permit is proof of your legal presence in Canada. If you are a temporary foreign worker under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, you cannot get an Alberta driver's licence or identification card.

DID YOU KNOW? If you are not eligible to hold a driver's licence (because of a licence suspension, a medical condition, etc.), you can still get an Alberta photo identification card (you cannot have both). This card is for identification purposes only and does not entitle you to operate a motor vehicle. You will need to provide the same type of identification as you would if applying for a driver's licence. For more information, go to servicealberta.ca. Click on the Drivers/Vehicles tab and then click on Identification Card.

TIP

You may need to have a translator for your driver's licence knowledge test. To find a translator, contact Alberta Transportation:

- Call 310-0000 toll-free in Alberta and enter 780-427-8901 after the prompt.
- Go to transportation.alberta.ca. Click on Drivers and Vehicles and then click on Driver Guides. Scroll to the List of Approved Translator Agencies.

Replacing your driver's licence with an Alberta driver's licence

If you have

- a valid driver's licence from another Canadian jurisdiction, you can exchange it for an Alberta driver's licence of equal class
- a Class 5 or higher driver's licence from Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Isle of Man, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland) or the United States, you can exchange it for a Class 5 Alberta licence
- a valid motorcycle (Class 6) licence from Australia, the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, Switzerland or the United States, you can exchange it for a Class 6 Alberta licence

If your licence is not from a country listed above and you have two years of driving experience

- bring your licence (officially translated, if not in English) to a registry office
- complete a Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) exemption application to have your licence and driving experience validated
- pass a written test about the rules of driving and a driving test (Advanced Road Test)

Once you meet all of the above requirements, you will be issued a Class 5 Alberta licence. A Class 5 licence permits you to drive

- a two-axle passenger vehicle (car, pickup truck, sport utility vehicle), excluding a motorcycle
- a two-axle passenger vehicle towing a trailer, if the trailer is not equipped with air brakes
- a two-axle recreational vehicle, excluding those equipped with air brakes
- a moped



Getting a driver's licence if you do not have one

Alberta has a Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program to ensure new drivers gain the experience and skills needed for safe driving. It will take at least three years to complete the two stages (learner and GDL probationary) of the program and obtain a Class 5 licence.

To begin the program and obtain a learner's licence, you must

- bring a minimum of two pieces of ID (including one piece of photo ID and your work permit or other proof of Alberta residency and Canadian legal presence) to a registry agent (see **Useful Contacts**, p. 83).
- pass a vision test
- pass a written test about the rules of driving. Written driving tests are offered in
 - Arabic
 - Chinese (traditional)
 - English
 - Farsi
 - French
 - Hindi
 - Punjabi
 - Spanish
 - Tagalog (Philippines)
 - Vietnamese

Other options for completing the driving test include writing the test in English using a dictionary to translate, taking an oral assisted test in English or taking an oral test with an approved translator. Contact a registry agent for more information. To find a registry agent near you, go to servicealberta.ca. Click on the Registries tab and then click on Find a Registry Agent.

If you pass the vision and written tests, you will be given a Class 7 learner's licence. When you drive with this licence, a fully licensed (non-GDL) driver who is at least 18 years of age must be in the vehicle with you. There are also other conditions on this licence as part of Alberta's GDL program. To learn more about these conditions and the next (GDL probationary) stage of the GDL program, go to saferoads.com. Click on the Drivers tab and then click on GDL.

TIP

You can take driving lessons in languages other than English from provincially licensed driving schools. For a list of licensed driving schools, go to transportation.alberta.ca. Click on the Drivers and Vehicles tab and then click on Driver Licensing.

Buying or leasing a motor vehicle

You can buy or lease a new car or truck from a car dealer (seller).

Leasing a vehicle is a little like renting a house. You sign a contract, make monthly payments over the term of the lease and return the vehicle to the company when the lease is over. Leasing may be an easy way to get a vehicle, but it may not be the cheapest way.

Prices of the same model of vehicle can vary, depending on the dealer. It is a good idea to shop around. New cars usually come with a warranty, a document that says that for a period of a year or more, certain parts of the car will be repaired without cost to the owner or the person leasing the vehicle. It is OK to bargain when you buy a new or used vehicle in Alberta.

You can buy a used vehicle from a used car dealer or a private owner. Most used vehicles do not come with a warranty. When buying a used vehicle, ask for an inspection report or have the vehicle inspected by a licensed mechanic. The report will tell you what, if any, repairs need to be made to the vehicle and will help you decide how much the vehicle is worth. You can also purchase a Vehicle Information Report and/or a lien search at a registry agent to make sure no money is owed on the used vehicle.



To find new and used vehicles and dealers

- go to **albertacanada.com** and click on Immigrating to Alberta. Click on the Living in Alberta tab, click on Transportation and then click on Buying a Vehicle.
- look under Automobile Agencies & Dealers—New & Used in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book
- look in the classified section of your local newspaper

For more information about leasing and buying vehicles, go to the following websites:

- the Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council at **www.amvic.org**. Click on Consumers and then click on Tipsheets.
- Service Alberta at **servicealberta.ca**. Click on the Consumer Information tab, click on Reality Choices and then click on In the Driver's Seat.
- the Alberta Motor Association at **ama.ab.ca**. Click on Auto & Driving.

If you have a complaint against an automotive business, contact the Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council by calling

- 1-877-279-8200 toll-free in southern Alberta
- 1-877-979-8100 toll-free in northern Alberta

Insuring a vehicle

By law, if you buy or lease a vehicle, you must buy automobile insurance that covers property damage, bodily injury and death in the event of an accident. You will be heavily fined for driving without insurance.

Vehicle insurance coverage and costs vary from one company to another. Talk to several insurance agents before choosing an insurance policy.

Some insurance companies give discounts to people who have taken a driver training course from a licensed driving school. Some companies will charge higher insurance rates for people who do not provide a driver's abstract (record).

When you buy insurance, your insurance agent will give you a pink card that describes the vehicle you are insuring and shows your name and address and the insurance agency's name.

To find out more about vehicle insurance

- call an insurance broker or agent. To find a broker in your area, go to the Insurance Brokers Association of Canada website at **ibac.ca** and click on Find a Broker.
- contact the Alberta Superintendent of Insurance:
 - Call 310-0000 toll-free in Alberta and enter 780-427-8322 after the prompt.
 - Go to **finance.alberta.ca/business/insurance**.

TIP

Read your vehicle insurance policy carefully. Ask your insurance agent or broker to explain anything you do not understand. Never sign a document you do not understand.

Registering a vehicle

If you buy or lease a vehicle, you must register it with an Alberta registry agent. You will be fined for driving a vehicle that is not registered. To register your vehicle, you must provide

- photo identification, such as a permanent resident card or driver's licence
- an Alberta address
- proof that you own the vehicle, such as a bill of sale, lease agreement or certificate of title. In addition, if your vehicle
 - is brand new, you must provide the New Vehicle Information Statement you received from the car dealer



- is not brand new and was last registered in another Canadian province or territory, you must provide proof of an out-of-province vehicle inspection or salvage vehicle inspection performed by an approved mechanic with a valid journeyman certificate. For a list of approved inspection facilities, go to transportation.alberta.ca. Click on the Drivers and Vehicles tab, click on Vehicle Inspection Program and then click on Locating a Vehicle Inspection Facility.
- was imported, you must provide the original copy of the Transport Canada Vehicle Import Form (Form 1) you completed for the Canada Border Services Agency. An out-of-province inspection may also be required.
- proof that you have valid Alberta vehicle insurance by providing your pink insurance card

When you complete an application form and pay a fee, you will be given a registration certificate to keep with you and a licence plate to attach to the back of the vehicle. Drivers of the vehicle must have the registration certificate and the insurance card with them at all times. Failure to provide your registration certificate and insurance card when stopped by a police officer may result in a fine or in the police taking possession of your vehicle.

For more information about vehicle registration, go to servicealberta.ca. Click on the Drivers/Vehicles tab and then click on Vehicle Licence Plate and Registration.

Driving and the law

Alberta has driving laws and a demerit system that you need to be aware of.

Seatbelts

By law, all Alberta drivers and their passengers must properly wear a seatbelt. Failure to wear a seatbelt may result in a fine.

Children under six years of age who weigh less than 18 kilograms (40 pounds) must be secured in an approved and properly installed child safety seat that is designed for the child's weight.

Traffic tickets and demerit points

Police give a summons (ticket) to drivers for breaking traffic laws (for example, driving faster than the speed limit or failing to come to a full stop at a stop sign). Drivers are fined, and between two and seven demerit points (marks given against an offender) are assigned to their driving record. Drivers who get 15 or more demerit points (eight or more for GDL probationary) within a two-year period have their licence suspended for one month. Before they can begin driving again, they must agree to meet special conditions.

TIP

If police stop you while you are driving, stay in the vehicle. When the police approach, open the driver's window and be ready to show your driver's licence, vehicle registration and insurance card.

DID YOU KNOW? If you have trouble understanding English, ask the police to provide an interpreter. Language problems cannot be used as an excuse for failing to obey laws or follow police instructions.



Courtesy of Tammy Kohut

Vehicle child safety seat

Drinking and driving

Canada has strict laws about drinking alcohol and driving a motor vehicle. **It is a criminal offence to operate a motor vehicle while your ability is affected by alcohol or drugs.**

It is against the law to

- refuse to give a proper sample of your breath or blood if requested by a police officer
- have a level of alcohol in your blood of more than 0.05 per cent while driving a vehicle
- have an open bottle of alcohol in a vehicle
- have unopened containers of alcohol within reach of the driver and passengers

If you break these laws, you may face one or more of the following outcomes:

- seizure of your vehicle
- temporary or permanent loss of your driver's licence
- a large fine
- increased costs for insurance coverage
- mandatory participation in special classes for impaired drivers
- a jail term
- mandatory installation of a device that requires you to provide a breath sample before starting your vehicle

For more information, go to transportation.alberta.ca and click on the Impaired Driving tab.

Collisions

If a vehicle you are driving is involved in a collision (accident), you are required by law to show the other driver your name, address, driver's licence number, and registration and insurance documents. You should get the same information from the other driver and write it down. Ask all witnesses for their name, address and telephone number.

If you think the damage will cost more than \$2,000 to repair, notify the police. The police will have you fill out an accident report. You also should contact your insurance company.

If someone has been injured, call 911 for an ambulance and the police. **You are required by law to stay at the site of the accident until the police arrive.**



Winter driving and vehicle care

Winter driving in Alberta involves snow, ice and cold temperatures. Learn how to drive safely in winter driving conditions:

- Reduce your speed. It takes longer to stop on ice and snow than it does on dry roads.
- Avoid sudden changes of speed or direction, which are dangerous on icy or snowy roads. They may cause your vehicle to skid (slide out of control).
- Take a winter driving course from a driving school.

Prepare your vehicle for winter:

- Make sure your vehicle is running properly. Cold weather can make mechanical problems worse.
- Use windshield washer fluid and antifreeze made for cold temperatures.
- Use tires with all-season or winter treads.
- When the temperature drops below -20°C, plug in the block heater two or three hours before you want to drive your vehicle. This heater warms up the engine compartment so that the engine will start properly.

Prepare for winter emergencies:

- If you get stuck or your vehicle stops working, you may have to wait in your vehicle until help arrives.
- Keep warm clothing and emergency supplies such as food, candles and matches in your vehicle. Use a cellphone to call for help, such as a tow truck. Attract attention by raising the vehicle's hood or lighting an emergency flare.
- If you run the vehicle for warmth, keep a window open slightly to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. For the same reason, if you are stuck during a snowstorm and continue to run your vehicle, regularly clear snow away from the tailpipe.

Find more information about winter driving at albertacanada.com/immigration/living. Click on Transportation and then click on Winter Driving Tips.





Staying in Canada

Becoming a Canadian citizen is a goal for many newcomers. If you are a permanent resident, you can begin preparing to make this commitment as soon as you arrive in Canada.

Getting a permanent resident card

Your permanent resident card is proof of your status as a permanent resident of Canada. You automatically applied for your card as part of the immigration process.

Your card will be mailed to you. If you did not give Citizenship and Immigration Canada a mailing address when you arrived in Canada, do so as soon as possible. You have 180 days from the day you arrived to provide your mailing address or you will need to reapply and pay a fee.

As a permanent resident, you and your dependants have the right to

- receive Canadian social benefits, including health care and education
- live and work anywhere in Canada
- apply for Canadian citizenship

As a permanent resident, you

- must pay federal, provincial and municipal taxes
- must respect all federal, provincial and municipal laws
- cannot vote in elections or be a candidate for a political position

For more information about the permanent resident card, contact Citizenship and Immigration Canada:

- Call 1-888-242-2100 toll-free.
- Go to cic.gc.ca. Point to the Immigration tab, click on New Immigrants and then click on Get a Permanent Resident Card.

Note to temporary foreign workers

If you are a temporary foreign worker, the information in this chapter does not apply to you. Please see **Temporary Foreign Workers**, p. 18, for more information.

Leaving and re-entering Canada

If you plan to leave the country, you must take your permanent resident card with you. It is proof of your status as a permanent resident of Canada. If you are not travelling outside Canada, leave your permanent resident card in a safe place and carry a photocopy.

Your permanent resident card expires every five years. Since you need the card to re-enter Canada, check the expiry date on your card and apply for a new one well before you leave the country.

In order to keep your status as a permanent resident, you need to spend two years (730 days) in Canada during every five-year period.

Being deported

Citizenship and Immigration Canada can refuse to let you stay in Canada if you

- gave false documents or information when you arrived or applied for permanent residence
- did not obey the conditions (if any) of your residency
- are convicted of a criminal offence
- are believed to have been involved in spying activity or organized crime
- are believed to have committed war crimes

You may have the right to appeal a decision that could result in deportation. If you are concerned about your status, call Citizenship and Immigration Canada at 1-888-242-2100 toll-free or talk to a lawyer who specializes in immigration law.

DID YOU KNOW? Husbands or wives who are legally permanent residents of Canada cannot be deported because of marital separation or divorce, even if they are sponsored by their spouses.

Becoming a Canadian citizen

To be eligible for Canadian citizenship you must

- be at least 18 years old
- have permanent resident status in Canada
- have lived in Canada for at least three years (1,095 days) in the past four years
- be able to speak English or French
- know the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizens
- be familiar with Canada's history, geography and political system

You **cannot** become a Canadian citizen if you

- have been found guilty of a criminal offence in the last three years
- are in prison or on parole or probation
- have been ordered by Canadian officials to leave Canada
- are considered a risk to Canada's security

When you become a Canadian citizen, you have the same rights as citizens who were born in Canada. You can

- vote and hold political office
- apply for a Canadian passport
- enter and leave Canada freely
- enjoy full economic rights
- be eligible for some pension benefits

For more information about becoming a Canadian citizen, contact Citizenship and Immigration Canada:

- Call 1-888-242-2100 toll-free.
- Go to cic.gc.ca. Point to the Immigration tab and then click on Citizenship.

DID YOU KNOW? Parents, adoptive parents and guardians apply for citizenship for children under age 18. Children must be permanent residents, but they do not need to have lived in Canada for three years.



Sponsoring your family

As a permanent resident or Canadian citizen, you can apply to sponsor close relatives for immigration to Canada.

Family Class

If you are a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada, family class sponsorship allows you to 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. When you sponsor a relative in the family class process, you must promise to support that person and his or her accompanying family members for a period of three to 10 years, depending on their age and relationship to you.

For more information about family class sponsorship, contact Citizenship and Immigration Canada:

- Call 1-888-242-2100 toll-free.
- Go to cic.gc.ca. Point to the Immigration tab and then click on Canadians.





If You Need Help

For some newcomers to Alberta, settling into a new life may be more difficult than they imagined, for many reasons. If you need help, there are programs and services available.

Emergency shelters

You may be able to find a temporary place to stay at an emergency shelter if you have no money and no other place to go. In Alberta, many communities have different emergency shelters for

- young people
- homeless men or women
- women and their children who are victims of family violence

Emergency shelters are free and provide a safe environment for a short period of time. If your family needs to use an emergency shelter, be aware that family members may not be able to stay in the same shelter together.

For more information, or to find an emergency shelter

- go to humanservices.alberta.ca. Click on Programs & Services, click on Homelessness and then click on Find a Shelter.
- look for emergency shelter telephone numbers on the first few pages of the telephone book

If you are a victim of family violence, see **Family Violence**, p. 63.



Food banks

You can get free food from a food bank if you do not have enough money to buy what you need. Before you can use a food bank, you may be asked to provide information about your income.

To find a food bank near you

- go to the Alberta Food Bank Network Association website at afbna.ca
- in southern and central Alberta, go to the Food Banks Alberta website at scafbf.ca. Click on Members.
- look under Food Banks in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book



Help for low-income earners

If you have a low income, government and community agencies offer programs and services that may be helpful to you and your family. To find out more about the programs and services offered

- talk to staff at an immigrant-serving agency
- look on the inside front cover and first page of the telephone book for a list of community services such as emergency shelters and distress services
- in Edmonton or Calgary, dial 211 for the community information and referral service
- go to informalberta.ca to search for community and government services in your city or town
- go to programs.alberta.ca. Under More Audiences, click on Lower-Income Earners.

Income Support

If you do not have the resources to meet your basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter, you may be eligible for financial benefits from the Alberta government. The amount of available assistance depends on each person's situation (for example, his or her ability to work and the number of children in the family). Income Support is part of a system of supports called Alberta Works.

You may qualify for Income Support if you are a permanent resident or refugee claimant and do not have the resources to meet your basic needs.

If you were sponsored, it is your sponsor's responsibility to support you. But you may be eligible for Income Support if

- your sponsor has lost a job
- your sponsor did not fulfil his or her responsibilities
- you have been abandoned or need to leave an abusive situation

Those not eligible for Income Support include tourists, foreign students, temporary foreign workers, persons illegally in Canada, persons on a temporary resident permit (except those approved for entry by the Alberta government and those recognized as victims of human trafficking by Citizenship and Immigration Canada) and those who have been denied refugee status.

To find out more about Income Support

- call the Alberta Supports Contact Centre at 1-877-644-9992 toll-free or 780-644-9992 in Edmonton
- go to humanservices.alberta.ca/is
- visit an Alberta Works Centre. To find a centre near you, call the Alberta Supports Contact Centre at the numbers listed above or go to humanservices.alberta.ca/offices.

Note to temporary foreign workers

If you are a temporary foreign worker, you are not eligible for Income Support.



Hoodoos, near Drumheller



Enjoying Alberta

One of the best ways to feel at home in Alberta is to explore your new community and province.

Exploring your community

Get to know your community by visiting local attractions and parks or taking part in cultural and recreational events.

To contact your local tourist information office

- go to albertacanada.com/immigration/choosing. Click on The Province and then click on Explore Alberta to find a drop-down list of all Alberta cities and towns, with a brief description of the city and region, and links to municipal websites.
- go to travelalberta.com. Point to the Places to Go tab, point to Cities and then click on one of the cities listed.
- go to auma.ca. Point to Become a Member and then click on Regular Members.
- look under Tourist Information or Visitor Information in the blue pages of the telephone book

Staff at your local tourist information office can provide you with information about parks, recreational facilities and events, some of which are free. They can also provide information about attractions such as zoos, museums and galleries.

Sports and recreation

Many Albertans take part in and enjoy watching a variety of sports, both professional and amateur. Students play sports at school, and many adults join teams and use community recreation facilities such as swimming pools and ice arenas.

For more information

- go to the Alberta Sport Connection website at albertasport.ca. Click on Sport and then click on Provincial Sport & Recreation Associations. Use the alphabetical listing to find the activity you are interested in.
- look under Sports Facilities in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book

TIP

If you cannot afford the equipment or fees for your child's sports or recreation activity, ask the association offering the activity about fee reduction and equipment subsidy programs.



Cultural activities

Alberta has many opportunities for people to enjoy cultural activities such as dance performances, concerts, theatres, art galleries and historical sites. During the summer months, you can find rodeos and fairs throughout the province, as well as many special celebrations and festivals such as the Calgary Stampede and Edmonton's Heritage Festival. These events are often advertised in newspapers and on radio and television.

For more information, contact Travel Alberta:

- Call 1-800-252-3782 toll-free.
- Go to travelalberta.com. Click on Things to Do.

Community centres

People go to community centres in their neighbourhoods to participate in social, fundraising or sports events, or to take recreational classes such as yoga or drawing. Heritage groups and religious organizations also offer social, learning and religious activities.

DID YOU KNOW? Many libraries, recreation centres, museums, transit systems and other public facilities have **fee reduction** programs. They charge less money for children, students, seniors and, in some cases, people with low incomes. It is a good idea to ask at any public facility about fee reduction programs.

Exploring Alberta

Because Alberta covers a large area, natural attractions and communities are often far apart. A well-maintained system of highways makes exploring the province by private vehicle fast and comfortable.

Getting there

If you do not have a car, you may choose to rent a car or take a bus, train or plane to your destination:

- To rent a car, you need a valid driver's licence and a major credit card. For more information, look under Automobile Rental and Leasing in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.
- Buses travel between large and small cities throughout Alberta. For more information, look under Buses or Bus Lines in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.
- Scheduled passenger train service is limited to an interprovincial route with stops in Jasper and Edmonton. For information, call Via Rail Canada at 1-888-842-7245 toll-free or go to viarail.ca.
- Scheduled airline service between Calgary and Edmonton offers frequent flights. Regional airline companies also fly to other cities in the province. For information, look under Airlines in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.



What to see

Alberta has many natural areas, including

- five national parks—for example, Banff, Canada's first national park, and Wood Buffalo Park, Canada's largest national park
- nearly 500 provincial parks and natural and recreational areas offering free access to recreational opportunities, unspoiled wilderness and abundant wildlife
- five United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage sites, ranging from dinosaur excavation sites to a First Nations heritage site

In national and provincial parks, animals, plants, land and water are protected by law. Activities that harm these natural treasures are not allowed.

For more information

- call Travel Alberta at 1-800-252-3782 toll-free or go to travelalberta.com. Point to the Places to Go tab and then click on Parks.
- go to the Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation website at albertaparks.ca
- go to the Parks Canada website at pc.gc.ca

Celebrating Alberta holidays

Albertans celebrate several holidays throughout the year. Many of these days are general or statutory holidays that are days off with pay for many employees.

General or statutory holidays are marked with an asterisk * on this and the following page.

DID YOU KNOW? If you work on a general or statutory holiday, you may be eligible for additional pay or other compensation. See **Employment Standards**, p. 48.

*New Year's Day January 1

People celebrate this holiday beginning the night before, on New Year's Eve. Some communities have family entertainment, fireworks and bonfires. At midnight people hug their loved ones and wish everyone a happy new year.

Valentine's Day February 14

People often exchange gifts of cards, flowers and candy with loved ones and friends.

*Good Friday/*Easter Sunday Late March /Early April

On these Christian holidays, many people also celebrate spring. Many employers also count Easter Monday as a holiday.

*Alberta Family Day Third Monday in February

This day is a general holiday in Alberta.



Enjoying Alberta





Mother's Day
Second Sunday in May

This day recognizes mothers.

***Victoria Day**
Monday before May 25

This day celebrates the birthday of Canada's first queen. For many Canadians it marks the beginning of summer.



Father's Day
Third Sunday in June

This day recognizes fathers.



***Canada Day** July 1

Canada became a nation on this day in 1867. Canadians celebrate with parades, music and fireworks.



***Civic Holiday/Heritage Day**
First Monday in August

Many Alberta cities and towns hold cultural heritage celebrations on this weekend. Many employers offer this day as a general holiday.

***Labour Day**
First Monday in September

This day honours working men and women.



Halloween October 31

Children put on costumes and go from house to house asking for candy and treats.



***Christmas Day** December 25

Many people celebrate this Christian holiday by putting up a Christmas tree and lights, and exchanging gifts.

***Remembrance Day**
November 11

This day honours Canadians who lost their lives in armed conflicts, including the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War and on Canadian peacekeeping missions. Canadians wear a red poppy and stand for two minutes of silence at 11 a.m.

***Thanksgiving Day**
Second Monday in October

Traditionally, this is a day to give thanks for a good harvest. Many Canadians celebrate with a meal of roast turkey and pumpkin pie.

Boxing Day December 26

Traditionally celebrated by giving gifts in boxes to the needy or those who had given their service during the year, this is now a day when many people visit family or friends or shop for bargains at Boxing Day sales. Many employers count Boxing Day as a general holiday.

Useful Contacts

Alberta Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour

The Government of Alberta provides programs and services to help people succeed in the changing workforce and to ensure safe, fair and healthy workplaces. For more information, go to work.alberta.ca.

You can access the government's career, workplace and labour market information in three easy ways: click, call or come in.

Click

Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website

ALIS is Alberta's online source for career, education and jobs information. Go to alis.alberta.ca to access the following resources:

- **Certification and registration requirements**—get answers to common questions about certification and registration requirements for regulated professions and trades in Alberta. Go to alis.alberta.ca/certinfo.
- **Occupational information**—find job descriptions, educational requirements, salary information, employment and advancement opportunities, and projected growth for more than 500 occupations. Go to alis.alberta.ca/occinfo.
- **Job search resources**—click on the Job Seekers tab at alis.alberta.ca to find a large database of job postings. You can also click on Alberta Work Search Online to find information, examples and exercises for every step of your job search.
- **Education planning**—go to alis.alberta.ca/post-secondary for information about planning and funding your post-secondary education.
- **Publications**—go to alis.alberta.ca/publications to find more than 60 career, learning and employment publications. All are free to Albertans, and many can be downloaded as PDF files.
- **ALIS Tips**—find more than 150 easy-to-read articles on career, learning and employment topics at alis.alberta.ca/tips.

Call

Alberta Career Information Hotline

The Alberta Career Information Hotline is a career counselling and referral service. Hotline staff can answer your questions about

- career planning
- educational options and funding
- occupational descriptions
- labour market information
- work search skills
- the workplace

The hotline also has an e-Resumé Review Service.

Hours: 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (mountain time), Monday to Friday

Call: 1-800-661-3753 (toll-free in Canada)
780-422-4266 (Edmonton)
1-800-232-7215 (toll-free for callers who are deaf or hard of hearing)

Web: alis.alberta.ca/hotline

Come In

Alberta Works Centres

Alberta Works Centres across the province provide information and advice about occupations, career options, finding work, education programs and funding. To find an office near you, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline or go to humanservices.alberta.ca/offices.

Immigration Help Centre

This service provides newcomers, temporary foreign workers and employers with information about immigration, education, employment and hiring options in Alberta.

Immigrate to Alberta Information Service

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (mountain time),

Monday to Friday

Call: 1-877-427-6419 (toll-free in Alberta)

780-427-6419 (outside Alberta)

Web: albertacanada.com

Click on Immigrating to Alberta and then click on the Immigration Help Centre tab.

Email: To submit an immigration-related question not answered on the website, go to albertacanada.com/immigration/helpcentre.aspx. Click on Other Resources and then click Contact Us. Scroll to the Email and Phone Service section and click on the Immigration Email Form link.

Immigrant-serving agencies

The following Alberta immigrant-serving agencies, funded jointly by the Canadian and Alberta governments, support immigrants in their new communities and provide a number of services to help them make the transition to life in Alberta.

Brooks

Brooks & County Immigration Services

Bay 2, 500 Cassils Road

Brooks, AB T1R 1M6

Call: 403-362-0404

Fax: 403-362-0435

Email: info@bcis-brooks.ca

Web: ccis-calgary.ab.ca

(scroll down to Brooks & County Immigration Services)

Calgary

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society

5th Floor, 1111-11 Avenue SW

Calgary, AB T2R 0G5

Call: 403-262-2006

Fax: 403-262-2033

Email: contact@ccis-calgary.ab.ca

Web: ccis-calgary.ab.ca

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

#200, 138-4 Avenue SE

Calgary, AB T2G 4Z6

Call: 403-263-4414

Fax: 403-264-3914

Email: reception@ciwa-online.com

Web: ciwa-online.com

Centre for Newcomers

#1010, 999-36 Street NE

Calgary, AB T2A 7X6

Call: 403-569-3325

Fax: 403-248-5041

Email: newcomers@centrefornewcomers.ca

Web: centrefornewcomers.ca

Immigrant Services Calgary

#1200, 910-7 Avenue SW
Calgary, AB T2P 3N8
Call: 403-265-1120
Fax: 403-266-2486
Email: info@immigrantservicescalgary.ca
Web: immigrantservicescalgary.ca

Edmonton

ASSIST Community Services Centre

9649-105A Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5H 0M3
Call: 780-429-3111
Fax: 780-424-7837
Email: info@assistcsc.org
Web: assistcsc.org

Catholic Social Services

10709-105 Street
Edmonton, AB T5H 2X3
Call: 780-424-3545
Fax: 780-425-6627
Web: catholicsocialservices.ab.ca

Centre d'accueil et d'établissement du Nord de l'Alberta

Bureau 108, 8627-91 Street NW
Edmonton, AB T6C 3N1
Téléphone: 780-669-6004
Télécopieur: 780-628-5135
Courriel: info@lecae.ca
Site Web: lecae.ca

Edmonton Immigrant Services Association

#201, 10720-113 Street
Edmonton, AB T5H 3H8
Call: 780-474-8445
Fax: 780-477-0883
Email: info@eisa-edmonton.org
Web: eisa-edmonton.org

Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers

11713-82 Street
Edmonton, AB T5B 2V9
Call: 780-424-7709
Fax: 780-424-7736
Email: info@emcn.ab.ca
Web: emcn.ab.ca

Millwoods Welcome Centre for Immigrants

#200, Tower II, 3699 Millwoods Road NW
Edmonton, AB T6K 3L6
Call: 780-462-6924
Fax: 780-466-6594
Email: info@mwci.ca
Web: wciedmonton.ca

Fort McMurray

Centre d'accueil et d'établissement du Nord de l'Alberta

#100, 312 Abasand Drive
Fort McMurray, AB T9J 1B2
Téléphone: 780-750-7779
Télécopieur: 780-791-9766
Courriel: info.fmc@lecae.ca
Site Web: lecae.ca

YMCA of Wood Buffalo – Immigrant Settlement Services

#106B, 9816 Hardin Street
Fort McMurray, AB T9H 4K3
Call: 780-743-2970
Fax: 780-743-2973
Email: heidi_carter@ymca.ca
Web: ymca.woodbuffalo.org

Grande Prairie

Grande Prairie Centre for Newcomers

Suite 201, 10014-99 Street
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 3N4
Call: 780-538-4452
Fax: 780-532-8857
Email: info@gpcn.ca
Web: gpcn.ca

Lethbridge

Lethbridge Family Services – Immigrant Services

703–2nd Avenue South
Lethbridge, AB T1J 0C4

Call: 403-320-1589

Fax: 403-317-7654

Email: admin@lfsimmigrantservices.ca

Web: www.lfsfamily.ca

Lloydminster

Catholic Social Services – Gateway for Newcomers

6612–35 Street
Lloydminster, AB T9V 3H1

Call: 780-875-9084

Fax: 780-875-5007

Email: newcomer@catholicocialservices.ab.ca

Web: catholicocialservices.ab.ca

Medicine Hat

Saamis Immigration Services Association

659–3rd Street SE
Medicine Hat, AB T1A 0H4

Call: 403-504-1188

Fax: 403-504-1211

Email: info@saamisimmigration.ca

Web: saamisimmigration.ca

Red Deer

Catholic Social Services – Immigration and Settlement

5104–48 Avenue
Red Deer, AB T4N 3T8

Call: 403-347-8844

Fax: 403-342-1890

Web: catholicocialservices.ab.ca

Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE)

#202, 5000 Gaetz Avenue
Red Deer, AB T4N 6C2

Call: 403-346-8818

Fax: 403-347-5220

Email: admin@care2centre.ca

Web: immigrant-centre.ca

There are regional immigrant-serving agencies not listed here that may have immigrant services and programs to help you. To find an agency near you, go to the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies website at aaisa.ca. Click on Find an Agency.



Useful contacts by topic

Addiction Services

p. 43

Addiction Helpline

Call: 1-866-332-2322 (toll-free)

Web: albertahealthservices.ca

Alberta Aids to Daily Living

p. 40

Call: 310-0000 (toll-free; enter 780-427-0731 after the prompt)

780-427-0731 (Edmonton and area)

Web: health.alberta.ca

Click on the Services tab and then click on Alberta Aids to Daily Living.

Bullying Prevention

p. 62

Bullying Prevention Helpline (24 hour)

Call: 1-888-456-2323 (toll-free)

Web: bullyfreealberta.ca

Child Abuse

p. 62

Child Abuse Hotline (24 hour)

Call: 1-800-387-5437 (toll-free)

Child Care Subsidy

p. 51

Call: 1-866-714-5437 (toll-free)

Web: humanservices.alberta.ca/family-community

Click on Child Care and then Subsidy.

Child Support Agreements and Orders

p. 63

Child Support Services

Call: 310-0000 (toll-free; ask for the office nearest you)

780-415-6400 (Edmonton)

403-297-6060 (Calgary)

Web: humanservices.alberta.ca/css

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

p. 70

Call: 1-888-242-2100 (toll-free)

Web: cic.gc.ca

Dentists

p. 43

Call: Look under Dentists in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book

Web: abda.ab.ca

(Alberta Dental Association and College)

Click on Find a Dentist.

Driver's Licence

p. 64

Call: Look under Licence & Registry Services in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.

Web: servicealberta.ca

Click on the Registries tab and then click on Find a Registry Agent.

Emergency Medical Services

p. 41

Call: **911** if you need immediate medical attention

Call: HealthLink Alberta (see p. 40) or look on the first page of the telephone book for the location and hours of the emergency department nearest you.

Emergency Shelter

p. 73

Call: 1-866-331-3933 (toll-free) to find a shelter near you 211 (Edmonton and Calgary)

Web: programs.alberta.ca

Under Life Events, click on Dealing With a Crisis and scroll down to Emergency Shelters.

Employment Insurance

p. 49

Call: 1-800-206-7218 (toll-free)

Web: servicecanada.gc.ca

Click on Apply for Employment Insurance.

Employment Standards (Alberta)

p. 48

Call: 1-877-427-3731 (toll-free)

780-427-3731 (Edmonton)

Web: work.alberta.ca

Under Working in Alberta, click on Employment Standards.

English Language Assessment Services p. 55

Calgary

Immigrant Services Calgary Society
Immigrant Language and Vocational
Assessment/Referral Centre

Call: 403-262-2656

Edmonton

Catholic Social Services
Language Assessment, Referral, and Counselling
Centre (LARCC)

Call: 780-424-3545

Fort McMurray

Keyano College
Continuing Education

Call: 780-715-3903

Lethbridge

Southern Alberta Language Assessment Services

Call: 1-888-329-4811 (toll-free)
403-328-4811

Medicine Hat

Karen Ziemann Consulting

Call: 403-527-5062

Red Deer

Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE)

Call: 403-346-8818

English Language Drop-in Centres p. 55

Calgary

Calgary Immigrant Educational Society

Call: 403-235-3666

Edmonton

Cultural Connections Institute –
The Learning Exchange

Call: 780-944-0792

Taber

Taber & District Community Adult Learning Association

Call: 403-223-1169

Eye Doctors p. 43

Call: Look under Optometrists in an online directory
or in the business pages of the telephone book.

Web: optometrists.ab.ca
Click on Find an Optometrist.

Family Violence p. 63

Call: 911 when in immediate danger
310-1818 (toll-free; 24-hour Family Violence Info Line)

Web: familyviolence.alberta.ca

Food Banks p. 74

Call: 211 (Edmonton and Calgary)

Web: afbna.ca
scafbf.ca (southern and central Alberta)

Foreign Credentials Assessment p. 46

Foreign Credentials Referral Office
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Call: 1-888-854-1805 (toll-free)

Web: cic.gc.ca
Point to the Immigration tab, click on Immigrate,
click on Prepare to Work and Live in Canada and
then click on Get Your Credentials Assessed.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) p. 35

Call: 1-800-959-1953 (toll-free)

Web: cra.gc.ca

Health Benefits, Adult and Child p. 39

Call: 1-877-469-5437 (toll-free)
780-427-6848 (Edmonton)

Web: humanservices.alberta.ca/financial-support
Click on Health Benefits.

Health Care Insurance Plan (Alberta) p. 37

Call: 310-0000 (toll-free; enter 780-427-1432
after the prompt)
780-427-1432 (Edmonton)

Web: health.alberta.ca
Click on Health Care Insurance and then
Forms & Brochures.

HealthLink Alberta p. 40

Call: 1-866-408-5465 (toll-free)
780-408-5465 (Edmonton)
403-943-5465 (Calgary)

Web: myhealth.alberta.ca

Human Rights Commission (Alberta) p. 59

Call: 310-0000 (toll-free; enter the 10-digit regional office number after the prompt)
780-427-7661 (north of Red Deer)
403-297-6571 (from Red Deer south)

Web: albertahumanrights.ab.ca

Immigrant Access Fund p. 46

Call: 1-855-423-2262 (toll-free)

Web: iafcanada.org

Income Support (Alberta Government) p. 46, 74

Call: 1-877-644-9992 (toll-free)
780-644-9992 (Edmonton)

Web: humanservices.alberta.ca/is

Income Tax p. 34

Call: 1-800-959-8281 (toll-free)

Web: cra.gc.ca

Insurance p. 30, 67

Alberta Superintendent of Insurance

Call: 310-0000 (toll-free; enter 780-427-8322 after the prompt)

Web: finance.alberta.ca/business/insurance

Insurance Bureau of Canada

Call: 1-800-377-6378 (toll-free)
780-423-2212 (Edmonton)

Web: ibc.ca

International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS) p. 45

Call: 310-0000 (toll-free; enter 780-427-2655 after the prompt)
780-427-2655 (Edmonton)

Web: work.alberta.ca

Under Immigration, click on International Qualifications Assessment.

Landlord and Tenant Rights and Responsibilities p. 28

Web: servicealberta.ca

Click on the Landlords/Tenants tab.

Lawyers p. 61

Law Society of Alberta

Call: 1-800-661-1095 (toll-free)
403-228-1722 (Calgary)

Or look under Lawyers in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.

Web: lawsociety.ab.ca

Click on the For the Public tab and then click on Lawyer Referral.

See also Pro Bono Law Alberta at pbla.ca/individual.

Libraries p. 12

Call: Look under Libraries in an online directory or in the blue pages of the telephone book.

Web: municipalaffairs.alberta.ca

Click on the Municipalities & Communities tab, click on Public Library Service and then click on Directory of Alberta Public Libraries.

Mail

See Postal Services/Canada Post

Mental Health p. 43

Mental Health Help Line

Call: 1-877-303-2642 (toll-free)

Occupational Health and Safety (Alberta) p. 49

Call: 1-866-415-8690 (toll-free)
780-415-8690 (Edmonton)

Web: work.alberta.ca
Under Working in Alberta, click on Occupational Health and Safety (OHS).

Permanent Resident Status Card p. 18, 70, 71

Call: 1-888-242-2100 (toll-free within Canada to apply for permanent resident status)

Web: cic.gc.ca
Point to the Immigration tab, click on New Immigrants and then click on Get a Permanent Resident Card.

Physicians p. 41

Call: Look under Physicians in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.

Web: cpsa.ab.ca
Use the Find a Physician directory.

Postal Services/Canada Post p. 13

Call: Look under Canada Post in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.

Web: canadapost.ca

Public Transit p. 7

Call: Look under Bus or Transit in an online directory or in the blue pages of the telephone book.

Web: cutaactu.ca
Click on Classifieds, click on Links and then click on Transit Systems. Scroll to the Alberta list to find your city's name.

Schools and School Boards p. 54

Call: Look under Schools in an online directory or in the business pages of the telephone book.

Web: education.alberta.ca
Click on the Parents tab and then click on School Choice.

Social Insurance Number p. 6

Call: 1-800-206-7218 (toll-free; press 3)

Web: servicecanada.gc.ca
Click on A to Z, click on S and then click on Social Insurance Number.

Student Funding (Post-Secondary) p. 57

Web: studentaid.alberta.ca

Temporary Foreign Worker Helpline p. 17

Call: 1-877-944-9955 (toll-free worldwide)
780-644-9955 (Edmonton)

Web: work.alberta.ca
Under Immigration, click on Temporary Foreign Workers.

Translators and Interpreters p. 44, 64

Alberta Transportation
(for driver's licence knowledge tests)

Call: 310-0000 (toll-free; enter 780-427-2731 after the prompt)
780-427-2731 (Edmonton)

Web: transportation.alberta.ca
Click on Drivers and Vehicles and then click on Driver Guides. Scroll to the List of Approved Translator Agencies.

Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta

Call: 780-434-8384 (Edmonton)

Web: atia.ab.ca

Workers' Compensation Board – Alberta p. 49

Call: 1-866-922-9221 (toll-free)
780-498-3999 (Edmonton)
403-517-6000 (Calgary)

Web: wcb.ab.ca

To find other government, health and social programs and services

- call 211 for a referral (Edmonton or Calgary)
- go to informalberta.ca

Contact Numbers and Information

	Name	Telephone Number	Address
Children's School(s)			
Dentist			
Doctor			
Emergency	Police	911	
	Fire	911	
	Ambulance	911	
	Poison Control	911	
HealthLink Alberta	Calgary	403-943-5465	
	Edmonton	780-408-5465	
	Provincewide (toll-free)	1-866-408-5465	
Hospital			
Walk-In Clinic			





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Courtesy of Edmonton Economic Development Corporation



ARE YOU NEW TO ALBERTA? Whether you are an immigrant, a temporary foreign worker or someone relocating from another province, look inside for basic information on topics including

- housing
- money, banking and shopping
- health care
- employment
- education
- human rights, laws and police
- social customs

Inside you will also find tips and useful contacts to help you settle here successfully. **Welcome to Alberta!**

