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# WELCOME to Alberta

VISAS

## Information for Newcomers



Government  
of Alberta

Alberta

# 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 card
- register for health care
- improve English language skills
- enrol children in school
- find work
- get a driver's licence
- stay in Canada
- get help
- 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. They are not actual photos of any individuals mentioned.**

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## Congratulations on choosing Alberta as your new home!

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


Moving to a new country 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 the book 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** on 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 June 2010. 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 don't have a computer, see **Accessing Computers and the Internet** on p. 12 for information about free computer access.

### **Note to Temporary Foreign Workers**

The chapter **Temporary Foreign Workers** on 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 Alberta.




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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 my 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 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.

### 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.

Courtesy of Travel Alberta



Edmonton city skyline & North Saskatchewan River



Courtesy of Travel Alberta



Stephen Avenue, 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 will help you settle into your new life. You'll also find lots of useful information and links at Alberta's official immigration website, [albertacanada.com/immigration](http://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, depending on the location:

- Calgary—\$80 to \$179
- Edmonton—\$65 to \$170
- Fort McMurray—\$189 to \$219
- Lethbridge—\$79 to \$139

For more information about hotels and motels, call Travel Alberta toll-free at 1-800-252-3782 or go to the website at [travelalberta.com](http://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 \$80 to \$120 per night. Go to [bbalberta.com](http://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 cost about \$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](http://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 \$30 to \$65 per person per day. Call 780-421-9622 or go to [edmonton.ymca.ca](http://edmonton.ymca.ca) and select Transitional Housing.
- **Post-secondary residences**  
Some Alberta universities and colleges offer temporary housing to non-students at rates between \$85 and \$100 (double occupancy) per day. To find a university or college in your community, go to the Alberta Advanced Education and Technology website at [advancededandtech.alberta.ca](http://advancededandtech.alberta.ca) (click on Post-Secondary).

## TIP

For help finding a temporary place to stay

- 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.

## Applying for a 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.



Source: Service Canada website ([servicecanada.gc.ca](http://servicecanada.gc.ca)). Reproduced with permission of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 2010.

## Applying for a Social Insurance Number

- 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 **secondary document** with that name. You must submit the original of this document.
- For more information about applying for a Social Insurance Number
  - call the Service Canada Employment Insurance number at 1-800-206-7218 and press 3 for information about Social Insurance Numbers
  - go to the Service Canada website at [servicecanada.gc.ca](http://servicecanada.gc.ca). Click on Find a Service Canada Centre Near You.
  - go to [servicecanada.gc.ca](http://servicecanada.gc.ca). Using the A to Z Services Index, choose Social Insurance Number.



## Using your Social Insurance Number safely

- Memorize the number and keep your Social Insurance Number card in a safe place.
- Don't use your Social Insurance Number card as personal identification.
- Don't show your Social Insurance Number card or give out the number to people who do not need it. Legally, you only need to give your Social Insurance Number to
  - your employer. Show your card or proof of application to your employer.
  - your bank or financial institution. Show the card when you apply for an account.
  - the government. Show your card when you access programs and benefits.
- If your card is lost or stolen, contact Service Canada. You may have to pay a fee to replace your card.

## Carrying identification

It's important to carry identification (ID) with you. Canadians are often asked to show their ID to confirm their identity, age or address, such as 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 home.

It's 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 passport from home 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 pieces of identification in a safe place and do not carry them with you:

- Social Insurance Number card
- passport
- confirmation of permanent residence forms
- Permanent Resident Card
- work permit

## Exploring your community

### Maps

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

- Your city or town may offer free or inexpensive street maps at a tourist information office. For the address, look under Visitors, Visitor Information, or Tourist Information in the blue pages of your local telephone book.
- Alberta cities offer free maps online. Go to the Travel Alberta website at [travelalberta.com](http://travelalberta.com). Click on Experience Alberta. Look for a link to maps, or choose Places to Go for information on cities and regions.
- 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 C-Train 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 taking the bus, it's important to dress for the weather, especially in winter.
- 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** on 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, 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. Transit inspectors may ask passengers to show that they have paid their fare, so be prepared to show your bus pass, receipt or transfer slip in case you are asked. 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

- look under Bus or Transit in the blue pages of your local telephone book
- 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](http://cutaactu.ca). Click on Classifieds, then Links, then choose Transit Systems. Scroll down to the Alberta list to find the name of your city.
- ask staff at an immigrant-serving agency. See **Useful Contacts**, p. 80.



## Walking

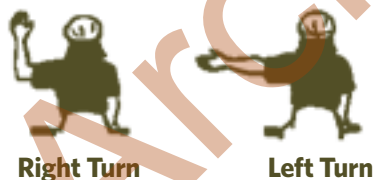
The following laws and tips will help you walk safely in cities and towns:

- 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 this. Look carefully and be sure vehicles have stopped *before* you begin crossing the street.

## Bicycling

Albertans of all ages ride bikes (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 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 (CSA) or American National Standards Institute (ANSI).
- Keep right or in the right lane. Ride single file.
- 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 brakes that will stop the bicycle, locking the wheels on clean, dry pavement.
- If you ride at night, equip your bicycle with front and rear reflectors and a white headlight.
- Bicycles designed for one person must carry only one person. A bicycle with a baby or child seat is equipped for two people.

## 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 the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory. See **Using Telephones and Directories**, p. 10.

## Driving

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





## Using telephones and directories

Almost every home and business in Alberta has a telephone. Many Albertans also use cell (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 pre-paid phone card for use in public pay phones). These are available at many locations, including Canada Post outlets, gas stations, grocery stores and drug stores (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 cell phone. You are billed monthly for the calls you make.
- Use a pre-paid 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.
- 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, including long distance.
- 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**

If you live in Edmonton or Calgary, you can dial **211** for help finding telephone numbers for social, health and government services.

Provincewide, you can search for telephone numbers for social, health and government services online at **informalberta.ca**.

## Getting telephone service

For telephone service in your home, you can have a landline (fixed line) connected or use 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 Telephone in the business pages of the telephone book or in an online directory.



**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, make sure to also provide 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, **911** is used to call for emergency help, including firefighters, police or ambulance services, in the following situations:

- 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 your 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'll 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 Employment and Immigration service 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 some Internet cafés 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 the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory.

## 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 your community

- look under Libraries in the blue pages of the telephone book
- go to the Alberta Municipal Affairs website at [municipalaffairs.alberta.ca](http://municipalaffairs.alberta.ca) to find the *Directory of Alberta Public Libraries*. Under Municipalities and Communities, click on Public Library Service. Then click on Directory of Alberta 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 drug store. You can also place properly stamped mail in the large, red Canada Post boxes on street corners and near public buildings. Go to Canada Post at [canadapost.ca](http://canadapost.ca) to find a post office, a postal code, or postal rates and services.

To address a letter or parcel

**DID YOU KNOW?** It's 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 the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory.

Copied with the permission of Canada Post



- 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



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.

You will find more information in the **English as a Second Language** section on 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's 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 (people from 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

- look in the **Useful Contacts** section on p. 80.
- call the Alberta Career Information Hotline. See p. 79.
- go to the Alberta Employment and Immigration website at [employment.alberta.ca](http://employment.alberta.ca). Click on Services to Immigrants. Here you will find programs and services for immigrants listed under settlement services, employment support and language training.
- go to the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies website at [aaisa.ca](http://aaisa.ca)

Immigrant-serving agencies do not all provide the same programs and services. If you visit an agency that cannot help you, they 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. A helpline, advisory offices and support services are available to help you succeed at work and in your new community.

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, such as income tax, will be deducted from your paycheque: 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

provides more information about working in Alberta. It is available in several languages from the Alberta Employment and Immigration website at [employment.alberta.ca/es](http://employment.alberta.ca/es) (click on Publications).



The *Temporary Foreign Worker Guide for Employees*



## Changes to your work situation

The following information (reprinted with permission from Citizenship and Immigration Canada) describes some conditions and issues that 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 (LMO) 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. Applications can be obtained online at [cic.gc.ca](http://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, call the Temporary Foreign Worker Helpline at 1-877-944-9955 toll-free.

- **Use of a representative**

If you choose to use a representative to help you with your application for a work permit, you are still responsible for the accuracy of the information provided. Further information about the use of representatives can be found at [cic.gc.ca](http://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 Temporary Foreign Worker Advisory Office and Helpline offers services in 170 languages. The Advisory Office and Helpline will help you learn about your rights and find solutions for situations involving unfair, unsafe or unhealthy working conditions.

Advisory offices are located in Calgary and Edmonton. Temporary foreign workers can contact an advisory office by calling or by visiting in person.

Once your needs are assessed, services provided by the Advisory Office may include

- providing help submitting a complaint. All complaints from temporary foreign workers are taken very seriously, and are referred for investigation.
- providing current information on available federal and provincial programs
- providing help in accessing and completing forms
- working with immigrant-serving agencies across the province to help you adapt to living and working in Alberta

To contact the Temporary Foreign Worker Advisory Office (Monday to Friday) visit or call,

- **North Location (Edmonton)**  
3rd Floor, City Centre  
10242-105 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5J 3L5  
780-644-2584
- **South Location (Calgary)**  
6th Floor, J.J. Bowlen Building  
620-7 Avenue SW  
Calgary, AB T2P 0Y8  
403-476-4540

To contact the Alberta Temporary Foreign Worker Helpline

- call 780-644-9955 in Edmonton and area
- call 1-877-944-9955 toll-free worldwide
- email [tfwadvisory.office@gov.ab.ca](mailto:tfwadvisory.office@gov.ab.ca)

## Temporary Foreign Worker Support Services

The Temporary Foreign Worker Support Services program 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:

- 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 banks, shops, housing, transportation, health, cultural, educational, recreational and legal services

Support services are available in the following communities:

- **Banff**—Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
- **Brooks**—Brooks and County Immigration Services
- **Calgary**—Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
- **Edmonton**—Catholic Social Services, Immigration and Settlement Service
- **Fort McMurray**—YMCA of Wood Buffalo Immigrant Settlement Services
- **Grande Prairie**—Grande Prairie Regional College Immigrant Settlement Services
- **Lethbridge**—Lethbridge Family Services, Immigration Services
- **Red Deer**—Catholic Social Services, Immigration and Settlement Service

You will find contact information for these immigrant-serving agencies in **Useful Contacts**, p. 80.



## 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 (AINP)

The Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program allows employers to keep employees in select occupations. Under this program, your employer may be able to apply to have you continue working permanently in Alberta and you may be eligible for permanent resident status.

The basic application steps are as follows:

- Your employer must submit an application for a permanent and full-time position to the program.
- Your employer's eligibility to nominate a temporary foreign worker for permanent resident status will then be assessed.
- When your employer's application has been approved, you must submit an application for nomination to the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program, along with a copy of the federal application package for permanent resident status.

For more information and application details, go to Alberta's official immigration website at [albertacanada.com/immigration](http://albertacanada.com/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

- toll-free at 1-888-242-2100
- online at [cic.gc.ca](http://cic.gc.ca). Under Come to Canada, click on Immigrate.





Courtesy of the Government of Alberta



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 3,703,979 (2009).
- 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 Standard Time Zone. When it is 7 p.m. in London, England, it is noon in Alberta.
- Alberta follows the North American standard for Daylight Saving 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 [albertafirst.com/profiles](http://albertafirst.com/profiles).



About 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 Environment Canada at [weatheroffice.gc.ca](http://weatheroffice.gc.ca) (click on Alberta).

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 Prairie and Northern Region website at [www.pnr-rpn.ec.gc.ca](http://www.pnr-rpn.ec.gc.ca). Click on Air and Meteorology, then click on Weather Safety.

### 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"> <li>• snow melts</li> <li>• rain</li> <li>• occasional wet snow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rain and thunderstorms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rain</li> <li>• some snow</li> <li>• snow stays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• snow</li> <li>• occasional blizzards</li> </ul>



### 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's exposed for too long in very cold weather (below -20°C). 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. 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. Most body heat is lost through the head.
- 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 wool, goose down or fleece layers of clothing if you're 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](http://albertacanada.com/immigration) (click on Weather and Maps).



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 June 2010; reviewed annually)

- \$8.80, or about \$18,300 per year

### Average hourly wage (as of June 2010)

- \$24.87, or about \$51,750 per year

### Average monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment

(as of April 2010)

- Calgary—\$1,082
- Edmonton—\$994
- Fort McMurray—\$2,060
- Lethbridge—\$843

### Average housing price (as of December 2010)

- Calgary—\$381,308
- Edmonton—\$310,885
- Fort McMurray—\$550,131
- Lethbridge—\$260,241

### Average price of basic grocery items (as of June 2010)

- bread (1 loaf or 570 grams)—\$2.88
- eggs (12)—\$2.17
- milk (1%, 2 litre)—\$3.27 (deposit and recycling fee included)
- apples (1 kilogram)—\$3.28

### Price of adult monthly transit pass (as of December 2010)

- Calgary—\$85.25
- Edmonton—\$81.50
- Fort McMurray—\$45
- Lethbridge—\$66.50







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](http://cic.gc.ca). Click on Before You Arrive. Then, click on What You Need to Know and click on General Information About 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 a similar greeting. Some people extend their right hand so 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 cm away from each other. Standing closer may make people uncomfortable.

- **Eye contact**

It is okay 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 of the time given in the invitation.

- **Public behaviour**

Violence and loudness in public places is not acceptable, including loud conversations, name-calling and spanking children. 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, 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 and to use your skills and experience to help others. In Alberta, organizations may interview volunteers for roles that match their interests and abilities while making sure the people they serve are safe. To find out more about volunteering, go to the Volunteer Alberta website at [volunteer.alberta.ab.ca](http://volunteer.alberta.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 household waste like 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](http://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's a good idea to ask permission before lighting a cigarette in someone's home or car. For more information, go to the Alberta Health and Wellness website at [health.alberta.ca](http://health.alberta.ca) (select Tobacco Reduction).

 **TIP**

To learn more about Canadian social customs, ask friends and family members what they have learned. Taking part in the Host Program is another good way to learn about many aspects of life in Alberta. For more information about the Host Program, ask 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 both 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 one room. Basement suites often rent for less.
- **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.



Townhouse or row house



- **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 a place to put them.
- **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
- go to **programs.alberta.ca**. Under People Services, 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 in windows.
- 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 drug stores.
- Look in the Classified section of local newspapers.
- Look in 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 your landlord (the owner or owner's agent) a security (or damage) deposit. 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.

If the apartment or house seems to be a good one for



Apartment

Single family homes

**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.

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 (ID)
- proof that you can pay the rent. For example, 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 suite 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. This written agreement is a lease, a contract that the landlord and you both sign.

Before you sign the lease, make sure it describes

- the type of tenancy: **fixed term** (for example, from January 1, 2011, to December 31, 2011) 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 (hooked up) 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 and family or staff at an immigrant-serving agency who to call
- go to [programs.alberta.ca](http://programs.alberta.ca). Under Life Events, click on Renting or Buying a Home. Click on Utilities, then on Finding Your Regulated Rate Provider.

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's important to pay your utilities on time every month. If you don't, 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's very important to describe in writing all of the existing damage and necessary repairs so 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 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
- 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](http://servicealberta.ca) and select 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 and 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. It's 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. Check your lease to find out how much and when notice must be given.
- 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 them even after you move out.
- clean all rooms and appliances. For example, clean inside, behind and under the refrigerator and stove, clean the oven, wash windows, walls and floors and vacuum carpets. If you do not, the cost of cleaning and repair work may be deducted from your security deposit.

### TIP

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





## Buying a home

The average housing price in a major city in Alberta is \$341,999 (as of December 2010). 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 rather than a type of housing. 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 Service Alberta at [servicealberta.ca](http://servicealberta.ca). Under the Consumer Information tab, click on Tipsheets–Consumer Information.

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

## Protecting your belongings

Whether you rent or buy your home, it's wise to insure your property and personal belongings. An insurance policy will pay for most of the costs to replace or fix belongings lost or damaged by fire or theft. Your landlord will not pay for your lost or damaged belongings.

To buy an insurance policy, you pay an annual fee to an insurance company based on the value of your belongings. If you rent, you will need a tenant insurance policy. If you buy a home, you will need a homeowner 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. Look under Insurance Agents and Brokers in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory.
- contact the Insurance Bureau of Canada Consumer Information Centre
  - toll-free at 1-800-377-6378
  - in Edmonton at 780-423-2212
  - online at [ibc.ca](http://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.





Automated banking machine



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# Money, Banking and Shopping

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



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## 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 the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory. Or, there may be a foreign currency exchange service in your community. Look under Foreign Exchange Brokers in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory.

## 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)
- safety deposit boxes
- debit cards and credit cards
- loans
- money orders and traveller's cheques



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 towards 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
- visit a few financial institutions and ask about their services

When you open an account, you will need to provide

- picture identification  
(see **Carrying Identification**, p. 7)
- a second piece of identification
- your Social Insurance Number (see **Applying for a Social Insurance Number**, p. 6) for income tax purposes

To open an account you do not need to

- have a job
- deposit (put in your account) a certain amount of money

### 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 stores in Alberta. 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 identification.

### Debit (bank) cards

When you open an account, you will be given a debit (bank) card. A debit or bank card is widely accepted by stores and businesses to pay for purchases.

You can also use your debit card to do your banking

- at an automated banking machine (ABM), also known as an automated teller machine (ATM)
- 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 will deposit payments electronically, 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 going into debt and paying it off, they build a favourable credit history or credit rating.

It's 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 utility bills, such as telephone or electricity 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's 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 saying that you are 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. You must pay many fees and charges in addition to a very high rate of interest. A \$300 loan for 14 days typically costs \$50 in interest and fees—equivalent to **435 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.

More information about banking and credit can be found online at

- Service Alberta at [servicealberta.ca](http://servicealberta.ca). Click on the Consumer Information tab, then Reality Choices. Select Dealing With Credit.
- Money Mentors at [moneymentors.ca](http://moneymentors.ca)
- the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada at [fcac-acfc.gc.ca](http://fcac-acfc.gc.ca). Select Publications, then Consumer Publications.
- the Canadian Bankers Association at [cba.ca](http://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 have contacted them.
- 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 birth date 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 or not 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 don't need them any more.
- Shred any unwanted credit applications you receive in the mail.
- Carry a minimum number of identification and credit cards with you.
- Keep your Social Insurance Number card 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 toll-free at 1-800-206-7218.

To find out how to protect yourself from identity theft, go online to Service Alberta at [servicealberta.ca](http://servicealberta.ca). Click on the Consumer Information tab, then select Identity Theft.

## 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* 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) and the fact sheet *Are you a newcomer to Canada?* (T4133) provide information about the Canadian tax system and how to complete your first income tax return. To order these publications, see **The Canada Revenue Agency** chart, p. 35.

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

## 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. You can apply for this credit by completing a *Canada Child Benefits Application* (form RC66) and submitting it, along with any required documents, to the Canada Revenue Agency. You may also need to complete and submit the *Status in Canada/Statement of Income* (form RC66SCH).

The pamphlet *Canada Child Benefits* (form T4114) provides more information. 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 all day, while others are open later, as much as 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tax packages, forms and publications</li> </ul>	cra.gc.ca	1-800-959-2221
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>income tax</li> </ul>	cra.gc.ca	1-800-959-8281
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GST/HST credit</li> </ul>	cra.gc.ca	1-800-959-1953
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Tax Benefit</li> </ul>	cra.gc.ca	1-800-387-1193
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>online course: Learning About Taxes</li> </ul>	cra.gc.ca/tax/individuals	



Like many Albertans, you may decide to shop at a mall where all the stores are in one large building or area and you can do all your shopping in one place. It's important to pay for your purchases before you walk out of each store into the common area of the mall 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 or not 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 less 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.

Check out these sources for more information about shopping wisely:

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





# Health Care

Under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan and the *Hospitals Act*, 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.

**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, providing you were eligible for coverage when you received the services.

### 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

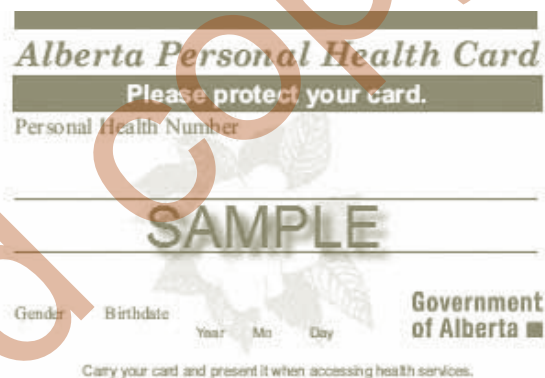
As a newcomer, you must register for Alberta Health Care Insurance within three months of your arrival.

To register, you must submit a completed 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. You can get an Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan application form

- online from the Alberta Health and Wellness website at [health.alberta.ca](http://health.alberta.ca). Click on Health Care Insurance Plan, then AHCIP Forms.
- by telephone at 780-427-1432 in Edmonton or toll-free in Alberta at 310-0000 (enter 780-427-1432 after the prompt)
- by writing to  
 Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan  
 PO Box 1360, Station Main  
 Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2N3
- by faxing your request to 780-422-0102
- in person at a registry agent office with Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan registration services. To find a registry agent near you, call 780-427-1432 in Edmonton or toll-free in Alberta at 310-0000 (enter 780-427-1432 after the prompt). Or, go to [health.alberta.ca](http://health.alberta.ca) and select Health Care Insurance Plan, then Registry Agent Office Locations.

## Personal Health Card

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan issues an Alberta 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 picture 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 1-866-278-4104 toll-free in Alberta.



### Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan Coverage

#### Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan pays for

- most physician services and supplies
- hospital room, food and supplies
- drugs received while in the hospital
- ambulance fees for people over age 65
- necessary surgery and supplies
- some podiatrist, chiropractor and optometrist treatments

#### 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 [health.alberta.ca](http://health.alberta.ca). Click on Health Care Insurance Plan, then choose Common Questions.

## Getting additional health care coverage

Some health services, such as prescription drugs or hospital charges for private and semi-private rooms, are not covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. Many Albertans have private health insurance plans that pay for these services, either through their employer or purchased individually from the Alberta government or from private insurers.

The Alberta government also provides help with health care services not provided by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan for low-income families and persons with special needs.

### Alberta Blue Cross 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 Alberta Blue Cross Non-Group Coverage, but Alberta Blue Cross Coverage for Seniors (for Albertans aged 65 or older and their spouse or 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](http://health.alberta.ca). Click on Health Care Insurance Plan, then on Prescription Drug Program.

### 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 Blue Cross Non-Group Coverage. For information about individual insurance programs, talk to your employer or look under Insurance in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory.

### Alberta Child Health Benefit

If your family has a low income, you may be eligible for the Alberta Child Health Benefit. The benefit 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 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 in the plan.

### 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 and pregnant women with limited income. It is also available for individuals and families who leave the Alberta Works Income Support program or the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program because of employment or Canada Pension Plan disability income. The benefit 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 the Alberta Child Health Benefit and the Alberta Adult Health Benefit

- go to the Alberta Employment and Immigration website at [employment.alberta.ca/hb](http://employment.alberta.ca/hb)
- call 1-877-644-9992 toll-free or 780-644-9992 in Edmonton

### Note to Temporary Foreign Workers

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





## 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, oxygen, hearing aids and artificial limbs.

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 about this program

- go online to [seniors.alberta.ca](http://seniors.alberta.ca) (click on the Health Related tab, then the link for Alberta Aids to Daily Living)
- contact HealthLink Alberta (see p. 40)



## 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. This service provides free health information and advice, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can talk to a registered nurse on the telephone or find information through the HealthLink Alberta website.

Go to [healthlinkalberta.ca](http://healthlinkalberta.ca) for

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

Call HealthLink Alberta at

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

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 the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory.

## 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.
- Use the Find a Physician directory of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta website at [cpsa.ab.ca](http://cpsa.ab.ca). You can search by physician's name, languages spoken, location or interests.
- Phone HealthLink Alberta (p. 40) and ask for the names of physicians who are accepting new patients in your area.
- Look under Physicians and Surgeons in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory.

### 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 picture 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 drugs or treatment.



## 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 your 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 plans, such as Alberta Blue Cross Non-Group Coverage or Alberta Blue Cross Coverage for Seniors
- private insurance plans
- vehicle insurance plans, if you are involved in a collision
- Alberta Employment and Immigration, if you receive Income Support, Alberta Child Health Benefit or Alberta Adult Health Benefit
- 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 or a 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 Alberta Blue Cross Non-Group Coverage or another health benefits 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 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) for infants and pre-school children, and health information such as child care, family planning and nutrition. They also offer health programs for pregnant women, babies and children. They may be able to arrange for an interpreter.

To find a public health office or community health centre, call HealthLink Alberta (see p. 40), talk to someone at an immigrant-serving agency or go to the Alberta Health Services website at [albertahealthservices.ca](http://albertahealthservices.ca) and click on Hospitals and Facilities.

## Immunization

Everyone who comes to Alberta from another country should be immunized for protection against certain diseases. If you have immunization records from your home country, 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 to provide your permission before your child is immunized.

## Using other health services

Not all health services are covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. The plan provides limited coverage for eye examinations and procedures, some mental health and addiction services, and no coverage for 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 Alberta Blue Cross Non-Group Coverage. When in doubt, discuss treatment costs with your health care provider or doctor before using their 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 the Alberta Association of Optometrists website at [optometrists.ab.ca](http://optometrists.ab.ca) and click on Find an Optometrist
- look under Optometrists in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan pays for a limited number of eye examinations and procedures each benefit year for Albertans under age 19 and over age 64. For Albertans aged 19 to 64, eye examinations and procedures are covered if a medical condition or episode of illness or trauma exists. 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 Alberta Child Health Benefit, Alberta Adult Health Benefit 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 friends or staff at immigrant-serving agencies which dentists they might recommend
- go to the Alberta Dental Association and College website at [www.abda.ab.ca](http://www.abda.ab.ca) and select Dentist Locator
- look under Dentists in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory
- call the Alberta Dental Association at 780-432-1012 in Edmonton or 1-800-843-3848 toll-free



## 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 Alberta Mental Health Board Help Line toll-free at 1-877-303-2642. 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 your 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 friend, contact

- your family doctor
- a self-help group such as
  - Alcoholics Anonymous at [aa.org](http://aa.org)
  - Narcotics Anonymous at [na.org](http://na.org)
  - Gamblers Anonymous at [albertaga.net](http://albertaga.net)
- Alberta Health Services' Addictions Helpline at 1-866-332-2322 for service information and referral. This service is free and confidential.

For more information about mental health and addiction services, go to [albertahealthservices.ca](http://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
- go online to the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta website at [atia.ab.ca](http://atia.ab.ca)

### Workplace culture

Alberta employers expect employees to be

- **on time** for work and when meeting deadlines
- **reliable**—employers expect you to be at work when you are scheduled to work. If you need to miss work, it's 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 don't know how to do something, ask. If you don't 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 are **team players** (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 open to new experiences in the workplace, such as learning about new equipment or working on different teams
- **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*

To order free copies of these publications

- call the Alberta Career Information Hotline toll-free at 1-800-661-3753 or in Edmonton at 780-422-4266
- download or order a copy online at [alis.alberta.ca/publications](http://alis.alberta.ca/publications)

Check out the tip sheets *How to Succeed at Work* and *New Job? Here's How to Make a Good First Impression*. You will find them on the ALIS website at [alis.alberta.ca/tips](http://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](http://albertahumanrights.ab.ca).

## Qualifications

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

### Certification and Registration Requirements for Employment in Alberta (CERTinfo)

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](http://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](http://cicic.ca). Click on Working in Canada, then on Professional Organizations in Canada.

To learn about working in any of the 50 designated trades in Alberta, including Red Seal trades, go to the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training website at [tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca](http://tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca) and click on Working in Alberta.

### International Qualification Assessment Service (IQAS)

The International Qualification 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 IQAS certificate that you can use to help you get a job, join a professional licensing organization or qualify for an education program.

Contact the International Qualification Assessment Service

- toll-free at 310-0000, then enter 780-427-2655 after the prompt
- in Edmonton at 780-427-2655
- online at [employment.alberta.ca/iqas](http://employment.alberta.ca/iqas)





### Foreign Credential Referral Office

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

Contact the Foreign Credential Referral Office

- toll-free at 1-888-854-1805
- online at [www.credentials.gc.ca](http://www.credentials.gc.ca)
- in person at a Service Canada Centre. To find a Service Canada Centre in your area, go to [servicecanada.gc.ca](http://servicecanada.gc.ca). Click on Find a Service Canada Centre Near You in the right-hand column.

### 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
- cost of books and course materials
- exam fees
- living allowance during study time
- travel expenses to write exams
- qualification assessments
- professional association fees

To find out more about the Immigrant Access Fund

- call 780-423-9677 in Edmonton or 403-204-2689 in Calgary
- go online to [iafcanda.org](http://iafcanda.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 about Alberta Works, contact the Alberta Supports Contact Centre:

- call 1-877-644-9992 toll-free
- call 780-644-9992 in Edmonton
- go online at [employment.alberta.ca/albertaworks](http://employment.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 online to [employment.alberta.ca/workfoundations](http://employment.alberta.ca/workfoundations)



#### **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 Alberta Employment and Immigration (AE&I) service centre. To find an AE&I office in your area, call the Career Information Hotline or go online to [alis.alberta.ca](http://alis.alberta.ca) and select Career Services Near You.
- get feedback on your resumé. Go to [alis.alberta.ca/hotline](http://alis.alberta.ca/hotline). Click on the Resumé Review Service link.
- find job postings and job search resources online at [alis.alberta.ca/jobs](http://alis.alberta.ca/jobs)
- go to the Alberta Work Search Online website at [alis.alberta.ca/worksearch](http://alis.alberta.ca/worksearch)
- talk to staff at an immigrant-serving agency. To find an immigrant-serving agency in your area, go to the Alberta Employment and Immigration website at [employment.alberta.ca/immigration](http://employment.alberta.ca/immigration). Click on Services to Immigrants.



The publications in the following list will help you learn more about how to look for work in Alberta:

- *Working in Alberta: A guide for internationally trained and educated immigrants*
- *Advanced Techniques for Work Search*
- *A Guide for New Job Seekers*

For a free copy of these publications

- download or order online at [alis.alberta.ca/publications](http://alis.alberta.ca/publications)
- call the Alberta Career Information Hotline toll-free at 1-800-661-3753 or in Edmonton at 780-422-4266

### TIP

If you are thinking about looking for work in another occupation, it's 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](http://alis.alberta.ca). Click on Occupational Profiles to find current and detailed information on more than 530 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 Employment and Immigration service centre. See **Useful Contacts**, p. 79.



## Knowing your rights and responsibilities on the job

### Employment standards

Alberta's *Employment Standards Code* and *Regulations* set out workplace rules for workers and employers about

- 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
- statement of earnings and deductions
- ending employment

To find out more about Alberta's employment standards

- order a free copy of the Alberta Employment and Immigration publication *A Guide to Rights and Responsibilities in Alberta Workplaces*. Download or order a copy online at [alis.alberta.ca/publications](http://alis.alberta.ca/publications).
- call Employment Standards toll-free at 1-877-427-3731 or in Edmonton at 780-427-3731
- go online to [employment.alberta.ca/es](http://employment.alberta.ca/es)


### 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 like 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. A pay stub showing typical deductions is shown below.

 **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

 <b>ABC RECYCLING PRODUCTS</b> <small>123 Private Road, Edmonton, AB T5J 4S7</small>			
<small>Name: Jack G. Candle 301 Stoney Run Road Edmonton, AB, T5K 5G9</small>		<small>Wage Rate: \$9.40 per hour * Overtime Rate: \$13.20 per hour Pay Period: September 4 - 10, 2011</small>	
Earnings:	Hours	Earnings	
Regular hours	30	\$282.00	
Overtime	4 (banked)		
Time off in lieu (earned August 25)			
4 banked hours x \$9.40/hour	4	\$37.60	
General holiday pay			
8 hours x \$9.40/hour	8	\$75.20	
<b>Total earnings</b>			<b>\$394.80</b>
<b>Deductions: **</b>			
Income tax		(\$20.00)	
EI		(\$5.00)	
CPP		(\$20.00)	
<b>Total deductions</b>			<b>(\$100.00)</b>
<b>NET PAY</b>			<b>\$294.80</b>

\* For the most current minimum wage information, go to [employment.alberta.ca/es](http://employment.alberta.ca/es).

\*\* Deduction amounts are examples only.



## Employment Insurance\*

Employment Insurance (EI) provides temporary financial help for unemployed Canadians and permanent residents while they look for work or upgrade their skills. To qualify for EI, you must have

- paid into EI
- been without work and without pay for at least seven consecutive days
- worked for the required number of insurable hours
- applied for EI

When you leave a full-time 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. To apply for EI, you must have a Record of Employment from each of your employers during the last 52 weeks.

If you are unable to obtain a Record of Employment from your employer but still need to apply for Employment Insurance benefits, contact the Employment Insurance section of Service Canada toll-free at 1-800-561-3992. Tell them you were unable to obtain your Record of Employment and ask to apply for Employment Insurance.

To find out more about EI benefits

- call 1-800-206-7218 toll-free
- go online to the Service Canada website at [serviccanada.gc.ca](http://serviccanada.gc.ca). Click on Employment Insurance.

\* Source: [www.serviccanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/index.shtml](http://www.serviccanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/index.shtml)

## Workplace health and safety

Alberta law protects all workers, including temporary foreign workers, from unsafe and unhealthy working conditions. Employers are responsible for the safety of all of their employees and all workers on their work site. Workers have a duty to take reasonable care to protect themselves and others around them. Workers also have a duty to refuse work if they believe they are in imminent danger. If you think something at your workplace is dangerous, and you or someone else would not normally work under those conditions, you must refuse to do it. Then, let your employer or supervisor know as soon as you can. If your employer does not fix the problem, call the Workplace Health and Safety Contact Centre at 1-866-415-8690 toll-free or at 780-415-8690 in Edmonton.

To find out more about workplace health and safety, go to the Alberta Employment and Immigration website at [employment.alberta.ca/whs](http://employment.alberta.ca/whs).

### 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 (WCB). For more information or to report an injury

- call WCB-Alberta at 1-866-922-9221 toll-free or 780-498-3999 in Edmonton
- go to the WCB-Alberta website at [wcb.ab.ca](http://wcb.ab.ca). Click on Report an Injury.



## 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.

### Business Link

The Business Link offers help and advice on topics from startup to taxation. To contact the Business Link

- call 780-422-7722 in Edmonton or 403-221-7800 in Calgary
- call 1-800-272-9675 toll-free in Alberta
- go online to [canadabusiness.ab.ca](http://canadabusiness.ab.ca)



### Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS)

The self-employment section of the ALIS website provides information and links to many resources. The website includes information about help with starting your business and about programs that offer financial assistance to small business, such as the Business Development Bank of Canada and Western Economic Diversification Canada. Go online to [alis.alberta.ca/selfemployment](http://alis.alberta.ca/selfemployment).

### Alberta First

The Alberta First website at [albertafirst.com](http://albertafirst.com) provides detailed information about Alberta communities, industries and businesses for sale. It also provides small business guides with information on topics from financing to marketing. For business-related information about a community, go to the website and click on Alberta Community Profiles. To download copies of the small business guides, click on More Resources, then click on Small Business Guides.



## 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 child care programs must meet government standards and facilities are inspected regularly. There are several licensed child care options:

- **Daycare programs and approved family day homes** provide care and learning through play activities for children under the age of six.
- **Out-of-school care programs** are for children six to 12 years of age. Out-of-school care programs typically operate before and after school hours and offer full-day care on non-school days.
- **Preschool programs** are for preschool children.
- **Group family child care programs** provide child care to preschool and school-aged children.

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:

- Go to the Alberta Children and Youth Services website at [child.alberta.ca](http://child.alberta.ca). Under Parents, click on Family Support for Children With Disabilities.
- Contact the Child and Family Services Authority in your area. Call 310-0000 toll-free and ask to be connected to the Child and Family Services Authority near you.

**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 is adequate. Many Albertans expect families to arrange care or supervision for children left alone under the age of 12. 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 daycare, out-of-school care, group family child care, preschool or approved family day home, 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 the Alberta Children and Youth Services website at [child.alberta.ca](http://child.alberta.ca). Under Programs and Services, click on Child Care, where you will find the link to the online application.



**DID YOU KNOW?** You may be eligible for the Universal Child Care Benefit, a federal government program for families with children under age six. Find out more by contacting the Canada Revenue Agency at 1-800-387-1193 toll-free or online at [cra.gc.ca](http://cra.gc.ca). Under Benefit Payments, click on Universal Child Care Benefit.





# Education

Alberta takes pride in a high-quality education system. In international test results, Alberta students scored in the top 10 in sciences, reading and writing, and mathematics. Many adults also take advantage of the wide range of educational opportunities that are available, from English language learning to post-secondary studies.

## Alberta's school system

Each province 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 4 1/2 to 19.

To qualify for an Alberta High School Diploma, students must pass a series of provincial examinations. Most students who plan to get 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
age 4 1/2 on or before March 1	Kindergarten (optional)	Elementary
age 6 to 11	Grade 1 to 6	Elementary
age 11 to 15	Grade 7 to 9	Junior High
age 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. With the exception of two communities, most separate schools are Roman Catholic schools. These schools provide basic education for Roman Catholic or Protestant students who are Alberta residents.
- **Francophone schools** provide an education in French. 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 unique teaching methods or learning environments compared to those offered in the regular public schools. Charter schools follow the Alberta Programs of Study. 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 tuition fees are charged, the following two requirements must be met:

- 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 resident, as defined by Alberta Education, includes people with study permits (minimum 1- to 2-year duration), temporary work permits (temporary foreign workers), refugee claimants, federal Temporary Resident Permits and those with diplomatic status. It does 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. If you cannot afford this, 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's important to find out from the school what the costs will be and if 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 goes 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. They also are closed between Christmas and New Year's Day, and for one week in March or April called Spring Break.
- Each school is closed for about four days in the school year: two for professional development (PD) days and two for teachers' conventions. On these days, students do not go to school because teachers are attending work-related events.

### TIP

It's important to arrange child care for children under 12 during school holidays and PD days if no adult or older sibling is available to supervise them.



## 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** on p. 62.

**TIP**

During snow storms, listen to a local radio station for announcements about school closings and changes to school bus schedules.

## 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. Check with your local school boards 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, if possible, to the school:

- identification (ID)—for example, your child’s birth certificate, passport or permanent resident status documents for you and your child
- school documents from your home country or province/territory (translated if possible) such as report cards, course outlines and examples of school work your child has done
- 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 the Alberta Education website at **education.alberta.ca**. Click on Parents, then on the link for School Choice.
- look under Schools in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory

**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.

**TIP**

You may need to have your education and training credentials translated. To find a translator

- call 780-434-8384 in Edmonton
- go online to the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta website at **atia.ab.ca**






## English as a Second Language

English language learning is a complex system. It's important to take classes in English at a level that is appropriate for you. An assessment (measure) of your English language skills is a good way to find out what level of English 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 for 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 these communities. You will find contact information for these English language assessment services in **Useful Contacts**, p. 83.
  - **Calgary**—Immigrant Services Calgary Society Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment Referral Centre
  - **Edmonton**—Catholic Social Services Language Assessment Referral and Counselling Centre (LARCC)
  - **Fort McMurray**—Keyano College, Community and Upgrading Education
  - **Lethbridge**—Southern Alberta Language Assessment Services
  - **Medicine Hat**—Karen Ziemann Consulting/ Assessor
  - **Red Deer**—Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE)

Counsellors at these referral 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 services

To find an English language drop-in service, call

- **Calgary**—Calgary Immigrant Educational Society  
403-235-3666
- **Edmonton**—Cultural Connections Institute  
The Learning Exchange  
780-944-9792



## Post-secondary education

Adult Albertans 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. They often are affiliated with a religious organization.
- **Technical 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. More information about apprenticeship can be found at [tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca](http://tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca).

For a complete list of all accredited post-secondary institutions in Alberta, go to the Alberta Advanced Education and Technology website at [advancededandtech.alberta.ca](http://advancededandtech.alberta.ca). Click on the Post-Secondary tab, then on Post-Secondary Institutions.

Before enrolling in any post-secondary program, it's 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 offer distance learning and online programs in addition to their regular on-campus 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 an Alberta Employment and Immigration service centre. To find the centre nearest you, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline.
- go to the ALIS website at [alis.alberta.ca/postsecondary](http://alis.alberta.ca/postsecondary)
- go to the Educational Information (EDinfo) website at [alis.alberta.ca/edinfo](http://alis.alberta.ca/edinfo)
- go to the Alberta Advanced Education and Technology website at [advancededandtech.alberta.ca](http://advancededandtech.alberta.ca) (click on Post-Secondary)



## Paying for post-secondary education

In Alberta, the cost of post-secondary education is shared among students, parents, spouses or partners, and government. Government assistance programs help post-secondary students pay for their education. To be eligible for financial assistance, you must meet the following criteria:

- You must be a resident of Alberta. You are considered to be a resident if you have lived in Alberta for the past 12 consecutive months and have not been a post-secondary or upgrading student during those 12 months.
- You must prove financial need.
- You must be enrolled as a full-time student at a designated or approved school in a designated program. You are considered a full-time student if you are taking a 60 per cent course load or a 40 per cent course load if you have a disability.
- You must maintain passing grades in your studies.

You may qualify for a student loan, scholarship, grant or bursary. Your eligibility for a loan is based on your resources and your allowable expenses. Scholarships, grants and bursaries are awarded on the basis of grades or accomplishments. You must repay student loans after you graduate. You do not have to repay a scholarship, grant or bursary.

For more information about student funding

- go to the ALIS website at [alis.alberta.ca/studentsfinance](http://alis.alberta.ca/studentsfinance)
- call the Student Funding Contact Centre at 1-800-222-6485 toll-free or 780-427-3722 in Edmonton

## 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 the Alberta Advanced Education and Technology website at [advancededandtech.alberta.ca](http://advancededandtech.alberta.ca). Under Community Learning, click on Lifelong Learning.
- call Community Programs at 780-427-5624 in Edmonton or dial 310-0000 toll-free, then enter 780-427-5624 after the prompt

**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 the Alberta Advanced Education and Technology website at [advancededandtech.alberta.ca](http://advancededandtech.alberta.ca). Under the Post-Secondary tab, click on Post-Secondary Institutions for links to colleges.
- contact your local school board. See **Enrolling Your Child**, p. 54.
- look for ads on notice boards in your community

### TIP

If you are interested in upgrading 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*
- Alberta's *Human Rights Act*

### *The 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, which include the right to travel, live and look for work anywhere in Canada

Learn more about the *Charter* by going to [canadianheritage.gc.ca](http://canadianheritage.gc.ca). Click on the A-Z Index. Click on Human Rights, then on *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.



Courtesy of Tourism Calgary

Calgary City Hall and Municipal Building from Olympic Plaza

## The Canadian Human Rights Act

This *Act* applies to federally regulated employers, unions and service providers who offer goods, services, facilities or accommodation 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 because of one of the above reasons) under this *Act*. For more information, contact the Commission

- toll-free at 1-800-999-6899
- online at [www.chrc-ccdp.ca](http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca)

## The 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, religion, colour, gender, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, family status, source of income, physical disability, mental disability and sexual orientation.

For more information, contact the Alberta Human Rights Commission

- by telephone at
  - 780-427-7661 north of Red Deer
  - 403-297-6571 from Red Deer south
  - 310-0000 toll-free, and enter the 10-digit regional office number after the prompt
- online at [albertahumanrights.ab.ca](http://albertahumanrights.ab.ca)

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

## 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, 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 may not be able to 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.

## Civil law

Civil laws are used to settle private arguments or disagreements among 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)
- are staffed by both women and men
- 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 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 think the police have treated you unfairly or badly, you can complain.

For complaints about police in your community, call the local police chief or police commission. Look for the telephone number in the blue pages of your telephone book under the municipal listings (city or town) for Police or Police Commission.

For complaints about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), contact the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP

- toll-free at 1-800-665-6878
- online at [www.cpc-cpp.gc.ca](http://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 (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 the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory
- 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 Society of Alberta website at [legalaid.ab.ca](http://legalaid.ab.ca)
  - look under Legal Aid in the white pages of your 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 Edmonton Community Legal Centre website at [eclc.ca](http://eclc.ca). Click on Legal Links, then select Community Legal Clinics in Alberta.
- **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 the website at [slsedmonton.com](http://slsedmonton.com)
  - call Student Legal Assistance in Calgary at 403-220-6637

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## 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, you have nothing to be ashamed of.

Victim services programs across Alberta offer free information, referrals and support to victims in the criminal justice system. Victim services provides victims with information about

- **preparing a victim impact statement.** The victim of a crime writes this legal document to tell the judge how the crime has affected them and the people close to them. This statement is used in court only after the judge finds the accused person guilty.
- **requesting restitution.** This is a way for offenders to repay victims for the loss they have suffered. The judge may order repayment to cover things like damage, destruction, loss of property and psychological or bodily harm.
- **accessing financial benefits.** The Victims of Crime Financial Benefits program is for victims who were emotionally or physically injured as a direct result of a violent crime that occurred in Alberta. It provides benefits based on the extent of the victim’s injuries. The victim must report the crime to police within a reasonable period of time. The application for these benefits must be received no more than two years after the date of the incident.

For more information

- call 780-427-3460 in Edmonton or toll-free at 310-0000. Request a copy of the booklet *Victims of Crime Protocol: What victims of crime can expect from the criminal justice system*. This resource provides victims of crime with information about what they can expect from the police, Crown prosecutors, victim service units and provincial and federal correctional authorities.
- go to the Help for Victims of Crime website at [victims.alberta.ca](http://victims.alberta.ca). On the website you will find
  - the *Victims of Crime* handbook, available in 13 languages (click on Publications)
  - *Help for Victims of Crime*, a guide for adults with basic reading skills



## Families and the law

In Canada, laws protect all family members: 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 towards children under 18:

- Parents must provide their children with food, clothing and shelter.
- 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.

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

- at 1-877-427-3731 toll-free or 780-427-3731 in Edmonton
- online at [employment.alberta.ca/es](http://employment.alberta.ca/es). Click on Alberta's Standards, then select Employees Under Age 18.

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

### 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.

The **Family Violence** section on p. 63 provides additional information about child abuse.

### 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, cell phones or email to hurt another person)

For help and information about bullying

- talk to trained counsellors at the Alberta Prevention of Bullying Helpline, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 1-888-456-2323 toll-free in Alberta. Help is available in more than 170 languages.
- go to the Bully Free Alberta website at [bullyfreealberta.ca](http://bullyfreealberta.ca)
- encourage your teens to go online to [b-free.ca](http://b-free.ca) or call 1-888-456-2323 toll-free in Alberta
- encourage your children to play an online game about stopping bullying at [teamheroes.ca](http://teamheroes.ca)

## Adults in marriages and common-law relationships

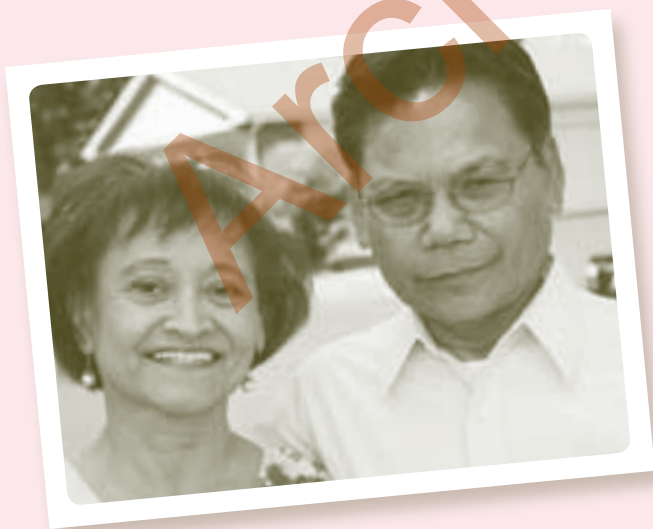
In Canada, women and men are considered equal partners in marriage and common-law relationships. Either the wife or the husband can ask for a divorce. Spouses seeking a divorce should each consult a lawyer. See **Lawyers** on p. 61.

For more information about divorce, go to [programs.alberta.ca](http://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

- go online to the Alberta Employment and Immigration website at [employment.alberta.ca/css](http://employment.alberta.ca/css)
- call Child Support Services in Edmonton at 780-415-6400, in Calgary at 403-297-6060 or dial 310-0000 toll-free and ask for the office nearest you



## 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. 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, call the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters toll-free at 1-866-331-3933.

Find more help and information about family violence

- by calling the 24-hour Family Violence Info Line at 310-1818 toll-free in Alberta. Help is available in more than 170 languages.
- online at [familyviolence.alberta.ca](http://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's wise to get an Alberta driver's licence, officially called an operator's licence.

## Getting an Alberta driver's licence

A 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.
- When you have legal presence in Canada and become an Alberta resident, your licence from your country, used along with an International Driving Permit, is valid for only 90 days after you arrive in Canada.
- If you have a licence from another Canadian province or territory, it is valid for only 90 days after you become an Alberta resident.
- If you are 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. However, if you have a vehicle in Alberta for longer than 183 days, you must register that vehicle in Alberta.

To get an Alberta driver's licence, you must prove that you are lawfully entitled to live in Canada and that you live in Alberta:

- If you are a new resident in Alberta, you must obtain an Alberta driver's licence within 90 days of moving to the province, regardless of whether you travel outside Alberta during those 90 days.



Courtesy of Service Alberta

- If you are 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/territory.

To get a driver's licence, you will need to visit an Alberta registry agent. To find an Alberta registry agent near you

- look under License & Registry Services in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory
- go to the Service Alberta website at [servicealberta.ca](http://servicealberta.ca). Under the Registries tab, click on Registry Agents.

You must bring a minimum of two pieces of ID with you to the registry agent:

- Bring one piece of photo ID, such as a Permanent Resident Card or passport (the original, not a copy).
- Bring one piece of ID with your signature, name and/or address, such as a credit card, cancelled cheque or a letter from an Alberta-based employer.

For more information about driver's licence ID, go to the Service Alberta website at [servicealberta.ca](http://servicealberta.ca). Under the Drivers/Vehicles tab, click on Identification 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.

**DID YOU KNOW?** If you do not have or cannot get an Alberta driver's licence, you can still get an Alberta photo identification card. 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](http://servicealberta.ca). Click on the Drivers/Vehicles tab, then click on Identification Card.

### **TIP**

You may need to have your documents translated. To find a translator

- call 780-434-8384 in Edmonton
- go online to the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta website at [atia.ab.ca](http://atia.ab.ca)

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

If you have a valid driver's licence from another Canadian jurisdiction, you can exchange it for an Alberta licence of equal class.

If you have a Class 5 or higher driver's licence from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Republic of Korea, the United States or Britain (England, Scotland and Wales, excluding Northern Ireland), you can exchange it for a Class 5 licence.

If you have a valid Class 5, 6 or higher licence from Japan or Switzerland, you can exchange it for a Class 5 or 6 licence.

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

- bring your licence (translated if not in English) to a registry office
- challenge the Class 7 knowledge exam and the Advanced Road Test (driving test)

If you pass, you will be issued a Class 5 licence. A Class 5 licence permits you to drive

- a two-axle passenger vehicle (car, pick-up truck, sport utility vehicle), excluding a motorcycle
- a two-axle passenger vehicle towing a trailer, if the trailer is not equipped with airbrakes
- a two-axle recreational vehicle, excluding those equipped with airbrakes
- 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 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 identification and your work permit or other proof of residence) to a registry agent
- 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 are also available, including a paper conversion dictionary and an oral test in English or in languages other than those listed above. Contact a registry agent for more information. To find a registry agent near you, go to [servicealberta.ca](http://servicealberta.ca). Click on the Registries tab, then click on Registry Agents.

If you pass, 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 sitting next to you in the vehicle. There are also other conditions on this licence as part of Alberta's Graduated Driver Licensing program. To learn more about these conditions and the next (probationary) stage of the Graduated Driver Licensing program, go to [saferoads.com](http://saferoads.com). Under Driver Safety, click on Graduated Driver Licensing.

## 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](http://transportation.alberta.ca). Click on Drivers and Vehicles, then 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's a good idea to shop around. New cars 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's okay 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 from 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.





To find new and used vehicles and dealers

- look under Automobile Agencies & Dealers— New & Used in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory
- buy a copy of a weekly auto sales newspaper (available at most convenience stores)
- look in the classified section of your local newspaper

For more information about leasing and buying vehicles

- go to the Service Alberta website at **servicealberta.ca**. Under the Consumer Information tab, click on Reality Choices. Then, select In The Driver's Seat.
- go to the Alberta Motor Association website **ama.ab.ca**. Click on Auto and Driving.

### Insuring a vehicle

By law, if you buy or lease a vehicle, you must buy automobile insurance that covers bodily injury, death and property damage in the event of an accident. You can be 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 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.

Find out more about vehicle insurance

- from an insurance broker or agent. Look under Insurance Agents & Brokers in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory
- online from the Insurance Bureau of Canada at **ibc.ca**
- by calling the Insurance Bureau of Canada Consumer Information Centre at 1-800-377-6378 toll-free or 780-423-2212 in Edmonton

**TIP**

Read your vehicle insurance policy carefully. Ask your insurance agent or broker to explain anything you don't 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 could be fined for driving a vehicle that has not been registered.

To register your vehicle, you must show

- photo identification (ID), such as a Permanent Resident Card, work permit or driver's licence
- proof that you are a resident of Alberta, such as bank account, credit card or utility statements showing your name and an Alberta address
- proof that you own the vehicle by providing a bill of sale, lease agreement or certificate of title:
  - If your vehicle is brand new, you will also need to provide the New Vehicle Information Statement you received from the car dealer.
  - If your vehicle was imported, you must provide the original copy of the Canada Transport Vehicle Import Form (Form 1) you completed for the Canada Border Services Agency and perhaps an out-of-province inspection.



- If your vehicle is not brand new and was last registered in another province or territory, you will need to provide proof of an out-of-province vehicle inspection or salvage vehicle inspection performed by an approved mechanic who has a valid journeyman certificate. For a list of approved inspection facilities, go to [transportation.alberta.ca](http://transportation.alberta.ca). Click on the Drivers and Vehiclestab. Then, click on Vehicle Inspection Program and select Locating a Vehicle Inspection Facility.
- 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 the Service Alberta website at [servicealberta.ca](http://servicealberta.ca). Under the Drivers/Vehiclestab, click on Vehicle Licence Plate and Registration.



Courtesy of Tammy Kohut

Vehicle child safety seat

## Driving and the law

Alberta has other laws related to driving, as well as a demerit system, that you need to be aware of.

### Seat belts

By law, all Alberta drivers and passengers in vehicles must properly wear a seat belt. Failure to wear a seat belt can result in a fine.

Children under six years of age who weigh less than 18 kg (40 lb) 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 within a two year period have their licence suspended for one month. During this month, they are not allowed to drive. 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.

## 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 0.08 per cent while driving a vehicle
- have an open bottle of alcohol in a vehicle. Even unopened containers of alcohol must be out of reach of the driver and passengers (for example, in the trunk of a car).

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

- 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

## 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, registration and insurance documents. You should get the same information from the other driver and write it down. Ask each witness 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. This is a good way to learn how to drive safely in winter.

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 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 cell phone 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're stuck during a snowstorm and continue to run the car, regularly clear snow away from the tailpipe.

Find more information about winter driving online at [saferoads.com](http://saferoads.com). Under Driver Safety, click on Driving on Winter Roads.







# 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 dependents 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

- are expected to pay taxes
- are expected to 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

- toll-free at 1-888-242-2100
- online at [cic.gc.ca](http://cic.gc.ca). Click on After You Arrive and select Being a Permanent Resident.

### 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 copy.

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

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.

## 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
- you did not obey the conditions (if any) of your residency
- you are convicted of a criminal offence
- you are believed to have been involved in spying activity or organized crime or 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 toll-free at 1-888-242-2100 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 residence 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

- toll-free at 1-888-242-2100
- online at [cic.gc.ca](http://cic.gc.ca). Click on Apply for 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, you can apply to sponsor close family 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 their 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

- toll-free at 1-888-242-2100
- online at [cic.gc.ca](http://cic.gc.ca). Click on Immigrate, then select Sponsoring Your Family.

### The Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program Family Stream

Under Alberta's Immigrant Nominee Program Family Stream, Canadian citizens and permanent residents who have lived in Alberta for at least two years and are at least 21 years of age can help close relatives who are skilled workers obtain Canadian permanent residence. Both Alberta relatives and nominees must meet specific requirements for this program.

For more information about the Family Stream

- call the Immigrate to Alberta Information Service at 1-877-427-6419 toll-free or 780-427-6419 in Edmonton
- go online to [albertacanada.com/ainp](http://albertacanada.com/ainp)







# 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

- look for emergency shelter telephone numbers on the first few pages of the telephone book
- go to [programs.alberta.ca](http://programs.alberta.ca). Under Life Events, click on Dealing With a Crisis.

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



Courtesy of Hope Mission

Archived Copy



## 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.

Find a food bank near you

- online from Alberta Food Bank Network Association website at [afbna.ca](http://afbna.ca)
- online from the Southern & Central Alberta Food Bank Federation website at [scafbf.ca](http://scafbf.ca)
- under Food Banks in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory



## 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 your 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 the Inform Alberta website at [informalberta.ca](http://informalberta.ca) to search for community and government services in your city or town
- go to the Alberta government Programs & Services website at [programs.alberta.ca](http://programs.alberta.ca). Under People Services, 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, their 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. As a refugee claimant, you are eligible for Income Support if your application for refugee status has been accepted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

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 their responsibilities
- you have been abandoned or need to leave an abusive situation

Tourists, foreign students, temporary foreign workers, persons illegally in Canada, persons on a Minister's Permit (except those approved for entry by the Alberta government and those recognized as victims of human trafficking by Citizenship and Immigration Canada) or those who have been denied refugee status are not eligible for Income Support.

Find out more about Income Support

- by calling the Alberta Supports Contact Centre at 1-877-644-9992 toll-free or 780-644-9992 in Edmonton
- online at [employment.alberta.ca/albertaworks](http://employment.alberta.ca/albertaworks)
- at an Alberta Employment and Immigration service centre. To find a centre near you, call the Alberta Supports Contact Centre at the numbers listed above.

### Note to Temporary Foreign Workers

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

Courtesy of Travel Alberta



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.

Contact your local tourist information office:

- Look under Tourist Information or Visitor Information in the blue pages of the telephone book.
- Go to the Travel Alberta website at [travelalberta.com](http://travelalberta.com). Click on Cities and Towns, then click on the link to your community's website.
- Go to the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association website at [auma.ca](http://auma.ca). Click on Becoming a Member, then Regular Members.

Your local tourist office can provide you with information about parks, recreational facilities and events, some of which are free. You will also find 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

- look under Sports Facilities in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory
- go to the Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation website at [tpr.alberta.ca/asrpwf](http://tpr.alberta.ca/asrpwf). Click on Sport and Recreation, then click on Provincial Sport and Recreation Associations. Use the alphabetical listing to find the activity you are interested in.

### 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.



Enjoying Alberta



## 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

- toll-free at 1-800-252-3782
- online at [travelalberta.com](http://travelalberta.com). Click on Experience Alberta.

## 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.

## Community centres

People go to community centres in their neighbourhoods to participate in social, fundraising or sports events, or 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.

## Getting there

If you don't 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 the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory.
- Buses travel between large and small cities throughout Alberta. For more information, look under Buses or Bus Lines in the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory.
- Scheduled passenger train service is limited to an interprovincial route with stops in Jasper and Edmonton. For information, call Via Rail Canada toll-free at 1-888-842-7245 or go online to [viarail.ca](http://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 the business pages of your telephone book or in an online directory.



## What to see

Alberta has many natural areas, including

- five national parks including Banff, Canada's first national park, and Wood Buffalo Park, Canada's largest national park
- nearly 500 provincial parks, 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 toll-free at 1-800-252-3782
- go online to the provincial parks website at **AlbertaParks.ca**
- go online to the Travel Alberta website at **travelalberta.com** and select Experience Alberta. Click on Things to See, then Natural Wonders.
- go online 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** on 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





This item has been either discontinued or is out of date. It is provided for informational and research purposes.



**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.



Courtesy of Edmonton Tourism

**\*Civic Holiday/Heritage Day**  
**First Monday in August**  
Many Alberta cities and towns hold cultural heritage celebrations on this weekend.

**\*Labour Day**  
**First Monday in September**  
This day honours working men and women.



**Hallowe'en** October 31  
Children put on costumes and go from house to house asking for candy and treats.



**\*Christmas Day** December 25  
This Christian holiday is celebrated by many people who put up a Christmas tree and lights, and exchange 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.



# Useful Contacts

## Alberta Employment and Immigration

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Alberta Employment and Immigration provides programs and services to help people succeed in the changing workforce, foster safe and healthy workplaces and help people in need. For information about the department's programs and services, go to the website **employment.alberta.ca**. You can access the department's career, workplace and labour market information in three easy ways: click, call or come in.

### Click

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#### Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website

**alis.alberta.ca**

ALIS is Alberta's online source for career, education and jobs information. ALIS has many resources, including

- **CERTinfo**—get answers to common questions about certification and registration requirements for regulated professions and trades in Alberta. Go to **alis.alberta.ca/certinfo**.
- **OCCinfo**—find job descriptions, educational requirements, salary information, employment and advancement opportunities, and projected growth information for more than 530 occupations. Search by occupational title, by interest, by subject, by industry, and more. Go to **alis.alberta.ca/occinfo**.
- **Job search resources**—select the Job Seekers tab at **alis.alberta.ca** to find a large database of job postings. You can also link to Alberta Work Search Online to find information, examples and exercises for every step of your job search.
- **Student funding**—go to **alis.alberta.ca/studentsfinance** for information about loans and grants, applying for and paying back your loan.
- **Publications**—go to **alis.alberta.ca/publications** to find more than 60 career, learning and employment publications. Most are free to Albertans, and many can be downloaded as PDF files.
- **Tip Sheets**—find more than 150 easy-to-read articles on career, learning and employment topics at **alis.alberta.ca/tips**. You can search alphabetically, or by topic or category.

### Call

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#### Alberta Career Information Hotline

The Alberta Career Information Hotline is a career consulting 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 online e-Resumé Review service.

Hours: 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m, Monday to Friday

Telephone: 780-422-4266 (Edmonton)

1-800-661-3753 (toll-free across Canada)

1-800-232-7215 (toll-free for callers who are deaf or hard of hearing)

Web: **alis.alberta.ca/hotline**

### Come In

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#### Alberta Employment and Immigration service centres

Alberta Employment and Immigration service 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 the ALIS website at **alis.alberta.ca** and click on Career Services Near You.

## Immigrant-serving agencies

The following is a list of immigrant-serving agencies operating in the province that are funded jointly by the Canadian and Alberta governments through the Integrated Service Program.

### Brooks

#### Brooks and County Immigration Services

Bay 2, Cassils Road  
Brooks, AB T1R 1M6  
Call: 403-362-0404  
Fax: 403-362-0435  
Email: info@BCIS-brooks.ca

#### Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

#200, 138-4th Avenue SE  
Calgary, AB T2G 4Z6  
Call: 403-263-4414  
Fax: 403-264-3914  
E-mail: reception@ciwa-online.com  
Web: ciwa-online.com

### Calgary

#### Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth

#201, 1112B-40 Avenue NE  
Calgary, AB T2E 5T8  
Call: 403-230-7745  
Fax: 403-230-0774  
Email: admin@calgarybridgefoundation.com  
Web: calgarybridgefoundation.com

#### Centre for Newcomers

#125, 920-36th Street NE  
Calgary, AB T2A 6L8  
Call: 403-569-3325  
Fax: 403-248-5041  
Email: newcomers@centrefornewcomers.ca  
Web: centrefornewcomers.ca

#### Calgary Catholic Immigration Society

3rd Floor, 120-17 Avenue SW  
Calgary, AB T2S 2T2  
Call: 403-262-2006  
Fax: 403-262-2033  
Email: contact@ccis-calgary.ab.ca  
Web: ccis-calgary.ab.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

#### Immigrant Services Calgary Society

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

#### Catholic Social Services Immigration and Settlement Service

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-Edmonton**

#50, 8627 rue Marie-Anne-Gaboury  
Edmonton, AB T6C 3N1  
Téléphone: 780-669-6004  
Télécopieur: 780-628-5135  
Courriel: [info@lecae.ca](mailto:info@lecae.ca)  
Site Web: [lecae.ca](http://lecae.ca)

### **Changing Together—A Centre for Immigrant Women**

3rd Floor, 10010-105 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5J 1C4  
Call: 780-421-0175  
Fax: 780-426-2225  
Email: [info@changingtogether.com](mailto:info@changingtogether.com)  
Web: [changingtogether.com](http://changingtogether.com)

### **Edmonton Immigrant Services Association**

Suite 201, 10720-113 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5H 3H8  
Call: 780-474-8445  
Fax: 780-477-0883  
Email: [info@eisa-edmonton.org](mailto:info@eisa-edmonton.org)  
Web: [eisa-edmonton.org](http://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](mailto:info@emcn.ab.ca)  
Web: [emcn.ab.ca](http://emcn.ab.ca)

### **Fort McMurray**

#### **YMCA Immigrant Settlement Services**

#201, 10011 Franklin Avenue  
Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2K7  
Call: 780-743-2970  
Fax: 780-743-2973  
Email: [heidi\\_carter@ymca.ca](mailto:heidi_carter@ymca.ca)  
Web: [ymca.woodbuffalo.org](http://ymca.woodbuffalo.org)

### **Grande Prairie**

#### **Immigrant Settlement Services Grande Prairie Regional College**

#202, 9924-100 Avenue  
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 0T9  
Call: 780-538-4452  
Fax: 780-532-8857  
Email: [iss@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:iss@gprc.ab.ca)  
Web: [gprc.ab.ca/community/iss](http://gprc.ab.ca/community/iss)

### **Lethbridge**

#### **Lethbridge Family Services Immigrant Services**

701-2nd Avenue South  
Lethbridge, AB T1J 0C4  
Call: 403-320-1589  
Fax: 403-317-7654  
Email: [admin@lfsimmigrantservices.ca](mailto:admin@lfsimmigrantservices.ca)  
Web: [lethbridge-family-services.com](http://lethbridge-family-services.com)



## Lloydminster

### Catholic Social Services

#204, 5101-48 Street  
Lloydminster, AB T9V 0H9

Call: 780-875-9084

Fax: 780-875-5007

Email: [angela.rugama@catholicsocialservices.ab.ca](mailto:angela.rugama@catholicsocialservices.ab.ca)

Web: [catholicsocialservices.ab.ca](http://catholicsocialservices.ab.ca)

## Medicine Hat

### Saamis Immigration Services Association

177-12 Street NE  
Medicine Hat, AB T1A 5T6

Call: 403-504-1188

Fax: 403-504-1211

Email: [info@saamisimmigration.ca](mailto:info@saamisimmigration.ca)

Web: [saamisimmigration.ca](http://saamisimmigration.ca)

## Red Deer

### Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE) Committee and Catholic Social Services (CSS) Immigration and Settlement Service

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

Call: 403-346-8818

Fax: 403-347-5220

CARE email: [care2@telusplanet.net](mailto:care2@telusplanet.net)

CSS email: [Remza.Mujezinovic@catholicsocialservices.ab.ca](mailto:Remza.Mujezinovic@catholicsocialservices.ab.ca)

Web: [intentr.com/immigrantctr](http://intentr.com/immigrantctr)

There are regional immigrant-serving agencies not listed here that may have other related immigrant services and programs to help you. To find the agencies closest to you

- go to the Alberta Employment and Immigration website at [employment.alberta.ca/immigration](http://employment.alberta.ca/immigration). Click on Services to Immigrants. Here you will find programs and services for immigrants listed under settlement services, employment support and language training.
- call the Alberta Career Information Hotline toll-free at 1-800-661-3753 or in Edmonton at 780-422-4266.
- visit an Alberta Employment and Immigration service centre in your community. You can locate these service centres by calling the Career Information Hotline. Or, go to the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website at [alis.alberta.ca](http://alis.alberta.ca). Click on Career Services Near You in the left-hand column.



## Useful contacts by topic

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### Addiction Services

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Addictions Helpline  
Call: 1-866-332-2322 (toll-free)  
Web: [albertahealthservices.ca](http://albertahealthservices.ca)

### Bullying Prevention

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Prevention of Bullying Helpline (24 hour)  
Call: 1-888-456-2323  
Web: [bullyfreealberta.ca](http://bullyfreealberta.ca)

### Child Abuse

p. 62

Child Abuse Hotline  
Call: 1-800-387-5437 (toll-free)

### Child Care Subsidy

p. 51

Call: 1-866-714-5437 (toll-free)  
Web: [child.alberta.ca](http://child.alberta.ca)  
(Under Programs and Services,  
click on Child Care)

### Child Support Agreements and Orders

p. 63

Child Support Services  
Call: 310-0000 toll-free and ask for the  
office nearest you  
780-415-6400 (Edmonton)  
403-297-6060 (Calgary)  
Web: [employment.alberta.ca/css](http://employment.alberta.ca/css)

### Citizenship and Immigration Canada

p. 70

Call: 1-888-242-2100 (toll-free)  
Web: [cic.gc.ca](http://cic.gc.ca)

### Dentist

p. 43

Call: Look under Dentists in the business  
pages of your telephone book or in  
an online directory.  
Web: [www.abda.ab.ca](http://www.abda.ab.ca)  
(Select Dentist Locator)

### Driver's Licence

p. 64

Call: Look under License & Registry Services  
in the business pages of your telephone  
book or in an online directory.  
Web: [servicealberta.ca](http://servicealberta.ca)  
(Under the Registries tab,  
click on Registry Agents)

### Emergency Shelter

p. 73

Call: 211 (Edmonton and Calgary)  
To find a shelter near you,  
call 1-866-331-3933 (toll-free)  
Web: [programs.alberta.ca](http://programs.alberta.ca)  
(Under Life Events, click on Dealing  
With a Crisis)

### Employment Insurance

p. 49

Call: 1-800-206-7218 (toll-free)  
Web: [servicecanada.gc.ca](http://servicecanada.gc.ca)  
(Click on Employment Insurance)

### Employment Standards

p. 48

Call: 1-877-427-3731 (toll-free)  
780-427-3731 (Edmonton)  
Web: [employment.alberta.ca/es](http://employment.alberta.ca/es)

**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  
Call: 780-424-3545

**Fort McMurray**

Keyano College, Community and  
Upgrading Education  
Call: 780-715-3903

**Lethbridge**

Southern Alberta Language Assessment Services  
Call: 403-328-4811  
1-888-329-4811 (toll-free)

**Medicine Hat**

Karen Ziemann Consulting/Assessor  
Call: 403-527-5062

**Red Deer**

Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE)  
Call: 403-346-8818

**English Language  
Drop-in Services** p. 55

**Calgary**

Calgary Immigrant Educational Society  
Call: 403-235-3666

**Edmonton**

Cultural Connections Institute—  
The Learning Exchange  
Call: 780-944-9792

**Eye Doctor** p. 43

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

Web: [optometrists.ab.ca](http://optometrists.ab.ca)

(Click on Find an Optometrist)

**Family Violence** p. 63

Call: 911 when in immediate danger  
310-1818 (24-hour Family Violence Info Line)  
Web: [familyviolence.alberta.ca](http://familyviolence.alberta.ca)

**Food Banks** p. 74

Call: 211 (Edmonton and Calgary)  
Web: [afbna.ca](http://afbna.ca) (Northern Alberta)  
[scafbf.ca](http://scafbf.ca) (Southern & Central Alberta)

**Foreign Credential Assessment** p. 46

Foreign Credential Referral Office  
Call: 1-888-854-1805 (toll-free)  
Web: [www.credentials.gc.ca](http://www.credentials.gc.ca)

**Goods and Services Tax (GST)** p. 35

Call: 1-800-959-1953 (toll-free)  
Web: [cra.gc.ca](http://cra.gc.ca)

**Health Benefits, Adult and Child** p. 39

Call: 1-877-644-9992 (toll-free)  
780-644-9992 (Edmonton)  
Web: [employment.alberta.ca/hb](http://employment.alberta.ca/hb)

**Health Care Insurance Plan  
(Alberta)** p. 37

Call: 780-427-1432 (Edmonton)  
310-0000 (toll-free) and enter  
780-427-1432 after the prompt  
Web: [health.alberta.ca](http://health.alberta.ca)  
(Click on Health Care Insurance Plan)



## Human Rights Commission (Alberta)

p. 59

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

Web: [albertahumanrights.ab.ca](http://albertahumanrights.ab.ca)

## Immigrant Access Fund

p. 46

Web: [iafcanada.org](http://iafcanada.org)

### Calgary

Momentum

Call: 403-204-2689

### Edmonton

Mennonite Centre for Newcomers

Call: 780-421-7400

## Income Support (Alberta Works)

p. 46, 74

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

Web: [employment.alberta.ca/albertaworks](http://employment.alberta.ca/albertaworks)

## Income Tax

p. 34

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

Web: [cra.gc.ca](http://cra.gc.ca)

## International Qualification Assessment Service (IQAS)

p. 45

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

Web: [employment.alberta.ca/iqas](http://employment.alberta.ca/iqas)

## Landlord and Tenant Rights and Responsibilities

p. 28

Web: [servicealberta.ca](http://servicealberta.ca)

(Select the Landlords/Tenants tab)

## Lawyer

p. 61

To find a lawyer call the Law Society of Alberta's Lawyer Referral Service

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

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

## Libraries

p. 13

Call: Look under Libraries in the blue pages of your telephone book

Web: [municipalaffairs.alberta.ca](http://municipalaffairs.alberta.ca).

(Under Municipalities and Communities, click on Public Library Services. Then, click on Directory of Alberta Public Libraries.)

## Mail

See Postal Services

## Mental Health

p. 43

Mental Health Board Help Line

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

## Permanent Resident Card

p. 70

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

Web: [cic.gc.ca](http://cic.gc.ca)

(Click on After You Arrive and select Being a Permanent Resident)

## Permanent Resident Status

p. 18, 71

To apply for permanent resident status from within Canada

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

Web: [cic.gc.ca](http://cic.gc.ca)

(Under Come to Canada, click on Immigrate)

## Physicians

p. 41

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

Web: [cpsa.ab.ca](http://cpsa.ab.ca)  
(Use the Find a Physician directory)

## Student Funding (post-secondary)

p. 57

Call: 1-800-222-6485 (toll-free)  
780-427-3722 (Edmonton)

Web: [alis.alberta.ca/studentsfinance](http://alis.alberta.ca/studentsfinance)

## Postal Services/Canada Post

p. 13

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

Web: [canadapost.ca](http://canadapost.ca)

## Temporary Foreign Worker Helpline

p. 17

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

Web: [albertacanada.com/immigration](http://albertacanada.com/immigration)  
(Click Temporary Foreign Workers)

## Public Transit

p. 8

Call: Look under Bus or Transit in the blue pages of your telephone book

Web: [cutaactu.ca](http://cutaactu.ca)  
(Click on Classifieds, then Links, then choose Transit Systems. Scroll down to the Alberta list to find your city's name.)

## Translators and Interpreters

p. 44, 54

Call: 780-434-8384 (Edmonton)

Web: [atia.ab.ca](http://atia.ab.ca)

## School Boards

p. 54

To contact a local school board or to find a school

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

Web: [education.alberta.ca](http://education.alberta.ca)  
(Click on Parents, then on the link for School Choice)

## Worker's Compensation Board of Alberta (WCB)

p. 49

Call: 1-866-922-9221 (toll-free)  
780-498-3999 (Edmonton)

Web: [wcb.ab.ca](http://wcb.ab.ca)

## Workplace Health and Safety

p. 49

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

Web: [employment.alberta.ca/whs](http://employment.alberta.ca/whs)

## Social Insurance Number

p. 6

Call: 1-800-206-7218 (toll-free) and press 3 for information about Social Insurance Numbers

Web: [servicecanada.gc.ca](http://servicecanada.gc.ca)  
(Using the A-Z Services Index, choose Social Insurance Number)

For other government, health and social programs and services

- in Edmonton or Calgary call **211** for a referral
- provincewide go online to [informalberta.ca](http://informalberta.ca)

## Contact Numbers and Information

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

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

- finding a place to live
- 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!**

