



Canada Border  
Services Agency

Agence des services  
frontaliers du Canada

# Settling in Canada

Information on importing goods for  
people intending to settle in Canada



RC4151(E) Rev. 06

Canada

This information is an overview of the laws, restrictions and entitlements that affect people intending to settle in Canada. The information in this publication was accurate at the time it was published. We make every effort to provide updates in a timely manner; however, legislative provisions and requirements may change at any time.

The various acts and laws that govern trade and traveller requirements, the importation and exportation of goods, and food, plant and animal inspection take precedence and should be consulted for precise information.

La version française de cette publication s'intitule  
*S'établir au Canada.*

## At Your Service

With a workforce of more than 12,000 public servants, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) provides services at 1,183 points across Canada and 39 locations abroad. At over 60 land border crossings and 9 international airports, we operate on a 24/7 basis. We administer more than 90 acts and regulations on behalf of other Government of Canada departments and agencies, as well as international agreements.

The CBSA delivers innovative border management through a network of dedicated professionals who work strategically with domestic and international partners to ensure Canada remains secure and responsive to new and emerging threats. We also intercept, detain and remove those persons who pose a threat to Canada or who have been determined to be inadmissible.

Border services officers are at Canada's ports of entry to serve you when you arrive in Canada. We are committed to providing efficient, courteous service. At designated bilingual offices, we will serve you in the official language of your choice.

If you require more detailed information that is not provided in this publication, please call the Border Information Service (BIS) line. The BIS telephone numbers can be found in the section called "Additional information."

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## Is this publication for you?

You will find the information in this publication helpful if you are moving to Canada for the first time to make this country your permanent home, or if you are coming to Canada for temporary employment for a period of **more than three years**. In either case, you can bring in your personal and household effects free of duties if you owned, possessed, and used them before you arrived in Canada.

However, if you have lived in Canada before, the conditions under which you can bring in your personal and household effects may be those that apply to a **returning or former Canadian resident**. We explain these conditions in the publication called *Moving Back to Canada*, which can be found at any Canadian embassy or consulate or on our Web site at [www.cbsa.gc.ca/formspubs](http://www.cbsa.gc.ca/formspubs).

## Ownership, possession, and use requirements

For your goods to qualify for duty- and tax-free importation as settler's effects, you must have owned, possessed, and used them before your arrival in Canada. If you have the sales receipts and registration documents for these items, you can use them to help prove they meet these three requirements.

It is important that you meet the three requirements of ownership, possession, and use. For example, if you owned and possessed the goods without using them, the goods are subject to duties. Please note that leased goods are subject to regular duties, as we do not consider that you own them.

### Wedding gifts

If you get married within three months before coming to Canada or if you plan to marry no later than three months after arriving in this country, you can bring in your wedding gifts free of duties.

However, you must have owned and possessed them before you arrived in Canada. In this instance, the "use" requirement for the goods does not apply. These same conditions apply to household goods you bring in as part of a bride's trousseau.

## Is exporting your money restricted?

Some countries limit the amount of money you can take out of the country. You should check with your banker, lawyer, or financial adviser. If you can prove that the money you wish to take out of that country has been restricted, you can claim a special provision that gives you up to three years to purchase household goods in the country from which you emigrated and to ship them to Canada duty- and tax-free. This provision waives the usual rule on previous ownership, possession, and use of goods.

## Items you can import duty- and tax-free

### Personal and household effects

Personal and household effects include goods such as:

- clothing and linen
- furniture
- furnishings
- appliances
- silverware
- jewellery
- antiques
- family heirlooms
- private collections of coins, stamps, or art
- personal computers
- books
- musical instruments
- hobby tools and other hobby items
- personal vehicles
- pleasure boats and the trailers to carry them (trailers are subject to Transport Canada requirements)
- mobile trailers, not exceeding 2.6 metres (9 feet) in width, which the owner is capable of moving on a personal basis
- utility trailers
- motor homes

- private aircraft
- tool sheds or garages which do not attach to, or form part of a dwelling.

However, houses, large trailers you use as residences, and any goods you use or will use commercially are **not** eligible as personal or household effects. These goods are subject to regular customs duties.

## Vehicles

Personal effects can include any kind of pleasure vehicles such as passenger cars, pickup trucks, camper trucks, vans, jeeps, chassis cabs, motorcycles, snowmobiles and motor homes, as long as you use them for non-commercial purposes. However, you should be aware that Transport Canada has many restrictions on vehicles.

Transport Canada defines a vehicle as any vehicle that is capable of being driven or drawn on roads, by any means other than muscular power exclusively, but not including a vehicle designed to run exclusively on rails. Trailers such as recreational, boat, camping, horse, and stock trailers are considered vehicles, as are wood chippers, generators, or any other equipment mounted on rims and tires.

### Transport Canada requirements

Transport Canada's requirements apply to vehicles that are less than 15 years old, and to buses manufactured on or after January 1, 1971.

Vehicles manufactured to meet **United States safety standards** do not comply with Canadian standards. As the importer, **before** you import your vehicle, you **must** contact the Transport Canada's Registrar of Imported Vehicles (RIV) to ensure that it is admissible for importation and can be modified to meet the Canadian standards after you import it.

The RIV is an agency contracted by Transport Canada to administer a national program to ensure that imported vehicles are brought into compliance with Canada's safety standards.

If you are considering importing a vehicle originally manufactured to meet United States safety and emission standards, contact the RIV at:

Registrar of Imported Vehicles  
Suite 400  
405 The West Mall  
Toronto ON M9C 5K7

Telephone: 1-888-848-8240 (toll-free in Canada and  
the United States)  
416-626-6812 (from all other countries)  
Facsimile: 1-888-346-8235  
Web site: [www.riv.ca](http://www.riv.ca)

If your vehicle does not meet Canadian safety standards but qualifies for importation, a border services officer will register your vehicle into the RIV program at the port of entry on your arrival in Canada. The program registration fee is CAN\$182 in all provinces except Quebec, where it is CAN\$197. You will then have 45 days to bring your vehicle into compliance with Canadian safety standards and have it inspected.

You cannot license your vehicle in Canada until it is modified and passes federal inspection under the RIV program.

Vehicles originally manufactured to meet the safety standards of countries **other than the United States or Canada** are not allowed into Canada, unless they are 15 years or older, or they are buses manufactured before January 1, 1971, or are entering Canada temporarily. **Before** importing this type of vehicle, you **must** contact Transport Canada at:

Telephone: 1-800-333-0371 (toll-free in Canada and  
the United States)  
613-998-8616 (from all other countries)  
Facsimile: 613-998-4831  
Web site: [www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety](http://www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety)

### **Other considerations**

Your vehicle will also be subject to provincial or territorial sales tax and safety requirements, so you should check with the vehicle department of the province or territory to which you are moving.

**Before** you export your vehicle to Canada, inquire with the customs authority of the country from which you will be exporting it if there are any requirements you must meet before you can ship the vehicle out of the country.

For more information, see the publication called *Importing a Vehicle Into Canada*. You can get a copy by calling the BIS at one of the numbers listed in the section called "Additional information" or from our Web site at [www.cbsa.gc.ca/formspubs](http://www.cbsa.gc.ca/formspubs).



## Alcohol and tobacco

If you meet the minimum age requirements of the province or territory where you enter Canada, you can include limited quantities of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products in your personal entitlement. These items **must** accompany you on your arrival.

Minimum ages for the importation of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products, as prescribed by provincial or territorial authority, are 18 years for Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Saskatchewan, and 19 years for Ontario, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island.

### Alcohol beverages

You are allowed to import only **one** of the following amounts of alcohol free of duty and taxes:

- 1.5 litres (53 imperial ounces) of wine;
- 1.14 litres (40 ounces) of liquor;
- a total of 1.14 litres (40 ounces) of wine and liquor; **or**
- 24 x 355 millilitre (12 ounces) cans or bottles (maximum of 8.5 litres) of beer or ale.

### Note

We classify “cooler” products according to the alcoholic beverage they contain. For example, beer coolers are considered to be beer, wine coolers are considered to be wine. We do not consider beer and wine products not exceeding 0.5% alcohol by volume to be alcoholic beverages.

You can bring in more than the free allowance of alcohol except in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. However, the quantities must be within the limit set by the province or territory where you will enter Canada. If the value of the goods is more than the free allowance, you will have to pay both customs and provincial or territorial assessments. For more information, check with the appropriate provincial or territorial liquor control authority **before** coming to Canada.

If you intend to ship alcoholic beverages to Canada (e.g., the contents of a bar or wine cellar), contact the appropriate provincial or territorial liquor board authority before you ship them, so you can pay the provincial or territorial fees and assessments in advance. To obtain release of the shipment in Canada, you have to produce a copy of the provincial or territorial receipt and pay all of the applicable federal assessments.

## **Tobacco products**

You are allowed to bring in **all** of the following amounts of tobacco into Canada without paying duty:

- 200 cigarettes;
- 50 cigars or cigarillos;
- 200 grams (7 ounces) of manufactured tobacco; and
- 200 tobacco sticks.

You can import more than these quantities, but you have to pay full duty and taxes on the extra amounts.

### **Note**

If you include cigarettes, tobacco sticks, and loose tobacco in your personal exemption allowance, only a partial exemption will apply. You will have to pay a minimum duty on these products **unless** they are marked “**CANADA DUTY-PAID • DROIT ACQUITTE**.” Canadian-made products sold at a duty-free shop will be marked in this way.

You can speed up your clearance by having your tobacco products ready for inspection when you arrive.

## **Currency and monetary instruments**

If you are importing or exporting monetary instruments equal to or greater than CAN\$10,000 (or its equivalent in a foreign currency), whether in cash or other monetary instruments, you must report it to the CBSA when you arrive or before you leave Canada. For more information, ask for a copy of the publication called *Crossing the Border with \$10,000 or More?* or select “Publications and forms” on our Web site at [www.cbsa.gc.ca](http://www.cbsa.gc.ca).

## Restrictions

CBSA assists other government departments in controlling the importation of certain goods into Canada, such as firearms, explosives, fireworks and ammunition, animals, endangered species, plants and plant products, meat, eggs and dairy products, fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as items for commercial use. You can get more information by calling the BIS at one of the numbers listed in the section called “Additional information” or by going on our Web site at [www.cbsa.gc.ca](http://www.cbsa.gc.ca).

### Firearms and weapons

Canada’s firearms legislation helps make the country safer for both residents and visitors. **Before** you attempt to import a firearm or weapon, contact the Canada Firearms Centre for information.

The following requirements apply to the importation of firearms and weapons:

- you **must** be at least 18 years of age;
- you **can** import non-restricted and restricted firearms, provided you meet all requirements; and
- you **cannot** import prohibited firearms, weapons or devices, including silencers, replica firearms, switchblades and other weapons.

You **must** declare **all** weapons and firearms at the CBSA port of entry or they will be seized and you may be subject to arrest.

For more detailed information about importing a firearm into Canada, request a copy of the publication called *Importing a Firearm or Weapon Into Canada* from a Canadian embassy, consulate, or mission, or call the BIS at one of the numbers listed in the section called “Additional information.”

For more information about applying **in advance**, for an *Authorization to Transport* (Form 679 EF), please contact:

Canada Firearms Centre  
Ottawa ON K1A 1M6

Telephone: 1-800-731-4000 (toll-free in Canada and the United States)  
506-624-5380 (from all other countries)

Facsimile: 613-957-7325

Email: [cfc-cafc@cfc-cafc.gc.ca](mailto:cfc-cafc@cfc-cafc.gc.ca)

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

## **Explosives, fireworks, and ammunition**

You require written authorization and permits to bring explosives, fireworks, and some types of ammunition into Canada. For more information, contact:

Explosives Regulatory Division  
Natural Resources Canada  
1431 Merivale Road  
Ottawa ON K1A 0G1

Telephone: 613-948-5200  
Web site: [www.nrcan.gc.ca](http://www.nrcan.gc.ca)

## **Food products, plants and animals**

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has a mandate to safeguard Canada's food supply and the plants and animals upon which safe, high-quality food depends. These controls, restrictions and prohibitions on the entry of plants, animals and their products, including food, mean you will need certificates or permits to import some of these goods.

Many products do not require a mandatory inspection, but if the goods you are importing need to be inspected, or if other actions are required, you may have to pay a fee.

Government of Canada departments and agencies such as Environment Canada and the CFIA as well as some provinces have special requirements for the import of food products, plants and animals. The *Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES) alone has import and export requirements for some 30,000 wild animals (including fish), plant species and their products.

Without the proper documentation, we may seize, dispose of or order the removal of some food products, plants or animals. Other imports may require treatment before they can stay. Importers are responsible for all costs related to disposal, quarantine or treatment.

For information on CFIA import requirements, refer to the Automated Import Reference System (AIRS) on the CFIA Web site at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca) or call a CFIA Import Service Centre toll-free at the following numbers:

Eastern Canada	1-877-493-0468
Central Canada	1-800-835-4486
Western Canada	1-888-732-6222

## Food products

Canada has complex requirements, restrictions and limits on the import of meat, eggs, dairy products, honey, fresh fruits and vegetables and other food from around the world. For example, root crops may be regulated and potatoes are prohibited. You can avoid problems by not bringing these kinds of goods into Canada.

You can import certain meat and dairy products from certain states in the United States. Before entering Canada with these products, contact the BIS at one of the numbers listed in the section called “Additional information,” or refer to AIRS on the CFIA Web site.

The CFIA and International Trade Canada (ITCan) have set limits on the quantity and/or dollar value of certain food products you can bring into Canada duty-free or that you can include in your personal exemption. Unless you have an import permit from ITCan for quantities over and above the established limits, you will have to pay duty ranging from 150% to 300%.

The following are some examples of the limits that apply to personal importations of food products from the United States:

- 2 dozen eggs;
- 20 kilograms of dairy products not exceeding \$20 in value (e.g. cheese and butter);
- 3 kilograms of margarine or butter substitutes; and
- 20 kilograms of edible meats and meat products, including turkey and chicken.

Within this limit, more CFIA and ITCan restrictions apply as follows:

- a maximum of one whole turkey or 10 kilograms of turkey products;
- a maximum of 10 kilograms of chicken; and
- a maximum of 5 kilograms of edible meats and meat products from cattle, sheep, goat, bison and buffalo.

### Note

All meat and meat products have to be identified as products of the United States.

## **Plants**

Plants are potential carriers of insects and disease. For this reason, border services officers help the CFIA control the entry into Canada of plants, including the earth, soil, sand or all other related matter in which they are planted or packed.

Houseplants are defined as plants commonly known and recognized as such, which are grown or intended to be grown indoors. These do not include bonsai plants. If you are importing houseplants from the continental United States as part of your baggage or household effects, you do not need phytosanitary certificates or import permits. For all other plants from the United States, you may require a phytosanitary certificate from the United States Department of Agriculture and an import permit from the CFIA.

To import plants from other parts of the world, you may require an import permit from the CFIA in advance. You may also require a phytosanitary certificate issued by the phytosanitary authorities of the country of origin (e.g. plant protection/quarantine in the country of origin).

You need permits to import orchids and cacti controlled by the CITES. For more information, contact the CITES office at one of the coordinates listed in the “Endangered species” section.

## **Animals**

You may import pet dogs and cats younger than three months old from the United States without submitting any documentation. However, a CFIA veterinarian must examine them if they appear unhealthy. If you own an assistance dog that is certified as a guide, hearing or other service dog, the animal is not subject to any restrictions as long as it accompanies you to Canada.

If you own cats older than three months, dogs older than eight months and pet dogs between three and eight months, you may import them from the United States as long as they accompany you when you enter Canada. You will also have to submit a certificate signed and dated by a veterinarian for each pet. The certificate must show that the animal is currently vaccinated against rabies and include the name of

the vaccine used and its expiry date. In addition, it has to identify the animal by breed, age, sex, colouring and any distinguishing marks. We cannot accept an animal tag in place of a certificate. If you import pet dogs between three and eight months that do not accompany you, you may require additional permits and certifications.

You need permits to import insects and butterflies controlled by CITES. If you are importing other animals from the United States, or animals of any kind from other countries, contact the BIS at one of the numbers listed in the section called "Additional information" or refer to the AIRS section on the CFIA Web site at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca) before you import.

## **Endangered species**

Canada signed the CITES, an international agreement to protect wild animals and plants and their parts or derivatives from over-exploitation in international trade. CITES operates through a system of import/export permits. However, you can import goods controlled under CITES (except for live animals) without a CITES permit if they are part of your clothing or accessories, are contained in your personal baggage, and you have owned, possessed and used the goods in Canada. For more information, contact the CITES office:

Telephone: 1-800-668-6767 (toll-free number in  
Canada)  
819-997-1840 (local calls and from all  
other countries)  
Facsimile: 819-953-6283  
Web site: [www.cites.ec.gc.ca](http://www.cites.ec.gc.ca)

## **Items you import for commercial use**

You have to pay the regular duties on any goods you import for commercial use, including:

- farm equipment;
- vehicles;
- other capital equipment you use or will use in construction, contracting, or manufacturing; and
- other goods you use or will use commercially or in a trade.

## Before leaving for Canada

**B**efore you arrive, you should prepare **two** copies of a list (preferably typewritten) of **all** the goods you intend to bring into Canada as settler's effects, showing the value, make, model, and serial number (when applicable). Divide the list into two sections: the goods you are bringing with you, and the goods to follow.

You have to present this list to the border services officer on your **first** point of arrival in Canada, even if you are not bringing in any goods at that time.

Since jewelry is difficult to describe accurately, it is best to use the wording from your insurance policy or jeweller's appraisal and to include photographs that have been dated and signed by the jeweller or a gemologist. You should describe each item of jewelry on the list of goods you submit. This information makes it easier to identify them when you first enter Canada, and later on when you return from a trip abroad with this jewelry.

At the border, the officer will prepare Form B4, *Personal Effects Accounting Document*, on your behalf, based on the list of goods you provided. The officer will assign your B4 form a file number and give you a receipt. You will need to present your receipt to claim duty- and tax-free entry of your "goods to follow" when they arrive later.

You can make the process easier by completing a B4 form in advance and presenting it to the officer when you arrive. You can get a form by calling the BIS at one of the numbers listed in the section called "Additional information," or you can visit our Web site at [www.cbsa.gc.ca/formspubs](http://www.cbsa.gc.ca/formspubs).

## Disposing of goods you brought into Canada duty- and tax-free

**I**f you sell or give the goods away within the first year of importing them into Canada duty- and tax-free, you have to pay any duties that apply immediately. The same rule applies to goods you begin using for commercial activities.



## Additional information

If you have any other questions, contact the Border Information Service (BIS) line. This is a 24-hour telephone service that automatically answers all incoming calls and provides general border services information. You can access BIS free of charge throughout Canada by calling **1-800-461-9999**. If you are calling from outside Canada, you can access BIS by calling 204-983-3500 or 506-636-5064 (long-distance charges will apply). If you call during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. local time, Monday to Friday, except holidays), you can speak directly to an agent by pressing "0" at any time.

You can also visit our Web site at **[www.cbsa.gc.ca](http://www.cbsa.gc.ca)**.

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