



Canada Border
Services Agency

Agence des services
frontaliers du Canada

Settling in Canada

Information on importing
goods for people intending
to settle in Canada

This pamphlet is an overview of the laws, restrictions, and entitlements that affect people intending to settle in Canada. The legislation always takes precedence and should be consulted for precise information.

The information in this pamphlet was accurate at the time it was published. However, legislative provisions and requirements may change at any time. We make every effort to provide updates in a timely manner.

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Protecting and serving Canadians

We at the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) are at Canada's entry points to help and serve visitors to Canada and Canadians in many ways. In carrying out our responsibilities, our fundamental commitment is to provide efficient, courteous service. Our service is offered in the official language of your choice at designated bilingual offices.

At the border, customs officers:

- help to monitor and control the entry of people and goods into Canada by keeping out goods that could threaten our health, environment, or agriculture;
- work to keep prohibited goods such as drugs, certain firearms, obscenity, hate propaganda and child pornography out of the country;
- work closely with importers and exporters to help businesses operate efficiently; and
- look out for missing children and runaway youths.

This pamphlet provides information and advice to help make your entry into Canada pleasant and problem-free.

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Is this pamphlet for you?

You will find the information in this pamphlet 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 pamphlet *Moving Back to Canada* (RC4105), which can be found at any Canadian embassy or consulate.

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:

- antiques;
- appliances;
- boats and the trailers to carry them (trailers are subject to Transport Canada requirements);
- books;
- family heirlooms;
- furnishings;

- furniture;
- hobby tools and other hobby items;
- jewelry;
- linen;
- musical instruments;
- private aircraft;
- private collections of coins, stamps, or art;
- silverware; and
- vacation trailers.

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.

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.

Vehicles

Personal effects can include vehicles 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 originally manufactured to meet the safety standards of countries **other than the United States or Canada** are usually not allowed into Canada, unless they are 15 years or older or they are buses manufactured before January 1, 1971.

Before importing your vehicle, you can contact Transport Canada at:

- **1-800-333-0371** (toll-free in Canada and the United States);
- **(613) 998-8616** (from all other countries).

Vehicles manufactured to meet **United States safety standards** do not necessarily meet the Canadian ones. As the importer, you are responsible for determining whether your vehicle complies with Canadian safety standards, or whether it can be modified to meet these standards after importation. You cannot import vehicles that cannot be modified to meet Canadian standards.

The Registrar of Imported Vehicles (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 by telephone at one of the following numbers, to verify that your vehicle is eligible for importation into Canada:

- **1-888-848-8240** (toll-free in Canada or the United States)
- **(416) 626-6812** (from all other countries)

If your vehicle does not meet Canadian safety standards but qualifies for importation, you will enter your vehicle into the RIV program when you report to a customs office. 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 and have it inspected.

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

Other considerations

Your vehicle may 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, make sure you first check with the customs authority of the country from which you will be exporting it. Some countries have export requirements you must meet.

For more information, see the pamphlet called *Importing a Vehicle Into Canada* (RC4140).

Alcohol and tobacco

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

Alcoholic beverages

If you meet the age requirements set by the province or territory where you enter Canada, you can include in your personal exemption **one** of the following:

- 1.5 litres of wine;
- 1.14 litres (40 oz.) of liquor; or

- 24 × 355 millilitres (12 oz) cans or bottles of beer or ale (for a total of 8.5 litres).

Note

“Cooler” products are classified according to the alcoholic beverage they contain. For example, beer coolers are considered to be beer; wine coolers are considered to be wine.

Beer/wine products not exceeding 0.5% alcohol by volume are not considered to be alcoholic beverages, and as such, no quantity limits apply.

Except in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, you can bring in more than this free allowance of alcohol as long as the quantities are within the limit the province or territory sets. However, the cost may be high, as you have to pay both customs assessments and the provincial or territorial levies and taxes.

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

If you meet the age requirements set by the province or territory where you enter Canada, you can include **all** of the following in your personal exemption:

- 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 duties 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

All physical importations and exportations of currency and monetary instruments equal to or greater than CAN\$10,000 must be reported to Canada customs. See the *Crossing the border with \$10,000 or more?* (RC4321) pamphlet for additional information.

Restrictions

CBSA assists other government departments in controlling the importation of certain goods into Canada, such as animals, firearms, ammunition, fireworks, meat and dairy products, plants and plant products, fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as certain food and drug products. You can get more information by calling our information line or find the address of your nearest customs district office on our Web site at www.cbsa.gc.ca/contact/rco-e.html.

Animals

Since animals may harbour pests or diseases that are harmful to people, animals, crops, and forests, we help the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and other government departments to control the entry of animals into this country.

You may import pet dogs and cats younger than three months old from the United States without submitting any documentation. You can also import without documentation assistance dogs, such as seeing-eye dogs, regardless of their age, from all countries as long as they accompany you when you arrive. However, dogs and cats must be referred to the CFIA if they appear unhealthy.

Dogs and cats from the United States that are three months old or older may be imported provided you submit a certificate signed and dated by a veterinarian for each pet. The certificate must show that the animal has been vaccinated against rabies within the last three years. In addition, the certificate has to identify the animal by breed, age, sex, coloring, and any distinguishing marks. Please note that we cannot accept an animal tag in place of a certificate.

For all other animals from the United States, and for animals of any kind from other countries, you should check in advance with the CFIA Import Service Centres (ISC) listed below:

Eastern Import Service Centre, Montréal

Hours: 7:00 to 23:00 (Eastern Standard Time)

Telephone: 1-877-493-0468 (toll-free in Canada and the United States)

(514) 493-0468 (local calls and from all other countries)

Fax: (514) 493-4103

Central Import Service Centre, Toronto

Hours: 7:00 to 24:00 (Eastern Standard Time)

Telephone: 1-800-835-4486 (toll-free in Canada and the United States)

(416) 661-3039 (local calls and from all other countries)

Fax: (416) 661-5767

Western Import Service Centre, Vancouver

Hours: 7:00 to 24:00 (Pacific Standard Time)

Telephone: 1-888-732-6222 (toll-free in Canada and the United States)

(604) 666-9240 (local calls and from all other countries)

Fax: (604) 270-9247

You can also find information on the CFIA's Web site: www.inspection.gc.ca.

Endangered species

Canada has signed an international agreement, the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES), to protect wild animal and plants and their parts or derivatives, from over-exploitation in international trade. CITES operates through an import/export permits. However, goods that are controlled under CITES (except live animals) that you have owned and possessed in your usual country of residence and that form part of your household belongings may be exempted from a CITES permit.

You cannot sell or dispose of the CITES-controlled item until 90 days after the date on which this exemption is claimed.

For more information, please contact:

CITES Office
Canadian Wildlife Service
Environment Canada
Ottawa ON K1A 0H3

Telephone: (819) 997-1840

Fax: (819) 953-6283

Web site: www.cites.ec.gc.ca

Firearms

Canada's firearms laws help make our country safer for both residents and visitors. We suggest you contact one of our customs offices or a chief firearms officer for information before you attempt to import a firearm.

The following requirements apply to the importation of firearms:

- You must be at least 18 years of age.
- You cannot import prohibited firearms or any prohibited weapons or devices, including silencers and replica firearms.

For more information about importing a firearm into Canada, request a copy of the pamphlet *Importing a Firearm or Weapon Into Canada (RC4227)* from a Canadian embassy, consulate, or mission. For more information about applying for a Canadian firearms licence or an *Authorization to Transport (ATT)*, contact the Canadian Firearms Centre (CFC).

Canadian Firearms Centre
50 O'Connor Street
Ottawa ON K1A 1M6

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

Fax: (613) 957-7325

Web site: www.cfc.gc.ca

Meat, dairy products, and fresh fruits and vegetables

Canada has many requirements, restrictions, and limits that apply to importing these and other foodstuffs. You can avoid problems by not bringing such goods into Canada. For more information, call the information line or find the address of your nearest customs district office on our Web site at www.cbsa.gc.ca/contact/rco-e.html.

Plants

Plants are potential carriers of insects and disease. For this reason, customs 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 houseplants, grown or intended to be grown indoors**. These do not include bonsai plants.

Houseplants being imported from the **continental** United States as part of a traveller's baggage or with household effects do not require phytosanitary certificates or import permits.

Houseplants from Hawaii entering Canada as part of a traveller's baggage or with household effects are admissible if they are bare-root and free of soil and all other related growing media, and if the container bears a stamped certificate from the Department of Agriculture of the State of Hawaii.

All other plants from the United States require a phytosanitary certificate from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and may require an import permit issued in advance by the CFIA.

Plants from countries other than the continental United States require a plant protection import permit issued by the CFIA. The permit must be obtained well in advance of the material being exported or shipped to Canada. The CFIA may require that the plant material be accompanied by a Phytosanitary Certificate issued by the phytosanitary authorities (i.e., Plant Protection/Quarantine authorities) in the country of origin.

For more information, contact any CFIA Import Service Centre listed in this pamphlet.

Before coming to Canada

Before 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 customs officer on your 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 jeweler's appraisal and to include photographs. You should describe each item of jewelry on the list of goods you submit. This information makes it easier to identify your jewelry at customs when you first enter Canada, and later on if you take it with you on a trip abroad.

At the border, the customs 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 order this form from the CBSA Distribution Centre listed at the end of this pamphlet.

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

If 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.

Need more information?

For more information or clarification, please contact your nearest Canadian embassy or consulate, or call our Automated Customs Information Service (ACIS). If you are calling from outside Canada, you can access ACIS by calling (204) 983-3500 or (506) 636-5064. Long distance charges will apply. You can access ACIS free of charge within Canada by calling 1-800-461-9999.

Most of our publications are available on our Web site at www.cbsa.gc.ca.

You can also request publications from the CBSA Distribution Centre:

Telephone: 1-800-959-2221 (toll-free in Canada and the United States),

Fax: (613) 946-0622

Comments or suggestions?

If you have comments or suggestions about this pamphlet, we would like to hear from you.

Please write or fax us at:

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