



THE ROAD TO CITIZENSHIP

There have been twists and turns as our country decided what it meant to be a Canadian citizen.

There are different ways to become a Canadian citizen. One is to be born here, or to be born anywhere in the world if one or both of your parents is Canadian. Another is to become a naturalized citizen. That means you were born in another country but applied and were approved to become Canadian.



TRULY CANADIAN

Before 1947, people who were born in Canada or were naturalized were actually British subjects. After the Second World War, Canadians saw themselves and their country differently. Many had always felt a stronger connection to Canada than to Britain. And as people from more countries moved to Canada, the government wanted to create a sense of belonging and unity. This growing feeling of national identity led to the *Canadian Citizenship Act*. It was passed in 1946 and took effect on Jan. 1, 1947. It set out how people could gain — and lose — citizenship. For instance, if you served in the military of an enemy country or lived outside of Canada for more than six years, our government could take away your citizenship. In 1977, a new act gave all Canadian citizens the same rights. It is still in use today. Before that, British subjects who came here were treated better than immigrants from other countries when they wanted to become citizens. Canadians also used to lose their citizenship if they became citizens of another country. The 1977 act permitted what's known as dual citizenship.

BECOMING A CITIZEN

Someone who does not have Canadian parents and was born in another country must meet several conditions to become a citizen. To apply for citizenship when they're over 18, people must typically:

- ✓ **be a permanent resident**
- ✓ **have lived in Canada for at least three years during the five years before signing a citizenship application**
- ✓ **file taxes in Canada for a set time**
- ✓ **not have done certain types of illegal things**
- ✓ **be able to communicate acceptably in either English or French**
- ✓ **pass the citizenship test**
- ✓ **take the citizenship oath**

The title may be different depending on the federal government at the time, but there's always a Member of Parliament who is the minister in charge of citizenship. That person has the power to give citizenship to someone who is experiencing unusual hardship or who has provided valuable services to the country.



**MARRYING A CANADIAN CITIZEN
DOESN'T AUTOMATICALLY MAKE
SOMEONE A CANADIAN CITIZEN.**



The Canadian government can take away (revoke) someone's citizenship if they lied on their application.



**I swear (or affirm)
that I will be faithful
and bear true allegiance
to His Majesty King Charles the Third
King of Canada
his Heirs and Successors
and that I will faithfully observe
the laws of Canada
including the Constitution
which recognizes and affirms
the Aboriginal and treaty rights of
First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples
and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.**

GOOD SWEARING

When you make a very serious promise, it's known as swearing or affirming an oath. (In this case, swearing means stating something important that you agree to.) When someone successfully applies to become a Canadian citizen, they swear the Canadian oath of citizenship printed above. It focuses on obeying the laws of Canada and being loyal to the sovereign — the king or queen. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada issued 94 calls to action, including updating the citizenship oath. The Government of Canada changed it in 2021 to add wording about Indigenous Peoples and history.

CANADIAN CITIZENS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- live anywhere in the country
- be treated fairly no matter who they are
- apply for a passport
- enter and leave Canada
- have and change religious or personal beliefs
- speak and express themselves freely
- challenge the government if they believe it's holding them unfairly
- be considered innocent until a court proves them guilty
- preserve and promote their language and culture
- receive services from the Canadian government in either English or French

CITIZENS OVER 18 HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- vote in elections
- be political candidates

CANADIAN CITIZENS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- respecting other people's rights and freedoms
- obeying the law
- looking after themselves and their families
- respecting English and French
- respecting multiculturalism and other cultures
- being part of a jury when asked
- voting in elections
- volunteering
- protecting the environment and Canada's heritage

THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THE MAIN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES THAT GO WITH BEING CANADIAN. WHAT OTHERS CAN YOU THINK OF?



You can still live in Canada if you aren't a citizen. Someone who has legally immigrated here and has government approval to stay but is not a citizen is called a **permanent resident**.

A **refugee** or **refugee claimant**

has asked the government to be allowed to stay here because of fear of treatment from a home country. Other people have permission to travel for long periods, go to school in Canada or work here for a specific length of time. They must have a document called a **visa**.

