



# Your first days in Manitoba

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**NEWCOMER GUIDE**

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Written for CLB 5+

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## WELCOME

*Guide to icons*

*Who should use this guide*

## 6 YOUR NEW HOME

- 6 About Canada
- 10 Canada's Peoples
- 11 About Manitoba

## 13 GETTING TO KNOW MANITOBA

- 13 Weather
- 17 Cost of Living
- 18 Getting Around
- 20 Getting Connected

## 21 YOUR FIRST DAYS CHECKLIST

- 21 Find a place to live
- 24 Get essential documents
- 29 Connect with newcomer serving organizations
- 30 Get your children in school
- 35 Apply for government benefits
- 36 Sign up for language classes
- 38 Know venues for recreation
- 40 Know where to get help
- 43 Checklist

## 44 WORKING IN MANITOBA

- 44 Career Basics
- 45 Job Search Basics

## 47 ADJUSTING TO CANADIAN LIFE

- 47 The Four Stages of Adaptation

## 50 ABOUT ENGLISH ONLINE, INC.

## 52 SOURCES

# WELCOME

Welcome to your new home!

Right now, it might feel like you have a million things to do upon arriving. It can be hard to decide where to start.

This guide was made with your needs in mind. We'll show you the first tasks you should accomplish to point you in the right direction.

You'll also learn:

- What Canada and Manitoba are like.
- Where to get newcomer services.
- How to start your career in Manitoba.
- How to adjust to Canadian life.

We've kept it simple so you don't drown in information. When you're ready and have more time, you can explore more tips at [english-online.ca](http://english-online.ca).

Moving to a new country is exciting, but it can also be challenging. We hope that your settlement will be smooth and worry-free with the help of this guide.

# GUIDE TO ICONS

You'll see these symbols throughout this guide:



*This is a tip you might find useful.*



*This provides links to other websites where you will find information, resources, or the services related to the topic discussed in the section. Some links may also be found in the text. They are blue and underlined.*



*This means additional information.*

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**Disclaimer:** We've gathered website links and contact numbers to help you get information and services. While we strive for accuracy, URL links and numbers can change. To avoid inconvenience, please check with the specific organization or agency to confirm available services, locations, or opening hours before going in person.

## WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE?

We made this guide for newcomers to Manitoba with Permanent Residents and Refugees in mind.

While the information presented here will be helpful to all newcomers to the province, some of the programs and services mentioned may not be open to all.

Depending on your immigration status, you will find that you qualify to some, but not all programs listed in this booklet.

**All newcomers are more than welcome to use this guide to learn more about Manitoba and know what to expect when they arrive.** But please remember to check the eligibility requirements of programs you're interested in before applying.

If you have questions or suggestions about the content of this guide, please email us at [info@english-online.ca](mailto:info@english-online.ca).

## YOUR NEW HOME

### About Canada

*Aside from majestic scenery, maple syrup, and hockey, the country is known for its diversity and most especially for its kind and welcoming people.*



*Woman draped in flag of Canada by Andre Furtado from Pexels. Free to use (CCO).*

Canada is the second largest country in the world with an area of almost 10 million square kilometres. It touches the Pacific, Arctic, and Atlantic oceans, making it the country with the longest coastline. It also spans six time zones: Pacific (PT), Mountain (MT), Central (CT), Eastern (ET), Atlantic (AT) and Newfoundland (NT). Manitoba is in the Central Time Zone.



*Political map of Canada (modified) unknown author from Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-SA*

Canada is composed of 10 provinces and three territories that are divided into five regions:

**The Atlantic Region:**  
**Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), Prince Edward Island (PEI), Nova Scotia (NS), and New Brunswick (NB)**

This region is known for its natural coastal beauty and rich history. Nova Scotia is called the gateway to Canada while Newfoundland and Labrador is

the oldest colony of the British Empire. Fishing, farming, forestry, and mining are the region's main industries.

**Central Canada: Quebec (QC) and Ontario (ON)**

More than half of the population lives in this region. It is the industrial and manufacturing

heartland of Canada and where the nation's capital, Ottawa (Ontario), is located. Ontario and Quebec produce more than three-quarters of all Canadian manufactured goods.

**The Prairie Provinces:**  
**Manitoba (MB), Saskatchewan (SK), and Alberta (AB)**

As the country's breadbasket, fertile farmlands abound here. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta are major producers of wheat, grains, and oilseeds as well as high-quality livestock. The region also has rich energy resources from mining, oil and gas, as well as hydro-electric power.

**The West Coast (or the Pacific Region): British Columbia (BC)**

Canada's Pacific gateway is known for its majestic mountains and extensive park system.

Its most populated cities are Vancouver and Victoria, where a large Asian and East Asian population may be found. About a half of the goods produced in BC are forestry products (lumber and paper). It also has a mining, fishing, fruit orchards, and wine industry.

**Northern Territories:**  
**Nunavut (NU), Northwest Territories (NT), and Yukon Territory (YT)**

The North is known as the "Land of the Midnight Sun" because daylight can last 24 hours at the height of summer. In winter, darkness sets in for three months. It spans one-third of Canada's land mass, but because of its harsh arctic climate, the population is only about 100,000. The North has gold, lead, copper, diamond, and zinc mines. Oil and gas deposits are also being tapped here.

## Form of government



*Parliament - Ottawa* by Stephen W. Dengler from Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-SA

Canada is proud of upholding the oldest continuous constitutional tradition in the world. Its form of government is a constitutional monarchy where the reigning British monarch (His Majesty King Charles III) is the head of state, while the Prime Minister is the head of government. The King does not directly rule. He is represented by the governor general at the federal level, and

by lieutenant governors in the provinces.

The government has three levels: federal, provincial, and municipal. The federal government is based in Ottawa, headed by the Prime Minister. Provincial and territorial governments are headed by premiers, while municipal governments are led by mayors.



### Learn more about this fantastic country you now call home:

- [Welcome to Canada – What you should know](#)
- [The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)
- [Canada.ca – The Official Website of the Government of Canada](#)

## Canada's Peoples

*Canada has three founding peoples: The Indigenous Peoples, French, and British.*

The Indigenous Peoples have been living on this land for thousands of years before the first European explorers came to North America. They have already established complex social, political, economic, and cultural systems in various parts of the continent. They lived off the land and were able to satisfy their material and spiritual needs through the resources all around them. Today, we recognize three distinct groups that live here: The First Nations Peoples, Inuit, and Métis. [Winnipeg has the biggest population of Indigenous Peoples of any city in Canada.](#)

The French and English were the first Europeans who came on these shores. The first wave were explorers who were looking for the East Indies. Succeeding groups composed of traders,

missionaries, soldiers, and colonists established colonies amongst the Indigenous Peoples. This coexistence laid the foundations of the new nation.

Over the past 200 years, Canada has developed into one of the world's most diverse countries. Millions of immigrants have chosen it to be their home. The largest groups are the English, French, Scottish, Irish, German, Italian, Chinese, Indigenous, Ukrainian, Dutch, South Asian, and Scandinavian. In the last 50 years, most immigrants have come from Asian countries.

This wonderful mixture of cultures and ethnicities have made this country a haven of diversity, where multicultural people work and live in peace as proud Canadians.

## About Manitoba

*Welcome to friendly Manitoba!*

Manitoba is one of Canada's most welcoming provinces. It is one of the top five destinations for skilled immigrants, refugees, international students, and family-sponsored newcomers from all over the world. Among the top languages spoken here are English and French, German, Tagalog (Filipino), Cree, Ukrainian, Chinese, Punjabi, Spanish, Ojibway, Chinese, Polish, and Oji-Cree.



**Manitoba is called the "Keystone Province" due to its shape and because it is centrally located within Canada.**

**Around 200 ethnic or cultural origins have been declared in the province.**

This diverse province is located in heart of the country bordered by Saskatchewan to the west, Ontario to the east, Nunavut Territory to the North, and the US states of North Dakota, and Minnesota to the south. It has a varied landscape of lakes and rivers, forests, and prairies that covers 649,950 square kilometres. That's twice the size of the United Kingdom!



*Manitoba general map* by Kmusser from Wikimedia Commons. CC-BY-SA



*Canada loon at Falcon Lake, Manitoba* by Whitehea from Wikimedia Commons. CC-BY-SA

This land spreads over parts of the traditional territories of the Assiniboine, Dakota, Cree, Dene, Anishinaabeg, and Oji-Cree peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis nation. The province's name, "Manitoba" was derived from "Man-into-wahpaow", which is Cree for *the narrows of the Great Spirit*.

Manitoba is made up of 137 municipalities. Of these, 10 cities, 25 towns, and two villages are considered urban areas, while 98 are rural municipalities, and two are local government districts. You may also hear the areas of Manitoba described by regions: there's Pembina Valley, Interlake, Northern, Parkland, Westman, and Winnipeg Capital Region where over half of all Manitobans live. As of 2023, the province has a population of a little over 1.4 million.



- **Manitoba is rich in water resources. It's known as the land of more than 100,000 lakes.**
- **The province's main industries are agriculture and agribusiness, manufacturing, transportation and logistics, aerospace, electricity and environmental industries, ICT and digital media, mining and petroleum, and building products.**
- **Learn more about [Manitoba's economy here.](#)**

# GETTING TO KNOW MANITOBA

## Weather

### *Is Manitoba really colder than Mars?*

It's true that it can get cold, especially at the peak of winter. But it's not cold all the time. In the summer months, temperatures can reach around an average of 25°C. It's also a sunny province. It enjoys more than 2,000 hours of bright sunlight each year.

You will experience the four seasons here:

### Spring

This season comes around March to June. Snow starts to melt and the temperature changes from cold to mild. Average temperatures range between -3.4°C to 8.9 °C during the day and gets cooler towards the evening. You may experience short snowy or rainy days in early spring. It is pleasant weather, but it is best to wear a jacket for comfort if you're going out.

### Summer

Summer is from June to September. Manitoba summers

can be hot and humid with average temperatures of 11.8°C to 24.8°C. It's the best time to explore the outdoors, enjoy the clear blue Manitoban skies, and see nature in full bloom. Don't forget to wear sunscreen and sunglasses!

### Fall or Autumn

Fall starts in September. The leaves of trees and shrubs changing colour is a fantastic sight during this season. The temperature also starts to get milder with average temperatures between -1°C to 9.8°C. You can

still go camping and sightseeing during these months. Fall lasts until November.

### Winter

Winter starts in December and lasts until March. Average temperatures range between

-22.8 °C and -12.7 °C, but it can reach to about -40°C. Aside from the extreme cold, there can be heavy snow. Dress as warmly as possible and try some winter activities. The best way to enjoy the season is to embrace it!

When people talk about the weather (and that's often), they use Celsius to describe the temperature. Checking the weather every day is a good habit not only for small talk but for your comfort, health, and safety. It will help you decide what to wear and how to plan your activities for the day.



**Look for "feels like \_\_°C" whenever you check the temperature. This takes into account the temperature, wind, sunlight, and humidity.**

Invest in weatherproof clothes. It may be wiser to buy them here. Although it can be expensive, remember that you will use them for a long time. You can also buy them from thrift or second-hand stores at a reasonable price.

You'll need:

- Winter jacket or coat
- Gloves or mittens
- A hat or toque
- Ear muffs
- Winter boots
- Thermal underwear (especially if you will be spending time outdoors)
- Scarf. A balaclava is also a good option if you need to cover your head, neck, and the lower part of your face
- Thick socks
- Sweater





Dressing in layers is a good way to stay comfortable in winter. You can wear a shirt, then a sweater, and a winter coat on top. You can shed your coat and sweater if it's warm indoors (most buildings are temperature-controlled) then put them back on when going outside.



**Manitoba observes Daylight Saving Time (DST). Clocks are moved an hour ahead on the second Sunday of March. Clocks are set back an hour on the first Sunday of November when DST ends. This is done to maximize the use of light in the spring and save energy.**



**For accurate 7-day weather forecasts go to: [Environment Canada-Manitoba](#) or [The Weather Network](#).**

## Cost of living

*Manitoba is an affordable place to live in compared to other provinces in Canada.*

You can enjoy comparatively lower house prices, electricity, auto insurance, and college and university tuition. Plus, Manitobans enjoy high-quality, tax-payer funded healthcare and public education for elementary and secondary levels.

But even with these advantages, budgeting is important in your first days. You will need to maximize your settlement funds.

Expect to spend mainly on housing, utilities, and basic goods like food, clothing, child care, and occasional expenses for medicine, school supplies, or entertainment.

You will find a variety of stores around you. There are groceries, department stores, specialty stores, and malls. You'll also find shops that sell ethnic foods from all over the world. Manitoba also has an active thrift and

vintage scene. Many buy clothing, furniture, and other goods from thrift stores, garage sales, and online marketplaces. This saves money and helps conserve the environment.

Most establishments accept cash for transactions. However, using debit or credit cards are the

most common ways to pay. It is important to note that sales taxes are imposed on most goods and services. This is not indicated on the tag price. Taxes are added when you pay at the counter. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is 5% and the Provincial Sales Tax (PST) is 7% in Manitoba (2024).



**Be a smart consumer! Go to the [Manitoba Consumer Protection website](#) to learn about various consumer issues.**

**Find your food here: [Where to buy traditional foods in Winnipeg](#).**

**Can you distinguish a loonie from a toonie? Read [Know your Canadian currency](#).**

## Getting around

*You can drive, use public transportation, and bike around Manitoba.*


If you have a vehicle, you can use your valid foreign driver's license for up to 90 days from your entry. Remember to apply for a driver's license before the 90 days is up. You may even consider getting

a driver's license even if you don't drive. In Canada, a driver's license is the main form of ID.

The agency to go to for licensing is [Manitoba Public Insurance](#).

If you're in Winnipeg (and don't want to drive), the Winnipeg Transit is a practical way to get around the city. You can buy a ticket or a Peggo card from various locations in person, by phone or online. You can also pay in cash, but make sure to have the exact amount. Drivers cannot provide change. You can get the Navigo app to know the bus routes and which bus number to take to reach your destination. Other Manitoban cities that have public transportation are **Brandon** and **Thompson**.

Taxis are also available. You will need to call a taxi or cab company to book a ride. Rideshare like Uber are relatively new in the province. You will need to download an app and book in advance.

 **Bus info:** [Winnipeg Transit](#), [Navigo Trip Planner](#)  
**Taxis/rideshare:** [Unicity](#), [Duffy's](#), [Uber](#)  
**Traffic apps:** [511 Manitoba](#), [Waze](#), [Google Maps](#)  
**Biking rules:** [Manitoba Bike Safety Manual](#)

Biking is a healthy way to get around. It's also cost-effective and good for the environment. Know cycling rules before you go on the road (check the resources below). For example, biking on sidewalks is not allowed here. You have to follow the rules of the road. You also need to wear a helmet. Using safety equipment is required by law.

Traffic is generally smooth and orderly even during rush hours. However, re-routing and delays can happen when there are accidents, road repairs, or during bad weather. It's always good to be prepared. Estimate enough time for travel and use traffic apps to get the latest information on road conditions.

## Getting connected

*Having a smart phone is important not only for your safety, it can also help you get information quickly. You'll also need it when you start applying for jobs.*

There are many stores and shops where you can buy a cellular phone. They can come with phone service to make calls, text, and access the internet. Decide if you need a plan or prepaid account. The cost will vary depending on your needs and preferences. For example, if you are a heavy mobile user, you can choose unlimited calls, texts, and internet data. Of course, this will cost more than a plan with limited features. Family plans can be more practical. Members

can share plan features and get discounts and free items.

Telephone numbers are usually 10 digits long. They start with the three-digit area code. Manitoba's area codes are 204, 431, and 584.

Phone numbers that start in 1-800, 1-888, 1-877, 1-866, 1-855, 1-844, or 1-833 are toll-free. This means you won't be charged a fee to call the individual or business if they are out of your area.



*The top telecommunications companies in Manitoba are Rogers, BellMTS, and Telus. Most big companies have smaller brands that target specific groups (for example the teen market) and provide budget-friendly options.*



*Learn more about cellphone plans here: [Compare the best cellphone plans](#). Learn more about cellphone contracts from the [Manitoba Consumer Protection](#) website.*

# YOUR FIRST DAYS CHECKLIST

Relatives, friends, or sponsors may welcome you to their homes when you arrive. These helpful folks can also explain the things you need to do in your first days. If they are immigrants as well, remember that not everything will be the same compared to when they arrived. It is likely that procedures and requirements for getting documents and services have changed. Also, some newcomer programs may have ended, while new programs are being offered all the time.

It's important to find out things for yourself and become self-reliant. You will not be staying with friends and family forever. Here is a checklist of priority tasks and links to the latest information to help you out:

*Please check eligibility requirements before applying for a settlement program.*



## FIND A PLACE TO LIVE

### Getting temporary housing

You can book temporary accommodations if you don't have relatives or friends to stay with. Hotels, Airbnb, and hostels are some examples of places you can book for a few days or weeks. Search only on trusted sites to avoid scams.

### Renting a home

You can also rent a house, apartment, townhouse, or a room. The cost will depend on the type of home, size and number

of rooms, location, and amenities (i.e. parking, utilities, etc.) included in the rent. Rates in Manitoba can go from around \$700 for a bachelor studio to \$1,500+ for an apartment with three bedrooms or more (2024).

Proof of income and rental history are needed to apply. Newcomers may need a guarantor if they don't have these requirements. A guarantor is a person who will make sure that you will pay your rent or take over the responsibility when you're not able. The landlord can also ask you for a security deposit when your application is accepted. The security deposit is no more than 50% of one month's rent. It pays for any damages you may cause while living in the rental home. If you have a pet, and the listing says that pets are allowed, the landlord may also ask you for a pet damage deposit.

Most people look for listings online. They also search on bulletin boards or watch out for signs around the neighbourhood. To be safe, ask help from newcomer serving agencies and use only reliable online sources. Make sure to view and inspect the unit before sending payment or signing the contract.



**Looking for an apartment and filling out an application can be complicated when you're a newcomer. Here are agencies that can help you:**

- [New Journey Housing](#)
- [West Central Women's Resource Centre](#)
- [Age and Opportunity \(A&O\) \(Housing for older adults\)](#)
- [Resource Assistance for Youth](#)

New Journey Housing, an agency in Winnipeg, created the [Renting a home in Manitoba](#) booklet. Read it before deciding on a place. You'll find out the things you need to consider when looking for a place to rent. Learn about tenancy rules, tenant rights, where to get help, and many more.

If budget or income are your concerns, see if you qualify for government subsidized housing (rent-geared-to-income) or the Manitoba Government Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) program.



**[Supports and Services for Refugee Claimants in Winnipeg](#) is a comprehensive and updated list compiled by the Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO).**



**Rental information links:**

- [Residential Tenancies Branch](#)
- [Rentboard.ca](#)
- [4Rent.ca](#)
- [Manitoba Government Services \(EIA\)](#)



**If you move and haven't received your PR card yet, don't forget to inform IRCC about your change in address: [Address Notification](#)**

### Utilities and services

It is your responsibility to pay for the cost of water, electricity (hydro), and gas (if gas is used in the home for heating or cooking) unless the landlord tells you that they are included in your rent. You may also need to contact the utility agencies for these services. It is best to ask your landlord before you make arrangements.

**[Manitoba Hydro](#)** (electricity and gas)

204-480-5900; 1-888-624-9376

**[City of Winnipeg](#)** (water and waste)

204-986-2455 or call 311

Contacting them as soon as you get a home is essential for your comfort and safety. You will need heat especially if you're moving in during winter.

You can also apply for other services like phone, cable TV, and internet. Telecommunications companies like BellMTS or Shaw provide bundled services that may be more cost-effective.



## GET ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS

### Social Insurance Number (SIN)

You need to have this nine-digit number to work in Canada and to receive government services and benefits. It's easy to apply, and there is no fee to get a SIN. Get it from Service Canada in-person, online, or by mail. Check which Service Canada Centre is nearest you from the link below.



**[Service Canada branches, Online appointment](#)**

**Go to: [What you need before you apply to know what papers you need to present.](#)**

id by Ahmad Faiz Shofiyulloh from Noun Project. CC-BY 3.0



**Your SIN can be used for fraud or identity theft so keep it private.**

**You don't need to disclose your SIN when applying for a job. Employers should ask for it only after you've been hired. Don't provide SIN when applying for an apartment, enrolling for school, or when buying a car. Provide it only when applying for government programs or opening an account that earns interest at a bank or credit union.**

### Health Card

Manitoba Health insurance covers Permanent Residents on the date of their arrival in Manitoba. You'll need to present your Health Card to be able to avail of most health services.

There is no fee to get the card. You can apply online or in-person. You will need the following:

- Completed registration form
- Permanent Resident Confirmation card (copy both sides) or your Record of Landing (IMM 1000)
- Supporting documents

Start here to apply: [Manitoba Health Card and Coverage](#)

Look for a family doctor once you get the card. Ask around, check with health clinics nearby if their doctors are accepting new patients, or use the [Family Doctor Finder](#). You don't have to be sick to get an appointment. Regular check-ups are important for you to stay healthy.



**If you're applying for a Health Card and need a Letter of Physical Address, you can request for one from [Immigrant Centre Manitoba](#). Please note that this can take two to three weeks.**

If you need medical attention while you're looking for a family doctor, go to:

- [Walk-in Clinics](#) (Winnipeg)
- Quickcare clinics in [Steinbach](#) or [Selkirk](#) for minor health problems
- Go to [Urgent Care Centres](#) for more immediate attention
- Call [Health-Links Info Santé](#) (204-788-8200/1-888-315-9257) for medical assistance or health questions (open 24 hours a day, seven days a week; handles 100 languages using over-the-phone interpreters)
- Call [9-1-1](#) for emergency cases (life-threatening situations)

Manitoba Health covers most physician health services and hospital services. But, it does not include dental care, private nursing, prescription glasses, and other specific services that you might need. Supplementary health insurance is a good option. Employers may offer this as part of workplace benefits or you can buy a plan yourself.



**Know your coverage: [Medical services insured by Manitoba Health](#)**

**Dental care links:**

- [Centre for Community Oral Health Clinics](#)
- [Where to go for dental care in your community \(WRHA\)](#)

**Learn about the new [Canadian Dental Care Plan](#)**

### Bank Account

You'll need a bank account to keep your settlement funds secure. You'll also need it to receive your salary when you get a job, and to save and invest for your future.

Canada has five national banks: Bank of Montreal (BMO), Bank of Nova Scotia (Scotiabank), Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), and Toronto-Dominion Bank (TD). These are the biggest banks. You can find them all over the country. There are also other banks, credit unions, even online banks in Manitoba. Credit unions are similar to banks in that they also offer savings and checking accounts, as well as credit cards, loans, and investments. The difference is that they are owned by members. They are not-for-profit organizations. Meanwhile, online banks conduct transactions purely over the internet. They don't have physical offices or tellers.

These institutions offer a variety of accounts. The most common are savings and chequing. Start by assessing your needs before choosing an account. This will help you save on service fees and get the best benefits. Ask about newcomer accounts. Some banks waive service fees from six months to a year for newcomers. They may also offer cash incentives or rebates. Call the institution to ask for an appointment. You may need to present identification to open an account.



Use the [account comparison tool](#) to help you decide which type of account best fits your needs.

Newcomers are now able to get credit cards when they open an account. The credit limit can start low (around \$1000-5000 CAD), but it increases as you start to establish your credit history. Establishing a good credit history is important in

Canada. You improve it when you use your card responsibly and pay your dues regularly. You will need a good credit score to apply for loans to buy a house, car, or any other purpose.

Aside from using a debit or credit card, you can also pay in cash in most stores. After you've opened an account, you can withdraw money from Automated Banking Machines (ABM) or Automated Teller Machines (ATM) in many locations. It's a good idea to ask your financial institution where you can find their ABMs/ATMs for your convenience, and to save you from additional charges.



More information about handling your finances can be found at the [Financial Consumer Agency of Canada website](#).

### **Library card**

Libraries in Manitoba are amazing! They're not only places to read books but also to get language training, join events, and get newcomer information. They also have facilities like study rooms, computers, printers, and wi-fi connection which you can use for studying or job search activities.

There is a [public library in every area of Manitoba](#). You can visit the nearest branch to apply for a card. You can fill-out the [application form](#) or allow staff to fill it out for you. Bring an identification card (ID) with your address, or an ID and a document that has your name and address on it (for example, a utility bill or government cheque) when you apply.



## CONNECT WITH NEWCOMER SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

One of the best ways to start your settlement journey is to register with a newcomer serving organization. These are agencies that focus on your needs. It's where you can get orientation & skills trainings, referrals, even direct assistance (like loans or job leads) to help you have a smooth settlement. They are usually staffed by immigrants, so they understand your unique needs.

Most newcomer serving agencies are funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Some are charities or funded by foundations. This allows them to offer services for free or at a low cost. Some provide a specific service like career counselling, job support, or language training. Others offer a combination of all of these services and more. There are also those that help specific groups like refugees, the youth, or older adults.

You will be asked for certain personal information when you register for settlement services. They can ask for your full name, date of birth, and immigration number or immigration document. Such information is given to IRCC and are kept confidential. [Learn why IRCC collects personal information](#) from this link.

You can register with [Manitoba Start](#) if you're in Winnipeg. Manitoba Start will assess your needs, enroll you in their

training or employment programs, and refer you to other agencies for services you might need. If you're not in Winnipeg, contact your nearest immigrant-serving organization (see the list of regional centres below). Otherwise, use [211 Manitoba](#) or the [MANSO Settlement Services Map](#) to find newcomer serving agencies in your area.

Some schools and community centres also host immigrant settlement workers. These helpful individuals welcome families and provide assistance. For example, they can help you fill out forms or enroll your children in school. They can also tell you about various programs in the community that can help you and your family.



### **Regional centres:**

- [Westman Immigrant Services \(Brandon\)](#)
- [Neepawa and Area Settlement Services \(Neepawa\)](#)
- [Portage Learning and Literacy Centre \(Portage la Prairie\)](#)
- [Eastman Immigrant Services \(Steinbach\)](#)
- [Regional Connections Immigrant Services \(Winkler, Morden, Altona, and Dauphin\)](#)
- [Thompson Newcomer Settlement Services \(Thompson\)](#)



## GET YOUR CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

In Manitoba, all children seven years old and older have to be in school. However, most kids start preschool/nursery at four years old and kindergarten at five years old:



Early years (Kindergarten to Grade 4) – 5 to 10 years old

Middle years (Grade 5 to 8) – 10 to 14 years old

Senior years (Grade 9 to 12) – 14 to 18 years old

Public education is free and the responsibility of the province. There are four publicly funded programs: English, French Immersion, Français, and the Senior Years Technology Education Program. Elementary is from Kindergarten to Grade 8, and secondary school (or high school) is from Grade 9 to 12.

Parents are also free to send their children to private or independent schools, or choose to homeschool them. However, these types of instruction are not funded by the province.

Most kids go to a school in the district where they belong. This is determined by where you live. To register, you may need documents like your PR Card, passport, school reports, and your child's birth certificate. Contact your school division's office to find out the exact requirements or read Manitoba Education's [Newcomer Parent Guide \(How do I register my child in school?\)](#).

The school year starts in the first week of September and ends the last week of June.



**Know what your child is learning in school. [My Child in School. A Resource for Parents](#) contains information on subjects for K-12. It also answers parents' basic questions, provides links to other resources, and suggests ways to help your child learn better.**



**Other helpful resources:**

[Schools in Manitoba Search](#)

Winnipeg School Division: [Find a school app](#)

**Newcomer Parent Guides:**

- [Overview \(What can I expect from Manitoba schools?\)](#)
- [At School \(As a parent, what can I expect for my child at school?\)](#)
- [Kindergarten \(What can my child expect at Kindergarten?\)](#)
- [Grades 1-12 \(What can my child expect in the classroom?\)](#)
- [Newcomer Parent Guides in French](#)

### **Child minding services**

Children below 12 years old can't be left unsupervised at home. Working parents usually enroll their children in a day care centre. To find one, you can ask around the neighbourhood, search online, or use the [Manitoba Child Care Search Tool](#).

Part of your child care fees may be paid by the province. This depends on your income, the number of kids you have, their ages, days required for care, and the reason for care. Check how much you can receive by using the [Subsidy Eligibility Estimator](#). Then go to [Child Care Online](#) when you're ready to apply. Take note that there are licensed and unlicensed child care centres in Manitoba. To receive child care subsidy, your child must be enrolled in a licensed centre or home.

Kids can also attend after-school programs. These provide a safe and supervised place where kids can do their homework or play with other kids. Talk to your child's teacher or the school administrator to know what after-school programs are available in your district. You can also check the list on page 34.



University of Manitoba Administration Building by James Teterenko from Wikimedia Commons. CC-BY-SA.

### **Post-secondary school**

Education beyond high school is called post-secondary school. It's also commonly known as college or university. In Canada, college is different from university. Colleges focus more on career training and the trades, while universities are geared toward academic and professional programs.

High quality university or college education is affordable in Manitoba. You can enroll in any of its five public universities, three colleges, four religious denominational post-secondary institutions, or technical institute. There are more than 90 undergraduate and graduate degrees to choose from. Students can also avail of grants, scholarships, bursaries or loans if they need financial support.

Requirements for admission may vary for each educational institution and program. Contact the schools you're interested in to know the exact requirements. If you're intending to go back to school as part of licensing for your occupation, talk to your professional association first. Doing this may save you time, effort, and money.



Find more information on after-school programs here: [Recreation Resources for School-Aged Newcomer Children & Youth \(Winnipeg\)](#).

Find more information on post-secondary education and funding assistance for further education from these sites:

- [Post-Secondary Institutions in MB](#)
- [Options for funding Post-Secondary Education](#)
- [Recognition Counts Program](#)



## APPLY FOR GOVERNMENT BENEFITS

Eligible newcomers can enjoy government financial supports like the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and GST/HST Credit even if they've just arrived.

- **CCB** is a tax-free monthly payment that helps parents with kids under 18 years old.
- **GST/HST Credit** is a tax-free, quarterly payment that helps individuals and families with low and modest incomes to offset all or part of the GST or HST (Goods and Services Tax/ Harmonized Sales Tax) they pay.

In Canada, filing an income tax return is not only a way to report your earnings, it is also a way to apply for government benefits. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) reviews your personal information to see if you are eligible for tax credits and programs that can help you in your current situation.

However, if you arrived just a few months before tax filing season, you may not need to file a return. To start receiving permanent resident benefits like the CCB and GST/HST credit, fill out [Form RC66](#) (and [Rc66sch](#)) and [RC151](#) and mail them to CRA. You should file a return when the next tax cycle comes (even if you are not employed). Tax season starts from the last week of February until April 30<sup>th</sup> (for the previous year).



More information may be found from the [Canada Revenue Agency](#) site. Free help is available for first time tax-filers from [Community Tax Clinics](#).



## SIGN UP FOR LANGUAGE CLASSES

Good language skills are essential for school, work, and in everyday life. Even those who have good English or French can benefit from improving their communication skills.

Newcomers can avail of free language training offered by various agencies, schools, and universities. You can choose between formal or informal programs that are delivered in-person, online, or both. To sign up, you may need to have your language skills assessed so you can receive instruction appropriate to your level (*See a list of language assessment centres on page 38*).

Formal language programs have structured lessons and exams to evaluate progress. Students receive a certificate after every level achieved. Meanwhile, informal language programs are flexible and have no formal assessment requirements. These programs are perfect for those who wish to practise and improve their conversational and listening skills, as well as gain friends. Lessons are usually based on settlement themes for both types of language training.

Workplace communication programs are also available to newcomers. These focus on technical language specific to certain jobs, effective business communication, as well as cultural and essential skills in the Canadian workplace. A Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level of 5-8 may be required to qualify for workplace communication programs.

If you don't know what type of language training you need, here are examples for each type to give you an idea. See if the description fits your needs, schedule, and learning style:

- **[LINC Home Study](#)** – Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada is a type of *formal* language training done remotely (online or by phone). It is for those who don't have time for in-person classes, but want to have intensive training. Students have one-on-one sessions with a TESL-certified teacher, receive assignments, and accomplish assessments. Learners receive a certificate after each successful assessment.
- **[English Online's Live & Learn program](#)** – Offers *informal* online drop-in classes that improve learners' English language skills and their knowledge about life in Manitoba. Students can join online chats, language workshops, reading clubs, writing workshops, or multi-week sessions. They can choose classes that fit their schedule. They can also learn on their own by using materials online.
- **[English at Work](#)** – This program provides *job-specific* English language training. It also teaches students about cultural and essential skills in the Canadian workplace. Employers can partner with the program and deliver the classes on-site. Learners can also directly enroll in classes at [Enhanced English Skills for Employment \(EASE\)](#).

Eligible newcomers can enroll in any of these programs to receive free training.



**Language Assessment Centres:**

- [WELARC \(Winnipeg\)](#)
- [Westman Immigrant Centre \(Brandon\)](#)
- [Regional Connections \(Winkler, Morden, Altona, and Dauphin\)](#)

[List of informal language training programs in Winnipeg  
ESL/FSL Programs for various levels & schedules](#)



## KNOW VENUES FOR RECREATION

This is a busy time for you but it's important to rest and have fun in your first days. You'll need to recharge your energy to keep up with all that you need to do.

There are so many venues for recreation in Manitoba. Your nearest community centre hosts many free or low-cost activities for all age groups and abilities. Enjoy swimming or skating, join fitness programs ranging from aerobics to yoga, or join arts and crafts, and book clubs. You'll have fun, stay healthy, and meet new people in your community.

You'll notice that Manitobans love the outdoors in any season. They explore parks, natural and historical sites, campgrounds, and beaches. Being in nature is uplifting. It can also help you become familiar with your environment and learn more about the province.

Aside from its verdant natural surroundings, Manitoba also has a lively music and arts scene. Various festivals and cultural



activities are held all year round. In fact, Folklorama, the world’s largest and longest-running multicultural festival, is held every summer here. Meanwhile, Festival du Voyageur, Canada’s largest winter festival is held in February. It’s a fun way to go back in time as the festival showcases French Canadian, Métis, and First Nations histories. Winnipeg is also home to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the world’s first museum dedicated to the “evolution, celebration, and future of human rights.”



- [Leisure Guide \(Winnipeg\)](#)
- [YMCA-YWCA Winnipeg](#)
- [Manitoba Provincial Parks](#)
- [Canadian Museum for Human Rights](#)
- [Manitoba Museum](#)
- [Festival du Voyageur](#)
- [Folklorama](#)



## KNOW WHERE TO GET HELP

Here’s a list of info guides, websites, and contact numbers for various concerns and needs:

### SERVICES:

- [211 Manitoba programs and services directory](#)
- [Your Recycling and Garbage Services Guide](#) (Winnipeg)
- [311 City Services \(Winnipeg\)](#) – Information from city laws to water and waste (Other areas have specific websites for city services, like [Brandon](#), [Dauphin](#), and [Portage la Prairie](#))

## GENERAL INFORMATION:

- [Manitoba libraries](#)
- **Manitoba Government** – Call: 204-945-3744; Toll-free: 1-866-Manitoba (1-866-626-4862); Email: [mgi@gov.mb.ca](mailto:mgi@gov.mb.ca). For specific inquiries, check the government directory: [Manitoba Government Frequently Called Numbers](#)
- **Canada Revenue Agency** – 1-800-959-8281 or 1-800-267-6999 for questions about taxes or government benefits.

## IMMIGRATION MATTERS:

- **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada** – For questions related to immigration programs or your immigration status. You can also call the Client Support Centre at 1-888-242-2100. Pre-recorded information about programs is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## HEALTH:

- **9-1-1** - Emergency number for immediate assistance (life-threatening situations)
- **Health-Links Info Santé** - Call 204-788-8200/1-888-315-9257 for medical assistance or health questions (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Handles 100 languages using over-the-phone interpreters.
- **Walk-in Clinics** (Winnipeg)
- **Quickcare clinics** in [Steinbach](#) or [Selkirk](#).
- **Urgent Care Centres** - For more immediate attention.
- **COVID-19 Provincial information** & **#ProtectMB** – For the latest on COVID-19 advisories, vaccine information, and online booking.

## SAFETY:

- **Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (or call 9-1-1)**
- **Manitoba RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police)** – A directory of detachments in every area in Manitoba.
- **Manitoba Police Services :**
  - 9-1-1 - For imminent danger**
  - [Winnipeg Police Service](#) (204-986-6222- non-emergency)
  - [Brandon Police Service](#) (204-729-2345- non-emergency)
  - [Sainte-Anne Police Service](#) (204-422-8209)
  - [Victoria Beach Police Service](#) (204- 756-2322)
  - [Morden Police Service](#) (204- 822-4900)
  - [Winkler Police Service](#) (204-325-0829)
  - [Altona Police Service](#) (204-324-5373)
  - [Rivers Police Service \(204- 328-7430\)](#)
  - [Cornwallis Police Service \(204-725-8686\)](#)
  - [Springfield Police Service](#) (204 -444-3321 - non-emergency)
- **SafeWork Manitoba**
- **Employment Standards**
- **Manitoba Human Rights Commission**

*Keep a copy of the contact numbers of agencies you may need to call for emergencies. Post this list somewhere that can be easily seen, like on your fridge door or a wall near your home phone. You can also save important emergency numbers on your mobile phone.*

## YOUR FIRST DAYS CHECKLIST



Here is a summary of your priority tasks. This list is interactive. Click on the headings to refer to the previous pages for links, application forms, and requirements. Click on the boxes once you've accomplished the task.

### Find a place to live

- Decide on what you need: Type of housing, location, number of rooms, and budget.
- Look at listings. Go to viewings.
- Apply and fulfill the requirements.
- Apply for utilities and services.

### Get essential documents

- Social Insurance Number (SIN)
- Health Card
- Bank Account
- Library Card

### Connect with newcomer serving organizations

Register with Manitoba Start or look for settlement organizations/ community agencies that offer specific help or training you need.

### Get your children in school

- Find your school district.
- Know the requirements.
- Register your child in school.
- Get child-care services.

### Apply for government benefits

- Apply for CCB.
- Apply for GST/HST.
- Learn about filing your tax return.

### Sign up for language classes

- Get your language level assessed.
- Decide on the type of language training that will fit your needs, schedule, and learning style.
- Register for classes.

### Know venues for recreation

- Check your Community Centre.
- Explore parks, natural and historic sites, campgrounds, and beaches.
- Go to museums and attend festivals.

### Know where to get help

- Get a list of emergency numbers.
- Know which agencies/groups/ organizations to contact for various needs.

## Starting your career

*Getting a job is one of your priorities when you arrive here. Being job-ready leads to a successful search. It will get you hired the soonest possible time.*

Doing research before coming to Canada is always emphasized. Why? Because the Canadian job market is competitive. To get an edge, you should know all that you can about your occupation. You are also advised to think about your career goals and polish your communication skills in English or French. This will allow you to hit the ground running when you arrive.

### Career basics

Occupations in Canada are classified either as “non-regulated” or “regulated.” Most jobs are non-regulated, meaning you don’t need a Canadian license or certification to be employed in your profession.

On the other hand, jobs in fields like medicine, engineering, architecture, and education, among others, as well as



*Have you heard of [Settlement Online Pre-Arrival \(SOPA\)](#)? It provides training on the most important skills you’ll need in the Canadian workplace even while you’re still in your home country.*

*If you’re already here, employment training centres can get you up to speed. Go to:*

- [Manitoba Start](#)
- [Manitoba Jobs & Skills Development Centres](#)
- [Success Skills Centre](#)

*There may be other employment centres in your community. Use the [211 Manitoba search tool](#) to find one near you.*



*Work photo 1 by Jopwell, work photo 2 by Helena Lopes, and work photo 3 by RODNAE Productions. All from Pexels. Free to use.*

certain trades, require certification. You'll need to earn a Canadian license to practice these types of jobs here. This can be a lengthy process for some newcomers. They usually get employed in a related field while working on their license. Others change careers altogether.

If your job is regulated and you want to work on your licensing and certification, the first step is to contact your professional regulatory body or association. Each regulatory body has a specific process and requirements for licensing. You can do this even before leaving for Canada.



Find out if your job is [regulated or non-regulated](#). Learn more about your occupation here: [Job Bank](#).

See the requirements for working in Canada:

- [Working in Canada as an International Student](#)
- [Working in Canada while a Refugee Claimant](#)

### Job search basics

Looking for employment may be different here compared to what you're used to. You may have to re-learn everything and start from scratch.

First off, you will need to format your resume in the Canadian style. This means tailoring your resume to fit the job description for each application.

Using the exact language used in the job ad is also important. Most employers use applicant tracking systems to read resumes. This tool helps them look for the top candidates based on certain key words.

To find job opportunities, you will need to learn how to tap the "hidden job market" and expand your network. Activities like volunteering and conducting informational interviews will help you with this.

Having digital skills is also essential in this process. Aside from knowing how to use basic computer software to create your resume and cover letter, you will also be using the internet extensively when searching for job openings, applying, and even attending job interviews which may be done via video conferencing.

It can get overwhelming and you may feel like there's so much to learn.

This is why employment trainings are valuable even for experienced professionals. These free programs provide direction, effective strategies, and encouragement. Some even provide the help of a career coach. These experts can give you valuable insights into the Canadian job market and personalized support every step of the way. They can even provide leads that can turn into job opportunities faster than if you search on your own (*go back to page 44 for links to agencies that provide employment training*).



Learn about Canadian workplace culture through these resources:

- [Working in the Canadian Workplace Handbook \(Paul A. Holmes/AWES\)](#)
- [Succeeding Professionally in Canada, Dr. Lionel Laroche, Multicultural Business Solutions \(video\)](#)
- [Developing Cultural Diversity in your Organization, Dr. Lionel Laroche, Multicultural Business Solutions \(video series\)](#)



## ADJUSTING TO CANADIAN LIFE



*Image 1* by Ketut Subiyanto, *Image 2* by Andrew Neel, and *Image 4* by Min An, all from Pexels. Free to use. *Image 3* by bomhehe100 from Pixabay. CCO.

### Stages of adaptation

*Moving to a new country is not easy. You'll need to learn many things and get used to a new environment. It takes effort, patience, and resilience to succeed.*

Newcomers usually go through four periods of adjustment:

- **The honeymoon stage:** Upon arriving, you feel hopeful and excited about living in a new place. Everything is new and exciting. You are optimistic about your future.
- **Culture shock:** Something happens that makes you sad, disappointed, or afraid. You begin to feel that living in a new country is not as easy as you thought.

- **Adjustment period:** You still feel sad and homesick sometimes, but you're now starting to learn how to manage your feelings and expectations.
- **Acceptance:** You start to feel a sense of belonging. You now have a more realistic view about living in your new home and feel optimistic about your prospects in life again.



Watch this video on [Your Mental Health and Well-being](#) to understand what newcomers can go through mentally during their settlement. You'll also learn about the tools and resources that can help keep you mentally healthy and strong during this period.

It can take up to two to three years to get used to your new life - for some less, for others more. Understanding that it is normal to go through these stages is often the key. Knowing that you are not alone makes the journey less challenging.

Another thing that's important is to be prepared. Having realistic goals and expectations is a good start. Preparing a Plan A and B can be a wise strategy to help you become more confident when planning your life goals. Allowing yourself to make mistakes and being open are also essential during this process.

Remember, supports are available for you whenever you need it. You should never be ashamed to reach out when you need help. Connect with other newcomers, newcomer serving agencies, neighbours, and mentors. They will understand what you are going through.

## ABOUT ENGLISH ONLINE, INC.

Establish a support group in Canada, but sustain your ties with your home country if you can. Sometimes, just seeing a familiar face or a quick chat with family and friends is all you need to ease homesickness. We can easily do this nowadays through online means like FaceTime, Zoom, or Skype.

Most of all, remember that you moved here to have a better life. Focus on your plans and goals, but strive to have a good work-life balance. Always take good care of yourself and take time for recreation. For newcomers, every day is an opportunity to learn.

Good luck on your settlement. We're glad you're here!



**Links to mental health resources:**

- [Klinik Crisis Line](#)  
204-786-8686 or 1-888-322-3019  
TTY 204-784-4097
- **Manitoba Suicide Prevention & Support Line**  
1-877-435-7170 (1-877-HELP170)
- [Kids Help Phone](#)  
1-800-668-6868
- More mental health resources may be found here: [Manitoba Health - Mental Health Resources](#)

English Online is Manitoba's first and only online learning hub for newcomers. It offers flexible, accessible, and responsive English language training infused with settlement information.

We promote self-directed learning, allowing newcomers to take charge of their needs at their own pace. We serve permanent residents, refugees, and Ukrainian temporary residents who are in Manitoba (*for a complete list of newcomers who are eligible for our services, please go to our [registration page](#)*).

As Manitoba's pioneer in online learning, we aim to foster a comprehensive online environment that brings people, resources, and technology together to address newcomers' unique needs for settlement and integration. Our main goal is to enable newcomers to succeed and reach their full potential.

Contact us at:

**English Online, Inc.**

Office: Suite 610, 294 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB, Canada  
R3C0B9

**Learner website:** [english-online.ca](http://english-online.ca)

**Corporate website:** [myenglishonline.ca](http://myenglishonline.ca)

Email: [info@english-online.ca](mailto:info@english-online.ca)

Phone: 204-945-5140

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## SOURCES

- [The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)
- [Discover Canada – The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship](#), IRCC
- [Welcome to Canada – What you should know](#)
- [Indigenous Peoples of Manitoba \(A guide for newcomers\)](#), Reynar and Matties for the Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba
- [Canada.ca](#) – The Official Website of the Government of Canada
- [Canada.ca](#) – Manitoba’s official symbols
- [Immigrate Manitoba](#)
- [Province of Manitoba site](#)
- [Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations \(MANSO\)](#)



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