

# **Canada**

## Business Guide

**Compiled by:**

**Embassy of Switzerland**

**Ottawa, February 2015**

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

A Swiss visitor or businessperson needs a valid Swiss passport to enter Canada. In addition, **Canada is in the process implementing a new electronic security screening plan. Under the new regulations, Swiss nationals will have to apply as of April 2015, for the so-called electronic travel authorization, eTA, before arriving by air.** The eTA application fee will be CAD 7.00. Other nationals should check with the Canadian Visa Office. The passport has to be valid for the duration of the planned stay in Canada.

Those wishing to reside in Canada have to apply for a Visa at the Visa Office of the Canadian Embassy in Paris. Applications for a Study Permit or a Work Permit must be submitted as well to the Canadian Visa office in Paris or to the Visa Section of the Embassy of Canada in Vienna.

[www.canadainternational.gc.ca/france/visas/index.aspx?lang=eng](http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/france/visas/index.aspx?lang=eng)

[www.canadainternational.gc.ca/austria-autriche/visas/index.aspx?lang=eng](http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/austria-autriche/visas/index.aspx?lang=eng)

Visitors are generally admitted to Canada for up to six months from the original date of entry. Extensions may be made within Canada and are normally not difficult to secure. Generally visitors are not allowed to work, to set up a business or to study while in Canada without authorisation. Visitors to Canada are not eligible for provincial health coverage and are advised to obtain medical insurance for the period of their stay.

Persons wishing to immigrate may evaluate their chances of success by means of a free self-assessment test.

[www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/eligibility.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/eligibility.asp)

Businesspeople and investors wishing to establish themselves in Canada should consult the Canadian Visa Office of the Canadian Embassy in Paris for the latest entry requirements.

[www.canadainternational.gc.ca/france/visas/index.aspx?lang=eng&view=d](http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/france/visas/index.aspx?lang=eng&view=d)

## LANGUAGES

Canada has two official languages, English and French. The majority of the French speaking population is concentrated in Quebec with significant minorities in New Brunswick and Ontario. The federal government has undertaken an active role in encouraging and facilitating bilingualism throughout Canada, particularly in public service and in public institutions.

Quebec is different from other Canadian provinces in several respects, most notably because 81.2 % of its population predominantly speaks French. The Charter of the French Language imposes certain obligations for using the French language at work and in commerce, education, legislation and professional orders.

[www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/](http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/)

The Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO) provides an online directory listing professional translators and interpreters found throughout Canada.

[www.atio.on.ca/](http://www.atio.on.ca/)

## **PUBLIC HOLIDAYS**

Statutory and generally recognized holidays:

New Year's Day <sup>1</sup>	January 1
Good Friday <sup>2</sup>	
Easter Monday <sup>3</sup>	
Victoria Day <sup>1</sup>	Monday on or preceding May 24
Canada Day <sup>1</sup>	July 1
Civic or Provincial Holiday <sup>4</sup>	1st Monday of August
Labour Day	1st Monday of September
Thanksgiving Day	2nd Monday of October
Remembrance Day <sup>1</sup>	November 11
Christmas Day <sup>1,4</sup>	December 25
Boxing Day <sup>1,4</sup>	December 26

<sup>1</sup> When these days fall on a Sunday or Saturday, the next working day is considered a holiday.

<sup>2</sup> Business remains open in Quebec

<sup>3</sup> Business remains open in most provinces, e.g. Ontario (but stays closed in Quebec)

<sup>4</sup> Holidays in the provinces and territories

[www.statutoryholidays.com/](http://www.statutoryholidays.com/)

## **HEALTH AND INOCULATIONS**

A visitor to Canada is not covered by the Provincial Health Insurance Programs. A current Swiss health insurance policy may or may not cover a visitor sufficiently. It might be advisable to buy additional medical insurance as the healthcare costs are very high in Canada.

The Public Health Agency of Canada provides updated general information and travel health notices.

[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/fag\\_rg\\_h1n1-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/fag_rg_h1n1-eng.php)

## **TIME ZONES**

Time in Canada is divided into six time zones. Clocks following the North American standard for Daylight Saving Time are to be turned forward by one hour on the second Sunday in March and turned back on the first Sunday of November.

[www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/services/time/time\\_zones.html](http://www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/services/time/time_zones.html)

Time difference between Switzerland and

- 6 hours            Montreal – Ottawa – Toronto

- 8 hours            Calgary

- 9 hours            Vancouver

## **ELECTRICITY SUPPLY**

110 volts, 60 hertz.

## **METHODS OF PAYMENT**

Acceptable payment methods are cash and credit cards. If you are planning a trip to Canada it is also recommended that you bring your ATM card (EC-Card) in order to access your bank account to make cash withdrawals.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **BY AIR**

Canada has a highly developed air transportation system that includes 10 major international airports and over 300 smaller airports. Canada's two main airline carriers are Air Canada and Westjet as well as a few regional Airlines such as Porter.

Swiss International Air Lines flies daily between Zurich and Montreal in summer, and five times weekly during the winter.

[www.swiss.com/web/DE/Pages/index.aspx?Country=CH](http://www.swiss.com/web/DE/Pages/index.aspx?Country=CH)

Air Canada offers nonstop flights between Zurich and Toronto as well as between Montreal and Geneva, with same-plane service continuing on to/from Toronto. The carrier's Star Alliance partner, Swiss International Air Lines, offers seats on a codeshare basis on this route.

[www.aircanada.com/en/](http://www.aircanada.com/en/)

Porter, a regional passenger carrier based at Toronto City Centre Airport, is serving Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal and many other destinations.

[www.flyporter.com](http://www.flyporter.com)

## **BY SEA**

Canada is a maritime nation with access to three oceans, the Pacific, the Atlantic and the Arctic, and to the world's longest inland waterway open to ocean shipping, the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway System. In addition, 300 commercial ports and harbours handle many goods shipped in and through Canada.

In the east, shipments are divided among several ports, including Montreal, Halifax, Port Cartier, Sept Iles/Pointe Noire, Saint John and Quebec. Vancouver is Canada's largest port and the main terminal for goods being shipped to the Asia-Pacific region. The Port of Prince Rupert is located just below the Alaskan Panhandle and boasts the shortest sailing distance from North America to Pacific Rim countries

Despite the cold climate in winter, many of Canada's deep-water ports are open year round. Modern container facilities at major ports, such as Halifax, Montreal and Vancouver, connect with inland container trains to ensure rapid movement of goods throughout North America. The Port of Montreal is Canada's leading container port because of its inland location, as well as its rail and road links to major markets in central Canada and the US northeast and mid-west.

The St. Lawrence Seaway - a marine highway as long as the Atlantic Ocean is wide - is vital to Canada's international competitiveness, the Seaway provides a direct route to the industrial heart of North America.

[www.cmc-ccm.com/](http://www.cmc-ccm.com/)

## **BY ROAD**

Canada has nearly 900,000 kilometres of public roads. The 8 030-kilometre Trans Canada Highway is the country's major east-west route, linking all 10 provinces. The road network includes a large number of crossing points with the US, 18 of which are major trade gateways.

In recent years, the increase in truck traffic generated by the growth in Canada-US trade and just-in-time manufacturing have placed added demands on the road system and have focused greater attention on road safety, including the quality of infrastructure. As a result, Canada invests a large amount of money on road maintenance and upgrades.

More and more, infrastructure upgrades are the result of public-private partnerships that make the most of private-sector technological and operational expertise. A case in point is the Confederation Bridge between the provinces of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, the world's longest continuous marine-span bridge over ice-covered water.

## **BY RAIL**

Canada Railways are the backbone of Canada's transportation system, providing the most economical method of moving containers and bulk commodities over great distances. Like the air industry, Canada's rail industry is dominated by two major players: Canadian National Railways (CN) and Canadian Pacific Railways (CP).

[www.cn.ca/](http://www.cn.ca/)

[www.cpr.ca](http://www.cpr.ca)

## **COMMUNICATION**

**Country Code** for calls from Switzerland to **Canada**: 001 (+ area code and phone number)

**Country Code** for calls from Canada to **Switzerland**: 011 41 (+ area code and phone number)

## **CELL PHONES AND WIFI**

Providers maintain cell phone service coast-to-coast across Canada. However, actual coverage may vary outside urban areas. It can be patchy, particularly in rural areas. Canada's cell-phone rates are amongst the highest in the world. Many hotels and airports offer free Wi-Fi.

## **BUSINESS HOURS**

Commercial businesses are generally open from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday, while Government offices are usually open from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm. Most banks are open for business from 9.00 am to 4.00 pm.

## **CANADIAN REPRESENTATIONS IN SWITZERLAND**

### **Canadian Embassy**

Kirchenfeldstrasse 88

CH-3005 Berne

Tel.: 031 357 3200

Fax: 031 357 3210

Mail: bern@international.gc.ca

[www.canadainternational.gc.ca/switzerland-suisse/](http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/switzerland-suisse/)

Hours of Operation: Monday to Thursday: 08:00 - 12:00 and 13:00 - 17:00/Friday: 08:00 - 13:00

Consular opening hours: 13:00 - 16:00 Monday to Thursday and from 9:00 - 12:00 on Fridays

### **Permanent Mission of Canada to the Office of the United Nations**

5, avenue de l'Ariana

CH-1202 Geneva

Tel.: 022 919-92-00

Fax: 022 919-92-33

Mail: genev@international.gc.ca

[www.international.gc.ca/genev/index.aspx?lang=eng](http://www.international.gc.ca/genev/index.aspx?lang=eng)

## **SWISS BUSINESS HUB IN CANADA**

**Mr. Markus Reubi**

**Head of Swiss Business Hub Canada**

c/o Consulate General of Switzerland

1572, av. Dr. Penfield

Montreal QC H3G 1C4

Tel: 001 514 932 7181 ext. 225

Fax: 001 514 932 9028

[www.s-ge.com/switzerland/export/en/blog/country-information-canada](http://www.s-ge.com/switzerland/export/en/blog/country-information-canada)

[markus.reubi@eda.admin.ch](mailto:markus.reubi@eda.admin.ch)

## **SWISS EMBASSY AND CONSULATES IN CANADA**

**Embassy of Switzerland Ottawa**

5 Marlborough Avenue

Ottawa ON K1N 8E6

Tel: 001 613 235 1837

Fax: 001 613 563 1394

[www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rep/nameri/vcan/canott.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rep/nameri/vcan/canott.html)

[ott.vertretung@eda.admin.ch](mailto:ott.vertretung@eda.admin.ch)

**Consulate General of Switzerland Montreal**

1572, av. Dr. Penfield

Montreal QC H3G 1C4

Tel: 001 514 932 7181

Fax: 001 514 932 9028

[www.eda.admin.ch/countries/canada/en/home/representations/consulate-general-in-montreal.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/canada/en/home/representations/consulate-general-in-montreal.html)

[mon.vertretung@eda.admin.ch](mailto:mon.vertretung@eda.admin.ch)

**Consulate General of Switzerland Vancouver**

World Trade Center

790-999 Canada Place

Vancouver BC V6C 3E1

Tel: 001 604 684 2231

Fax: 001 604 684 2806

[www.eda.admin.ch/countries/canada/en/home/representations/consulate-general-vancouver.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/canada/en/home/representations/consulate-general-vancouver.html)

[van.vertretung@eda.admin.ch](mailto:van.vertretung@eda.admin.ch)

## **TIPS FOR INITIATING BUSINESS CONTACTS**

It is recommended to respond immediately to requests and invitations: In North America, business is conducted at a very fast pace. Decisions should always be made 'yesterday', so 'Strike while the iron is hot'. Service is a very important issue. It is actually as important as the quality or technology of the product. It is not always the 'best' product that wins - the best company does. Promotional material (including websites) should be designed for the Canadian market. Unless otherwise requested, pricing should be in Canadian dollars. It is highly recommended, when doing business with French speaking customers, to provide all business related services in French.

## **BUSINESS PRACTICES**

### **BUSINESS CARDS AND COMPANY WEBSITES**

As a rule, business cards are exchanged at a first meeting. Not being able to present a business card at a meeting could be viewed by your Canadian contact as unprofessional and may hurt your credibility as a legitimate and serious business partner. When you receive business cards at a conference table, place the business cards in front of you to refer to the correct names of your contacts during the meetings.

Potential business partners will most probably visit your website before you meet. An English/French language menu will be helpful and signals that you are serious about entering into business with North America.

Forms of address, formality and informality, business attire: address your counterpart as Dr, Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms. However, very soon after meeting you, your contact will usually suggest to switch to a first-name basis. Nevertheless, this should not be mistaken as a sign that you have achieved an advanced level of intimacy. Do not hesitate to ask your contact how his/her name is pronounced correctly.

## **CONVERSATION**

In general, Canadians enjoy laughing and appreciate people with a sense of humour. Usually, a compliment is a good choice as a conversation starter since it is common to compliment one another in Canada. This could include a nice remark concerning an achievement or about something they are wearing. Sports (esp. hockey) is usually a very good conversation starter. Canadians will likely ask you about your first impressions of the country/city, which constitutes a welcome opportunity to exchange compliments. Try to avoid any discussions or jokes about race, religion, politics, sexual orientation or gender.



## **SMOKING**

Smoking in indoor workplaces and public places is banned in most provinces and at federally regulated buildings. In some jurisdictions, the law prohibits from smoking in motor vehicles with passengers under 16. Shops are banned from displaying tobacco. In general, the tolerance towards smokers has become very low.

## **SALES TAX, TIPS, AND GRATUITIES**

Retail sale prices indicated on merchandise tags and restaurant menus never include sales taxes. In most cases, the federal Goods and Services Tax (GST) of 5% and a Provincial Sales Tax (rates vary from 0% in Alberta to 10% in Prince Edward Island) or Harmonised Sales Tax (HST) (in New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Ontario) will be added to any bill at the cashier. Tips and gratuities for services are generally not included anywhere in Canada. A tip of 15% to 18 % is expected on restaurant bills. Services by taxi, hairdresser, etc. are usually rewarded by a tip at the discretion of the person paying the bill. Always check whether a service charge was included in a restaurant bill, especially if paying for a group of people.

[www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/gst-tps/menu-eng.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/gst-tps/menu-eng.html)

## **SAMPLES/GIVEAWAYS**

Canada and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) have concluded a Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the States of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland).

[www.seco.admin.ch/dokumentation/publikation/00008/00023/02337/index.html?lang=en](http://www.seco.admin.ch/dokumentation/publikation/00008/00023/02337/index.html?lang=en)

Under the terms of the Agreement, qualifying goods which originate in Switzerland enter Canada permanently duty – free, although applicable taxes will be collected (usually 5% Goods and Services Tax (GST)). These goods must be accounted for at time of release on a Form B3, Canada Customs Coding Form. The tariff treatment will be “24” and an Origin Declaration must be available.

[www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/forms-formulaires/b3-3.pdf](http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/forms-formulaires/b3-3.pdf)

Goods entering Canada temporarily are usually documented on Temporary Admission Permit (Form E29B) or an ATA Carnet.

[www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/forms-formulaires/e29b.pdf](http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/forms-formulaires/e29b.pdf)

Under certain circumstances, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) will require a security deposit on goods temporarily imported to Canada. These goods are normally documented on the Temporary Admission Permit (Form E29B).

[www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/forms-formulaires/e29b.pdf](http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/forms-formulaires/e29b.pdf)

At the time of exportation, goods granted temporary admission on a Form E29B or Carnet must be presented along with importer's/owner's copies of the appropriate documentation to CBSA for verification and certification. This presentation may occur at a CBSA office inland or at the port of export, depending on the circumstances involved and is necessary for you to receive a refund of any securities posted. Please note that the refund is not immediate.

Should you require additional assistance it is recommend that you contact the Border Information Service (BIS). You can access the BIS line free of charge throughout Canada by calling 1-800-461-9999. If you are calling from outside Canada, you can access the BIS line by calling either 204-983-3500 or 506-636-5064 (long-distance charges will apply).

[www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/contact/menu-eng.html](http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/contact/menu-eng.html)

[contact@cbsa.gc.ca](mailto:contact@cbsa.gc.ca)

### **COLLECTION AGENCIES**

Debt collection agencies are specialized in collecting outstanding debts.

[www.collection-calls.ca/largest-canadian-agencies.html](http://www.collection-calls.ca/largest-canadian-agencies.html)

### **SPECIAL FEATURES ON THE MARKET**

The Canadian marketplace is unique and demands a solid and thorough preparation from the Swiss exporter. Canada, with 35,5 million inhabitants, is, in relation to its size, sparsely populated and there are striking regional differences. For this reason, marketing to Canadians can become more expensive per capita than it is in many other markets. Distribution costs are higher per capita due to the large, thinly populated countryside with a wide variety of climates, terrains, etc.

Although Canada's international trade is dominated by its strong bilateral relationship with the United States, Canada as a trading nation is making big efforts to promote its trade relations with other foreign nations.

Environmental issues and the need to reduce, reuse and recycle are important for many Canadians. They are also very concerned about social issues such as gender rights, pay equity, minority and animal rights. Therefore, environmental and social issues must be taken into consideration when dealing with the Canadian marketplace. Canadians are very conscious of what they are buying and are very much interested in reliable technical support and after-sales service.

Date: Ottawa, February 2015  
Author Dorothea (Doris) Scheuber  
Embassy of Switzerland  
Address: 5 Marlborough Avenue  
Ottawa ON K1N 8E6  
Canada  
[ott.vertretung@eda.admin.ch](mailto:ott.vertretung@eda.admin.ch)  
[www.eda.admin.ch/canada](http://www.eda.admin.ch/canada)