ARE YOU ORGANIZING AN INTERNATIONAL EVENT OR A MEETING?

What delegates need to know about Canada’s visa and entry requirements

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) is responsible for delivering Canada’s immigration programs. We are committed to helping event and meeting organizers plan a successful international event by providing important visa and entry requirement information for participants and delegates.

We recommend that organizers contact CIC as soon as possible when planning an international event. We are available to respond to inquiries or concerns regarding the immigration aspects of your event or meeting. To get you started, we’ve prepared a series of common questions and answers and an event notification form for you to fill out and send back to us with information about your meeting or event.

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Why should I inform CIC of an international event or meeting?

Doing so will allow CIC to respond to any questions that may arise before the meeting about admissibility requirements, temporary resident visas, travel documents and work permits. It will also allow us to plan resources for processing visa applications for your participants and inform our immigration officers of your event or meeting.

Who should I contact?

Special Events Coordinator
Fax: 613-952-5382
E-mail: Special.Events@cic.gc.ca
Questions about visa and entry requirements

Who needs a visa to come to Canada?
All visitors to Canada require a visa, except citizens of countries where an exemption has been granted. A complete list of countries whose citizens require a visa to visit Canada can be found at www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/visas.asp.

The list also indicates the exemptions—countries whose citizens do not require a visa to travel to Canada. All visas must be obtained at a Canadian visa office abroad. Visas are not available at the border or at the airport.

Do delegates also need a passport or other travel document?
Most participants will also need a valid passport or an appropriate travel document to enter Canada.

Exceptions are made for the following people:

- **Citizens of the United States.** Although they do not need a passport, they should carry evidence of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, a citizenship certificate, a naturalization certificate or a state birth certificate. If these documents do not contain their photograph, they will be asked for a driver’s licence or other identification.

- **Permanent residents of the United States entering directly from the United States.** Although they do not need a passport, they should carry their resident alien card. If they are entering Canada from a country other than the United States, permanent residents will need a passport.

- **Members of the armed forces** of countries designated under the *Visiting Forces Act* who are visiting on official duty.

- **Members of flight crews** who have an airline flight crew licence or a crew member certificate issued in accordance with International Civil Aviation Organization specifications.

Your delegates can get more information about visa requirements and valid travel documents by contacting the Canadian visa office closest to where they live. A complete list of countries whose citizens require a visa to visit Canada can be found at www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/visas.asp.

What documents are required for children travelling to Canada?
Canada has laws and regulations to protect children and to prevent abduction. If delegates are travelling with a child (17 years of age or younger), they should carry:

- a valid passport or an appropriate travel document (see previous question for more information) for each child;

- a letter of permission from the child's non-accompanying parent or legal guardian when travelling with a child who is not legally their own; and

- copies of legal documents regarding custody rights if custody is shared.

Do delegates passing through or returning to the U.S. require special documents?
Since June 1, 2009, with the full implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, the U.S. government has required most travellers entering the United States (including U.S. citizens) by land ports, sea or air to have a passport or other travel document approved by the Department of Homeland Security.

For complete details on U.S. entry requirements, please visit www.dhs.gov.

How do delegates apply for a visa?
To find out how to apply for a visa, please visit www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/visa.asp. All visa applicants must satisfy CIC that they are visiting Canada for the purpose of participating in the event or meeting.
The applicants must demonstrate that they:

- are in good health (in some cases, a medical examination may be required);
- do not have a criminal record;
- do not pose a threat to Canada’s security;
- have a valid passport or travel document;
- have enough money to support themselves and their dependants while in Canada;
- will leave Canada voluntarily at the end of the period authorized for their stay; and
- meet all other requirements of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

A visa officer makes decisions on a case-by-case basis, and the burden of proof lies with the applicant. Applicants may be required to attend an interview with a visa officer before a final decision is made. While the majority of visa applications are accepted, CIC cannot guarantee that every applicant will receive a visa.

Do delegates attending an event or a meeting need a letter of invitation to apply for a visa?

Yes, delegates need to include a letter of invitation with their visa application and should check their local visa office for more information. A list of visa offices abroad can be found at www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/offices/missions.asp.

The letter of invitation establishes the purpose of the trip to Canada and provides information on the applicant’s plans while in Canada.

If someone is travelling to Canada for a convention, an event or a conference, regardless of whether they are required to have a visa or not, a letter of invitation assists agents at ports of entry in determining whether the person is a legitimate visitor and intends to attend a conference.

The letter of invitation helps the visa officer to assess the resources applicants will require during their trip to Canada. For this reason, the letter of invitation issued by the conference organizer should indicate if financial assistance is being provided (airline ticket, accommodations, etc.) to individuals in order to facilitate their participation in the event.

The letter of invitation should be sent to the delegate and not to the visa office.

How long will it take for a visa application to be processed?

You must inform your delegates of visa requirements and the need to apply early. To allow adequate time for processing, applications for visas must be submitted to the appropriate visa office abroad well in advance of the intended visit.

Delays may be avoided by presenting the completed visa application at least eight weeks in advance of travel. It is important to note that processing times may vary depending on the complexity of the application. In some instances, the visa office may not be in the applicant’s country. A list of Canadian visa offices abroad is available at www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/offices/missions.asp.

How much does it cost to apply for a visa?

Each applicant for a visa must pay a $75 non-refundable application processing fee for a single-entry visa.

Could delegates be exempt from paying the visa application processing fee?

When the Government of Canada or an organization of the United Nations (UN) hosts a meeting in Canada, the participants do not have to pay the visa application processing fee.

To determine whether a fee exemption applies to your event, please fill out the Notice of an International Event or Meeting form and return it to the Special Events Coordinator by e-mail. You will need to include information that clearly describes the role and involvement of the Government of Canada or the UN in the meeting. In itself, the funding of a meeting by either organization does not guarantee an exemption from the visa application processing fee.
Fee exemptions do not apply to other people or dependants accompanying delegates who come to Canada as visitors, or to media representatives who come to report on the event or meeting.

**How can delegates check the status of their visa application?**
They may contact the Canadian visa office where they applied.

**What if a delegate’s application is refused?**
The final decision to grant a visa lies with the visa officer. Once an application has been refused, CIC cannot overturn the officer’s decision. Further, fees are not refunded as they cover the administrative costs of processing the application.


**Will any of the delegates require a work permit?**
Individuals who come to work at the event, such as translators, organizers, clerks or equipment installers, must contact their Canadian visa office abroad to determine whether they will require a work permit. The list of Canadian visa offices is available at [www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/offices/missions.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/offices/missions.asp). More information on work permits can be found at [www.cic.gc.ca/english/work/index.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/work/index.asp).

**What other things should I consider when organizing an international event or a meeting in Canada?**

1. **Protocol for heads of state, ministers or diplomats**
   If high-level government officials such as heads of state, ministers or diplomats are invited to your event and you have questions about protocol and reception services, please contact the Office of Protocol at Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. For more information, please visit the Office of Protocol’s Web page at [www.international.gc.ca/protocol-protocol/index.aspx](http://www.international.gc.ca/protocol-protocol/index.aspx).

2. **Reception counter**
   You may consider setting up a reception counter at the airport where your representatives can greet delegates when they arrive in Canada. Contact the airport where your delegates will arrive if you plan to do so.

3. **Border requirements**
   All equipment and goods to be brought into Canada for the event must be reported to the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). The CBSA should be contacted for information on border requirements for delegates and goods entering Canada, as well as documents and procedures that may be required. Please contact the nearest CBSA office in your province or area, or visit the CBSA website at [www.cbsa.gc.ca/services/ie-ei/cmt-cre/contact-eng.html](http://www.cbsa.gc.ca/services/ie-ei/cmt-cre/contact-eng.html).

**How do I register?**
When you have gathered all the necessary information, please fill out and submit the Notice of an International Event or Meeting form. The form can be found at [http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/meeting-form.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/meeting-form.asp).

**NOTE:** CIC will notify you if we determine that your participants are exempt from the visa application processing fee.