



How to Obtain Proof of Canadian Citizenship



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This brochure explains

- Why you may need proof of citizenship
- What documents are accepted as proof of citizenship
- What a citizenship certificate is
- Who can apply for a citizenship certificate
- How to apply for a citizenship certificate

Why do I need proof of Canadian citizenship?

You might need proof of Canadian citizenship:

- to vote;
- to obtain a passport;
- to obtain a driver's licence, an enhanced driver's licence or enhanced identity card;
- to get a job; or
- to access government services such as health care or a pension, or to obtain a Social Insurance Number.

What documents are accepted as proof of citizenship?

The following documents are recognized by Citizenship and Immigration Canada as proof of citizenship. Some government departments or agencies may not accept all of the documents below and may require additional documentation.

- **Provincial or territorial birth certificates** (for people born in Canada, unless you were born after February 14, 1977 **and** at the time of your birth, your parents were neither Canadian citizens nor permanent residents, **and** at least one parent had diplomatic status in Canada. If you were born in Canada before February 15, 1977 to a parent with diplomatic status, please contact us for more information on eligibility (see “Contact Information” section at the end of this publication.))
- **Naturalization certificates** (issued before January 1, 1947)
- **Registration of Birth Abroad certificates** (issued between January 1, 1947, and February 14, 1977, inclusively)
- **Certificates of Retention** (issued between January 1, 1947, and February 14, 1977, inclusively)
- **Citizenship certificates** (some people born outside Canada between February 15, 1977, and April 16, 1981, inclusively, to a Canadian parent who was also born outside Canada to a Canadian parent were required to take steps before their 28th birthday in order to keep their citizenship. This is known as “retention” of one’s citizenship. If they did not take the necessary steps to retain their citizenship, it was automatically lost under the 1977 *Citizenship Act*. If you think this may apply to you and you need more information, please contact us (see the “Contact Information” section at the end of this publication.))

What is a citizenship certificate?

A Canadian citizenship certificate is a document that proves that a person is a Canadian citizen. It can be issued to a person born in Canada, to a person born outside Canada to a Canadian parent*, or to a permanent resident (a landed immigrant) who has been granted Canadian citizenship. The citizenship certificate is a wallet-sized card. It contains your name, date of birth, height, eye colour and gender, and includes your photograph and signature. **It is not a travel document. Any Canadian citizen wanting to travel outside Canada should obtain a Canadian passport.**

* A child born outside Canada to a Canadian parent in the second or subsequent generation is not a Canadian citizen automatically.



Who can apply for a citizenship certificate?

Any Canadian citizen is entitled to apply for a citizenship certificate. Citizens **born in Canada** may apply for a citizenship certificate if they wish, although provincial or territorial birth certificates are frequently sufficient to prove Canadian citizenship.

If you wish to confirm your status as a Canadian citizen, update your citizenship certificate, or replace a lost, destroyed or stolen certificate, you must apply.

How do I apply for a Canadian citizenship certificate?

To apply for a Canadian citizenship certificate, you must complete the form *Application for a Citizenship Certificate*.

You can visit the CIC website at www.cic.gc.ca to download and print the application form or contact us to order the forms you need (see the “Contact Information” section at the end of this publication).

Carefully follow the instructions in the application guide, complete the form, pay the fees, provide the required photographs and include the requested documents that are specific to your situation.

Is it possible that I am not a Canadian citizen?

In general, if you were born in Canada, you are a Canadian citizen.

If you were born in Canada after February 14, 1977 and at the time of your birth, your parents were not Canadian citizens or permanent residents, **and** at least one parent had diplomatic status in Canada, you are not a citizen. If you were born in Canada before February 15, 1977 to a parent who was a foreign diplomat in Canada, please contact us (see the “Contact Information” section at the end of this publication).

If you were born in another country:

- In general, you are a Canadian citizen if you became a citizen through the naturalization process in Canada (i.e., you were a permanent resident [a landed immigrant] before you became a citizen).
- In general, you are a Canadian citizen if you were born outside Canada and one of your parents was a Canadian citizen at the time of your birth and that parent was either born in Canada or naturalized in Canada (‘naturalized’ means that the parent was a permanent resident [a landed immigrant] before becoming a citizen). You are the first generation born outside Canada. For more information, please see the “First generation limit to citizenship by descent” section.

- You **may** be a Canadian citizen if you were born outside Canada between January 1, 1947, and April 16, 2009, inclusively, to a Canadian parent who was also born outside Canada to a Canadian parent (you are the second or subsequent generation born outside Canada). If you think this may apply to you and you need more information, please contact us (see the “Contact Information” section at the end of this publication).
- If you were a British subject residing in Canada when the *Canadian Citizenship Act* came into force on January 1, 1947, or you were born outside Canada to a British subject parent who might have become a citizen on that date, contact us to find out how to confirm whether or not you are a citizen (see the “Contact Information” section at the end of this publication).

If you are uncertain about whether you are a Canadian citizen, we encourage you to use our online self-assessment tool before applying for the Canadian citizenship certificate. To use the online tool, visit the CIC website at www.cic.gc.ca, and proceed to Apply for Citizenship section.

First generation limit to citizenship by descent

Citizenship by descent (that is, citizenship through a parent) is limited to the first generation born or adopted outside Canada.

In general, people born outside Canada to a Canadian citizen on or after April 17, 2009, are Canadians at birth only if one of their parents:

- was born in Canada, or
- became a Canadian citizen by immigrating to Canada (becoming a permanent resident) and being granted citizenship (also known as naturalization).*

This first generation limit also applies to children adopted by a Canadian parent outside Canada, if the parent was born outside Canada to a Canadian parent, or if the parent had become a citizen through the citizenship adoption process. The first generation limit does not apply to children adopted by a Canadian parent who became a citizen through the regular grant process after immigrating to Canada.

This first generation limit does not apply to a child born outside Canada in the second or subsequent generation, or adopted outside Canada in the second or subsequent generation if, at the time of the child's birth or adoption, the Canadian parent is working outside Canada as an employee of the Canadian government or a Canadian province or territory or serving outside Canada with the Canadian Forces.

The first generation limit took effect on April 17, 2009. Any person who was a citizen immediately prior to that date remained a citizen on April 17, 2009.

** Some naturalized citizens became citizens by descent by operation of law on April 17, 2009. If you think this may apply to you and you need more information, please contact us (see the "Contact information" section at the end of this publication).*

How much does it cost to apply for a citizenship certificate?

The fee is C\$75. This charge covers the cost of processing.

Why do some citizenship certificates have an expiry date?

Beginning January 1, 2007, expiry dates were included on the citizenship certificates of people born outside Canada on February 15, 1977, or after, to a Canadian parent who was also born outside Canada to a Canadian parent. This was to serve as a reminder to these people that they were required to take steps before their 28th birthday in order to retain their citizenship. On April 17, 2009, the *Citizenship Act* changed and people who had not already turned 28 by that date no longer had to take any steps to retain their citizenship.

If your citizenship certificate has an expiry date of April 17, 2009, or after, you do not have to take any steps to retain your citizenship. You will still have Canadian citizenship even after the expiry date on your certificate. However, your certificate will not be valid after this date. You should apply for a new citizenship certificate before your present one expires. Please refer to the section “How do I apply for a Canadian citizenship certificate?”

If you have a certificate with an expiry date of before April 17, 2009, you may not have taken the necessary steps to retain your citizenship and you may no longer be a citizen. To obtain more information, contact us (see the “Contact Information” section at the end of this publication).

What should I do if I need a citizenship certificate urgently?

Citizenship certificates may be issued on an urgent basis to Canadian citizens who demonstrate an urgent need to have their application processed. Every urgent application will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

For more information on this subject, contact us (see the “Contact Information” section at the end of this publication).

How can I find out if a citizenship certificate was ever issued to me?

A search of citizenship records can confirm if you were or were not issued a citizenship certificate. Some individuals apply for a Search of Records to obtain a letter from CIC to use to prove to another government or organization whether or not they were issued a citizenship certificate in the past, for example, foreign nationals who are applying to renew a foreign passport sometimes need proof that they never received a citizenship certificate. To apply for a search of citizenship records, you should complete the form *Application for a Search of Citizenship Records* and follow the instructions provided in the form. The fee for the search is C\$75.

For more information on this subject or to obtain the *Application for a Search of Citizenship Records*, contact us (see the “Contact Information” section at the end of this publication).

Contact information

You can obtain information on CIC's programs and services by consulting the Department's website at www.cic.gc.ca. You can also download and print application forms.

If you are in Canada, you can contact the CIC Call Centre at **1-888-242-2100** (toll-free) for more information. The automated voice response system can provide you with answers to general questions 24 hours a day. You can also speak to an agent between 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. your local time. If you are hard of hearing and you use a text telephone, you can access the TTY service at **1-888-576-8502 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.** your local time.

If you are outside Canada, contact the **Canadian embassy, high commission or consulate** responsible for your region.

CIC publications can be found on the Department's website at www.cic.gc.ca.

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