

# What Does Canadian Citizenship Mean?

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*The following information is from the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website and intended to familiarize immigrants with Canada before they apply for citizenship.*

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## What does Canadian citizenship mean?

Canadian values include freedom, respect for cultural differences, and a commitment to social justice. We are proud of the fact that we are a peaceful nation. In fact, Canadians act as peacekeepers in many countries around the world.

Canada is a large country with a small population. We have developed a unique federal style of government that is based on compromise and co-existence. We value our democracy, and every citizen is encouraged to do his or her share. Our laws are based on our democratic values.

Canadian values include:

- **Equality** — We respect everyone's rights. Everyone has the right to speak out and express ideas that others might disagree with. Governments must treat everyone with equal dignity and respect—two other fundamental Canadian values.
- **Respect for Cultural Differences** — We try to understand and appreciate the cultures, customs, and traditions of all Canadians, whether they were born in Canada or came here from another country.
- **Freedom** — As Canadians, we enjoy basic freedoms, such as freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of peaceful assembly.
- **Peace** — We are proud of our non-violent society and our international role as peacekeepers.
- **Law and order** — We respect democratic decision making and the "rule of law." We promote due process so that the courts and the police treat everyone fairly and reasonably. We ensure that our elected governments remain accountable to Canadians.





## Multiculturalism

Throughout Canada's history, millions of immigrants have helped build our country. We welcome people from more than 150 countries each year.

As Canadians, we are proud that many different cultural and ethnic groups live and work here in harmony. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act recognizes our cultural diversity. It states that we are all free to maintain and share our cultural heritage and to participate fully and equally in our national life.

The only people originally from Canada are the Aboriginal peoples. They lived in Canada for thousands of years before the first immigrants came here. The Aboriginal peoples are an important part of Canada's population. They are

working to protect and promote their languages, cultures, and traditions, and to set up their own governments.

In a country as large and diverse as Canada, equality is very important. It is so important that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is part of our Constitution.

In Canada, we also believe in the importance of working together and helping one another. People who help others without being paid are called volunteers. There are millions of volunteers across Canada. Some people join community groups and help with local projects. Others help friends and neighbours in need. There are many different ways you can help others in your community.

## Bilingualism

English and French are Canada's two official languages. English- and French-speaking people have lived together in Canada for more than 300 years. This is an important part of our Canadian identity—more than 98 percent of Canadians speak either English or French or both. **You must be able to speak English or French to become a Canadian citizen.**



Legal documents like the Canadian Constitution and the Official Languages Act protect the rights of individual Canadians with regard to official languages. For example,

- English and French have equal status in the Parliament of Canada, in federal courts and in all federal institutions;
- everyone has the right to a criminal trial in either English or French;
- the public has the right, where there is sufficient demand, to receive federal government services in either English or French; and
- official language minority groups in most provinces and territories have the right to be educated in their language.

## Environmental Responsibility

Economic growth is crucial for the future prosperity of Canada, but growth must be managed carefully so that it does not harm the environment. The Canadian government is committed to the goal of sustainable development, which means economic growth that is environmentally sound.

A healthy environment is important to quality of life. All citizens should act in a responsible manner toward the environment so that our children have the opportunity to live in a country that is clean and prosperous.



All Canadian citizens have a responsibility to contribute to the social, economic, and environmental well-being of our country. Both individual and collective action will help achieve progress toward the goal of sustainable development.

*Citizenship and Immigration Canada, A Look at Canada, What Does Canadian Citizenship Mean? (June 2004):*  
<[www.cic.gc.ca/english/citizen/look/look-02e.html](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/citizen/look/look-02e.html)>