



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

# Canadian Consular Services Charter

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[Travel.gc.ca](https://travel.gc.ca)

Canada

*Global Affairs Canada is committed to providing effective and efficient consular service to Canadians around the world. The Government of Canada's ability and success in resolving consular cases are conditioned, in many instances, by the laws and regulations of other countries as well as the quality and level of cooperation offered by persons and organizations outside the Government of Canada.*

*When you request consular services abroad, Canadian officials will assess your situation and inform you as to how and when they can provide assistance or whether another provider is better placed to help.*

*In emergency circumstances, every effort will be made to provide assistance. However, there are limits to the assistance consular officials can provide and you may have to pay for some of these services.*

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# Assisting Canadians Abroad

Today, more and more Canadians explore remote corners of the world, work or volunteer abroad, participate in international student exchanges and retire in sunny destinations.

While most international trips are trouble-free, the Government of Canada is there to offer Canadian citizens information on safe travel and to provide consular assistance should they find themselves in trouble abroad.

This charter outlines the consular services the Government of Canada may provide to Canadians.

There will be circumstances in which our ability to provide consular support may be limited. These circumstances are also outlined in this document.

## Services to Canadian Citizens

Canada's consular services program aims to:

- publish timely and accurate information on safe travel abroad;
- deliver modernized, effective and efficient consular services;
- provide emergency assistance to Canadians 24/7.

### We can assist:

- Canadian citizens;
- in some locations, citizens of countries with which Canada has consular services sharing agreements or memorandums of understanding in place.

If you are a dual citizen and travelling in the other country where you hold citizenship, local authorities may refuse to grant you access to Canadian consular services, thereby preventing Canadian consular officers from providing you with those services. See **Travelling as a dual citizen** for more information.

The decision to travel is a choice and you are responsible for your personal safety abroad.

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### What we ask of you:

- Ensure that you have comprehensive travel insurance, including health, life and disability insurance with medical evacuation.
- Take personal responsibility for your travel choices. You are responsible for your personal safety abroad and your financial needs.
- Be resourceful. Attempt personal and local remedies before seeking consular assistance.
- Follow our **travel advice and advisories** at [travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories](https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories) and respect the local laws of the country you are visiting.
- Get the Travel Smart app at [Travel.gc.ca/mobile](https://Travel.gc.ca/mobile) for access to travel advice at any time during your trip.
- Protect your passport and promptly report if it is **lost or stolen**.
- Keep our **contact information** on you while you travel. In case of emergency, call the closest Canadian office serving your location. Should the office be closed, your call will be transferred to the Emergency Watch and Response Centre in Ottawa. The centre operates 24/7 and may also be reached directly at +1 613 996 8885 (collect calls are accepted) or by email at [sos@international.gc.ca](mailto:sos@international.gc.ca).
- Provide feedback. We value any feedback about consular services you receive while abroad. You can fill out our online **Client Feedback Form**.

## Travel Checklist for Canadians

- Buy travel insurance. You should purchase the best travel insurance you can afford before you leave Canada to help you avoid any large expenses, such as the cost of hospitalization or medical evacuation.
- Consult our **travel advice and advisories** page twice: before travelling and again just before you leave to get the latest updates.
- Sign up for the Registration of Canadians Abroad service at **travel.gc.ca/register**, which allows us to contact you in an emergency, such as an earthquake or civil unrest.
- Have a valid Canadian passport for each family member.
- Carry a consent letter if you are travelling alone with a child or children under 18.
- Stay connected with our **Travel Smart app**, by **subscribing to travel updates** and by following our **social media channels**, including Facebook and Twitter.
- Find the contact information for the Canadian **embassy or consulate** closest to your destination and keep the information with you.
- Respect and obey a country's local laws, religions and culture.
- Be prepared to cover additional costs for any unexpected expenses that may occur.

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## Consular Services Provided by the Government of Canada

Canadian officials provide consular assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through more than 260 points of service in 150 countries and through our Emergency Watch and Response Centre in Ottawa.

Each consular case is unique and the assistance we can provide will vary depending on circumstances.

Before you go, visit our **Embassies and consulates** page to find the location and contact information for the Canadian embassy or consulate closest to your travel destination.

Always keep this information close at hand while travelling, and if you need emergency assistance, call the nearest office serving your destination.

### Canadian government officials abroad *can*:

- help in a medical emergency by providing a list of local doctors and hospitals;
- provide advice and contact information for local police and medical services to victims of robbery, sexual assault or other violence;
- provide assistance in cases of missing persons or the abduction of a child to another country;
- replace a lost, stolen, damaged or expired passport;
- contact relatives or friends to request assistance in sending you money or airline tickets;

- transfer funds if urgent financial assistance is required and all other options have been exhausted;
- contact next of kin, with your authorization, if you have had an accident or are detained by police;
- advise local police in Canada to contact next of kin in case of death;
- provide assistance to repatriate the remains of your loved one back to Canada;
- help you, in case of a death abroad, to identify a funeral home experienced in international funeral arrangements in the region where the death took place as well as a funeral home in Canada;
- request timely and transparent investigations into suspicious circumstances in the event of an alleged or apparent crime or death (although consular officials cannot interfere in an investigation or legal matter);
- contact friends or family on your behalf, with your authorization.
- provide you with a list of local lawyers;
- provide you with sources of information about local laws and regulations.

**Canadian government officials abroad *cannot*:**

- guarantee your safety and security while you are abroad;
- post bail, pay legal fees or medical expenses;
- reimburse you for hotel costs, delayed travel or cancelled trips;

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- provide legal advice, intervene in private legal matters or financial estate disputes;
  - get you out of prison;
  - intercede with foreign immigration officials to allow you to enter or exit a country;
  - solve immigration-related problems such as overstaying a visa and applications for a visa to Canada or other countries;
  - perform fingerprinting services or obtain criminal record checks;
  - help you find employment, accept mail, store personal effects or search for lost items on your behalf;
  - perform investigations abroad into crimes or deaths: this is the responsibility of local authorities;
  - ask local authorities to give you preferential treatment;
  - take possession of a child that has been abducted by a parent involved in a custody dispute.

### **When large-scale emergencies arise**

During large-scale emergencies, such as natural disasters and civil unrest, the Government of Canada *may*:

- deploy expert teams to enhance the capacity of our officers in the region affected by an emergency;
- help Canadians depart to the nearest safe haven on a cost-recovery basis;
- liaise with families back in Canada or try to put Canadians in touch with their families;

- provide timely information and updates through our website and social media as well as by phone, SMS and email.

### **Limitations to our services**

Situations vary from one location to another, and there may be constraints that will limit the ability of the Government of Canada to provide assistance, particularly in the case of natural disasters or in countries or regions where the potential for violent conflict or political instability is high.

Our ability to provide services in some instances may also be hindered by the laws and regulations of other countries.

## **What you can do if you need assistance when abroad**

You may find yourself in various situations while you are abroad where some level of assistance may be required.

### **1. Whether you're in Canada or out of the country and a family member has died abroad:**

- The designated representative for the family should contact the travel insurance provider to notify them of the death.
- **Contact us** to inform us of the situation and obtain more details on how we can assist.
- For further information, see **Death abroad**.

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## 2. If you think your child has been abducted by the other parent, or you are facing an international custody problem:

- Contact local police. Inform them that you are the main point of contact for your child and provide them with a description of your child, a recent photograph and any legal custody documents in your possession.
- Speak to a lawyer who can give you legal advice.
- Contact Passport Canada and ask that your child's name be added to the **Passport Program System Lookout List**. This will alert officials if they receive a passport application for your child.
- For further information, see **International Child Abduction: A Guidebook for Left-Behind Parents**.
- **Contact us** to inform us of the situation and obtain more details on how we can assist.

## 3. If a friend or family member goes missing abroad:

- Stay calm and try to contact them by telephone, email and social media.
- Call family members and friends and verify their last address abroad.
- Report the disappearance to local police in the country where you are located.
- You may also want to contact the missing person's credit card company and banks to obtain recent financial transactions.

- **Contact us** to inform us of the situation and obtain more details on how we can assist.
- For further information, see our **Missing persons** page.

#### 4. If you or a loved one becomes ill or injured and requires medical assistance abroad:

- Verify if travel insurance is available, and contact the insurance company to ask for a referral.
- If urgent care is needed, the best option is often the nearest hospital.
- **Contact us** to inform us of the situation and obtain more details on how we can assist.
- For further information, see our **travel insurance page**.

#### 5. If you or a loved one is arrested and detained abroad:

- Clearly inform the arresting authorities that you want them to immediately notify the nearest **Canadian government office abroad** of your arrest.
- If possible, also **contact us** directly to inform us of the situation. The nearest office serving your destination or the Emergency Watch and Response Centre, available 24/7, will provide more details on how we can assist.
- Ask appropriate local authorities to provide immediate access to consular officers.

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- Remember that consular officers cannot arrange your release from prison and you are subject to the criminal justice system of the country where you are arrested and imprisoned.
  - Request consular officers to provide you with a list of local lawyers and in some circumstances provide you with consular visits to ensure your well-being.
  - For further information, see our **Arrest and detention** page.

## 6. If your destination is affected by a large-scale emergency:

- Contact your family and friends as soon as you can, even if you have not been affected by the situation.
- If the situation warrants, consider leaving by commercial means if it is safe to do so.
- Monitor local news.
- Follow the advice of local authorities.
- **Contact us** to inform us of your situation and to receive emergency assistance.

## Your Privacy

Canada's *Privacy Act* protects your personal information and consular officers are required to respect all of its provisions. The personal information they collect from you when you experience problems abroad is safeguarded by the Act against inappropriate disclosure.

However, in accordance with the Act, there are a few exceptions under which your personal information may be disclosed without your consent. In all cases, consular officers will make every effort to protect your privacy by limiting the amount of information disclosed without your consent to what is strictly required under the circumstances.

For more information on your privacy, consult the Consular Services Privacy Notice Statement or the **Consular Policy Regarding the Use and Disclosure of Personal Information under the *Privacy Act***.

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