

turtle-shell products, whalebone carvings, and cat skins, teeth and claws are some of the more common items illegally brought back to Canada. These items are included in the more than 30,000 species of wild animals and plants regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). A violation of CITES could lead to seizure of your purchase, as well as a fine and/or prison term. Contact Environment Canada for details.

Since many other countries also have strict laws protecting wildlife, it is often wise to leave any items you already own at home.

Also, be aware that it is forbidden to bring home cultural property whose sale or export is banned or controlled by its country of origin. Strict penalties may be imposed, and the cultural property can be confiscated and returned to the country of origin. For more information, contact Canadian Heritage (1 800 0-Canada) or the embassy of the country concerned.

When in doubt, don't buy it!

Social Insurance Number and Government Health Insurance Plan

If you have worked abroad for a long time, your social insurance number (SIN) may be flagged as dormant. The number still belongs to you. To have your SIN reactivated when you return, you will be required to accurately identify yourself. For more information, visit Human Resources Development Canada's site at www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/sin/010_e.shtml or call 1 800 206-7218.

Remember that, when you return, there may be a waiting period before your government health insurance becomes effective. To renew your coverage, you will have to contact the health department of your province or territory to register and fulfill the waiting period. Apply for reinstatement immediately upon arrival. The page http://canada.gc.ca/othergov/prov_e.html will help you find links to the official sites of Canada's provinces and territories.

Health Concerns

If you become sick or feel unwell on your return to Canada, see a doctor promptly. Inform the doctor that you have been living outside Canada, and where. Likewise, if you were ill while