

For Canadians, the largest difference concerns criminal law. An accused person is considered guilty until proven innocent. For example, if you are accused of drug smuggling, then the system will consider you guilty until such time as you can prove innocence. As well, in an automobile accident, when persons are injured, you can be jailed pending the results of the investigation. Also, many aspects of fraud may involve imprisonment pending the results of an investigation. Bail is not usually available for foreigners, except for very minor crimes.

If you are arrested or detained, you can request the arresting officer to inform the nearest Canadian diplomatic mission. You will need a Mexican lawyer and the mission can refer you to one who speaks English or French. Meanwhile, be aware that what you say can be used against you. Avoid making any arrangements with police or court officials unless your lawyer is present. Do not sign anything in Spanish if you do not understand the language, without the permission of your lawyer.

Communications

The Mexican telecommunications network has improved appreciably

since long distance and value-added services were privatized. But the system is still well below Canadian standards. Service in some areas is sporadic, and long distance charges are high and sometimes unpredictable. Canadians living in Mexico may face long waits to obtain a telephone line. Many hotels add large service charges to outgoing long distance calls.

When calling Canada, a good alternative is provided by Canada Direct. This service is offered by Stentor, the alliance of Canada's full-service telecommunications companies.

Internet access is now widely available in Mexico. A list of providers is available on the Internet (<http://thelist.internet.com/countrycode.html>). Access can also be arranged through the business centres in the larger international hotels.

Money and Banking

Canadian currency and Canadian dollar-denominated traveller's cheques are not widely accepted in Mexico. While they can be exchanged at some banks and most hotels in major cities, you may find it more convenient to