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# WORKING ABROAD

Unravelling the Maze

Dept. of External Affairs  
Min. des Affaires extérieures

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We would like to receive your comments on this booklet. Was it helpful? Write to us at the address given above and let us know what you think. We are also on the Internet. Our World Wide Web address is: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

Ce document est aussi disponible en français.

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## Introduction

About 1.5 million Canadians live and work abroad. The vast majority do so successfully and, for many, working overseas is an enriching experience. If you are planning to work abroad, there are many details that you will need to consider prior to departure. Preparation and careful planning will go a long way to ensure a safe and successful international work experience.

The goal of *Working Abroad: Unravelling the Maze* is to provide you with practical information to maximize the chances of a successful venture and with advice on what to do if things don't work out as planned. Read it before you go, and pack it in your luggage for future reference.

## Before You Go

### *Finding Overseas Employment*

A wide variety of international work opportunities exists around the world. If you are interested in finding overseas employment, where do you begin? Whether you plan to find paid employment, pursue volunteer opportunities or explore new business ventures

The Consular Affairs Bureau of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) is committed to providing effective and efficient services throughout the world to all Canadians. We understand how accidents, illness, legal problems, and linguistic and cultural differences are difficult to manage alone. If you encounter problems while working abroad, we are there to assist you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through our network of 250 offices worldwide. You will find a list of these offices in DFAIT's companion publication, *Bon Voyage, But...* See page 25 for details on how to order this publication.

abroad, you first need to decide what you want to do and where you want to do it. You also need to seriously evaluate your job skills and decide whether you want to build on your previous work experience or do something altogether new. You will find Jean-Marc Hachey's *The Canadian Guide to Working and Living Overseas* an excellent

resource as you begin this process. The book will help you assess your personal and professional goals, plan your job-hunting strategy and secure the overseas job you want.

If you are unsure about the length of time you want to work abroad, you might consider looking for short-term projects, such as youth exchanges, internships, professional exchanges, work-and-learn programs or working holidays. A short-term placement may give you the experience and background you need to decide whether or not you want to work abroad for an extended period.

All books and other publications referred to in the text, as well as additional published material on working abroad, are listed at the back of this booklet. Your local library, bookstores and the Internet are also excellent sources of information.

### ***DFAIT Youth Initiatives***

DFAIT co-ordinates two separate initiatives to assist young Canadians in securing employment abroad: the Youth Internship Program (YIIP)\* and the International Youth Exchange Program (IYEP). The YIIP

provides for paid internships with Canadian organizations operating in other countries. You can obtain further information by calling 1-800-559-2888 (in Canada). The IYEP provides a wealth of information concerning opportunities in more than 60 programs in over 20 countries. For more details, call 1-800-267-8376 (in Canada) or (613) 992-6142, or consult DFAIT's Web site (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>).

### ***Evaluating Job Offers***

If you are offered a job overseas by an organization or company, it is important that you investigate it carefully before you accept. The more preparation and research you do in Canada, the more successful your employment abroad is likely to be.

- **Find out as much as you can about the organization or company that is offering you a job.** Ask for references, visit its Internet site and call your local Better Business Bureau (if the organization or company is Canadian) to get as much information as possible. Contact others who have worked for the organization or company, or ask to speak to someone currently employed there.

\* At the time of printing, this program is scheduled to end in March 1999.

- **Examine the terms of your contract carefully or have it reviewed by a lawyer.** Make sure that the financial and other conditions of the job offer are carefully detailed and that you fully understand them. For instance, you should know in what currency your salary will be paid and when you will be receiving your first pay cheque. Keep in mind that it is never a good idea to accept a job overseas if the details are to be worked out on your arrival.

- **Understand the arrangements for your work visa.** Although your employer may take on the responsibility of obtaining your work visa for you, it is up to you to ensure that all arrangements are legitimate and consistent with the requirements of the country concerned. Refer to the section entitled "What Documents Do You Need?" on page 7 of this publication for details.

- **Avoid risky ventures.** Always remain sceptical of overseas placement firms that operate solely by telephone or mail, and avoid companies that charge advance fees for placement. Women should be particularly wary of employment

opportunities that offer quick and easy money for entertainment or hostess jobs. Many are thinly veiled prostitution rings.

Doing your homework before you leave Canada will significantly reduce the chances of things going wrong overseas. It is recommended that you establish an "emergency fund" or make prior arrangements with family or friends to assist you financially in the event that the job proves unacceptable or things simply don't work out. You should have enough money to return home.

It is also wise to take with you extra copies of your résumé, degrees, diplomas and other certificates, and reference letters so that you have the option of pursuing other job opportunities while you are abroad. Find out, however, what the requirements are if you decide to change jobs or companies, as doing so may render your visa or work permit invalid. For more details, see the section entitled "Visa" on page 8.

### ***Learn About Your Destination***

Take the time to learn about the political, cultural and economic environment of your destination. Some countries experience ongoing

wars, insurgencies or sporadic unrest. Find out if your destination is known to be dangerous. Call DFAIT's Consular Affairs Bureau in Ottawa at 1-800-267-6788 (in Canada) or (613) 944-6788 for travel reports. These reports will give you background information on security and political conditions, health issues and entry requirements for over 170 countries. If you would like to receive information by fax, dial 1-800-575-2500 (in Canada) or (613) 944-2500 and follow the automated instructions.

If you are planning to work in the United States or Mexico, you should also obtain copies of the DFAIT booklets *Crossing the 49th and México: ¿Qué pasa?*. See page 25 of this booklet for details on how to order these publications.

This information is also available at DFAIT's Internet site (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>).

When you are abroad, you will be able to tune in to Radio Canada International (RCI) for the latest news. RCI also broadcasts messages from the Canadian government during emergency situations. You can obtain a schedule of times and frequency of broadcasts to different parts of the world by calling the Canadian

Broadcasting Corporation at (416) 205-3311 in Toronto or (514) 597-7555 in Montreal.

### *What Documents Do You Need?*

#### Passport

All Canadian citizens must have a valid passport before taking up residence abroad. Once living overseas, you should continue to maintain a valid passport. Application forms are available at passport offices, Canadian missions, travel agencies, and at the nearest Northern Store in northern communities. Passport applications accompanied by the required information and supporting documentation are usually processed within five working days if presented in person or up to three weeks if mailed to the Central Passport Office. When planning your departure time, however, allow yourself more time if you need a visa, since a valid passport is required before you can apply for a visa.

Your passport is valid for five years. If your passport is due to expire within the next six months, check with your host country's embassy or consulate in Canada for its rules and restrictions



regarding passport validity and expiration. Some countries will not let you enter if your passport is within six months of expiry.

For more information about passports, call 1-800-567-6868.

Locally, you can call:

(514) 283-2152 in Montreal;  
(613) 994-3500 in Ottawa-Hull;  
(416) 973-3251 in Toronto; or  
(604) 775-6250 in Vancouver.

**Before you leave Canada, be sure to complete the "In case of accident or death notify" section in your passport.** This will help us quickly notify your family or friends if an emergency arises.

**You should also prepare a "passport emergency kit" in case your passport is lost or stolen.** This should include a photocopy of the identification page in your passport, an original of your birth or citizenship certificate, the address and telephone number of the Canadian embassy in the country in which you plan to work, and two recent passport-size photographs. Keeping this information in a safe place separate from your passport will save you time and money should you lose the originals. For added security, you may also want to leave a "kit" with a friend or relative at home.

**If your passport is lost or stolen while you are overseas, report the loss or theft to the local police, obtain a copy of the police report and contact the nearest Canadian mission immediately for a replacement.** Before a new passport can be issued, you must complete an application form, produce written evidence of your Canadian citizenship (e.g., a birth or citizenship certificate), provide a copy of the police report and present two recent photographs.

### **Visa**

All governments require foreigners to obtain their permission to reside in their country. In some instances, that permission is reflected by an endorsement or stamp placed in your passport, allowing you to enter the country for a specific time and purpose. All countries require you to obtain special permission for entry when you plan to work. This permission is called a visa or work permit.

Only the country concerned can provide you with definitive and official information on entry requirements. If a visa is required, you should obtain it before leaving Canada. It is important that you consult the embassy or consulate of the country in which you plan to

work for details and processing fees. You should apply months in advance of your departure date, as obtaining a visa can be a time-consuming process. You can also contact DFAIT's Consular Affairs Bureau at **1-800-267-6788** (in Canada) or **(613) 944-6788** for more information.

Note that your work visa may have special provisions concerning departure and reentry. If you plan to travel while working overseas, inquire about the process of obtaining a multiple-entry visa to avoid future difficulties.

An increasing number of countries are including AIDS testing as an entry requirement, particularly for long-term residents and students. Again, contact the embassy or consulate of the country concerned for the latest information.

### **Work Permit**

A work permit is usually required if you plan to work in a foreign country. You should obtain it before you leave Canada. You can usually do this at the same time as you get your visa. Note that a work permit could be included in your visa or it could be a separate document from your visa. Again, contact the embassy or consulate

of the country you are going to for details.

### **Alien Registration Card**

When you arrive in your host country, you may also need to obtain an Alien Registration Card (green card). You will be required to carry it at all times for identification purposes and as proof of your status.

### **International Driver's Licence**

Contact your local Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) to find out the procedures for obtaining an international driver's licence. Keep in mind, however, that some countries require foreigners to acquire a local licence after a certain period. Obtain that information before leaving Canada or make inquiries at the time of your arrival. In addition, it is important that you educate yourself on the traffic rules and procedures of your host country before you get behind the wheel. Always carry your car insurance policy with you when driving in case of an accident.

### **Dual Citizenship**

Having dual citizenship does not necessarily mean you can work in the other country of which you are

a citizen. Ask for a definitive ruling from the authorities of the second country. Be aware that obtaining Canadian citizenship could have led to the loss of your other citizenship without your knowledge. Call the country's embassy or consulate in Canada to obtain more information about your status.

*If your citizenship status is clear and you decide to work in your country of second nationality, you could be under certain obligations. For instance, you may be required to perform obligatory military service or you could lose your right to protection and assistance from Canadian officials.*

If you do run into problems because of your dual nationality, contact the nearest Canadian mission immediately.

### ***Health-Related Issues***

#### **Getting Medical Advice**

Health Canada strongly recommends an individual risk assessment by your own family doctor or a travel medicine expert prior to travelling. Based on your health risks, vaccinations and any special precautions you need to take can be determined. Health Canada's Laboratory Centre for Disease

Control (LCDC) provides travel health information through the Internet (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>) and through a fax retrieval system, FAXlink. To access FAXlink, call **(613) 941-3900** using the handset of your fax machine and follow the instructions.

A list of travel clinics in your area can be obtained through Health Canada's Travel Medicine Program at **(613) 957-8739** or the Canadian Society for International Health at **(613) 241-5785**, or through the Internet ([http://www.csih.org/trav\\_inf.html](http://www.csih.org/trav_inf.html)).

#### **Vaccinations**

Before travelling to any country, find out well in advance of your departure if you need any special vaccinations or preventive medications for such illnesses as yellow fever, typhoid, meningitis, Japanese encephalitis, hepatitis or malaria. An International Certificate of Vaccination for yellow fever may be a legal requirement to enter certain countries. Your doctor, the local office of the Canadian Society for International Health, the LCDC FAXlink service or the LCDC Web site can provide you with this information.

Start your vaccination shots at least three months before you leave. In some cases, you may need several inoculations, with waiting periods between each injection.

Make sure that your routine immunizations are up to date. If you were not exposed to certain diseases as a child, or were not immunized, you could be at an increased risk of contracting diseases such as tetanus or diphtheria.

If infants or small children are accompanying you, you may need to arrange an alternate or accelerated childhood immunization schedule for them. Talk to your pediatrician, family doctor or travel medicine clinic.

## AIDS

AIDS/HIV is a global disease. Some countries require proof of recent AIDS testing as an entry requirement. Have the test conducted and obtain the results before you travel. Call Health Canada at (613) 957-8739 to find out if the country in which you will be working requires documentation.

When you are overseas, take all the same precautions you do at home. Do not assume that condoms will be readily available. Even if they

are, they may not meet the safety standards set by the World Health Organization.

Remember: Using intravenous drugs is not only illegal but extremely risky.

## Medication

If you take medication, be sure to pack an extra supply or make arrangements for resupply in case you are away for longer than expected. Having a duplicate of your original prescription is highly recommended. Also, have an extra prescription that lists both the generic and the trade names of any drug you are taking, in case your medication is lost or stolen. This is also a good idea if you wear glasses or contact lenses — having the prescription makes it easier to replace them.

**Do not try to save luggage space by combining medications into a single container. Keep all medications in the original, labelled container to avoid problems.**

Find out whether your medication is sold in the country in which you will be working. Also check to see that it is legal. Some over-the-counter medications in Canada are illegal in other countries or

require a prescription. Obtaining a note from your doctor that states the medical reasons for your prescription and the recommended dosage is also encouraged.

If you need syringes for a medical condition such as diabetes, it is very important that you take an appropriate supply. As well, you should have a medical certificate that shows they are needed for medical use.

If you have a pre-existing medical condition that could present a problem while you are abroad, it is wise to wear a Medic Alert® bracelet. Through the Medic Alert® Foundation, your vital medical facts become part of a database that can be accessed 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world. Call **1-800-825-3785** for membership information.

### **Pregnancy**

If you are pregnant and plan to work abroad, talk to your doctor. Some vaccinations may not be recommended. Also, check your health insurance plan carefully to ensure it covers health complications arising from pregnancy.

### **Health Insurance**

Obtain health insurance before you go abroad. Make sure that you understand the terms of your policy and that it covers all your needs and those of all members of your family. There is nothing worse than being ill and on your own in a foreign country, and having to worry about large financial obligations. Health insurance is one of the best investments you can make.

Out-of-country health insurance is available through travel agents or directly from insurers listed in the Yellow Pages™. Check the following points when purchasing such health insurance:

- Are foreign hospital and related medical costs paid directly or are you required to pay up-front and seek reimbursement later?
- Does the insurance cover medical evacuation to Canada, along with any required medical escorts?
- Are pre-existing medical conditions covered?
- Are premature births and related neonatal care covered?

- Will the insurer provide a cash deposit in advance if a hospital requires it?
- Does the insurance cover costs associated with a death abroad, including the return of remains to Canada?
- Does the insurer maintain a service centre that is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week?

Always carry a copy of your insurance policy with you, along with the telephone contact numbers of the insurer's service centre. This information should also be left with a friend or relative at home. If you receive medical attention, obtain a detailed invoice from the doctor or hospital.

When you arrive in the country in which you will be working, make a point of locating the nearest reputable clinic/hospital. Don't wait for an emergency: it may be too late! The local Canadian mission will be able to provide information on clinics/hospitals (for a list of missions, consult DFAIT's publication *Bon Voyage, But...*).

It is unlikely that your existing health insurance in Canada will

provide coverage while you are overseas. Remember that, when you return to Canada, there is a three-month waiting period before your provincial health insurance becomes effective.

### Other Insurance

Planning to drive while abroad? Keep in mind that most countries have laws that require drivers to have adequate insurance.

Personal insurance is important, too. There are companies in Canada that will sell you insurance no matter where you are going to be. Where possible, purchase your insurance from one of these companies, as their procedures may be more familiar to you.

It is possible that the company employing you overseas will make arrangements for health and other types of insurance for you. However, rather than making this assumption, check with the company's human resources department to find out your status and coverage. If you are not totally covered, take the necessary steps to rectify this. Also, if you are accompanied by a spouse, partner or children, find out the status of their coverage — they may not be included in your policy.

The 1998 edition of *Bon Voyage, But...* includes the names of insurance companies that may address your specific needs.

### **Regulations for Pets**

If you are planning to take your pet overseas, call the host country's embassy or consulate in Canada well in advance of your departure to obtain information on all the necessary requirements. At a minimum, your pet will need vaccinations and a detailed health certificate. Your pet may also be required to undergo a period of quarantine before entering another country. When you are planning to return home, you may need to follow similar procedures and present a certificate stating that the pet was vaccinated for rabies within the preceding three years.

For more information, contact the Canadian Food Inspection Agency at (613) 759-1572.

### ***Practical and Financial Issues***

#### **Money Matters**

Before you leave Canada, make sure that you will have enough money with you to get properly settled. Although some compa-

nies may provide a settlement allowance, keep in mind that it may be several weeks before you receive your first pay cheque. Consult a bank or a foreign currency agent to find out the most appropriate currency to take with you. Canadian currency and traveller's cheques in Canadian dollars are not always accepted. Traveller's cheques in U.S. dollars are often the safest and most convenient option.

Be aware that your bank machine card or credit card may not necessarily be usable or honoured in another country.

#### **Planning Your Finances**

Before leaving Canada, make sure that you have settled all your financial obligations or make arrangements to do so while you are working abroad. This may involve setting up automatic payments from your Canadian bank account to cover outstanding or ongoing commitments. You should advise your bank that you will be working overseas and supply your new address. Most banks can provide a variety of services to assist you in managing your finances from outside Canada.

It is always a good idea to take at least one credit card with you. Although you may choose not to use it, it will definitely provide you with some peace of mind. Keep it in a safe place for unexpected expenses or emergencies.

## Taxes

If you are living abroad but maintain residential ties in Canada, you are usually considered a factual resident of Canada for taxation purposes. However, there may be other factors involved, so you should review your situation with Revenue Canada before you leave in order to avoid surprises. The Revenue Canada publication *Canadian Residents Abroad* provides excellent information for individuals. See page 27 for details on how to order this publication.

Revenue Canada's International Tax Services Office processes income tax returns for non-residents and deemed residents of Canada, including Canadians working overseas. It also provides general assistance by telephone, correspondence and counter service, and looks after all non-resident tax withholding accounts. You can contact the office in writing at 2204 Walkley Road, Ottawa, ON K1A 1A8 or by fax

at (613) 941-2505. You can also telephone the office (collect calls are accepted) at the following numbers:

Non-Resident Withholding  
Accounts: (613) 952-2344  
Problem Resolution Program:  
(613) 952-3502  
General Inquiries: (613) 952-3741

Also, if you have access to the Internet, you can get general information about Revenue Canada, as well as many of its publications and forms (<http://www.rc.gc.ca/>).

You may also wish to consult a private financial planner, who can provide advice and guidance on such matters as contributing to Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSPs) and the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) while you are abroad.

## Mail

If you are overseas for an extended period, you can arrange to have your mail sent to a post office box or, where possible, to the nearest Canadian mission. In the latter case, the mission will hold on to letter-size mail (not parcels) for you to pick up **in person**. This mail cannot be forwarded to another address.



## Shipping Your Belongings

Shipping your goods and household effects to another country can be costly. Find out what you need to take and ship only what you will not find locally. Ask if your employer will partially or fully cover the costs of moving your belongings, or provide you with essential items when you arrive.

As well, find out ahead of time what you are allowed to take with you. Most countries have very stringent import controls.

## Canada Customs

Before going abroad with valuable items, you can take advantage of a free identification procedure at any Canada Customs office. This service is available for items that have serial numbers or other unique markings. Alternatively, if you request it, Customs can apply a sticker to any item and give it a serial number.

Jewellery often has significant value and can be difficult to identify. To make it easier to reenter Canada with jewellery, you should contact your nearest Customs office to find out the steps you should take to identify items of jewellery prior to your departure.

## Personal Issues and Concerns

### People with Special Needs

Many countries do not provide access for people in wheelchairs or make allowances for those with special hearing, sight or other physical requirements. Contact your local access organization or talk to others who have lived in your host country in the past. There are also several guides published about international travel for people with special needs. Check your local library or bookstore or the Canadian Transportation Agency Web site (<http://www.cta-otc.gc.ca>).

### Women Working Abroad

If you are a woman planning to work overseas, find out everything you can about the culture and customs, and the role of women, in the country in which you will be working. Knowing what to expect will help you prepare yourself. For practical advice specifically of interest to women going overseas, obtain a copy of DFAIT's booklet *Her Own Way: Advice for the Woman Traveller*. See page 25 for details on how to order this publication.

## Preparing Your Family for the Move

Researching the country's customs, culture and history before you leave Canada will make your overseas experience more meaningful and will enable you to better prepare yourself and your family for different living conditions abroad. In addition to using library and Internet resources, contact the National Film Board to borrow videos that you and your family can watch together. Also, use the informal network of friends, co-workers and other people who can offer specific advice about living overseas and adjusting to life in a new country.

## Moving Overseas with Children

Immigration authorities in most countries, including Canada, are vigilant about documentation for children crossing international borders. Unless a child has a valid Canadian passport, or is accompanied by both natural parents, he/she needs special documentation in addition to proof of citizenship.

If only one parent is escorting the child, notarized consent from the other parent must be presented, in addition to a copy of any

separation or divorce decree. This consent is required even if the separation or divorce documents award custody of the child to the accompanying parent.

If you have school-age children, education is probably the most significant issue you will need to consider when moving abroad. It is important that you secure appropriate schooling for your children before leaving Canada. You can make your children's adjustment to a new culture easier by getting them actively involved in extra-curricular activities or sports, where they can make friends and feel more a part of their new surroundings.

Keep in mind that working abroad can put an added strain on family relationships. If you are moving to another country with your child and there is a possibility of a custody dispute developing while you are there, you should talk to a lawyer before you leave. A special publication, *International Child Abductions: A Manual for Parents*, is available from DFAIT. See page 25 for details on how to order this publication.

### Language Training

If you are proficient in English, French or both, you have a good language base for working in many areas of the world and communicating effectively. But if you are planning to work in a country that is neither Anglophone nor Francophone, you will have communication problems. If you are planning to learn the language of your host country, you might consider beginning your studies before your departure by obtaining audio tapes or registering in a language course.

### Culture Shock

Many people who go overseas to work experience what is commonly referred to as culture shock. Although its intensity varies from one individual to another, most people experience a period of cultural adjustment. Symptoms include:

- a feeling of anger, frustration and irritability, and loss of sense of humour;
- withdrawal, spending excessive amounts of time alone, or spending time only with Canadians or other foreigners and avoiding contact with local citizens;

- negative feelings about the people and culture of the host country;
- compulsive eating and drinking, and a need for excessive amounts of sleep; and
- boredom, tiredness, and an inability to concentrate or work effectively.

You should also be aware that you might experience a reverse form of culture shock after living abroad. Be prepared to face a period of readjustment when you return to Canada. For more information about the symptoms of culture shock and coping strategies, see Alan Cumyn's book *What in the World Is Going On?: A Guide for Canadians Wishing to Work, Volunteer or Study in Other Countries* and other recommended reading listed at the back of this booklet.

### Preparing for Your Return Before You Leave

Before you leave Canada, it is a good idea to assess how working abroad fits into the context of your career and life goals. Bear in mind that, after living overseas, returning to Canada can be difficult and stressful. Coming home



## Coping with Culture Shock

**P**robably the best overall strategy for coping with the various manifestations of culture shock is to make a conscious effort to adjust to the new culture. Here are some suggestions on how to make yourself feel more at home in your new surroundings:

- **Get involved in some aspect of the new culture.** Whether you study art, music, or learn a new sport or martial art, being an interested student will make a world of difference.
- **Take the time to learn the language.** It always helps to understand as much as possible of what people are saying. They will appreciate your effort to communicate with them in their own language, even if it is just a few simple phrases, and it will make your daily life much easier, too. Carry a small notebook with you and jot down a couple of new phrases each day.
- **Travel.** Take the time to be a tourist and explore the country's sites and attractions.
- **Make friends and develop relationships.** Make an effort to meet others. This will help you overcome cultural differences and come to a better understanding of the country and its people. Interacting with local people will also show you how to be more sensitive to cultural norms and expectations.
- **Maintain contact with friends and family back home.** Writing home about your experiences and problems can help you sort through them. It is also a good idea to keep a journal of your feelings and thoughts.
- **Do something that reminds you of home.** This can really boost your spirits when you are feeling homesick. So, make sure you have packed your favourite music or hobbies.

can make some people feel very unsettled and can even lead to depression.

If possible, make some preparations for your return before you leave. For example, if you already have a job in Canada, you might want to inquire about taking a leave of absence. If you are planning to return to college or university, make sure that you have all the necessary applications and forms with you or arrange to have

them sent overseas, so that you do not miss application deadlines.

Keep in mind that maintaining a strong support network in Canada while you are abroad is likely to make coming back much easier.

Trying to envisage your return before you have even left may seem unnecessary, but a little forward planning could go a long way towards easing your return to Canada.

## Working Abroad

### *Registering at a Canadian Mission*

If you plan to stay longer than three months in a country, it is recommended that you formally register at the nearest Canadian mission. This will make it easier for you to be contacted in case of an emergency or crisis. Registration is voluntary, and the information you provide is not shared with any other Canadian government department. Registration is not usually available in the countries of Western Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

arrangements in place for you to register with another country's embassy or consulate. For instance, Canada has a formal reciprocal agreement with Australia.

### *Consular Assistance*

Canada's missions abroad are ready to help you in case of an emergency. In some instances, there may be a fee for services.

What can they do for you?

- They can contact, at your request, your relatives or friends and ask them to send you emergency funds.

**20** In countries where Canada has no direct representation, there may be

- They can help you during emergencies such as natural disasters and civil and military uprisings.
- They can direct you to sources of information about local laws, regulations, cultural customs and how to obtain visas.
- They can assist with medical emergencies.
- They can replace passports. However, not all missions are authorized to issue regular passports.
- If you are arrested, they can try to ensure equitable treatment under local laws. At your request, they can inform relatives and friends about your arrest and try to ensure that legal rights and processes are extended to you consistent with the standards of the host country. However, they cannot set aside local laws if you are charged with an offence, nor intervene in the judicial process of a foreign country. They cannot post bail, pay for a lawyer or pay your fines.
- If you wish, they can notify your next of kin regarding accidents or deaths and let them know whether, and how, they can help.

### ***Emergency Consular Services***

Canadian missions offer 24-hour assistance. During non-office hours, a telephone call you make to a mission will be automatically transferred to a consular officer in Ottawa or you will be asked to leave a message on an answering machine. In either case, there will be a prompt response. If you leave a recorded message, make sure that it is clear and that you leave a telephone number or a full contact address. In addition, you can make a collect call to DFAIT in Ottawa at (613) 996-8885. You may wish to use the *Canada Direct* service if it is available.

### ***Voting While Overseas***

Canadians who reside abroad are eligible to vote by absentee ballot in all federal elections. For additional information, consult the nearest Canadian mission.

### ***Banking***

You may wish to set up a bank account in your host country that is fed by funds from your Canadian account. To do this, you will need to go to a local foreign exchange bank with your passport, your Alien Registration Card (green card) and Canadian banking information

(your branch and account number). Usually, someone who can speak English or French will be available to assist you. The process can be complicated and time-consuming, and you should make sure that you have a source of funding during this period. Retain all documentation on financial transfers, as you may need it for local income tax purposes.

It is also important that you establish how much money you are allowed to send home. The amount of money you are permitted to leave with or to transfer may be strictly regulated by your host country. Keep all receipts and transaction records.

When working overseas, you should try to have your salary paid in Canadian or U.S. dollars. If you are paid in local currency, make sure that you know the exchange rate; the relative value of your salary could be seriously affected by changes to that rate.

### ***Marriage and Divorce While Abroad***

In other countries, the procedures surrounding relationships can be more difficult than at home. If you decide to marry while you are abroad, make sure you understand

the local requirements and laws. If your future spouse is not a Canadian citizen, find out whether he/she would be eligible to travel back to Canada with you on either a temporary or a permanent basis. This information can be obtained from the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate.

Divorce or separation could be more complicated abroad than in Canada. Property settlement and child custody issues will be different too. If your spouse is a citizen of the country in which you are living, he/she may have more rights than you do as a foreigner. Always make sure that you understand the laws and local procedures. Establish whether or not what you do locally will be legally recognized on your return to Canada. Do nothing without the advice and guidance of a lawyer.

### ***Respecting Local Customs and Laws***

Difficult situations or frustrating confrontations can sometimes occur if you are unaware of the local customs and laws of your host country. Be wise and learn ahead of time what behaviour is appropriate and what is likely to offend the local citizens.

More than 2,000 Canadians are currently imprisoned abroad for various offences. Keep in mind that, while in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws and regulations. Ignorance is no defence, and your Canadian citizenship offers you no immunity.

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

## Returning to Canada

### *Departure Tax*

Some countries impose a departure tax or service fee at the airport or point of departure. Prior to leaving such a country, make sure you set aside enough money, in local funds, to pay this tax.

### *Drugs*

Most countries impose severe penalties for the possession of even a minuscule amount of illegal drugs. Even prescription drugs and syringes used for legitimate medical purposes come under intense scrutiny and should therefore have proper accompanying documentation. As previously mentioned, keep all drugs in their original containers and carry the necessary prescriptions with you.

Choose your travelling companions wisely. Never agree to take across a border any parcel that is not yours.

For more information, visit DFAIT's Anti-Drug Information Program's Web site (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/english/travel/adip-pia/>).

### *Settling Your Obligations Before You Return*

It is important that you settle all your obligations before you leave your host country. For example, make sure that you pay all your local bills or make acceptable arrangements to do so. It may also be a good idea to obtain a letter of release from domestic or other



employees, stating that you are free of any obligation to them. In addition, you will need to meet all local tax requirements and obtain clearance from the local tax authorities before you will be allowed to leave.

### ***Bringing Home Your Belongings***

Depending on how long you have resided outside Canada, you may be subject to special import provisions for household items and personal belongings on your return. When you go through Immigration and Customs at the port of entry, have your passport ready. Where possible, pack the articles you have acquired abroad separately to make inspection easier. Have your receipts handy in case you need to support your Customs declaration. For specific details, obtain a copy of the brochure *Moving Back to Canada?* See page 26 for details on how to order this publication.

### ***Illegal Souvenirs***

While working outside Canada, you may decide to purchase souvenirs. Unfortunately, many attractive items sold in foreign countries are made from endangered plants or animals.

Crocodile-skin briefcases and wallets, python-skin boots, ivory bracelets and carvings, coral earrings, cactus rainsticks, tortoise shells, orchids and parrots are some of the more common items illegally brought back to Canada. These items are included in the more than 40,000 species of wild animals and plants regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Under Canada's *Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act* (WAPPRIITA), a violation of CITES could lead to seizure of your purchase, as well as stiff penalties of up to \$150,000 and/or prison terms of up to five years.

The same rules apply if you already own an item made from a controlled wild animal or plant and you wish to take it out of Canada. Since other countries also have strict laws, it is safer to leave these items at home.

To determine precisely what you can and cannot legally bring back into Canada, contact Environment Canada by telephone at (819) 997-1840 or by fax at (819) 953-6283. More information is available on Environment Canada's Web site,

the Green Lane (<http://www.ec.gc.ca/cws-scf/traveller>).

### **Health Concerns**

If you should 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 you were abroad, see your doctor on your return and explain your medical history and any treatment you received.

If you were in a malarial area and develop fever during the first year after your return (especially in the first two months), see your doctor immediately and inform him/her that:

- anti-malarial pills do not guarantee protection against malaria; and
- malaria must be ruled out by one or more thick and thin blood film examinations.

## **References, Resources and Recommended Reading**

### **Publications**

#### **DFAIT Publications**

DFAIT produces a number of free publications on safe travel. To order copies, call 1-800-267-8376 (in Canada) or (613) 944-4000, or access them on the Internet (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>).

*Bon Voyage, But... Information for the Canadian Traveller*

*Canadian Performers: How to Enter the United States*

*China: Visiting and Working in the Middle Kingdom* (to be published in the fall of 1998)

*Crossing the 49th: A Compendium of the Bumps on the Road for Canadians Going South*

*A Guide for Canadians Imprisoned Abroad*

*Her Own Way: Advice for the Woman Traveller*

*Hong Kong: A Guide for Visiting and Resident Canadians* (Internet version only)

*International Child Abductions:  
A Manual for Parents*

*México: ¿Qué pasa? A Guide for  
Canadian Visitors*

*Retirement Abroad: Seeing the  
Sunsets* (to be published in the  
fall of 1998)

#### *Country Travel Reports*

Travel reports offer travellers current information on conditions in over 170 countries, including safety, health and passport requirements. They are available via telephone at **1-800-267-6788** (in Canada) or **(613) 944-6788**; a FaxCall system at **1-800-575-2500** (in Canada) or **(613) 944-2500**; or the Travel section at DFAIT's Internet site (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>). These services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

#### **Citizenship**

##### *Dual Citizenship*

*How to Prove You Are a  
Canadian Citizen*

These publications may be obtained from the Web site of the Public Affairs Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (<http://cicnet.ci.gc.ca>) or by calling **(613) 954-9019**.

#### **Customs**

##### *I Declare*

*Importing a Firearm into Canada*

*Importing a Motor Vehicle  
into Canada*

*Moving Back to Canada?*

These publications may be obtained free of charge by writing to: Communications Branch, Revenue Canada, Customs and Excise, Ottawa, ON K1A 0L5; by calling **1-800-461-9999** (in Canada) or **(613) 993-0534**; or by contacting your local Customs office.

#### **Food Products**

##### *Be Aware and Declare*

This publication may be obtained free of charge by writing to: Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Communications Branch, Publication Distribution, 930 Carling Avenue, Room 118, Ottawa, ON K1A 0C5 or by calling **(613) 759-1000** and asking for the Publications Branch.

## Health Issues

### *Basic Facts About AIDS*

This booklet may be obtained by writing to: National AIDS Clearinghouse, 1565 Carling Avenue, Suite 400, Ottawa, ON K1Z 8R1 or by calling (613) 725-3434.

### *Don't Drink the Water: The Complete Travellers' Guide to Staying Healthy in Warm Climates*

*International Travel and Health* (published by the World Health Organization)

These books are available for approximately \$14.95 and \$21.42, respectively, plus GST and shipping costs. They may be obtained by writing to: Canadian Public Health Association, 1565 Carling Avenue, Suite 400, Ottawa, ON K1Z 8R1 or by calling (613) 725-3769, ext. 190.

### *Health Information for Canadian Travellers*

A free copy of this publication may be obtained by writing to: Canadian Society for International Health, 1 Nicholas Street, Suite 1105, Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7; by calling (613) 230-2654; or by e-mailing [csih@fox.nstn.ca](mailto:csih@fox.nstn.ca).

## International Relations

### *Diplomatic, Consular and Other Representatives in Canada*

This publication may be obtained for approximately \$19.95 plus GST and shipping costs by writing to: Canada Communication Group — Publishing, Ottawa, ON K1A 0S9 or by calling (613) 956-4800.

## Revenue and Taxation Issues

### *Canadian Residents Abroad (T4131)*

### *Emigrants and Income Tax (T4056)*

### *Non-Residents and Temporary Residents of Canada (T4058)*

These publications may be obtained free of charge by writing to: International Tax Services Office, Revenue Canada, 2204 Walkley Road, Ottawa, ON K1A 1A8 or by calling 1-800-267-5177 (Canada and the United States) or (613) 952-3741 (outside Canada and the United States). They are also available on the Internet (<http://www.rc.gc.ca>).

**Other Recommended Reading**

Axtell, Roger E. 1993.  
*Do's and Taboos Around the World: A Guide to International Behaviour.*  
3rd ed. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Cumyn, Alan. 1996.  
*What in the World Is Going On?: A Guide for Canadians Wishing to Work, Volunteer or Study in Other Countries.*  
Ottawa, ON: Canadian Bureau for International Education.

*Directory of Canadian Companies Overseas.* 1994.  
Mount Royal, QC: Overseas Employment Services.

Griffith, Susan. 1993.  
*Work Your Way Around the World.*  
6th ed. Oxford, U.K.: Vacation Work.

Hachey, Jean-Marc. 1995.  
*The Canadian Guide to Working and Living Overseas.*  
2nd ed. Ottawa, ON: Intercultural Systems/Systèmes interculturels.

Landes, Michael. 1997.  
*The Back Door Guide to Short Term Job Adventures.*  
Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

Yarmoshuk, Lisa, and Christopher Coy. 1993.  
*A World of Difference: Every Student's Guide to Off-Beat Work, Travel and Study Opportunities.*  
3rd ed. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.

**Other Resources****Tourisme Jeunesse**

Tourisme Jeunesse, a non-profit organization, helps young people who want to work abroad. As part of the services it provides, it holds a conference called "Working Abroad" and distributes handbooks (in English and French) through stores and universities. To contact Tourisme Jeunesse, dial 1-800-461-8585 (in Canada) or (514) 252-3117 in Montreal. The organization is also on the Internet (<http://www.tourismej.qc.ca>).

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If you require urgent assistance  
abroad, call the Department of  
Foreign Affairs and International  
Trade in Ottawa at

**(613) 996-8885**

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Working abroad : unravelling the  
maze. --

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