

Guide for Sponsored Refugees by the Gouvernement du Québec

(Courtesy translation – original version in French)

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Guide à l'intention des personnes réfugiées parrainées par le gouvernement du Québec

Consultez la version originale de ce guide, rédigée en français, disponible sur Québec.ca.

Consult the original French version of this guide, available on Québec.ca.



LEARN MORE:

www.quebec.ca/en > Immigration > Refugees and asylum seekers > Refugees abroad > Sponsored refugees

This guide was written and produced by the Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes (TCRI), in collaboration with the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration. We would like to thank the people who collaborated on the writing of the first edition of this guide.

The information and resources presented in this guide are up to date as of September 2025. These do not replace official legislation, statements, policies or programs.

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- Also available in English in PDF format on the following websites: www.quebec.ca and www.tcri.qc.ca

- الدليل متوفر أيضاً باللغة الانجليزية بصيغة PDF على المواقع التالية :
www.quebec.ca و www.tcri.qc.ca
- همچنین نسخه فارسی آن بصورت پی دی اف روی وب سائتهای
www.quebec.ca : زیر موجود می باشند و www.tcri.qc.ca

- Aussi disponible en français en version PDF sur les sites Web suivants : www.quebec.ca and www.tcri.qc.ca

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Symbols of Québec on the cover page:

- The official bird of Québec is the snowy owl
- The official tree of Québec is the yellow birch
- The official flower of Québec is the blue lag iris

This document was drafted and translated in the spirit of gender equity and neutrality.

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DIRECTORY OF USEFUL CONTACTS (TELEPHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES)

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency (police, fire or ambulance)	911
Info-Santé (health information – nurse or social worker)	811
Québec Poison Control Centre	1-800-463-5060
SOS domestic violence	1-800-363-9010
Sexual violence	1-888-933-9007
Suicide prevention	1-866-277-3553
Elder abuse	1-888-489-2287
Ligne parents (hotline for parents)	1-800-361-5085
Tel-jeunes (youth hotline)	1-800-263-2266
Alcohol and drugs – help and information	1-800-265-2626
Gambling – help and information	1-800-461-0140
Interligne – Sexual orientation and gender diversity	1-888-505-1010

IMMIGRATION

- **Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration (MIFI):**
www.quebec.ca/immigration; **1 877 864-9191**
- **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC):**
www.canada.ca/en; **1-888-242-2100**

OTHER

- **Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse** (human rights and youth rights commission)
www.cdpcj.qc.ca; **1 800 361-6477**
- **Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail** (labour standards, pay equity and worker health and safety commission)
www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca; **1 844 838-0808**
- **Canadian Red Cross** (Restoring Family Links Program)
www.croixrouge.ca; **1-800-363-7305**
- **Directeur de l'état civil** (Registrar of Civil Status)
www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca; **1 877 644-4545**
- **Emploi-Québec**
www.quebec.ca/emploi; **1 877 767-8773**
- **Energir**
www.energir.com; **1-800-563-1516**
- **Hydro Québec**
www.hydroquebec.com; **1-888-385-7252**
- **Hydro Sherbrooke**
www.sherbrooke.ca/fr/hydro-sherbrooke; **1-819-821-5622**
- **La Place 0-5** (access point for licensed childcare services)
www.laplace0-5.com; **1-844-270-5055**
- **Ministère de la Famille** (Ministry of Family)
www.quebec.ca/gouvernement/ministere/famille;
1-855-336-8568
- **Ministère de l'Éducation and Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur** (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education)
www.quebec.ca/gouvernement/ministere/education;
1-866-747-6626
www.quebec.ca/gouvernement/ministeres-organismes/enseignement-superieur;
1 877 266-1337
- **Office des personnes handicapées du Québec** (government agency for people living with disabilities)
www.quebec.ca/gouvernement/ministeres-et-organismes/office-personnes-handicapees;
1 800 567-1465
- **Finding a resource in health and social services**
www.sante.gouv.qc.ca/repertoire-ressources;
1 877 644-4545
- **Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec** (Québec health insurance board)
www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca; **1 800 561-9749**

- **Tribunal administratif du logement** (rental housing board)
www.tal.gouv.qc.ca; 1 800 683-2245
- **Services Québec (Québec government services)**
www.quebec.ca/services-quebec; 1 877 644-4545
- **Réseau de l'action bénévole du Québec** (volunteer action network)
www.rabq.ca; 1 866 496-4004
- **Service québécois de changement d'adresse** (address change service)
www.adresse.gouv.qc.ca; 1 877 644-4545
- **Réseau d'intervention auprès des personnes ayant subi la violence organisée (RIVO)** (Psychological support for refugee and immigrant survivors of trauma)
www.rivo-resilience.org; 514 282-0661
- **Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec** (automobile insurance and driver's license)
www.saaq.gouv.qc.ca; 1 800 361-7620

INTRODUCTION

Québec fully supports the principle of international solidarity and the objectives of the international conventions governing refugee protection. Humanitarian immigration plays an important role in Québec. The Collective Sponsorship Program for refugees was developed to allow non-profit organizations and groups of Québec residents to provide refugees living abroad an opportunity to find protection and start a new life in Québec.

Québec is a democratic, pluralistic and inclusive francophone society. Québec and its institutions are founded on the rule of law and the principle of state secularism. For example, the right to equality, without discrimination based on gender, is protected in the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*. This right applies in the public domain (for example, in the workplace) and also in the private domain (for example, within the family).

Québec aims to ensure that immigrants can participate in community life to the full extent of their skills and aspirations, and can do so in French, the language of integration and social cohesion. The inclusion of people of all origins is crucial to Québec's prosperity. All people are equal in value and dignity and have the right to equal protection under the law. They are free to lead their lives according to their beliefs, while respecting the law and the democratic and Québec values expressed in the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*.

LEARN MORE

About the democratic and Québec values as expressed in the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*: www.quebec.ca/en > **Immigration > Settle and integrate in Québec**

OBJECTIVES OF THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended for sponsored refugees in Québec. It provides information that will help you during your one-year sponsorship in Québec:

- By providing information on the necessary steps for you to settle in Québec;
- By providing tools that will be helpful for your integration.

This guide provides information to facilitate your integration, from the time of your arrival in Québec until the end of the one-year sponsorship period.

USING THIS GUIDE

This guide is divided into six main sections:

1. Background: General information about refugee sponsorship and about Québec;
2. Getting settled: Information on moving into your first home;
3. Integrating: Important tasks to complete;
4. Your rights: Useful information to understand and respect the values of your host society;
5. Your family abroad: Once you have settled, you may be able to bring family members to join you in Québec;
6. Planning for the end of the sponsorship undertaking: Suggestions to facilitate your transition out of the sponsorship period.

We invite you to visit the websites referred to in each section to learn more.

At the end of this guide, you will find a **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** section. It includes the most frequently asked questions regarding each of the sections in this guide.

As the days, weeks and months pass, you can refer to this guide in order to better understand the different stages of your integration and get to know Québec better. You can use this guide during your first year in Québec and throughout your settlement and integration.

It is also recommended to consult the guide **Settle and Integrate in Québec**, which contains a great deal of useful information. The guide can be found at [Québec.ca](http://Quebec.ca).

HUMANITARIAN IMMIGRATION TO QUÉBEC

PROGRAM FOR REFUGEES ABROAD

The Program for Refugees Abroad is an important part of Québec's humanitarian immigration program. It allows refugees abroad to be resettled here. When they arrive in Canada, these refugees have permanent residence status.

Permanent residence status grants the majority of benefits offered to Canadian citizens: access to healthcare, and to live, work and study in Canada. After a certain amount of time, permanent residents can apply for Canadian citizenship.

The Program for Refugees Abroad consists of two streams:

GOVERNMENT-ASSISTED REFUGEES PROGRAM

In this program, the Québec government, with the help of community organizations, supports refugees in their settlement and integration in Québec.

REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Under this program, Québec residents and non-profit organizations have demonstrated their solidarity with refugees abroad. They have signed sponsorship agreements with the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration. It is through this program that you have been resettled in Québec. The sponsors meet you at the airport and support you during your first year in Québec. Everyone involved in the sponsorship has both rights and responsibilities.

COLLECTIVE SPONSORSHIP: RESPONSIBILITIES

GOVERNMENT	SPONSOR	SPONSORED PERSON
<p>The Québec government's responsibility is to provide you, free of charge, with the services offered to Québec residents. These include: French language instruction, education, and employment integration. The services offered will be described in detail in the third section of this guide: Integrating.</p>	<p>Your sponsor has committed to meet your basic needs and those of your accompanying family members. Your sponsor must provide you with adequate housing and furniture, facilitate your transportation and ensure that you have the food you need and that you have clothing appropriate for Québec's climate.</p> <p>The sponsor has also committed to help you integrate into Québécois society. This could mean, for example, accompanying you to register for public services and programs and to help you with learning French or looking for a job.</p> <p>This commitment, which is both moral and financial, is set out in a formal agreement with the Québec government, for a period of one year following your arrival in Québec. To qualify for this agreement, your sponsor had to prove they met the income requirements established by the Québec government. In sum, your sponsor is responsible for providing you with all the information and assistance required to facilitate your integration in Québec.</p>	<p>You must inform your sponsor if significant changes or difficulties occur during the sponsorship period. This could be a pregnancy, a work opportunity, a housing problem, your child having difficulties at school, or other events that could affect your sponsor's responsibilities. You must also notify your sponsor of any change of address.</p> <p>You must inform your sponsor of how your basic needs are being met. If applicable, you must inform them of any steps taken to obtain financial assistance, including social assistance (welfare) from the Government of Québec.</p> <p>In the section Your rights, you will find advice in case difficulties with your sponsor arise.</p> <p>You must make every effort to integrate into Québec society.</p>

YOUR NEW ENVIRONMENT

QUÉBEC

Québec covers an area of more than 1,600,000 square kilometers. Its population is over 8 million. Its capital is Québec City and its largest city is Montréal.

Québec has a unique character because of its predominantly French-speaking population and the rich cultural mix of its population. Québec has the largest territory of the 10 Canadian provinces. Québec society is governed by the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* and the *Charter of the French Language*, which makes French the official language of Québec. French is the common public language, the language of public institutions and the customary language of work, education, communications, and business.

A modern society, Québec is well known for its democratic political system and its public services. Québec offers many social and community services. Its diverse economy is based on the management of many natural resources, and its economy is growing in parallel with advances in information technology and other cutting-edge sectors.

Québec's national holiday is June 24, which is a public holiday.

Democratic values of Québécois society as expressed in the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*:

- Québec is a francophone society;
- Québec is a free and democratic society;
- Québec is a society based on the rights and responsibilities of Québécois;
- Québec is a secular society;
- In Québec, women and men have the same rights.

LEARN MORE:

About Québécois society: www.quebec.ca/en > Immigration > Settle and integrate in Québec > Sharing Québec's key values

YOUR MUNICIPALITY

Québec is divided into 17 administrative regions. Each has resources and characteristics that distinguish it from the others.

The best way to become familiar with your community is to ask your sponsor questions.

The vast majority of communities in Québec have a website on which you will find information about community services offered, often free of charge.

LEARN MORE:

About the different administrative regions: www.bonjourquebec.com/en-ca > Where to go > Regions of Québec

CULTURE, SPORTS AND RECREATION

When arriving in Québec, many people see it as a bridge between the European and American continents. This is reflected in the architecture, culture, and cuisine. A great way to enjoy this culture is to participate in the many activities offered, often free of charge, by your city or town.

Participating in sports and cultural activities will help you understand Québec society and meet new people, which will facilitate your integration.

Québec loves to celebrate culture, sports, and the pleasure of being together. Throughout the year, festivals, events, and celebrations are organized in many regions. To find out about them, consult the calendar of events for your region.

Québec has many museums, some specializing in Québec history, others in contemporary art, or in the natural sciences. There are different entrance fees, including special rates for young people, families and seniors. Some museums also offer times when admission is free.

With snowy winters and hot summers, Québec offers a wide variety of recreational activities. Take advantage of the many parks, and of classes or sports activities offered by local community recreation organizations.

Québec is known for the vastness of its natural territories, as well as for its abundant, diverse and impressive flora and fauna. The Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (agency that manages parks and wildlife) offers a range of activities in Québec's provincial parks and wildlife reserves.

LEARN MORE:

- About cultural events: www.quebecvacances.com
- About museums: www.musees.qc.ca
- About libraries: www.reseaubiblioduquebec.qc.ca
- About outdoor activities: www.sepaq.com

GETTING SETTLED

AT THE AIRPORT

When you arrived at the airport, you received the following official documents from:

- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC):
 - Confirmation of Permanent Residence,
 - Interim Federal Health Program eligibility certificate.
- Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration (MIFI):
 - Certificat de sélection du Québec – CSQ (Québec selection certificate) for each member of the family, or a confirmation of issuance of a CSQ (in the case of an error in or absence of the CSQ),
 - Sponsored refugees – Assessment of physical health and well-being. This is an information sheet inviting you to make an appointment for an assessment by health professionals.

It is important to keep these documents safe. You will need them throughout your integration process. They belong to you, and you can give a photocopy to your sponsor. To learn more about these documents see the **Integrating** section.

MOVING

YOUR SPONSOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Your sponsor has promised to house you upon your arrival in Québec. This means:

- Paying the whole rent for your housing;
- Paying related costs, such as electricity and heating;
- Furnishing your home.

Your sponsor may ask you to stay temporarily at their home or elsewhere for the time necessary to find you adequate housing (with their help).

ACCOMPAGNEMENT QUÉBEC

The Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration provides the integration service Accompagnement Québec, which is adapted to sponsored refugees. This free and personalized service will help facilitate your settlement and integration in Québec. According to your profile and life plans, an integration assistance agent (IAA) may guide and assist you toward the appropriate resources. Your sponsor will be invited to the first meeting with an IAA.

Register now via the Arrima platform or ask for help from your sponsor:

- Create your account and profile in **Arrima** or, if you already have one, log in to your account;
- Select **Accompagnement Québec** in the menu on the left and follow the instructions to complete your registration.

If you need interpretation services, indicate your first language when registering.

LEARN MORE ABOUT ACCOMPAGNEMENT QUÉBEC

Visit: www.quebec.ca/en > Immigration > Integration service for immigrants

HOUSING

In Québec, the landlord (owner) and tenant (you) sign a lease: this is a legal contract that generally lasts 12 months. When you sign the lease, you commit to stay there and pay the rent until the lease ends. It is possible to transfer your lease to someone else, but certain conditions must be fulfilled.

The landlord has the right to ask	The landlord does not have the right to ask
An identity document: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The landlord has a right to see an identity document but he cannot keep neither the document nor the information there in.• Post-dated check for the first rental month• Advanced payment of one month of rent (maximum)• Reference from a former landlord• Your credit history	Personal informations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Security number• Family situation• Sexual orientation• Religion Money: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A security deposit• Pay the rent several months in advance

When signing a lease, you will be asked to provide certain information. It is strongly recommended that you take out a home insurance policy. In the event of fire or theft at your home, you could be compensated financially and avoid legal problems if you have such insurance.

The cost of home insurance is generally low for someone who has just arrived and who probably owns fewer expensive possessions.

When looking for housing, it is recommended to avoid spending more than 30% of your monthly income on housing, including energy costs (heating and electricity).

LEARN MORE

About renting an apartment and your rights and obligations: **Tribunal administratif du logement** www.tal.gouv.qc.ca

To help you in your housing search, you can consult the guide prepared by the **ROMEL (Regroupement des organismes du Montréal ethnique pour le logement)**. The guide contains valuable information, from how to search for housing up to signing the lease: www.romel-montreal.ca/en > Publications > Guide du nouvel arrivant (in French)

FURNISHINGS

Many sponsors use their mutual assistance networks to provide the homes of the refugees they have sponsored with basic furnishings:

- A bed and sheets for each member of the family;
- Living room furniture;
- A dresser or wardrobe for clothing;
- A kitchen table and chairs;
- A stove and a refrigerator;
- Kitchen utensils;
- Bathroom items.

Don't hesitate to let your sponsor know if you need any items or furniture. Tell them when an appliance is faulty so that they can repair or replace it.

You can browse classified ads on specialized websites like **lespac.com**, **Kijiji.ca** or **Marketplace** for used furniture. Some businesses and community organizations also offer used furniture.

Important: Inspect the used furniture you find closely to avoid a bed bug infestation in your housing.

REGISTERING FOR SERVICES

ELECTRICITY, GAS AND OIL

Electricity, gas and oil heating services are generally paid for by the tenant, who must register for service directly from the provider. Before signing up, ask your landlord to tell you which services are included in your rent and which are not. Some apartments are heated with electricity, while others are heated with oil or gas.

With the help of your sponsor, you should sign up for the necessary services.

A request to **Hydro-Québec** is free when made online using the **Customer Space**. However, if the request is made through a customer services representative, a \$25 fee, plus tax, applies and will be added to your first bill.

LEARN MORE

- About electricity: Hydro-Québec - **1 888 385-7252** www.hydroquebec.com
- About natural gas: Énergir - **1 800 563-1516** www.energir.com
- About oil: A variety of providers offer this service. Ask for your sponsor's help or ask your new neighbours. They can give you information on the service providers in your area.

TELEPHONE AND INTERNET

In Québec, many companies offer cellular telephone, IP (VoIP), and landline services. Companies usually offer a monthly fee for service that allows unlimited local calls, regardless of their duration. Your sponsor can help you to choose the best plan.

Rates for cell phone plans in Canada are generally higher than in many other countries.

Calls outside of Canada can be expensive. It is often better to use calling cards that are available at neighbourhood convenience stores (dépanneurs) if you want to call your friends or family abroad. As with telephone services, there are many internet service providers in Québec. Costs vary greatly from one to the next. You should choose a plan according to your needs.

All municipal libraries offer computers and free WI-FI internet access.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Each time you move, in addition to telling your sponsor, it is important to give your new address to government departments and to your service providers.

FOR QUÉBEC

Your change of address can be communicated to several departments in one easy step by going to the website of the **Service québécois de changement d'adresse** (SQCA): www.adresse.gouv.qc.ca

These are the departments and agencies that will be informed:

- Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity);
- Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec (Québec health insurance board);
- Retraite Québec (administers the Québec pension plan);
- Revenu Québec (collection of income tax);
- Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (automobile insurance and driver's license board);
- Directeur général des élections du Québec (chief electoral officer).

It is also important to inform Hydro-Québec of a change of address.

FOR CANADA

To find out the process for informing the government departments that provide services to you of your change of address, call **1 800 O-CANADA (1-800-622-6232)**.

Your change of address can be communicated to **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada** (IRCC) by calling **1-888-242-2100** (keep in mind that your permanent residence card will be sent to you at the most recent address you provided to IRCC).

HOUSING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

In Québec, low-rental housing (also called HLM) is available for low-income households under certain conditions. To make a request or for more information, contact your city's **Office municipal d'habitation (Municipal Housing Office, OMH)**: www.habitation.gouv.qc.ca/repertoire/liste_des_centres_de_services.html

The **Programme Allocation-logement (Shelter Allowance Program)** allows eligible individuals who spend too much of their budget on housing to benefit from a monthly allowance. The allowance may go up to \$100 per month.

TO FIND OUT MORE:

- Low-rental housing (HLM): www.habitation.gouv.qc.ca/programme/programme/programme_hlm.html
- Québec Rent Supplement Program: www.habitation.gouv.qc.ca/programme/programme/programme_de_supplement_au_loyer_quebec_pslq.html
- Programme Allocation-logement (Shelter Allowance Program): www.revenuquebec.ca/fr/citoyens/votre-situation/faible-revenu/programme-allocation-logement/

INTEGRATING

This section will provide information to facilitate your integration. The boxes indicate the most important steps to take. Your sponsor must provide you with all the information you need and accompany you throughout the process.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

TO-DO LIST:

- Register with the **Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec – RAMQ** (Québec health insurance board)
- Have the assessment of physical health and well-being done

YOUR HEALTHCARE COVERAGE

The federal government and the Québec government provide healthcare coverage for sponsored refugees.

RÉGIE DE L'ASSURANCE MALADIE DU QUÉBEC – RAMQ

In Québec, the **RAMQ** provides universal coverage for Québec residents. This coverage includes medical care, prescription medications, and hospitalization, in most cases. As a resident of Québec, you are eligible for this coverage. You just have to register with the RAMQ. Registration is simple and free. Your sponsor will assist you.

To register:

You must answer the eligibility questions by accessing the RAMQ website at: www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca > **Citizens > Health Insurance > Register or re-register for health insurance**

You will need to attach the following documents to your request in PDF:

- Permanent resident card or confirmation, issued by **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada**;
- Certificat de sélection du Québec (Québec Selection Certificate, CSQ) issued by the **Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration**.

Each member of your family must also submit these documents.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG INSURANCE IN QUÉBEC

You are eligible for the public drug insurance plan administered by the **RAMQ**. This insurance provides basic coverage to all those who do not qualify for a private group insurance plan covering prescription drugs. Registration for the prescription drug insurance plan in Québec can be done at the same time that you register for your health insurance.

INTERIM FEDERAL HEALTH PROGRAM (IFHP)

The IFHP is a federal healthcare program provided to you free of charge for your first 12 months in Canada. When you arrived at the airport, an immigration officer gave you a document entitled Interim Federal Health Certificate of Eligibility.

The IFHP covers some medical and prescription drug costs not covered by the RAMQ, such as:

- Emergency dental care:
 - Emergency examination: a maximum of one emergency examination is covered per six months;
 - Diagnostic x-rays: x-rays are covered, but with some restrictions on quantity and type;
 - Restorations are covered only for severely affected teeth;
 - Fillings for molars and front teeth;
 - Urgent non-complex extractions;
 - Anesthetics are covered, with some restrictions, according to the age of the patient.

In Québec, children under 10 years of age receive certain dental services free of charge in a dental clinic or hospital. The Québec Health Insurance Plan (RAMQ) covers these expenses. For children 10 years and older, dental expenses are no longer covered by the RAMQ, but the IFHP covers emergency costs for the first year after arrival.

- Some eye care;

In Québec, optical care and optometrist services are covered by the RAMQ for children under 18, for seniors over 65 years and for those with a visual impairment. For everyone else, optical care is not covered by the RAMQ. For those over 18 and under 65, it is the IFHP that covers costs during the first year after your arrival.

- Various specialist services, such as clinical psychologists, psychotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and physiotherapists;
- Medical equipment, such as orthopedic appliances and prostheses, mobility aids, hearing aids, diabetic equipment and incontinence supplies.

To access this additional coverage, you must submit your Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) Certificate of Eligibility to the professional you are visiting before the consultation. They will then be able to tell you whether the required care is covered.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about the IFHP, go to: www.canada.ca/en > Immigration and Citizenship > Refugees and asylum > Find services for refugees in Canada > Health care – Refugees

ASSESSMENT OF PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Québec offers an assessment of physical health and well-being for refugees, which will be your first contact with the health and social services network. This assessment includes meeting with a nurse and a social worker to check your health and refer you to the right resources, if necessary. This free evaluation can be done by contacting your local Refugee Health Clinic. Refer to the information sheet provided at the airport.

INTEGRATED CENTRES

Québec's health and social services system includes Integrated Health and Social Services Centers (CISSS) and Integrated University Health and Social Services Centers (CIUSSS), which ensure the accessibility, continuity, and quality of health services for the population of the area that each one serves.

They are places to which the population can turn in case of health or psychosocial problems. You can receive the appropriate services at one of these centres, or you may be directed to another resource that is part of the service network in your area.

To find the centre in your area, go to: www.sante.gouv.qc.ca/en > Finding a resource

LOCAL COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTRES (CLSC)

Connected to the CISSS or CIUSSS, the local community service centers (CLSC) are found in all the municipalities in Québec. They offer:

- Health and social services;
- Preventive and medical services for residents in their area;
- Rehabilitation and reintegration services;
- Public health activities.

To see a doctor the same day or the next day, you can go to a walk-in clinic without an appointment.

Take the time to visit the CLSC in your neighborhood to learn about the services it offers and its hours of operation. If it cannot provide you with the help you need, the staff will direct you to the appropriate organization. Some CISSS and CIUSSS may offer services in languages other than French. It is possible to obtain vaccination and blood testing services in most CLSCs.

Your sponsor can help you with the process. You may also consult the Resource in health and social services directory of the government of Québec to find a drop-in health clinic or resources near you.

For resources near you: www.sante.gouv.qc.ca/en > **Finding a resource**

REGISTERING TO HAVE A FAMILY DOCTOR

A family doctor follows patients on a long-term basis. They take account of lifestyle and family history and are concerned with the overall health of their patients. A family doctor can also refer you to a specialist doctor, if needed. To access a family doctor, you can register on the waiting list:

- By telephone, by contacting the Guichet d'accès pour la clientèle orpheline – GACO (service desk for patients without a family doctor) in your area. To find the service desk for your area, call **1-877-644-4545**;
- Online, via the Guichet d'accès à un médecin de famille – GAMF (list to find a family doctor): www.quebec.ca/en > **Health > Finding a health resource > Québec Family Doctor Finder**.

The waiting time to find a family doctor varies according to doctors' availability and the number of people without family doctors in your region. Once a family doctor is assigned to you, they will contact you.

INFO-SANTÉ (811)

At any time, you can reach a nurse or a social worker at Info-Santé by calling 811, if you have questions or concerns regarding your health.

EMERGENCIES (911)

In case of emergency, call 911, and an ambulance will pick you up and take you to a hospital in your area. The ambulance service is not free, so you may be charged.

During your first year, these charges are covered by the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP). Depending on your financial situation, they may also be covered in the following years. Ask your sponsor for more information on this.

EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

If you experience emotional or psychological difficulties, it is important to talk about them. In Québec, there are a variety of professionals with the expertise to help you. These services are free and confidential. You can talk to people you can trust who will be able to guide you towards resources and support.

The IFHP gives you free access to these emotional and psychological support services during your first year.

RIVO (Réseau d'intervention auprès des personnes ayant subi la violence organisée) specializes in providing emotional and psychological support to refugees, to help them overcome the consequences of violence they have suffered. RIVO's services are offered in several languages. They can help you to rebuild, to resume your role in your family, integrate into your community and contribute fully to your new society.

RIVO is a network of professionals based in Montréal. They can help you find support in your community. RIVO is not a crisis intervention service. However, requests for support are handled within a reasonable timeframe. Call **514-282-0661** – info@rivo-resilience.org.

In case of non-urgent health problems, contact Info-Santé by calling 811. This service is available 24 hours a day / 7 days a week. Association québécoise de prévention du suicide (AQPS): **1-866 APPELLE (1-866-277-3553) – 24 hours a day / 7 days a week**.

FRENCH

TO-DO LIST:

Register for French language classes if you are not already fluent in French.

LEARNING FRENCH, A NECESSITY

In Québec, speaking French is a necessity. Québec society is governed by the *Charter of the French Language*, which makes French the official language of Québec. French is the language of public institutions and the usual language of work, education, communications, and business. Québec aims to preserve and promote its official language. French represents not only an essential tool of communication but also a common symbol of belonging to Québec society. If you are not fluent in French, you should take classes to learn it and facilitate your integration and full participation in community life.

A VARIETY OF OPTIONS TO LEARN FRENCH

The Québec government offers free French classes to facilitate your integration. When you take French classes offered by the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration, or its partners, you could be eligible to receive various allowances to support you while you take the courses, or to cover certain related costs such as transportation or childcare.

There are several ways to learn French in different regions in Québec, ranging from regular full-time courses, regular part-time courses, specialized courses and online courses, including specialized courses by field of employment.

The training course is suitable for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels of French.

BEGINNER AND INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

Beginner and intermediate courses are offered throughout the year. Once you've applied for admission, you can expect to begin your language training quickly, even during the summer.

CAREER-ORIENTED CLASSES

The Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration also offers specialized French classes for different professions (health and nursing; engineering and applied sciences; administration, law and business, tourism and commerce). These part-time courses will help you improve your French in your professional field, whether for work or studies.

ONLINE FRENCH CLASSES

To learn French at your own pace, the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration also offers intermediate and advanced French courses online. Intermediate online French courses can be taken in self-study mode or with the support of a tutor. Self-study modules in specialized areas of employment (health and nursing, engineering and applied sciences, administration, law and business, tourism, and commerce) are also available online.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE*

FRENCH CLASSES OFFERED BY THE MINISTÈRE DE L'IMMIGRATION, DE LA FRANCISATION ET DE L'INTÉGRATION

	Participation allowance (\$)	Transport allowance	Allowance for child care	Duration Session of about 11 weeks
Full-time classes	\$230/week \$28/training day	Yes	Yes	25 to 30 hours/week (11-week session approximately)
Part-time classes (incl. specialized classes)	No	No	Yes	4 to 20 hours/week (11-week session approximately)
Online classes	No	No	No	Flexible

*Financial assistance is adjusted on July 1 of each year. You can consult the current amounts online:

www.quebec.ca/en > Education > Learn French

TO APPLY

You can register for French classes full-time or part-time on the government of Québec's **Apprendre le français** (Learn French) platform:

- Click on the option that corresponds to the selected course type;
- Create an account on **Apprendre le français** (Learn French):
 - If you already have an account, sign in.
 - If you have an **Arrima** account, use that same login information to sign in.
- Fill out the admission request.

Unless otherwise specified, the financial assistance request for your participation in the course will be done through the same form as your course registration.

Follow the instructions on the **Québec.ca** website for the childcare fee reimbursement request.

To apply: www.quebec.ca/en > Education > Learn French

BUDGET AND FINANCES

TO-DO LIST:

- Obtain your Social Insurance Number (SIN)
- Open a bank account
- Apply for child assistance payments (both Québec and Canada)

SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER

You must have a social insurance number (SIN) to:

- Work;
- Open a bank account;
- Receive benefits and services from Canadian government programs.

There is no fee to apply for a SIN. Each SIN is given to just one person and cannot be legally used by anyone else. Keep all documents containing your SIN and your personal information in a safe place; do not keep them on you.

To obtain your SIN:

- Go to the **Service Canada office** in your municipality;
- Bring the original of your Confirmation of Permanent Residence document, given to you by **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada**.

If everything is in order, you may receive your SIN in just one visit.

It is strongly recommended that you apply for a SIN as soon as possible after arriving in Québec.

YOUR BANK ACCOUNT

To open a bank account, you must:

- Go in person to the financial institution of your choice;
- Take these two pieces of identification:
 - your social insurance number (SIN),
 - your Confirmation of Permanent Residence document from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

FAMILY ALLOWANCES

You can apply online for the Canada child benefit (CCB) using your CRA account (My Account). Sign in and click on “Benefits and credits.”

You can also apply by mail by completing the following steps:

- Download the Canada Child Benefits Application:
www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/forms-publications/forms/rc66.html
- Mail the duly completed form and requested documents to:

Centre fiscal de Jonquière

2251, boulevard René-Lévesque
Jonquière QC G7S 5J2

For the Family Allowance offered by the Québec government, the application can only be done online. Go to the **Retraite Québec** website: www.retraitequebec.gouv.qc.ca/en > **Online services and tools > Online services > Family Allowance.**

TRANSPORTATION LOAN

In some cases, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides an interest-free loan to help cover transportation costs, International Organization for Migration (IOM) service fees, and other related expenses.

If you have received this loan, it is your responsibility to repay it. It is not your sponsor’s responsibility.

The repayment begins, in principle, one year after your arrival. It is your responsibility to keep your address up to date with IRCC in order to receive your account statements and not miss any payments. The time you have to repay this interest-free loan depends on the amount borrowed. For loans of:

- \$1,200 or less, you have 36 months (3 years);
- \$1,201 to \$2,400, you have 48 months (4 years);
- \$2,401 to 3,600 \$, you have 60 months (5 years);
- \$3,601 to 4,800 \$, you have 72 months (6 years);
- More than \$4,800, you have 96 months (8 years).

At any time, if you find yourself unable to repay your loan, you can ask for a review of your terms of payment by contacting **IRCC** at **1-800-667-7301**.

COST OF LIVING

The average income per inhabitant in Québec is comparable to that of most industrialized countries. However, cost of living is lower. Depending on where you are, rent and the cost of buying a house can be more affordable, especially in places that are further away from major urban centres.

Your sponsor will give you advice to save money, such as:

- Using the supermarkets that sell products at lower prices;
- How to save on electricity, especially by reducing heating expenses in winter.

SAVING MONEY

To make the best of a limited budget, it is possible to make choices that save you money.

For food, the best places to buy are supermarkets. In convenience stores (dépanneurs), pharmacies, and other food retailers, prices are higher and there is less variety of products. If you look at the flyers of your favorite stores, or others close to your home, you can benefit from additional discounts or buy products in larger quantities while they are on sale. Some retailers also offer discount coupons on their websites. There are also apps that can help you view flyers online and make grocery lists quickly. The assistance offered by your sponsor must cover your basic needs at all times, including the purchasing of food products.

Used or “second-hand” goods are also a good option to save money. Second-hand stores offer a wide selection of clothing, bedding, furniture, toys, kitchen accessories, and more. Everything is in good condition and at a very affordable price.

The Internet also offers sites for the purchase or sale of second-hand goods. On **Facebook**, you can search for exchange groups in your area. The **Kijiji** website is also a great resource for buying all kinds of second-hand items, and prices are often negotiable.

There's also discount "dollar" stores where it is possible to buy items for **\$1** or slightly more. They have kitchen and home supplies, decorations of all kinds, school supplies, fashion accessories, toys, etc.

It's also important to know how to manage your energy consumption economically. Québec's electricity costs are among the lowest in North America. But keep in mind that in winter, energy consumption can increase significantly.

LEARN MORE

Visit the **Hydro-Québec** website for suggestions that will help you reduce your energy costs:
www.hydroquebec.com/residential/energy-wise/

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX IN QUÉBEC

Canada and Québec collect taxes on most goods and services, with the exception of basic consumer needs (for example, food, shelter, transportation, and health). These taxes do not change from one product to another.

- Goods and services tax (GST in English, TPS in French) is administered by the **Canada Revenue Agency**;
- Sales tax (PST in English, TVQ in French) is administered by **Revenu Québec**.

LEARN MORE

About taxation in Québec: www.revenuquebec.ca > **Citizens > Consumption Taxes**

TIPPING IN QUÉBEC

In Québec, tips are not usually included in the prices. They are left up to the client. In restaurants, it is recommended to tip about **15%** of the bill, before taxes. But this can vary according to your appreciation of the service. Tips for hair salons, manicures, other aesthetic services or taxis, grocery, and other delivery services is around **\$5**.

ACCESS TO CREDIT

When you immigrate to Canada, your credit history doesn't come with you; you must rebuild it.

To obtain a credit card, go to the financial institution where you have a bank account. You are entirely responsible for the payment of your balance. Keep in mind that poor management of your credit can harm your ability to borrow.

WORK

The Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration and the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (department of labour, employment and social solidarity) have websites intended for immigrants, including detailed information on the job market.

LEARN MORE

- www.quebec.ca/en > **Immigration > Settle and integrate in Québec > Employment**
- www.quebec.ca/en > **Employment**

ACCOMPAGNEMENT QUÉBEC: EMPLOYMENT AND RECOGNITION OF COMPETENCIES DOMAINS

The domains of "**Employment**" and "**Recognition of competencies**" from the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration's **Accompagnement Québec** program aims to speed up and facilitate the economic integration of immigrants. To do so, the integration agent will suggest, as needed, that the person immigrating has an evaluation of the equivalency of their diplomas, will provide information on the procedures to follow for the recognition of competencies if the person wishes to work in a regulated trade and will also refer the person to **Emploi-Québec** (Employment Québec) or a specialized organization, where they will be able to access employability services.

YOUR PROFESSIONAL SITUATION IN QUÉBEC

REGULATED TRADES AND PROFESSIONS

In Québec, the practice of certain trades and professions is regulated.

Professional orders

Many professions are governed by professional orders which are responsible for protecting the public. They have the authority to set admission criteria and standards of practice, assess competencies and credentials, and award the certificate or permit to qualified candidates.

Regulatory requirements

Certain conditions for admission or practice are subject to regulatory requirements. For example, the electrical, plumbing, and gas technician trades are governed by regulatory bodies. This is also the case for certain professions in the financial sector, for teaching and for driving heavy vehicles.

Check whether the profession or trade you wish to practice in Québec is governed by a regulatory body or is subject to regulatory requirements. You will then have an idea of the conditions to be fulfilled in order to practice and the steps to be taken with the regulatory body to submit a request to examine your file. This will speed up your integration into the job market.

You should communicate as soon as possible with the regulatory body that governs the profession you'd like to practice in Québec. You can also visit QualificationsQuebec.com, a free, general information access point.

LEARN MORE

- About credential recognition: www.qualificationsquebec.com
- About regulation of trades and professions in Québec: www.quebec.ca/en > Employment > Find Out About a Trade or Profession > Practising a Regulated Trade or Occupation

LOOKING FOR A JOB

USING JOB SEARCH RESOURCES

It is possible that, when you arrive, you will not be able to have the same job that you held in your country and for which you were trained. Like most people moving to Québec, you will probably have to make some compromises before getting the job you want.

Looking for a job is an important step in your economic integration. Your sponsor is also responsible for helping you find a job. Don't hesitate to ask for their advice and to use their network of contacts to help you.

OBJECTIF INTÉGRATION SESSIONS

The Québec government also offers services that will help you in your job search. The **Objectif Intégration** information sessions have a total duration of 24 hours and are given over several days. They are offered by the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration in partnership with community organizations. The objective of these sessions is to explain how Québec society functions. They use dynamic group sessions which cover the democratic values of Québec society expressed in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, as well as Québec workplace culture.

You can receive **\$230** of financial assistance for your participation in the full information session if you fill out the form online.

A drop-in childcare service is offered by some of the partner organizations to supervise your children during the session.

LEARN MORE

To register for the Objectif Intégration sessions: www.quebec.ca/en > Immigration > Settle and integrate in Québec > Objectif Intégration Information Session for Immigrants

You can also register by phone with the MIFI information service at: **1 877 864-9191**

SERVICES QUÉBEC OFFICES

The **Services Québec** office in your area offers resources and services to people who need employment assistance. They offer:

- Reception services;
- A multi-use room (with computers);
- Financial assistance services.

EMPLOYMENT INTEGRATION PROGRAM FOR IMMIGRANTS AND VISIBLE MINORITIES (PRIIME)

The objective of **PRIIME** is to help you obtain a first work experience in Québec in your profession or trade, if you haven't yet been able to work in that field.

Your new employer may be able to receive a subsidy to cover part of your salary and other costs, such as the salary of a mentor or expenses for training and other activities related to integration.

To find out if you're eligible, visit your local **Services Québec office** centre to meet with an agent who will evaluate your needs and ensure that this program is the best service for your situation. As needed, the **Services Québec office** agent can help you in the process of your search for employment.

LEARN MORE

www.quebec.ca/en > Employment > Find a Job or Internship > Employment Assistance Programs

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

When looking for a job, it can be helpful to have support to increase your chances of success. The Employment Assistance Services program offered by **Emploi-Québec**, in partnership with community organizations specializing in job placement, allows you to:

- Attend information sessions on the job market;
- Obtain career advice and guidance;
- Participate in job search assistance activities and job placement activities.

QUÉBEC EMPLOI WEBSITE

Emploi-Québec's Québec Emploi website helps you to find:

- Job offers and paid internships;
- Job and internship offers for students;
- Job offers in northern Québec.

You can register with **Québec Emploi** to submit an application and receive job alerts. Once registered, you can change your preferences at any time by logging into your account.

Job placement resources are available everywhere in Québec to answer your questions and to guide and help you in your job search. Don't hesitate to contact them.

LEARN MORE

- About employment assistance services: www.quebec.ca/en > Employment > Find a Job or Internship > Employment Assistance Programs > Online Services – Employment Assistance
- About the directory of organizations specializing in job placement: www.quebec.ca/en > Employment Find a Job or Internship > Find an Employment Agency > Finding an employability services organizations
- About job offers: www.quebec.ca/en > Employment > Find a Job or Internship > View job offers

LABOUR RIGHTS

Labour rights in Québec are protected by the *Act respecting labour standards* (LNT) which sets out the minimum standards of employment. The **Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail - CNESST** (labour standards, pay equity, and occupational health and safety commission) oversees the application of this law. Employers must respect these standards and therefore can never impose working conditions inferior to these standards. But there is nothing preventing employers from offering more advantageous conditions.

LABOUR STANDARDS

- Minimum wage;
- Duration of a normal work week (40 hours);
- Rules on breaks, vacations and observance of statutory holidays;
- Sick leave, absences for family reasons;
- Recourses against unfair dismissals and penalties;
- Notices for termination of employment, layoff or dismissal;
- Costs related to mandatory clothing, equipment, travel, and training;
- Protection against psychological and sexual harassment in the workplace.

You will also be entitled to paid vacation, which is calculated according to the number of months worked. Generally, employees start with 10 days of paid annual vacation. There are also eight holidays a year when people do not work.

A pregnant employee may take 18 weeks of maternity leave; the father, paternity leave of 5 weeks. Both parents can take parental leave for up to one year. You may be eligible to receive benefits during this time off. Find out more from the Québec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP).

LEARN MORE

- About the Québec Parental Insurance Plan: www.rqap.gouv.qc.ca/en
- About labour standards: www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/en

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

In the area of worker health and safety, the **CNESST** has various programs for the prevention of accidents at work and occupational illnesses. It also offers compensation for workers who have suffered work-related injuries.

LEARN MORE

Are you a worker who has immigrated recently? In Québec, your health and safety are protected! (Available in French and in Spanish) www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/en > **Documentation > Forms and publications**
www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/fr/organisation/documentation/formulaires-publications/travailleur-immigrant-au-quebec-votre-sante-votre

HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE AND DISMISSAL FROM WORK

Discrimination and harassment at work, both psychological and sexual, are not allowed. The right to be treated in full equality, regardless of one's personal characteristics, is guaranteed by Québec's *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*.

The *Act Respecting Labour Standards* includes provisions concerning unjust dismissal. If you believe you have been wrongly dismissed, you can file a complaint.

If you think you were the victim of workplace harassment, discrimination, or unjust dismissal, you can complain to the **Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail – CNESST**: www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca

THE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

In Québec, employment contracts may be oral or written. So, your employer will not necessarily give you a written contract (especially if it is a smaller business). But you should know that any employment contract is governed by rules set out in the Civil Code of Québec and the *Act Respecting Labour Standards*.

The contract may be for a fixed period (temporary position) or an indeterminate period (permanent position). To terminate the contract, either the employer and the employee must give reasonable notice (usually 15 days). The employer must give you a Record of Employment showing all your hours worked. If you believe you have been wrongfully dismissed, you may file a complaint with the **CNESST**.

Generally, salary is paid every two weeks, but some employers pay by the week. Management staff may be paid monthly. On your paycheck, you will see the following deductions: federal tax, provincial tax, Québec Pension Plan (QPP), Québec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP), Employment Insurance (EI).

UNDECLARED WORK

Working “under the table” means doing undeclared work. In other words, it means having an employee work without declaring it to the government and without making a regular employment contract. This is illegal and can have serious consequences for both the employer and the employee. Also, it deprives the government of taxes that are essential to provide services for the well-being of the population.

Unlike the employer, the employee cannot be personally prosecuted for working under the table. However, sometimes a person collects employment insurance or social assistance (welfare) while doing undeclared work. If the government finds out, the employee will lose their welfare or employment insurance and may face financial penalties and other legal sanctions. They may even face a criminal charge for fraud.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND VOLUNTEERING

Getting involved in your community and volunteering can be great ways to adapt to Québec culture while also contributing to society. They're also great ways to gain work experience, which is often required by employers. Community involvement can also help you get references, practice your language skills and meet interesting people.

Your sponsor can help you to find an organization to volunteer with.

Volunteering is also an excellent way to create a network of contacts, to develop friendships, to support a cause that you care about, and discover new interests.

LEARN MORE

About community involvement and volunteering, visit the website of the Réseau de l'action bénévole du Québec (Volunteer Action Network of Québec). It brings together 25 multi-sectoral Québec organizations for volunteer action: www.rabq.ca

INCOME TAXES (QUÉBEC AND CANADA)

Government services are financed by taxes. All residents of Québec must declare their income. The tax system is based on the principle of self-assessment: each taxpayer must report the income earned. It is also possible to claim deductions and credits based on income and personal and family circumstances. This is done on a form called the “Income Tax Return”.

If you receive employment income, your employer will deduct contributions from your salary. These deductions include:

- Provincial and federal taxes;
- Québec Pension Plan;
- Deductions for parental and employment insurance, etc.

All deductions from your pay must be clearly identified. Your employer can explain them to you.

Every year, you must file two tax returns: one for the federal government (Canada Revenue Agency) and one for the Québec government (Revenu Québec). These returns are filled out on forms provided for this purpose. The tax year runs from January 1 to December 31. The tax returns must be sent to both governments no later than April 30 following the tax year.

The tax return allows the federal and Québec governments to verify your eligibility for various social programs (family allowances, parental leave, etc.). To qualify for government allowances, it is mandatory to file tax returns.

The Importance of Filing a Tax Return

To qualify for tax credits, deductions, or social assistance programs to which you may be entitled, you must complete your income tax returns each year, even if you do not have any income to declare nor taxes to pay.

If you have difficulty completing your tax returns, contact **Revenu Québec** and the **Canada Revenue Agency**. Also, many community organizations offer free help to complete tax returns. You can ask your sponsor to put you in touch with one near you.

LEARN MORE

- About federal taxes: www.canada.ca/en > Taxes
- About Québec taxes: www.revenuquebec.ca > Citizens > Your Situation > New Residents

EDUCATION

TO-DO LIST:

- Register your children at a daycare or a school
- Register yourself, if necessary, for adult education or a post-secondary program

CHILDCARE

In Québec, a variety of educational childcare services are provided. Childcare services in Québec are the responsibility of the **Ministère de la Famille** (department of the family).

You can enroll your child in a childcare centre (CPE) or subsidized daycare centre through a single access point called **La Place 0-5**.

The number of spaces is limited in CPEs as well as in subsidized daycare centers. It's also possible to register your child in a private or family daycare service. To locate the service and find out how to register your child, use the Childcare Locator. It will help you to find all the CPEs and daycares near your home.

LEARN MORE

About CPE childcare services access point: www.laplace0-5.com/en > I am a parent > Register

About access to childcare services:

- www.quebec.ca/en > Family and support for individuals > Childhood > Childcare centres
- Quebec.ca > Famille et soutien aux personnes > Enfance > Garderies et services de garde > Trouver un service de garde et inscrire mon enfant (in French)

THE QUÉBEC SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Québec public education system is secular. School is compulsory for children from 6 to 16 years of age. Education is free for residents of Québec, from kindergarten to college (post-secondary). Since French is the official language of Québec, immigrant children, regardless of their parents' language, must attend French-language schools until the end of high school.

The school year begins at the end of August or the beginning of September and usually ends before June 24 (Québec's national holiday). Its duration is at least 180 days of class. Co-educational classes (boys and girls) are the norm at all levels of study. The school system is divided into four levels: preschool, primary, secondary and post-secondary education.

Private schools are recognized by the Ministère de l'Éducation et le **Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur** (Ministry of education and post-secondary education). To attend these institutions, you must pay tuition fees and satisfy the school's admission conditions.

If your child does not speak French, they will need support to integrate into their new class. Non-French-speaking students at the preschool, elementary and secondary levels benefit from support measures to learn French provided by the **Ministère de l'Éducation**.

By enabling students to acquire proficiency in French, these measures help students to integrate as quickly as possible into a regular class in French. These measures vary from school to school. However, each school is responsible for providing students with the most appropriate support.

REGISTERING YOUR CHILDREN

Before your child can attend school, you will need to register them with the school board. Depending on your region's school board, you may be required to provide the following documents:

- Proof of address in Québec;
- Birth certificate (if available);
- Permanent resident card or confirmation, issued by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC);
- Certificat de sélection du Québec (Québec Selection Certificate), issued by the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration;
- Passport;
- Report cards, if applicable.

Depending on your situation, the school board will provide you with the documents needed for registration and the contact information for the school to attend. An interview or initial evaluation of your child's competencies, or both, may also be scheduled.

PRESCHOOL

Preschool education prepares children to enter primary school. It is offered to:

- 4-year-old children, full or part-time, in some schools;
- 5-year-old children, full-time, throughout the public school network and in some private schools.

Kindergarten is not mandatory, but 98% of kindergarten-aged children attend it.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Primary education begins at age 6. The child must be 6 years old by September 30 of the school year for which they are enrolled. Primary school is compulsory. Primary education lasts six years and includes three cycles of two years each. Children with learning disabilities can benefit from specialized services.

SCHOOL DAYCARE SERVICES

The schedule of kindergarten or elementary school students rarely coincides with that of working parents. The end of classes is usually at 3 pm. However, most schools offer in-school child care before classes begin in the morning, at lunch, and after class. It should be noted that these services must be paid for.

SECONDARY SCHOOL (HIGH SCHOOL)

High school offers a five-year general education, divided into two cycles:

- The first cycle, lasting two years, reinforces the education received at the elementary level and allows students to begin to orient themselves professionally;
- From Cycle 2 (starting in Secondary III), students are offered different pathways:
 - A general education course,
 - A training course focused on employment.

At the end of the five-year high school general education program, students receive a Secondary School Diploma (SSD), which gives them access to college education.

At the end of the training course focused on employment, students obtain a diploma of professional studies (DEP), which can be followed up by a certificate of professional specialization (ASP). These diplomas give direct access to the labour market.

The DEP certifies the student's acquisition of the skills necessary to practice a profession or trade, for example as a dental assistant, carpenter, cabinet-maker or baker. The duration of the training is on average one and a half years (600 to 1800 hours).

The ASP attests to the student's success in a field of expertise more specialized than the initial training obtained by a DEP. Depending on the specialty chosen, the training is 6 or 12 months (330 to 900 hours). More than 20 programs, including occupations such as cooking and legal secretarial services, are offered to DEP holders.

LEARN MORE

About DEP and ASP options: www.admissionfp.com

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AT SCHOOL

Parent participation in school is strongly encouraged. It helps you support your child in their school career and keeps you informed of their progress at school. Teachers regularly send invitations to parents to:

- Meet teaching staff;
- Get to know school programs;
- Participate in activities carried out by the students, such as concerts, plays and science fairs.

TUTORING FOR HOMEWORK

The **Alloprof** website offers free homework and learning support to all elementary, high school, and adult education students, as well as to Québec parents. **Alloprof offers eight different services** (a telephone service, a text message service, and six online services) provided by a team of qualified teachers and an online community made up of students, parents, and educators.

Some schools offer a homework assistance program for their students. Check with school staff to see if the service is available and how to access it.

LEARN MORE

About tutoring and homework help: www.alloprof.qc.ca (in French)

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

In Québec, postsecondary education (also known as higher education) has two components: college and university.

COLLEGE EDUCATION

General and Vocational Colleges (CÉGEPs) and some private colleges offer students the choice between pre-university programs and technical programs.

Pre-university programs last two years and prepare the student for university. Technical programs last three years and are designed with the job market in mind. However, in some cases, technical programs also give the student access to university.

In both types of programs, the same general education is offered to all students (French, English, humanities, and physical education).

■ CÉGEPs also offer continuing education for adults, with classes often given in the evening. Their purpose is to provide working people and jobseekers with training designed to improve or acquire professional knowledge.

LEARN MORE

About how to apply to CÉGEP Regional Admission Services: www.quebec.ca/en > **Education > CEGEP > Studying at CEGEP > Admission > Process**

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The duration of studies varies according to the field of study. Québec universities have a great deal of autonomy. They design their own teaching and research programs, determine their admission requirements, and issue their own degrees.

The website of each university includes the study programs offered as well as registration details and important dates to remember.

■ At any age, if you meet the academic admissions criteria, you can register to start or continue your education.

LEARN MORE

Universities in Québec: www.quebec.ca/en > **Education > University > Studying at university > List of Québec universities**

WORK-STUDY BALANCE

Working while studying can be beneficial for high school, college, and university students. However, if work-study balance is not maintained, there can be serious consequences, including a decrease in academic performance, a loss of interest in studies, or even dropping out of school.

To avoid these problems, it is important to avoid working too many hours of work per week.

LEARN MORE

- www.perseverancescolaire.com (in French)
- www.jeconcilie.com
- www.ichoosemyemployer.com
- [Québec.ca](http://Quebec.ca) > **Famille et soutien aux personnes > Grossesse et parentalité > Conciliation famille-travail-études** (in French)

LOANS AND BURSARIES

The Québec government provides financial assistance to people who are pursuing post-secondary studies. The amount of assistance is usually based on:

- Your family situation;
- Expenses related to your studies;
- Financial contributions you receive;
- The income you earned the year before.

This financial assistance is paid in the form of a loan or the form of a bursary if your financial need is greater than the amount of the loan to which you are entitled. If you receive a loan, you will have to repay it gradually when you finish your studies. Throughout your full-time studies, the Government of Québec will pay the interest on the loan. The interest will become your responsibility at the end of your full-time studies. A bursary does not have to be repaid.

LEARN MORE

- About education: www.quebec.ca/en > Education
- About loans and bursaries: www.quebec.ca/en > Education > Student Financial Assistance

ADULT LEARNING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

In Québec, many organizations offer adult education and training, including services specifically for immigrants.

Adult education centres allow anyone 16 years of age or older to obtain a secondary school diploma (DES) or to complete the prerequisites for vocational training or post-secondary education.

RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN CREDENTIALS (DIPLOMAS OBTAINED ABROAD)

If you already have one or more diplomas and are looking for Québec equivalence, there are certain tools available. The recognition of prior education of a student admitted to the general youth educational system is done through tests developed in accordance with the Québec curriculum.

After analyzing a student's academic record, the **Ministère de l'Éducation** et le **Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur** may award course equivalencies to adults who wish to obtain a DES or admission to a program of study.

The **Comparative evaluation for studies done outside Québec** is an assessment issued by the **Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration** which provides a general comparison between two official education systems. It provides a description of diplomas, transcripts and studies carried out in a school system recognized by the authorities of a given country.

LEARN MORE

- About the Comparative evaluation for studies done outside Québec: www.quebec.ca/en > Immigration > Work in Québec > Recognition of skills acquired abroad > Getting a comparative evaluation
- About credential recognition: www.qualificationsquebec.com

TRANSPORTATION

TO-DO LIST

Obtain a driver's license (if you wish)

DRIVING IN QUÉBEC

If you hold a valid foreign driver's license, you have the right to drive in Québec for six consecutive months. However, you can only drive the following vehicles: car, motorcycle, scooter, or moped.

Even if your foreign driver's license permits you to drive a truck, bus, minibus, or taxi, it does not allow you to do so in Québec.

After six months, you will need to obtain a Québec driver's license. You can start this process as soon as you arrive in Québec.

LEARN MORE

MASS TRANSIT

Mass transit in Québec includes both public and private services. For urban transport, these are usually public. For intercity transport, they are private. In Québec, public transit is an economical and environmentally friendly way to get around quickly.

In your community, there may be other forms of transportation available, such as carpooling or car-sharing. Québec municipalities also offer an extensive network of bike paths that allow you to get to know your region at your own pace.

YOUR RIGHTS

HUMAN RIGHTS

In Québec, human rights and freedoms are guaranteed by two legal texts:

THE CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is one of the sections of the Canadian Constitution. The Charter outlines the rights and freedoms that Canadians regard as essential for maintaining a free and democratic society. These include the rights to security, physical integrity, freedom of expression, and equality, including equality between men and women.

QUÉBEC CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

In Québec, the rights mentioned above are also protected by the Québec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*. The Québec Charter outlines the areas of activity in which discrimination is prohibited and the grounds of discrimination that are prohibited in order to ensure equal rights for everyone.

▮ Enforcing your rights will never endanger your status in Canada.

Each person has the responsibility to respect the rights of others and to uphold their own rights. In cases of abuse or discrimination, a complaint may be filed with the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (human rights and youth rights commission.)

LEARN MORE

- About your rights and freedoms in Québec: www.cdpedj.qc.ca/en
- About how equality between women and men is achieved in various sectors: www.quebec.ca/en > Gouvernement > Departments and agencies > Secrétariat à la condition féminine (in French only) > Publications > Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination refers to a situation in which a person or group of people is treated differently because of personal characteristics. Discrimination creates inequalities, preventing those who experience it from fully exercising their rights and freedoms. The grounds of discrimination prohibited by the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* are: race, colour, sex, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, marital status, age except to the extent permitted by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social status, disability or the use of a means to overcome a disability.

It is possible to file a complaint about discrimination with the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse. If this does not solve the problem, it is possible to take the complaint to the Human Rights Tribunal.

▮ You have the right to file a complaint if a landlord refuses to rent you an apartment or if an employer refuses to hire you because of your ethnic origin.

▮ If you believe you have been the victim of any type of discrimination, talk to your sponsor. They should be able to assist you with these recourses.

LEARN MORE

On the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*: www.cdcdp.jq.gc.ca > Publications > The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms Made Easy* (available in several languages)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Domestic violence and sexual assault are crimes in Québec. If you are a victim, you are protected by law, and if you are a witness, the law encourages you to come forward and denounce such situations to the police.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence involves a situation of domination in an intimate relationship, either current or in the past. It is intentional and manifests itself by aggressive, violent, and destructive behaviour. It can take the form of verbal threats, economic threats, harassment, physical aggression (sexual or otherwise) such as beatings. This type of violence is rooted in a desire for control and manipulation; it is illegal because it violates the fundamental rights of the person who is the victim, namely:

- The right to physical integrity;
- The right to dignity.

If you are a victim, you are protected, and you will not lose any of your rights if you leave your home to escape abuse. The law also protects your children in this situation.

It is recommended to call the police during a domestic violence incident. They will protect you and anyone else who needs protection, and you will be provided safety by social services. You will also have access to other helpful resources: free shelter, assistance centres for victims of sexual assault, and Crime Victims Assistance Centres.

If you need help, if you want to help someone, or if you want to better understand domestic violence, contact SOS Violence Conjugale or visit this website: www.quebec.ca/en > Family and support for individuals > Violence and bullying > Domestic Violence

If you are the victim of domestic violence, or you witness it, call **911**.

LEARN MORE

- À cœur d'homme, support for violent partners and spouses (French only): www.acoeurdhomme.com
- **Brochure à intention des femmes immigrantes ou femmes de communautés ethnoculturelles (If you are an immigrant woman or a woman from an ethnocultural community, this brochure may be for you):** www.quebec.ca/gouvernement/ministeres-et-organismes/secretariat-condition-feminine/publications/communaute-ethnoculturelle
- **Brochure à l'intention des femmes immigrantes à statut précaire (If you are an immigrant woman with precarious status, this brochure may be for you):** www.quebec.ca/gouvernement/ministeres-et-organismes/secretariat-condition-feminine/publications/statut-precaire

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual assault is a form of violence that does not necessarily require physical contact. It involves an abuse of power and is committed by one person without the consent of the other. However, in some cases (often in the case of minors), the person's consent may be obtained by emotional manipulation or blackmail. It is nonetheless sexual assault, which is a crime punishable by law, regardless of the type, the act, the situation, the relationship between the individuals concerned, and the circumstances.

Whatever the circumstances of sexual assault or domestic violence, the victims are not to blame. Nonetheless, they are often reluctant to complain and may even feel responsible. Friends and relatives can play an important role in listening, helping, and accompanying people who find themselves in this difficult situation.

If you are a victim of sexual assault, call **911** immediately. You can also call **1-888-933-9007**. This confidential hotline offers listening, information, and referral services and is intended for victims of sexual assault.

CHILDREN, YOUTH AND THEIR RIGHTS

Migration involves significant challenges for both parents and children. Contact with a new culture can sometimes lead to conflict within the family. Children tend to adapt more quickly, and sometimes parents find it difficult to follow everything their children are going through in the new society. When children go to school, their new interests and classmates may cause tension within the family.

As parents in Québec, you have the responsibility to protect your children and ensure their well-being, safety, education, and development. The *Youth Protection Act* stipulates that when a youth under the age of 18 is in a situation that compromises or threatens to compromise their safety or development, it must be reported to the authorities. It is the **Direction de la protection de la jeunesse - DPJ** (Directorate of Youth Protection) which is responsible for the enforcement of this law.

When the DPJ receives a report, it carries out an evaluation. All reports received by the DPJ are treated confidentially. After the evaluation, the DPJ may conclude that the safety or development of the child:

- Is not compromised, but that the parents and child need assistance, in which case it must inform the parents of the resources available in their community to get the help they need;
- Is compromised, in which case it takes responsibility for the child and determines the measures to ensure the child's protection and to help the parents to correct the situation. The DPJ may, in certain cases, decide to remove the child from the family and place the child temporarily in a youth centre or with a foster family.

Reports to the DPJ may be related to a variety of problems:

- Abandonment;
- Neglect;
- Psychological abuse;
- Sexual abuse;
- Physical abuse;
- Serious behavioural problems;
- Serious risk of neglect.

If you are facing difficulties with your child, do not hesitate to talk to your sponsor, a family member, or a community worker from an organization in your area.

LEARN MORE

- About child and youth rights: www.cdpedj.qc.ca/en
- You can also contact Ligne Parents for confidential and professional support: **1-800-361-5085** - www.ligneparents.com

ELDERLY PEOPLE AND THEIR RIGHTS

The elderly (often also called "seniors") have the same rights as everyone else in Québec. They are protected against any form of physical or verbal abuse, exploitation, or neglect by family members, friends, neighbours, and the public.

If you think you are a victim, speak to someone close to you or to a worker at a community organization in your area.

You can also call the **Ligne Aide Abus Aînés** (Elder Mistreatment Helpline), a confidential listening and reference hotline for elderly people. Call **1-888-489-2287**.

LEARN MORE

About programs and services for seniors: www.quebec.ca/en > **Family and support for individuals > Seniors > Programs and Services for Seniors**

SEXUAL MINORITIES AND THEIR RIGHTS

Sexual orientation has been a prohibited ground of discrimination in Québec since 1977. Gender identity or expression has been a prohibited ground of discrimination since 2016. Same-sex couples have the right to marry since 2005. Transgender and transsexual persons have the right to change their sex on their birth certificates and identity documents without having to undergo surgery. Despite evolving opinions and attitudes and laws, sexual minorities are still sometimes victims of homophobia and transphobia. Resources exist to support these individuals, both at the personal level and to pursue legal remedies.

The Québec government, in collaboration with a number of partners, aims to bring Québec society to a full and complete recognition of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and all other forms of sexual and gender identity.

LEARN MORE

The Interligne hotline is a front-line information and support service for issues related to sexual orientation and gender diversity: www.interligne.co/en

BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING

Bullying is defined in the *Education Act* (article 13, paragraph 1.1) as “any repeated direct or indirect behaviour, comment, act or gesture, whether deliberate or not, including in cyberspace, which occurs in a context where there is a power imbalance between the persons concerned and which causes distress and injures, hurts, oppresses, intimidates or ostracizes.”

It can take various forms and may occur in a variety of environments. In all cases, it is unacceptable and can greatly affect the victim. Anyone can be affected by bullying, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or personal characteristics. They may be the victim, the witness, or even the perpetrator of bullying.

If you believe that you have been a victim or that you have witnessed bullying, it is important to use the recourses available to you. Québec is committed to preventing and combating bullying in all spheres of life. Bullying and cyberbullying are punishable by law in Québec.

LEARN MORE

About preventing bullying: www.quebec.ca/en > **Family and support for individuals > Violence and bullying > Bullying**

YOUR RIGHTS AS A SPONSORED PERSON

Your sponsor must cover your essential needs (accommodation, furnishings, travel, food, clothes). In addition, they must assume the costs not covered or reimbursed by the public health care system or by a government program for job search preparation and processes. They are also responsible for providing you with all the information necessary to facilitate your integration. This is part of their responsibilities, which you have a right to. Your sponsor has committed to support you for one year.

SOME THINGS YOUR SPONSOR IS NOT ALLOWED TO DO:

- Require you to pay for your settlement needs;
- Require you to work without pay for them or someone else;
- Require you to take French classes in order to receive a weekly financial allowance. This choice is up to you as a sponsored person. Learning French is your responsibility and will allow you to participate fully in society. You must do your best to advance in your integration;
- Ask or require you to do anything against your will, or that could cause you problems.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T RECEIVE THE NECESSARY SUPPORT FROM YOUR SPONSOR?

If you believe that your sponsor is not respecting their commitment to you, you should first discuss your concerns with your sponsor if you feel comfortable doing so.

If you are uncomfortable talking to your sponsor, or, if after sharing your concerns, you still do not receive the help you need, or if you want assistance related to a sponsorship dispute, you can contact the **Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration** at: **514 864-9191** (Montreal area) or **1 877 864-9191** (Elsewhere in Québec - toll free).

If you do not receive sufficient financial support to cover your basic needs, such as food and housing, you may be eligible to receive social assistance from the **Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale**. An evaluation will be done, and if it is determined that your sponsor does not provide enough support to cover your basic needs, you will be entitled to this financial assistance.

For more information, get in touch with the Centre spécialisé des demandeurs d'asile, des garants défaillants et des services aux parrainés (Asylum seekers, defaulting guarantors and sponsored persons specialized service centre) at the following number: **1-877-767-8773**

If you or your family are victims of, or think you may be victims of, verbal, sexual or other forms of abuse at the hands of one or multiple members of the group sponsoring you, call **911** immediately.

You run no risk when you call **911**. You will be confidentially supported, protected, and directed to the help you need. Don't forget that your status is protected.

The filing of a complaint against your sponsor will have no impact on your permanent residence status.

You can also contact the ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration confidentially. Client services centre: **514 864-9191** (Montreal area) or **1 877 864-9191** (Elsewhere in Québec - toll free).

YOUR FAMILY ABROAD

It can be difficult for you if you left family members in your home country or a third country. This could affect your ability to integrate quickly. Your sponsor is aware and sensitive to this. Don't hesitate to discuss it with them.

Don't hesitate to discuss this with your sponsor or to consult emotional and psychological support resources if you need (see the Emotional and psychological support section).

There are different ways to sponsor a family member to join you in Canada. For both family and Collective sponsorship, sponsors must demonstrate that they have the capacity to financially support the person they wish to sponsor for the entire sponsorship period.

SPONSORING A FAMILY MEMBER WHO IS A REFUGEE UNDER THE COLLECTIVE SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

To sponsor a family member, or any other person who is a refugee, you must either contact a non-profit organization or form a group of 2 to 5 people (permanent residents or citizens). It is not necessary to be related to the person you wish to sponsor. The organization or group of 2 to 5 people will have to demonstrate, among other things, its financial capacity to support the person during the one-year sponsorship period.

LEARN MORE

About this process: www.quebec.ca/en > Immigration > Refugees and asylum seekers > Collective sponsorship of a refugee who is abroad

ONE-YEAR WINDOW

If someone in your immediate family (spouse, common-law partner or dependent child under the age of 22) was registered on the federal government forms but was not able to accompany you, they can join you in Québec as long as they meet the federal government's eligibility requirements. You will need to fill out the form "Demande pour faire venir au Québec les membres de la famille restés à l'étranger (Délai prescrit d'un an pour personnes réfugiées ou à protéger à l'étranger)" (Application to bring family members who are still abroad to Québec (one-year window of opportunity provisions for refugees or protected persons)) to apply via the Canadian and Québec governments.

LEARN MORE

About this process: www.quebec.ca/en > Immigration > Refugees and asylum seekers > Collective sponsorship of a refugee who is abroad > After submitting your application > Bringing family members to Québec who are still abroad

SPONSORING A FAMILY MEMBER IN THE FAMILY CLASS

It may also be possible for you to sponsor a family member in the Family Class. The requirements are explained on the website of the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration. The family member you wish to sponsor will also find this information helpful to understand the sponsorship process and prepare themselves for their new life in Québec.

LEARN MORE

About this process: www.quebec.ca/en > Immigration > Immigrate permanently to Québec > Sponsor a family member

SPONSORING A SPOUSE, COMMON-LAW PARTNER OR DEPENDENT CHILDREN

Your spouse, common-law partner or conjugal partner must be at least 16 years old.

Dependent children must be under 22 years old and must be single (that is, not be married nor have a common-law spouse). If the dependent child that you sponsor has a child, you could also sponsor their child.

You can also sponsor a child who is 22 or older, but only if they are still dependent on you, or the other parent, and have been unable to support themselves at least since their 22nd birthday due to a physical or mental disability.

SPONSORING A BROTHER, SISTER, NIECE, NEPHEW OR GRAND-CHILD

You may sponsor them only if they are orphans, without a father or mother, and under the age of 18. They must not be married or in a common-law relationship. There are special requirements for this category.

LEARN MORE

About the specific requirements: www.quebec.ca/en > Immigration > Immigrate permanently to Québec > Sponsor a family member > Sponsoring an orphaned minor

SPONSOR YOUR PARENTS OR GRANDPARENTS

It may also be possible to sponsor your parents or grandparents. However, this procedure is complex. Also, you must have the financial ability to support your parents or grand-parents for 10 years. The application will be evaluated by the federal and Québec governments.

LEARN MORE

About the federal requirements for family sponsorship: www.canada.ca/en > Immigration and citizenship > Immigrate > Family sponsorship

SPONSORING CHILDREN 22 OR OLDER, UNCLES, AUNTS, COUSINS, NIECES AND NEPHEWS WHO AREN'T ORPHANS

It is not possible to sponsor these people as part of the Family Class. However, you might be able to sponsor them under the Collective sponsorship program if all the requirements are met. (See Sponsoring a family member who is a refugee under the Collective sponsorship program, above)

LEARN MORE

About collective sponsorship: www.quebec.ca/en > Immigration > Refugees and asylum seekers > Collective sponsorship of a refugee who is abroad

RETURNING TO, OR VISITING, YOUR COUNTRY

You obtained Canada's protection when you were granted refugee status. Under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, if you return to your country, even for a short time, you put your refugee status at risk, as well as your permanent resident status.

Also, if something happens to you while visiting your country, the Canadian government will not be able to help you. Thus, it is not in your interest to visit your country before obtaining Canadian citizenship.

▮ Returning to your country, even for a short time, means risking your legal status in Canada.

PLANNING FOR THE END OF THE SPONSORSHIP PERIOD

The end of the 12-month undertaking can be a time of uncertainty for sponsored people. Preparing for this transition is important, and you should discuss it with your sponsor as soon as you feel the need.

The end of your sponsor's financial support means that they are no longer required to cover your basic needs. You will have to rely on your own resources. If you do not work, you may be eligible for social assistance (welfare) offered by the Québec government.

One of the objectives of sponsorship is to help you become self-sufficient. Your sponsor is expected to evaluate your progress throughout the sponsorship period, especially:

- Whether you have a job with sufficient income to cover your basic needs;
- Whether you are able to carry out daily tasks, for example: paying your rent and bills, managing a budget, being familiar with your town/city and its services, getting around your town/city.

No later than your ninth month in Canada, your sponsor should start preparations with you for the end of the sponsorship period.

At that point, you should know how to:

- Contact emergency services;
- Access health and social services;
- Find an affordable place to live;
- Get around your town/city;
- Pay your rent and other household bills;
- Follow a budget and transfer money electronically;
- Access language instruction and job search services.

During this transition period, your sponsor should provide you with information about the following:

- Social assistance (welfare) offered by the Québec government (eligibility and application);
- Eligibility for subsidized housing;
- Services offered by community organizations in your town/city;
- Income taxes (how and when to file your taxes, support available for filing taxes);
- Changes to health coverage (end of coverage through the Interim Federal Health Program).

At the end of your twelfth month, you can apply for the following services:

- Social assistance (welfare) from Emploi-Québec. This is intended to provide financial support in case you face difficulties meeting your basic needs;
- Subsidized housing: This is housing in which the rent is set according to income. It is reserved for people with low income. This type of housing exists in most towns and cities in Québec;
- Network of community organizations. Partners of the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration offer a variety of services to facilitate your integration in Québec. They offer information sessions, personalized support, French classes, and many other services to support your integration process. Ask your sponsor to put you in touch with the organization in your neighbourhood or town.

You can also consult: www.quebec.ca/en > Immigration > Integration support services offered by partner community organizations

At the end of your twelfth month, you can also continue to enjoy access to the following programs and services:

- The Accompagnement Québec service can facilitate your integration and support you in your processes (settlement, francization, employment, recognition of competencies, immigration procedures, community life);
- Community organizations that specialize in employment. Organizations that specialize in employment offer support services and counseling, as well as job search support and activities to help you get ready for the job market. They can also provide information about trades and skills that are in demand in a particular region;
- Professional integration support. As a new resident of Québec, once you have learned French, you can benefit from the Employment Integration Program for Immigrants and Visible Minorities (PRIIME);
- If you haven't yet had the opportunity to work in your field, the PRIIME program could facilitate such an opportunity by offering an employer a subsidy to hire you;
- French language classes: If you would like to take French classes, you can do so.
- Community activities and social support groups. All Québec municipalities have community organizations. These organizations are excellent places to meet new people and find information. Services offered by these organizations are usually free.

If this transition makes you unsafe, don't hesitate to discuss it with your sponsor. They will be able to reassure you and let you know what services will be available to you after the commitment period and remind you of those that will remain accessible.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PROGRAM FOR REFUGEES ABROAD: COLLECTIVE SPONSORSHIP

a) My sponsor asked me for money to help cover my costs in Canada. Do I have to pay?

No, you do not have to pay. If you are a sponsored refugee, it means that a group of people or a non-profit organization has volunteered to cover your basic needs. Your sponsor should help you find housing and move in, as well as providing food, clothing, and financial support.

However, some refugees who come to Canada have their own funds. If you have money when you arrive, or if you begin to work during the sponsorship period, your sponsor may expect that you contribute to cover the costs of your needs. If this is the case, your sponsor should not be devoid of their responsibilities based on your contribution.

b) Do the Québec or Canadian governments collect money from refugees or their relatives to finance refugee sponsorship and settlement in Canada?

No, the federal and Québec governments do not ask for money or charge processing fees for refugees awaiting resettlement. If you receive a notice asking you to deposit money to pay processing fees, do not answer. Such notices are not from the federal or the Québec government.

c) May I move to another city or town before the end of the one-year sponsorship period?

Yes, but be aware that your sponsor is required to support you financially throughout the sponsorship period. The sponsor must also provide whatever support is required for your integration. Therefore, you may not be eligible for social assistance offered by Québec or another province during the sponsorship period. You should also keep in mind that a lease may have been signed in your name and that it's not easy to end a lease. If you are thinking of moving, discuss this with your sponsor.

d) If I begin to work before the end of the sponsorship period, how will that impact my sponsor's financial commitment?

One of the objectives of sponsorship is to help you become financially independent after a period of time. If you work during the first year, your sponsor may expect you to contribute to your basic expenses. However, if you lose your job, your sponsor will be required to support you again until the sponsorship period is over.

e) Is it permitted to give money to my sponsor to say thank you?

Your sponsor should never ask you for money as a thank you. The sponsor should not ask for a donation – for the organization that is sponsoring you, for example – as a condition of the sponsorship. This is prohibited by the Québec rules on sponsorship.

GETTING SETTLED

a) Can I take part in choosing my housing?

Your sponsor is responsible for providing you with suitable housing. The choice of housing will depend on a variety of factors, notably size, quality, cost, and proximity to different services.

If the housing chosen by your sponsor doesn't suit you, discuss this with them, keeping in mind that they may have already signed a 12-month lease. In this case, it may be difficult to move to another home during those 12 months.

b) Can I take part in decisions regarding our budget?

Yes, it is good to discuss your budget with your sponsor soon after your arrival. Your sponsor has promised the Québec government to cover your basic needs, and they have a budget for this. Don't hesitate to discuss this. Open communication will help to avoid misunderstandings.

INTEGRATING

a) Are there financial aid programs to help me pay my rent?

During your first year in Québec, it is your sponsor's responsibility to pay for your housing. The government of Québec also has a Programme *Allocation-logement* (Shelter Allowance Program) to help you pay your rent if you have a low income and if you spend too large a portion of your income on housing. However, other programs may apply to you. Some municipalities offer subsidized or low-cost housing. Learn more about these options from your municipality and your sponsor. They will be able to answer any questions.

b) Are there subsidies or discounts for public transit?

In all parts of Québec, there are reductions for people of certain ages. People aged 65 and over benefit from significant discounts on public transit costs. Children and students also benefit from reduced rates. Find out more from your sponsor.

If you are taking full-time French classes offered by the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration, you can obtain a transportation allowance.

c) If I don't have a job, do I have to pay back the transportation loan from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)?

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) expects you to begin repaying the transportation loan one year after your arrival. If you aren't working or if your income is too low to repay the required amount, it is important to communicate as soon as possible with the IRCC collection team. An agent can evaluate your financial situation and may reduce the minimum payment temporarily.

d) Do we have access to food banks near us?

It is your sponsor's responsibility to meet the food needs of your family. If you have trouble meeting your food needs with the budget provided by your sponsor, speak to them about this, and they may adjust the budget.

If this is insufficient or only partially sufficient and you are still food insecure, contact the **Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration: 514 864-9191** (Montreal area) or **1 877 864-9191** (Elsewhere in Québec - toll free). You may also be able to access food banks in your area while the situation is being resolved. Visit this website for more details: www.banquesalimentaires.org/en/

EDUCATION

a) Can I choose the school that my children will go to?

School registration is usually done according to the postal code of the child's primary residence, so your child will normally go to the school in your neighbourhood. However, if you want your child to go to a different school that offers particular programs, for example, a school that is focused on music, sports or an international school, registration must be done early, right at the beginning of the school year. You should get in touch with the school in order to find out about their registration procedures.

b) Which are the best schools for my children?

All schools must offer the academic program established by the Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur. In addition, each school may provide special programs, for example in sports or music. However, the basic academic program has been established by the Ministère.

c) How can I find a summer camp or day camp for my child?

Towns and cities sometimes offer day camps during summer vacation. Check with your town to see if they offer this service. If not, visit the website of the Association des camps du Québec: www.camps.qc.ca

Costs vary from one camp to another. Many camps offer financial accessibility programs for low-income families. These programs are funded by the camps themselves or by other organizations such as local foundations or the Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur.

d) Who can help me or my children choose a study program or a career?

Students in grades 5 and 6 participate in activities throughout the school year to learn about different academic and professional paths. These activities are separate from regular classes, and the students are not tested on the content. They allow students to deepen their understanding of themselves, examine aspects of the academic world, and expand their knowledge of the world of work. They also help students to consider different options for future study and work.

For students at secondary school and college levels, schools offer personalized educational and professional orientation services. Your educational institution can provide you with more information about how to access these free services. The Reception, referral, counselling and support services (SARCA) offer support in educational and professional orientation. For more information, visit www.quebec.ca/en > Education

a) Can applying for social assistance cause problems for my sponsor or my status in Canada?

If the person sponsoring you defaults on their obligations to you and to the Québec government during the first year, they may face consequences. If you have to apply for last-resort financial assistance because your sponsor does not support you or no longer supports you, your sponsor will have to repay all amounts received through Québec's last-resort financial assistance program. They may also be prohibited from sponsoring any other person until the debt owed to the government is repaid in full.

Any failure on your sponsor's part to fulfill their obligations has no impact on your status in Québec. Applying for last-resort financial assistance in Québec will not cause any problems for you or affect your status in any way.

b) What can hinder my citizenship application?

Having a criminal record in Canada or abroad could harm your citizenship application. If you have a criminal record, you may be denied Canadian citizenship.

Failure to meet your Canadian residency requirement of being physically present in Canada for three years during the five years prior to the date you signed your citizenship application could also have a negative impact on your citizenship application.

c) Is it possible to travel outside of Canada?

Yes, as a permanent resident, you may travel outside Canada. However, you must obtain a refugee travel document. With this document, you are allowed to travel anywhere except for your country of citizenship or the country where you alleged that you are a victim of persecution.

Remember that returning to the country from which you fled can endanger your status in Canada. Canada offers protection to refugees because they have demonstrated they are in danger in their country of origin. Canada has the right to withdraw refugee status if a person accepts the protection of their country of origin after having obtained refugee status in Canada.

Canada can withdraw refugee status from a person who:

- Travels to their country of origin (even for a short visit);
- Uses the passport of their country of origin to travel;
- Applies for a new passport from their country of origin.

d) How to apply for a travel document?

You can submit an application for a travel document in a Passport Canada office in your region. To find out more about the process: www.canada.ca/en > Travel and tourism > Canadian passports and travel documents > Apply for a refugee travel document or certificate of identity

e) My passport from my country of origin is going to expire, should I renew it?

No. If you renew it, you will put your status in Canada at risk. Canada offers protection to refugees because they have shown that they are in danger in their country of origin.

f) After selling possessions in my country of origin, can I transfer the money to Canada?

Yes, you can transfer money obtained in your country of origin or elsewhere.

However, if you receive social assistance (welfare) in Québec, you must declare any transferred amounts. It is possible that you will become ineligible for social assistance, or that your benefit will be reduced. It depends on the amount of funds transferred.

You should also mention, to your sponsor, any money transferred to you in order to be fully honest with them. Your sponsor may expect you to contribute financially to meeting your needs.

g) Must I pay taxes on these amounts?

Taxpayers in Canada must respect Canadian tax laws on the disclosure of assets abroad. You may be required to declare these assets to the Canada Revenue Agency and Revenu Québec. If you sell your assets and transfer the funds from the sale to your bank account in Canada, you may also have to pay taxes on these amounts. To avoid unpleasant surprises, it is recommended that you discuss with an accountant or call the **Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)** and **Revenu Québec**.

h) Can I travel to other Canadian provinces during my first year?

Yes, you can travel anywhere in Canada. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees freedom of movement within Canada. Therefore, you have the right to travel anywhere in the country.

YOUR FAMILY ABROAD

a) How long after our arrival can we sponsor family members who are refugees in other countries?

To sponsor family members who are refugees in another country, you must meet certain conditions. As with your own sponsorship, the sponsor of your family members can be a group of 2 to 5 people or a non-profit organization. In any case, the sponsor must show that they can respect the sponsorship agreement, particularly by proving their financial capacity. For more information on sponsorship requirements, visit the website of the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration: www.quebec.ca/en > **Immigration > Immigrate permanently to Québec > Sponsor a family member**

b) How long after our arrival can we sponsor family members who are still in our country of origin?

You must first verify whether your family members are part of the Family Class. You must also check your eligibility to sponsor them, notably whether you have sufficient financial capacity. If both you and your family members are eligible, you can submit a sponsorship application.

c) For the One-Year Window of Opportunity Program, how long after our arrival can we begin proceedings?

You can begin proceedings as soon as the circumstances that prevented your family members from accompanying you have changed. You should inform the **Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration**, as well as your sponsor, as quickly as possible. Your sponsor can help you with the process. Remember that you have one year after your arrival to begin proceedings.

d) What are the processing times for reuniting my family in Canada?

Processing times vary considerably and depend on several factors: application backlogs, variations in processing times at different Canadian visa offices, medical exams, security checks, etc. To see the average processing times by type of application: www.cic.gc.ca > Check application processing times

PLANNING FOR THE END OF THE SPONSORSHIP PERIOD

e) Can we save money in preparation for the end of the sponsorship period?

Yes, if you are working during the sponsorship period, you can save up money.

f) Will I be eligible for social assistance from Québec following the end of the sponsorship period?

Yes, you may be eligible for social assistance (welfare) from Québec. To be eligible, you must show that your resources (assets and earnings) are less than the limits set by the **Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale**.