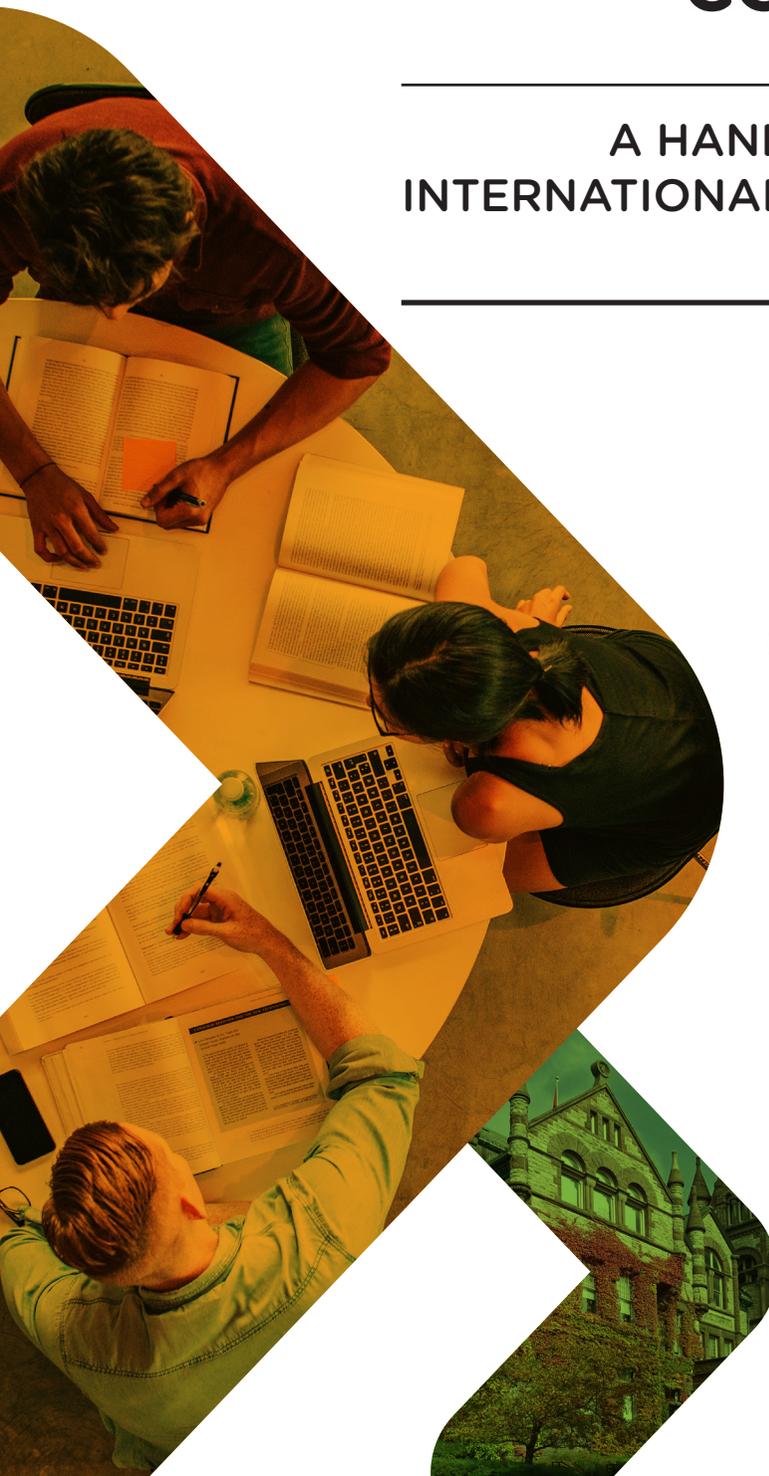




International Student
CONNECT

**A HANDBOOK FOR
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
IN ONTARIO**





O CANADA

O Canada!
Our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.

With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!

From far and wide,
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.





International Student Connect

Do you know that you can attend an
ISC Let's Connect Information session?

For more information, please visit
www.settlement.org/InternationalStudent

To contact us directly, please call
our bilingual line at **1-844-871-4567**
or email us at **ISC@costi.org**



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ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

Welcome to Ontario, Canada. Canada is a proud, multicultural society, welcoming international students from all over the world. Over 13 million people live in Ontario and this includes people from over 200 countries who speak more than 130 languages. Moving to a new country is exciting and there are different things to learn. The International Student Connect (ISC) Handbook and Fact Sheets, available at ISC Let's Connect Information sessions and webinars, will guide your next steps.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THE HANDBOOK

This handbook will give you the basic information you need to live in Ontario. It contains three sections. The first will introduce you to Canada and Ontario, the second provides information relevant to life in the province and the third section will highlight student life.

To help you organize and plan your next steps, you can use the Living in Canada tool at cic.gc.ca or findlink.at/cic-ictvac

WELCOME TO CANADA GUIDE: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

In this handbook, you will find references to information you can find in the Welcome to Canada guide published by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Look for this icon: 



You can also read the guide online at cic.gc.ca or findlink.at/welcomecan

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Findlinks take you to a specific page online. To help you find information easily, we have included the main domains for Internet addresses along with a FindLink.



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GETTING TO KNOW CANADA AND ONTARIO



CANADA

Canada became a country in 1867 when three British colonies—Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia—joined together as the Dominion of Canada. Today Canada is an independent nation with 10 provinces and 3 territories. Canada is a constitutional monarchy and member of the British Commonwealth. Queen Elizabeth II is the head of state and our elected prime minister is the head of Canada’s government. Canada has three levels of government: federal, provincial/territorial and municipal or regional.

Some of the federal government’s responsibilities include immigration and customs, national defence and international relations. Each province manages its own health care and education, among other systems. Ontario’s colleges and universities are regulated and funded by the provincial government, but the federal government manages the process for obtaining a study permit or student visa. Municipal (city) or regional governments handle local concerns such as housing, libraries, garbage collection, water and police.

Canada is a young country with three founding peoples and two official languages—English and French. The Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples of Canada have lived here for thousands of years. There are three groups of Indigenous peoples: First Nations, Inuit and Métis. There are many distinct groups within the First Nations with different customs and languages, such as the Cree, the Ojibwa, the Squamish or the Dene. Inuit are the Indigenous people of the Arctic. The Métis are people with mixed First Nations and European ancestry with a distinct language and culture. Over a million Canadians self-identify as Indigenous people.

French settlers first came to Canada in the 1600s. These settlers formed the colony of New France and established Canada’s oldest cities such as Quebec City and Montreal. French Canadians explored North America and traded with the Indigenous peoples long before the British. English-speaking settlers from Great Britain, Ireland and the American colonies arrived in the 1700s and Great Britain took control of the territory, including New France.

Over the past 200 years, people from many different ethnic and religious groups have immigrated to Canada. Today, about 20 percent of Canadians were born outside of Canada. Canada’s wilderness is vast and diverse, but most people live in urban and suburban areas with dense populations. The cities of Canada are home to some of the most multicultural communities in the world.

CANADA BY NUMBERS

- › **Pop:** 36,000,000 people
- › **Area:** 10,000,000 km² — the second-largest country in the world
- › 3 coastlines—Atlantic, Pacific, Arctic Oceans
- › 10 provinces
- › 3 territories
- › 2 official languages—English and French
- › Over 200 languages spoken in Canada

CITIES, PROVINCES AND REGIONS P.18

The capital city of Canada is Ottawa, located in Ontario. It is Canada's fourth-largest city. The three largest cities in Canada are Toronto (Ontario), Montreal (Quebec) and Vancouver (British Columbia).

Canada has 10 provinces and three territories, each with its own capital city.

The main regions of Canada are:



THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Newfoundland and Labrador,
Prince Edward Island,
Nova Scotia and New Brunswick



CENTRAL CANADA

Quebec and Ontario



THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES

Manitoba, Saskatchewan
and Alberta



THE WEST COAST

British Columbia



THE NORTH

Nunavut, the Northwest
Territories and Yukon

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT P.24-25

The federal government deals with national issues such as:



National
Defence



Foreign
Affairs



Currency and
Banking



Employment
Insurance



Postal
Service



Criminal
Law

The federal government is led by the Prime Minister. Federal government representatives are called Members of Parliament (or MPs).

THE PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT

The provincial/territorial governments deal with issues such as:



Health



Education



Transportation

In Ontario, the provincial governing body is called the Ontario Legislature. Provincial government representatives are called Members of Provincial Parliament (or MPPs).

Municipal governments (your local community or city government) deal with local services such as garbage collection and recreational services. Municipal government representatives are called councillors.

**CHECK
IT OUT**

- › www.canada.gc.ca
- › www.ontario.ca



ONTARIO

Ontario is part of central Canada and the largest province by population with more than one third of Canada's population. Ontario is the fourth largest province by size, but it is still very big—twice the size of France and about one third the size of India. The province stretches from the Ottawa River valley in the east, the edge of the prairies in the west, the Great Lakes in the south, and Hudson's Bay in the north. Most Ontarians live in urban centres near the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. Ottawa, the capital city of Canada, is on the Ottawa River. Canada's largest city, and the fourth largest in North America, is Toronto—6 million people live in the Greater Toronto Area.

The name "Ontario" comes from an indigenous word meaning "beautiful lake" or "sparkling water." The indigenous peoples of Ontario have lived in the land of sparkling water for at least 7,000 years. Today, Ontario is home to the largest population of indigenous peoples in the country. They are the foundation of diversity in the province.

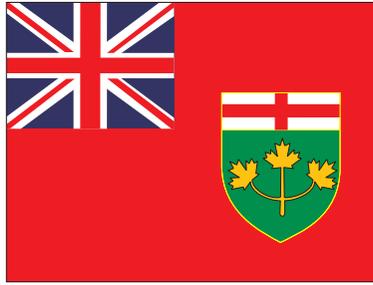
Today, Ontario is a clear example of Canada's commitment to multiculturalism. Almost half of all newcomers to Canada live in Ontario. Living in Ontario means living among people of different backgrounds, religions and languages. It also means having the chance to enjoy foods, music, art and performances from all over the world.

Ontario has a diverse economy. Some of Canada's best agricultural land is in southern Ontario. Southern Ontario is a centre for financial services, hospitality, manufacturing, life sciences and information technology. The economy in the North is based on natural resources—mining, forestry, hydro-electricity and the services that support these industries.

ONTARIO BY NUMBERS

- › **Pop:** 13 million
- › **Area:** 1,076,000 km²
- › 4 Great Lakes
- › 40 percent of the population of Canada lives in Ontario
- › 44 colleges and universities
- › 200+ languages spoken
- › Over 200 languages spoken in Canada





FRANCO-ONTARIO

While English is the main language spoken in Ontario, French Canadians have lived in the province for hundreds of years. Today, almost 5 percent of Ontario's population is francophone, and there is a vibrant French culture in the province. That population is also diverse—around 14 percent of francophone residents in Ontario were born outside of Canada. Some Franco-Ontarian communities in eastern and northeastern Ontario are

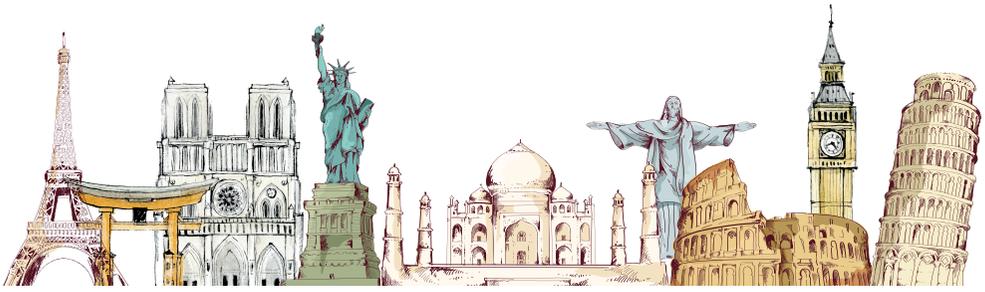
over 90 percent French-speaking. The *Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario* coordinates the political and cultural activities of the Franco-Ontarian population. Canadian law gives equal status to English and French and all federal services are available in both languages. French is not an official provincial language in Ontario, but the *French Languages Services Act* gives everyone the right to receive provincial services in French.

FRANCOPHONE EDUCATION

French is a required subject in English-language schools in Ontario. Speaking both English and French fluently is an advantage when seeking work in Canada, especially jobs in government. Many English-speaking children go to second-language French-immersion schools. There are also first-language French public schools for children who speak French at home.

There are several French-language post-secondary institutions in Ontario. Many of the institutions offer programs in both French and English for francophone people and bilingual speakers of both French and English. There are also post-secondary programs that help English-speaking students improve their French.





CULTURAL VALUES AND BELIEFS

Canada is an open, free society where people have the right to express their opinions and practice their faith and cultural traditions. Respecting these freedoms and celebrating diversity is the foundation of Canadian culture. In Canada, the good of the many is sometimes more important than the rights of any one individual. Canadians feel strongly that education and health care should be free for every resident and that the government should help those in need. To pay for this collective good, all residents of Canada pay taxes on their income, their property, goods and services. Canada is also a land of pristine wilderness and vast natural resources which inspires Canadians to protect and celebrate the country's natural heritage.

INCLUSIVENESS AND DIVERSITY

Canada has a diverse society that works towards the inclusion of all people. Canada's population includes people with differences of all kinds such as cultural and religious backgrounds, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability and interest. By accepting and celebrating our differences, we ensure that Canada

is a place where everyone feels at home. There are many laws and policies that protect everyone's **human rights** and encourage an inclusive society. Our freedoms cannot impede on the basic freedoms of others, so every member of Canadian society must compromise to ensure fairness for all.

CHECK IT OUT

- › Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- › Ontario Human Rights Code
- › Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Canada is a secular society, however every person is allowed and encouraged to practice their religious faith. Schools and workplaces try to accommodate religious practices such as dietary

restrictions, dress codes and holidays. However, religious practices that go against provincial or federal laws or that violate human rights are not protected.

GENDER EQUALITY

Equality between men and women is a core value in Canadian society. Women in Canada have the same legal rights as men as well as the same educational and professional opportunities. However,

more cultural changes are needed to ensure the true equality of women in our society. Cultural practices that demean or hurt women or girls are not tolerated.

THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

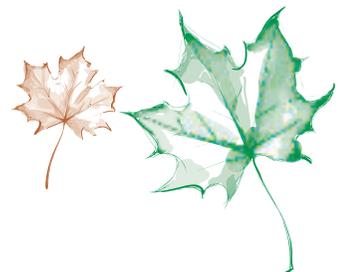
LGBTQ is short for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer and represents Canadians with a wide range of sexual orientation and gender identities. Members of this community are proud participants in

Ontario society. Same-sex marriage and adoption are legal in Ontario. Discriminating against or harassing people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity is against the law in Canada.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Disability is a general term that refers to many different conditions. Often, a person's disability is not visible to other people. Canada has laws to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Businesses, organizations and communities across Canada are

working to become more accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities. Canada is a better place to live when all of its residents can access easily reading materials, websites, services and physical spaces.



NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS

Canadians have a reputation for being polite, diplomatic and funny. Compared to their American neighbours, Canadians are often seen as quiet and reserved. In business and politics this makes Canadians seem less aggressive and ambitious. Canada often acts as mediator in global relations and introduced the practice of peacekeeping. Canadians are proud of this reputation for politeness and diplomacy—it is an important part of the Canadian identity. However, Canadians also love a good joke, especially when it is about Canada.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS

Because Canada is so diverse, there are very few universal customs. Newcomers adapt their traditions to life in Canada and Canadians have learned to adapt their traditions to respect and include those of newcomers. But in general, Canadians are polite and reserved—especially in Ontario. In fact, Ontarians are sometimes so polite that they avoid making eye contact or speaking to strangers in public places, especially in larger cities. This can be misinterpreted as rudeness, but to an Ontarian, intruding or staring seems impolite. Yet behind their reserve, Ontarians are

very kind and friendly people.

Many of the customs in Ontario are related to reserved politeness. For example, people wait patiently in line for services in Ontario and take their turn boarding public transit. Ontarians are also sensitive to time. Scheduled events and meetings start on time—being late is considered rude and inappropriate. People in Ontario rarely complain about poor service in public, and criticism and complaints are often softened with positive statements.

SORRY!

Ontarians, like all Canadians, often apologize even when they are not at fault by saying “sorry.” There is a popular American joke: When you bump into a Canadian, they say “Sorry” for being in your way! But sorry is not always an apology. It can mean “excuse me” or “pardon me.” It might also be a way to express empathy—“I’m sorry that happened to you.”

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Caring for the environment is an important value in Ontario. The governments and people of Ontario work hard to reduce consumption,

manage waste and conserve energy to help protect the environment. Ontarians also save money when they conserve energy and avoid creating waste.



REDUCE YOUR CONSUMPTION

- › Walk, ride your bike or take public transit instead of a car
- › Carry a reusable water bottle instead of buying bottled water
- › Bring your own cloth bags to the grocery store
- › Avoid printing documents
- › Turn off the lights when you leave a room
- › Use energy efficient light bulbs
- › Unplug appliances and electronics when you are not using them
- › Fix things that are broken instead of replacing them

In Ontario trash or garbage is collected from homes by the local municipal government. There are waste diversion programs to reduce the amount of garbage sent to landfills. Ontario households separate plastic, paper and metal items from their trash for recycling in the Blue Bin or Blue Box program. Many communities also separate their organic waste for a Green Bin collection program. Ontarians also recycle in the workplace and in public. Fast food restaurants have recycling bins and most communities have recycling and garbage bins on the street and in parks. Keeping your community clean is a social expectation in Ontario and littering or throwing trash on to the street, is against the law.



SETTLEMENT

As you approach the end of your studies in Ontario, you must decide whether or not to remain in Canada. Graduation is a time of transition for every student, but international students must think carefully about what they plan to do after graduation and at the end of their study permit. There are many programs and services in Ontario that can help you prepare for this transition and settle into a more permanent life in Canada.

CHECK IT OUT

- › The **Settlement.org** website provides reliable information about settling in Ontario. Settlement.org also provides an online community where newcomers can ask questions and share their experiences.

PATHWAYS TO IMMIGRATION

After completing your studies at a Canadian institution, you can apply to become a permanent resident and, if you wish, pursue Canadian citizenship. There are several pathways to immigration for international students who complete college or university programs in

Ontario. However, these pathways have requirements that require advanced planning. Depending on the pathway to immigration that you choose, you may need to begin the application process a few years in advance, or you may need to have a confirmed job offer in place.

ONTARIO IMMIGRANT NOMINEE PROGRAM (OINP)

The **Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program** is open to undergraduate, post-graduate and graduate students. The program nominates people for permanent resident status within

Ontario. There are three streams for international students depending on their level of education and employment situation.

EXPRESS ENTRY

The **Express Entry** process manages permanent residence applications for two federal economic immigration programs that may apply to

international students: the Canadian Experience Class and the Federal Skilled Worker Program.

SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Settlement agencies are community organizations that help newcomers settle into their new home in Canada. Services are confidential, at no cost to you, and available in many languages. Settlement workers can provide information about housing, health care, language training, employment and many other available services. Many settlement agencies also offer programs that can help you and your

family connect to your new community. The government provides funding for these organizations to deliver settlement services to newcomers throughout Ontario. While there may be some restrictions on eligibility for certain programs, especially for those who are in Canada on a study permit, staff at settlement agencies can help you find the support you need.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CONNECT (ISC) - LET'S CONNECT INFORMATION SESSIONS AND WEBINARS

You can attend a **Let's Connect Information Session** to learn about immigration pathways, legal rights, money and personal finance, health care, finding a place to live and other important settlement topics. Let's Connect Information Sessions are one-hour group workshops held on or near selected campuses and are facilitated by experienced settlement workers. If you are close to a campus where the sessions are offered, you may sign up for one-on-one sessions with a settlement worker at the end of the Let's Connect Information Session. ISC also offers a series of free webinars.

If you cannot attend an in-person Let's Connect Information Session, or if you are just looking for more information, you can register for a **Let's Connect Webinar** at www.internationalstudentconnect.org.

For more information, visit www.internationalstudentconnect.org and internationalstudentconnect.org/fr.

To contact us directly, please call our bilingual line 1-844-871-4567 or email us at isc@costi.org



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Major Pro Sports Teams
Special Events

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Places of Worship
Public Libraries





LIFE IN ONTARIO



Ontario is a large province with many cultures and traditions. Every community in Ontario is unique, from big cities to small towns, but this guide will give you a brief introduction to life in the province.

CLIMATE

Ontario has four distinct seasons with cold winters and warm summers, but the weather varies from location to location. Ontario's climate is influenced by the Great Lakes, which make the weather unpredictable and quick changing. Ontarians must check the weather forecast every day to make sure they are prepared!

WINTER

Winter begins around October in Northern Ontario and late November or December in Southern Ontario. It lasts until March in the south and April in the north. Temperatures can drop far below freezing and snow sometimes accumulates into large snow banks. When the temperature goes up, the streets become full of slush. However, life in Canada does not stop in winter. Ontarians put on their winter boots, warm coats, hats, gloves and scarves and go about their day.

SPRING

Spring is often very rainy and lasts from March to June—but can feel much shorter. Sometimes there is winter weather in late March and summer conditions in late May. In fact, in the spring, weather can change from summer conditions one day to winter conditions the next.

SUMMER

June to August are the summer months. Summers in Ontario can sometimes be hot and humid, especially in larger cities. However, the daily temperature can change from quite cool in the mornings to very hot in the afternoon.

FALL

Fall brings cooler temperatures, lots of wind and both rainy and sunny days. Fall is also the beginning of the new school year and the harvest season. Leaves change colour to orange and red before falling from the trees—which is how the season gets its name.

ENJOY THE OUTDOORS

Enjoying the outdoors is an important part of life in Ontario throughout the year. Each season brings a new opportunity to get outside and have fun. Some cities in Ontario have bike share programs as well as bike shops that rent or sell used bikes. Ontario Parks has a Learn to Camp program that includes information sessions and overnight camping sessions with all the necessary equipment provided. Many communities have water and boating safety courses as well as swimming lessons for adults. You can also rent equipment and take lessons for winter activities like skating and skiing.



FALL



WINTER



SPRING



SUMMER



Hiking



Skating



Biking



Biking



Biking



Tobogganing



Hiking



Camping



Harvest Time



Downhill Skiing



Outdoor Sports



Hiking



Outdoor Sports



Cross-country



Gardening



Swimming



Farmers' Market



Skiing



Bird Watching



Visiting a Cottage

CHECK
IT OUT

› Weather.gc.ca
› DiscoverOntario.net

› OntarioTravel.net
› ParksOntario.ca



CULTURAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Ontario is home to many historic sites and cultural attractions. From Niagara Falls to Fort York to Parliament Hill, you can learn about Ontario's history and culture wherever you live. Many museums, galleries, parades, celebrations and festivals, both large and small, are free of charge or may have a small fee. Some sites and events have discounts for children, youth, students and seniors. Some events, such as New Year's Eve fireworks, Maple Syrup festivals, Doors Open tours, Gay Pride parades, Canada Day celebrations, and Santa Claus parades occur all over the province, but some special events are unique to their community. Here are just some of the museums, galleries, attractions, and events you will find across Ontario.

MAJOR GALLERIES, MUSEUMS

- › Royal Ontario Museum
- › Canadian Museum of History
- › Art Gallery of Ontario
- › National Gallery of Canada
- › Aga Khan Museum
- › McMichael Collection
- › Science North
- › Ontario Science Centre

ATTRACTIONS

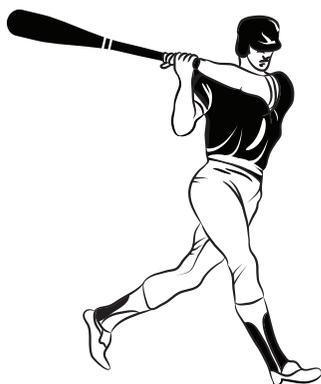
- › Point Pelee National Park
- › Niagara Falls
- › St. Jacob's Farmer's Market and Village
- › Canada's Wonderland
- › Ripley's Aquarium
- › Algonquin Provincial Park
- › Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat
- › Sandbanks Provincial Park
- › The Rideau Canal
- › ByWard Market
- › Calypso Theme Waterpark

MAJOR PRO SPORTS TEAMS

- › CFL Hamilton Tiger Cats, Toronto Argonauts, Ottawa Red Blacks
- › NBA Toronto Raptors
- › NHL Ottawa Senators, Toronto Maple Leafs
- › MLS Toronto FC
- › MLB Toronto Blue Jays
- › NLL Toronto Rock

HOCKEY, HOCKEY, EVERYWHERE!

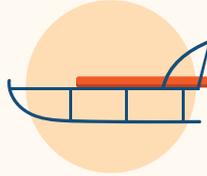
If you ever want to check out Canada's favourite sport up close, Ontario is a great place to do it. NHL tickets are expensive and hard to get. But the professional **Ontario Hockey League** has teams in towns and cities across the province. Your college or university may also have a hockey team, and your local community will have some top-notch youth teams and adult recreational teams. Check out your local hockey rink for more information.



SPECIAL EVENTS



Winterlude
(Ottawa)



Bon Soo
Winter Carnival



Stratford
Festival



Hot Docs Film Festival
(Toronto)



Carassauga Festival
(Mississauga)



Mariposa Folk Festival
(Orillia)



Caribana Caribbean
Festival
(Toronto)



MuslimFest
(Mississauga)



Toronto International
Film Festival



James St. Supercrawl
(Hamilton)



Eden Mills
Writers Festival
(Eden Mills)



Word on the Street
(Toronto)



Oktoberfest
(Kitchener-Waterloo)

COMMUNITY CENTRES AND RECREATION

While your college or university will probably have student centres and recreation facilities, cities and towns in Ontario also have many social and recreational opportunities. Most communities have a place where community groups can meet. Many community centres also have skating arenas, swimming pools, gyms and sports fields. Some facilities and programs can be used for free while others have fees or require registration. Programs for adults and children are either free or offered at a low cost. Some programs are open to everyone, and other programs require advanced registration. Private recreation and fitness clubs require membership fees, as do local sports clubs or leagues that organize regular games and tournaments.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Canadians have the freedom to practise their own religion. While Ontario is a secular society, many Ontarians express their faith by gathering in churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other places of worship.

Many faith communities also run community centres with programs for both their congregation and their local community. Faith groups also meet on college and university campuses in Ontario.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Most communities in Ontario have a public library system. Libraries are free and open to the public. The primary purpose of public libraries is to provide access to information resources—these include books and computers with Internet access. But libraries also offer a wide range of free programs to the community, including lectures and seminars, English as a second language resources, and homework clubs for students. You can also borrow music, videos, video games, ebooks and audio books. Some libraries have also started lending other items such as tools and musical instruments.

Many library services, such as borrowing books or using computers, require a library card. You can apply for a library card online or in person at your local library. Proof of address is required but library cards are free to anyone who resides in the library's service area. To get a library card, you will need one piece of official identification (passport or driver's license) and proof of your address such as an official piece of mail, such as a bill or letter from your school.

Libraries charge fines when items are returned late as well as other small user fees, such as for printing documents or using meeting rooms.



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Violence in the Family

Emergency



STUDENT LIFE IN ONTARIO

Your college or university campus will likely be the centre of your life in Ontario. The International Student Office at your school can help you learn about life on campus. Some students live in residences on campus, or in apartments and houses near campus. Other students live with family or friends and commute to campus by car or on public transit. But the campus is the heart of student life in Ontario—no matter where they live, students spend much of their time on campus.

Some of the facilities you will find on an Ontario campus include cafeterias, food courts, coffee shops, student lounges, bookstores, computer labs, libraries, fitness and recreation centres, prayer rooms, and health clinics. There are also student organizations and clubs, faith groups, social events, guest speakers, music and theatre performances, and competitive and recreational sports.

Ontario's colleges and universities also provide academic support, tutoring, and counselling services to help students adjust to the challenges of student life. Ontario's post-secondary campuses also provide safety and security services that help make the campus safe for everyone.

GETTING INVOLVED, MAKING FRIENDS

“Friend” can mean many things—roommate, classmate, coworker, acquaintance, member of a social group, date, or social media connection. And there are just as many ways to make friends. Introducing yourself to someone you recognize from class is one way to meet new people. Of course, the best way to meet your fellow students is to participate in campus life. Social events, clubs, sports leagues and volunteer projects are just some of the ways to get involved on campus. You can learn many things in your classes, but participating in extra-curricular activities provides practical experience and learning opportunities.

MANAGING YOUR TIME

Being a student is one of the most exciting times in a person's life and having a healthy study and work life balance is critical to student health and wellness. Punctuality is important in

Canadian culture. Classes, meetings and workdays start on time and assignments and projects are submitted on schedule. Keeping track of assignments and planning time to complete them and

prepare for exams will help you manage several courses at once. While classes and studying take priority, students must also find time for work, recreation, and a social life. You should also make time to maintain a healthy life style by

eating well and getting enough sleep. The student services offices on your campus have many resources to help you manage your time—you just need to ask for help!

For more information, visit <http://wmhp.cmhaontario.ca>

STAYING HEALTHY

Healthy students find a balance between studies, work, and play. There are many resources available to students on college and university campuses in Ontario. If you find yourself struggling with your studies, your physical health, your feelings and mood, or other concerns, be sure to access one of the many support systems available to you—the international student office, the resident life staff, your academic counsellor, a student mentor or peer counsellor, tutoring centre, student health centre, a settlement worker, or even just a friend. Help is there, you simply need to ask for it!

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Health and wellbeing is the key to success as a student. Concentration, memory, and energy all depend on our physical health. But maintaining a healthy lifestyle of nutritious food, regular exercise, and plenty of sleep is a challenge for busy students. Colleges and universities in Ontario provide

information and programs to help students make healthier choices. All international students are required to have health insurance and this means they can always visit the doctor or nurse when they have questions or are feeling unwell.

TIPS FOR A HEALTHY STUDENT LIFE

- › Eat regularly and include healthy food in your diet
- › Keep fruits, veggies, and other healthy snacks like granola bars or nuts in your room or backpack
- › Plan a regular weekly session of exercise like a recreational sports league, a yoga class, or a fitness class
- › Walk or cycle to campus or to work
- › Build time into your schedule for sleep
- › Avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening
- › Avoid screens before going to bed and turn off notifications while you are sleeping.
- › Avoid alcohol during the school week and limit consumption on weekends
- › Avoid the use of drugs
- › Avoid smoking and other tobacco use

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is an important part of student life. On-campus health and student services can help you balance the demands of school, work, personal life and the added stress of adjusting to life in Ontario. Stress, anxiety, depression and addiction are serious conditions that can be treated with help. You can also seek help from your doctor, community health centres and settlement agencies.

Good2talk is a free, confidential, 24-hour counselling service for students at Ontario's colleges and universities. Students can call at any time to speak to a counsellor about any issue, big or small. The service also provides referrals to on- and off-campus counselling services and programs.

**CHECK
IT OUT**

- › **Good2Talk—Post-Secondary Student Helpline**
www.good2talk.ca
1-866-925-5454

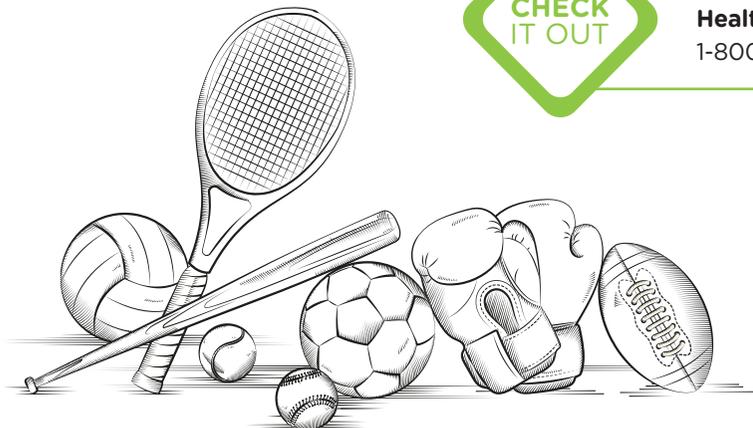
SEXUAL HEALTH

Sexual health is an important part of student life in Ontario. Colleges and universities have programs and services to educate their community members on issues of sexual health, from Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), to birth control, and the important issues of sexual violence and consent. Community sexual health clinics provide services such as birth control counselling

including condoms at no cost to you, and STI and HIV testing. Many of these services are anonymous and all are confidential. You can learn more about sexual health and find a clinic near you by visiting sexualhealthontario.ca. Ontario also has an AIDS and Sexual Health Infoline, which is confidential and available in multiple languages.

**CHECK
IT OUT**

- › **AIDS and Sexual Health Infoline**
1-800-668-2437





STAYING SAFE

Ontario is generally a safe place to live with low crime rates, even in the big cities. Safety is everyone's responsibility and every school in Ontario provides resources and information to students about staying safe on and off campus. All schools have a security office and offer various programs to keep students safe. As an individual, you can enhance your own personal, property and online identity security by taking some simple precautions.

SAFETY TIPS

Personal Security

- › Be aware of your surroundings and follow your instincts.
- › Choose a well-lit route when walking alone at night
- › If you are alone at night, keep your door locked
- › If you do not feel comfortable in a situation, then leave it
- › If you feel threatened or unsafe, go to a place where there are people and call for help
- › At parties, events, and bars stay with your group of friends and leave together.
- › Do not accept drinks from strangers or leave your drink unattended.

Property Security

- › Lock the windows and doors when you leave
- › Do not leave valuable items unattended in public spaces
- › Lock up your bicycle
- › Lock your car doors, and hide valuables under the seat or in the trunk
- › Use a pad lock at the gym or pool
- › Use passwords on your devices and register for locator services

Online Security

- › Do not share your passwords
- › Do not share your bankcard Personal Identity Numbers (PINs)
- › Check the privacy setting on your social network accounts
- › Avoid sharing too much personal information online
- › Keep your anti-virus software up-to-date
- › Avoid clicking on links and attachments in emails from people you do not know

CAMPUS SAFETY

Most college and university campuses offer programs such as walk-home services. Security guards or teams of student volunteers will accompany students and staff between buildings on or near campus and to parking lots,

campus residences or transit stops. Many campuses also have special security phones that will contact campus security directly or sound an alarm. Visit your school's website to learn more about security.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

In Ontario, some college and university students drink alcohol in social settings. You must be 19 years old to buy alcohol. Staying healthy is important to your success so you should avoid frequent drinking and excessive or "binge" drinking. Drinking alcohol also impairs judgement, which can have serious consequences for school, work, and general health.

You may purchase cigarettes and other legal tobacco products at 19 years of age or older. Smoking is however the biggest risk factor for heart and lung disease, cancer and stroke. Nicotine which is derived from cigarettes is one of the most addictive drugs in the world. There are many restrictions about where you can smoke in Ontario—workplaces, campus buildings, public

transit, restaurants, and bars are smoke-free environments. Landlords often prefer non-smoking tenants and restrict smoking on the property.

Illicit drugs and the abuse of prescription drugs pose a danger. Whether they are used for recreation, to enhance performance, or avoid the need for sleep, drugs are habit forming and harmful to your body and mind. Buying, selling, and possessing illicit drugs and medications without a prescription is illegal in Canada and can have severe consequences.

Note that the laws regarding the possession and use of marijuana are changing in Canada, but it is still against the law to buy, sell, and use marijuana for recreational purposes in Ontario (as of January 2017).

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

In Ontario, sexual violence is both against the law and socially unacceptable. Sexual violence includes rape and sexual assault and all other unwanted acts such as harassment, stalking, cyber bullying, trafficking, and exploitation. Sexual violence does not always involve physical force. Both men and women can be

victims of sexual violence, however statistics show that the majority of sexual assault cases involve men as the offenders. Ontario's colleges and universities aim to create campus communities where sexual violence is unacceptable and the survivors are able to get the help they need.

CONSENT

It is important that both male and female students understand the concept of consent. In Canada, an individual must actively and willingly give consent to any sexual activity. Any type of sexual activity without consent is sexual assault—including kissing or touching.

Consent must be affirmative. It cannot be assumed or implied by silence or other actions such as accepting a ride home or going on a date. Giving consent to one instance of sexual activity does not mean that consent is given to

any other sexual act. Someone who is intoxicated or otherwise impaired cannot give their consent. A person cannot legally give their consent if they are tricked, coerced, or afraid for their safety.

It is important for students to understand what it means to give consent so that they are empowered to refuse their consent if they choose to, and so that they are able to recognize consent given by others.

DISCLOSURE AND REPORTING

Disclosing sexual violence can be difficult. Reporting it to authorities can be even harder, so many acts of sexual violence go unreported. Some victims may not realize that what happened to them was assault. They may feel guilt or shame or think that their consent was implied. Other survivors may be worried that no one will believe their story or that the offender will not be punished. Some victims of sexual violence may need some time to understand what has happened, or to heal a little, before coming forward.

Colleges and universities in Ontario are working on new policies and procedures to make it easier for survivors to report their experiences and get the help they need. Survivors of sexual violence may be more comfortable disclosing their assault to someone they trust, such as a friend. Medical care, counselling, and other services are confidential—survivors are not required to report the assault to the police or other authorities to obtain support. Visit your school's website to learn more about the sexual violence policies on your campus and how to access support resources.



BUDGETING

Most students in Ontario have limited funds. It is helpful to plan for your expenses and create a budget to make sure your spending matches your income. A budget is a summary of your income and your expenses. It is a good way to keep track of your money to make sure you have enough to pay your bills and avoid overspending.

The first step is to add up all of your resources—all sources of funds and income, such as your savings, contributions from family, scholarships, and income from a part-time job. Then, add up your fixed expenses, like tuition and rent, and estimate your variable expenses such as food, clothing, and personal items. The amount of your expenses should be equal to or less than your resources.

TRACK YOUR SPENDING

Once you have a budget, the best way to stay on budget is to keep track of your spending. There are many ways to do this, including writing down everything you spend or checking your debit or credit card account records. But there are also many Smartphone Apps that can help you track your spending—you simply make an entry every time you make a purchase or pay a bill.

**CHECK
IT OUT**

› For more information on creating your budget visit **Prosper Canada** at www.prospercanada.org

STUDENT EXPENSES



TUITION AND FEES

Varies by school and program



TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

Computer, cell phone and service, internet service



BOOKS AND MATERIALS

Including lab costs, special tools, special software



FOOD

Campus meal plans, groceries, restaurants



HEALTH CARE

Required as part of international student fees
UHIP is required by all schools



CLOTHING

Clothes, outerwear, footwear



HOUSING COSTS

Varies by location and off-campus or on-campus



INCIDENTALS

Laundry, personal items, banking fees, gifts



TRANSPORTATION

Public transit fares vary by location; cycling and walking are low cost alternatives



ENTERTAINMENT

Social gatherings, parties, films, concerts, activities, special events, sightseeing

THE COST OF LIVING

The cost of living varies across the province and expenses will vary from school to school. Your college or university will list education costs on its website and may also include some estimates for living expenses in the local community. Once you have subtracted your major expenses, such as tuition, rent, books and health care, you can calculate how much money will be left over for each month.

It is also important to account for the transition period between school and work, and if you choose to settle in Ontario, the time it takes to become a permanent resident. In the time it takes to find a job, you will still need to pay rent and buy food. You will also need to pay for private insurance while you wait for the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) to begin.

TIPS FOR REDUCING EXPENSES

- › Live with a roommate to save on rent, utilities, internet
- › Walk or cycle instead of taking public transit
- › Compare cell phone plans to get the best deals
- › Try buying clothes, furnishings, textbooks, and other items second-hand
- › Shop at discount grocery stores and buy food in bulk
- › Bring your lunch from home
- › Use a student discount card
- › Use campus recreation instead of joining a private gym
- › Watch movies at home with friends
- › Make coffee and tea at home

CHECK IT OUT

- › **Numbeo.com** lists consumer prices for cities and towns all over the world. Information is provided by contributors and updated on a regular basis. You can use this website to compare the cost of living in Ontario communities to the cost of living in your country, by category.



A SAMPLE STUDENT BUDGET

Resources	Monthly	Year (8 months)
Savings	\$2,500.00	\$20,000.00
Scholarships	\$425.00	\$3,400.00
Family contributions	\$1,250.00	\$10,000.00
Loan	\$875.00	\$7,000.00
Work income	\$625.00	\$5,000.00
Total	\$5,675.00	\$45,400.00
Upfront Costs		
Tuition and Fees (including Health Insurance)		\$29,756.00
Books and Materials		\$2,000.00
Computer		\$800.00
Phone		\$300.00
Subtotal		\$32,856.00
Remainder	\$1,568.00	\$12,544.00
Monthly Expenses		
Off-Campus Housing		
Rent (2 bedroom shared)	\$625.00	\$5,000.00
Heat	\$50.00	\$400.00
Electricity	\$50.00	\$400.00
Internet	\$25.00	\$200.00
Phone	\$45.00	\$360.00
Transportation	\$115.00	\$920.00
Food	\$350.00	\$2,800.00
Clothing	\$75.00	\$600.00
Incidentals	\$125.00	\$1,000.00
Entertainment	\$100.00	\$800.00
Subtotal	\$1,560.00	\$12,480.00
Balance	\$8.00	\$64.00

CHECK IT OUT

- > The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada has a **student budget worksheet** available on its website: www.fcac-acfc.gc.ca. Look for it on the **Life Events** page of the **“For Consumer”** section. There is also a link to a downloadable Excel spreadsheet.



EMPLOYMENT

Most students in Ontario work part-time to help pay for their education and living expenses. Students also use their work experience to help prepare them for their future careers. Even jobs outside your intended field can help you develop important skills and gain experience.

As an international student, you work while you are studying in Canada without a work permit. With a study permit, you may work 20 hours per week while school is in session and full-time hours during school breaks. If you study in a program that includes co-op placements or internships, you must have a work permit. Your spouse must apply for a work permit if they wish to work while in Canada. Everyone who works in Canada must have a Social Insurance Number (SIN). Learn about applying for a SIN on the Service Canada website.



STUDENT WORK

Students in Ontario work both on-campus and off-campus. There are a wide variety of on-campus job opportunities, from office work to food services. Off-campus, students often work in the service industry, as these jobs offer part-time flexible work shifts that do not interfere with class schedules. Some students also pursue part-time jobs related to their area of study.



EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Colleges and universities in Ontario have career centres to help students find and prepare for employment. International students in Ontario can also use the employment services and resources offered by the government, community organizations, and settlement agencies. Campus career centres and employment services provide resources on resume writing and how to have a successful job interview. Look for workshops and seminars about these important skills.

Campus career centres often organize the hiring process for on-campus jobs and advertise or list off-campus job opportunities for students. Your career centre may also host job fairs to help match student workers with potential employers and hold seminars about preparing for employment after graduation.

ISC Let's Connect Information Sessions and Webinars

You can attend a **Let's Connect Information Session** to learn about employment, workers' rights, immigration pathways, and other important settlement topics. Let's Connect Information Sessions are one-hour group workshops held on or near campus and led by experienced settlement workers. After the session you can sign up for one-on-one sessions with a settlement worker. ISC also offers a series of free webinars.

If you cannot attend an in-person Let's Connect Information Session, or if you are just looking for more information, you can register for a **Let's Connect Webinar** at www.internationalstudentconnect.org.

For more information, visit www.internationalstudentconnect.org or contact us at isc@costi.org.

JOB SEARCH TOOLS

There are many online job search tools students can use to find employment in Ontario.

- › Your college or university may have a job posting service that is only open to students.
- › The government of Canada hosts the national Job Bank at www.jobbank.gc.ca.
- › Websites like Workopolis.ca, HotJobs.ca, and Monster.ca also list a wide variety of jobs.
- › Large companies often list job opportunities on their own websites.
- › Professional organizations often have field-specific job listings.
- › Employers also list job opportunities on social media sites like LinkedIn.

However, sometimes the best way to find a job is to talk to fellow students and look for help-wanted signs in your own neighbourhood!

APPLYING FOR A JOB

- › Create a resume that conforms to Canadian standards
- › Read the job description carefully
- › Compare the skills required to your abilities and experiences
- › Write a letter that highlights your best qualities for doing the job
- › Complete the job application, if there is one
- › Submit resume, letter, and application as directed
- › Bring a list of references
- › Prepare for an interview by researching the company
- › Practice for the interview with a friend
- › Arrive early for your interview
- › Bring letters of recommendation, work samples or portfolio
- › Thank interviewers for the opportunity
- › Send a thank-you note or email as a follow up

QUALIFICATIONS

Many professions in Canada require specific training or certifications—these are known as regulated professions. In non-regulated professions, employers still select applicants based on their education, training and experience. If

you are interested in pursuing a specific career in Canada, it is important to research the necessary or expected qualifications and skills. Visit your school's career centre for more information about your field of interest.

CANADIAN EXPERIENCE: CO-OP, INTERNSHIPS, VOLUNTEERING

Employment is a good way to help cover the costs of your education. But employment will also help you gain valuable Canadian work experience. Many colleges and universities in Ontario include internships and co-op placements as part of their programs. While the school will help their students to find placements, it is up to you to apply and interview for positions. Many of the top internships and co-op placements are competitive.

Co-op placements pay regular wages. Internships may be paid or unpaid. If their program requires an internship, students usually receive academic credit instead of payment. In most cases, internships without academic credit must pay at least minimum wage. In addition to co-ops and internships, many students volunteer to learn new skills, gain experience and network with potential employers.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

Workers in Ontario, including international students, have basic rights:

- › The Ontario Human Rights Code protects you against discrimination and harassment based on your age, race, country of origin, ethnicity, religion, disability, family status, gender identity or sexual orientation.
- › The Employment Standards Act (ESA) outlines the standards that employers and employees must follow, including hours, pay and work environment.
- › The Occupational Health and Safety Act protects the health and safety of workers and outlines the obligations of employers to ensure a safe workplace.
- › The Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) provides compensation and support to workers who are injured at work.



ACCOMPANYING FAMILY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

VISAS AND WORK PERMITS

International students may bring their spouse or partner and dependent children when they come to study in Canada. Family members must be included in the application process and must provide the necessary

documents. Spouses or partners of international students who want to work can apply for an Open Work Permit. This type of work permit is not job specific and is valid for the duration of the study permit.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Children and adolescents are required to attend school in Ontario until they have either completed their Ontario Secondary School Diploma, or they have reached the age of 18. Children of international students do not require a study permit to attend school in Ontario. While some parents choose to pay tuition for private schools, most children in Ontario attend one of the many public schools in the province. The school your children attend is

designated based on your address. Children begin school at age 4 with two years of kindergarten. Public schools may be either English or French, and there is also a publically funded Catholic school system in Ontario with programs in both English and French. French-language schools are for students who speak French at home, but English-language schools also offer French-immersion programs available to all students.



CHILD CARE

There are many different child care options for infants, toddlers, pre-school children, and school-age children. Child care providers may also provide extended care for hours outside the regular work day, as well as drop-in or emergency care when unexpected events occur.

There are two main types of child care: licensed and home-care. Licensed child-care centres are regulated and inspected by the government. These child-care centres can be found in workplaces, community centres, schools, places of worship, or a dedicated private facility. Your college or university campus may have a licensed child-care centre for the children of students and staff.

Many people care for other people's children in their home. The government does not regulate independent home child care providers, but does limit the number of children allowed. Some home child care providers work through licensed agencies that ensure the provider meets policies and standards.

Child care is very expensive in Ontario. The cost of licensed day care ranges from \$800 to \$2000 per month, per child, depending on their age. Many communities also have a shortage of child care spaces, and many families sign up months in advance. There is a licensed child care subsidy available to families in Ontario who meet the income requirements. You can apply for the child care subsidy through your local city or regional government.

EARLY YEARS CENTRES (EYC)

Ontario's Early Years Centres are free drop-in centres in your local community. Parents and other caregivers can bring children 6 years and under to play and learn. It is free to visit an EYC and participate in programs and activities. Early Years Centres also provide information and resources to families. You can get advice about parenting as well as information about local programs and services. Centres do not provide child care—caregivers must stay with their children.

LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

Public schools in Ontario offer English-as-a-Second-Language programs. Children will be assessed when they start attending school and then placed in the appropriate class.

School boards and community organizations also offer free ESL classes for adults; however, the partners of

international students do not usually qualify for these programs. There are many courses available through the local school board, colleges and universities, and private language schools. If a course lasts less than six months, a study permit is not required.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

The families of international students can take advantage of programs on campus and they are also welcome to participate in their local community. Public libraries and community centres

are open to all residents. These facilities offer many programs and services for free or a small fee. Visit your local library or community centre or check online for information.



› The **Settlement.org** website has much information about living in Ontario and getting to know your community.

FAMILY IN ONTARIO

There are many ways to be a family in Ontario. Marriage is the foundation of family life for many people in Canada. Unmarried couples that live together are “common-law partners” and have many of the same rights and obligations as married couples. Same-sex marriage has been legal in Ontario since 2003. Families can include stepchildren and stepparents, single parents, children who are adopted, or no children at all. Some families live separately and others include many generations in the same home. Both same-sex couples and single individuals are allowed to adopt children.

In Ontario, only a court can grant you a divorce. Either spouse (marriage partner) can apply for a divorce. You must give proof that your marriage has broken down. If your spouse gets a divorce in another country, it is usually considered legal in Ontario if your spouse has been out of Canada for at least a year. If a couple separates or divorces, the court resolves child custody based on what is best for the child. The courts also have the power to compel partners to pay financial support both their former spouse and their children.

VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY

Family violence is not tolerated in Ontario, or any part of Canada. Violence against a spouse, or any other family member, is illegal in Ontario—including unwanted sexual activity. Wives have the right to refuse sexual contact of any kind. Threatening family members is also a crime. A person who is found guilty of domestic violence against a family member may face serious punishments. Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence; however, most acts of violence in the family are committed by men against women. There are many resources available to victims of domestic violence, including emergency shelters and counselling.

Parents are allowed to use spanking or “reasonable force” to discipline young children, but severe punishment

is not allowed. It is against the law to use physical force against teenagers. Any act that causes injury or emotional damage to a child or youth is considered child abuse. This includes physical, emotional, or sexual mistreatment, as well as exposure to violence. Neglect is also a form of child abuse. Neglect can include a wide range of behaviours, such as a failure to provide supervision and education, as well as proper shelter, nutrition, and cleanliness.

Every adult in Ontario is required by law to report suspicions of child abuse. In cases where child abuse or neglect is suspected, child protection laws in Ontario allow child welfare officials to remove children from family homes.

For more information visit the following website: <http://settlement.org/ontario>

EMERGENCY

- › If you or your family are in danger, call 9-1-1



INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

› **Settlement.org**

Settlement.org has extensive information about living in Ontario, including where to find local settlement services.

› **Canadian Government**

www.canada.gc.ca

This website is the entry point for all departments in the federal government of Canada. You can find information on a wide range of topics related to living and studying in Canada.

› **Servicecanada.gc.ca**

1-800-622-6232

The Service Canada website and locations offer information related to immigration, taxation, citizenship, employment insurance, or any other federal program or service. You must apply for a Social Insurance Number from Service Canada if you want to work while in Canada.

› **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada**

www.cic.gc.ca

This government website is an excellent source of information about Canada for international students.

› **Financial Consumer Agency of Canada**

www.fcac-acfc.gc.ca

The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada is a federal department with information for Canadian residents. On the Life Events page of the “For Consumer” section, there is a downloadable student budget worksheet for students in Canada.

› **Job Bank**

www.jobbank.gc.ca

The Job Bank is the Government of Canada’s leading source for jobs and labour market information. It offers users free occupational and career information.

› **Environment Canada**

www.weather.gc.ca

The Environment Canada website has current weather conditions for communities across Canada.

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

› **Ontario Government**

www.ontario.ca

This website is the entry point for all ministries and agencies of the provincial government of Ontario. You can find information on a wide range of topics related to living and studying in Ontario.

› **ServiceOntario.ca**

1-800-267-8097

Learn about Ontario programs and services, including those related to employment, education, training and driving. Residents apply for OHIP cards, driver's licenses and car license plates at ServiceOntario centres.

› **OntarioTravel.net**

This website is the official tourism website of Ontario. Learn more about all the things you can do while living in Ontario.

› **Parks Canada**

www.pc.gc.ca

Learn more about the National Parks of Canada on their website. There are six national parks in Ontario.

› **Ontario Parks**

www.ontarioparks.ca

There are over 200 provincial parks in Ontario. Learn more about the parks and the programs offered by Ontario Parks on their website.

› **2-1-1 - Government and Community Services**

Get information and referrals to community and social services in your area 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in more than 150 languages. Calling 211 is free and completely confidential. You can also visit: 211ontario.ca

› **4-1-1 - Directory Assistance**

Find a residential or business phone number. There is a fee for this service and it varies depending upon your provider.

› **9-1-1 - Emergency**

In an emergency, dial 9-1-1 from any phone. The operator will ask if you need police, fire or ambulance. The operator will also ask you for your location. Interpreters are available for 170 languages.

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

› **Crime Stoppers**

1-800-222-TIPS (8477)

Crime Stoppers allows you to anonymously report information to law enforcement.

› **Assaulted Women's Helpline**

1-866-863-0511

www.awhl.org

Women who have experienced violence or are at risk of violence can contact the Assaulted Women's Helpline. Call 9-1-1 if you are in immediate danger.

Good2Talk—Post-Secondary Student Helpline

› **www.good2talk.ca**

1-866-925-5454

Good2Talk is a helpline sponsored by KidsHelpPhone and Ontario's colleges and universities. It is available 24 hours for post-secondary students in Ontario who need assistance or counselling. Call 9-1-1 if you are in immediate danger.

