

1. Who Will Help

Table of Contents

1. Who Will Help.....	1
1.1 “Please Move to Canada” Guides.....	1
1.2 What Programs to Apply For.....	3
1.3 Resources Especially for Gender and Sexually Diverse People, and for Women.....	4
1.4 Canadian Government Services.....	6
1.5 Refugee Sponsorship.....	7
1.6 Resources for Health-industry People in Particular.....	8
1.7 Resources for Everyone.....	9
1.8 Books about Moving to Canada.....	10
1.9 The Hard Part.....	11
1.10 Commercial Resources.....	11
1.11 Immigration Law Firms.....	12
1.12 Planning Ahead.....	13
Conclusion.....	14

It used to be draft-age men who needed to flee from the US to Canada. These days it’s *at least* 2SLGBTQI+ folks and existing refugees. It may soon be more: the number of young women who want to emigrate from the US quadrupled to 40% between 2014 and 2025.

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/697382/record-numbers-younger-women-leave.aspx>

Gilead is coming true.

This chapter lists organizations who can help you right from the beginning. Subsequent chapters will list additional organizations and web documents related to the subject of the chapter.

As always, this book is not legal advice. For that, please see immigration lawyers, below.

1.1 “Please Move to Canada” Guides

Both the federal and provincial governments want to attract immigrants. Until a political problem in 2024 with undergrads and housing, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) did too. This has already started to change back: Canada is now (in 2026) trying to expedite immigration processing for university professors and grad students from the US. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

The **federal** booklet is 148 pages of everything they think you will need, entitled “Welcome to Canada, What you should know”. It ranges from planning to getting a bank account to applying for

citizenship. In effect, it's a resource guide, just like this.

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/pub/welcome.pdf>

The Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada site has the current statuses of *everything*, all written in a Canadian dialect of “bland”. A good sample and starting point is “Settling in Canada”, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/settle-canada.html>

A typical **provincial** guide is **Ontario's** “Settlement.Org, Welcome To Ontario”, a

<https://settlement.org/>

This is a web page of helpful information, including about provincial workshops you can attend for a deeper dive into some of the techniques you may need, and the whole gamut of the Ontario Settlement Services help program.

A related effort is the Ontario **Immigrant Nominee Program** (OINP)

at <https://settlement.org/ontario/immigration-citizenship/immigrating-to-ontario/immigration-categories/what-is-opportunities-ontario-provincial-nominee-program-pnp/>

This is for people with job offers in Ontario, to “nominate” them to immigration.

Quebec has a similar program, “Choosing to Immigrate to Québec”. It is oriented toward people who have conversational french and want to live in Quebec.

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/permanent/choose-quebec>

There are also programs for french-speakers who wish to work *elsewhere* in Canada, part of the federal “express immigration” program. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/rural-franco-pilots/franco-immigration.html>

The rest of the province and territories' guides are

Province/Territory	Guide Title	URL
Alberta	Welcome to Alberta	https://www.alberta.ca/welcome-to-alberta.aspx
British Columbia	WelcomeBC Guide	https://www.welcomebc.ca/
Manitoba	Welcome to Manitoba	https://immigratemanitoba.com/
New Brunswick	Newcomer's Guide to New Brunswick	https://www.welcomenb.ca/content/wel-bien/en.html
Newfoundland and Labrador	Welcome to Newfoundland and Labrador	https://www.immigration.gov.nl.ca/welcome/
Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia Immigration Guide	https://novascotia.ca/immigration/welcome/
Ontario	Ontario's Guide for	https://www.ontario.ca/page/welcome-ontario

Province/Territory	Guide Title	URL
	Newcomers	
Prince Edward Island	Welcome to Prince Edward Island	https://www.welcomepei.com/
Quebec	Quebec's Guide for Newcomers	https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration
Saskatchewan	Welcome to Saskatchewan	https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/moving-to-saskatchewan
Northwest Territories	Welcome to the Northwest Territories	https://www.immigratenwt.ca/
Nunavut	Nunavut Immigration Guide	https://www.gov.nu.ca/family-services/information-immigrants
Yukon	Yukon Community Guide	https://yukon.ca/en/immigration

These are all quite general: their advice is good for almost every form of immigration.

Individuals also do “please move here” videos: I recommend Todd Maffin’s “I Am the Very Model of a Modern-Day Canadian”, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k7OUowPPMQ>

1.2 What Programs to Apply For

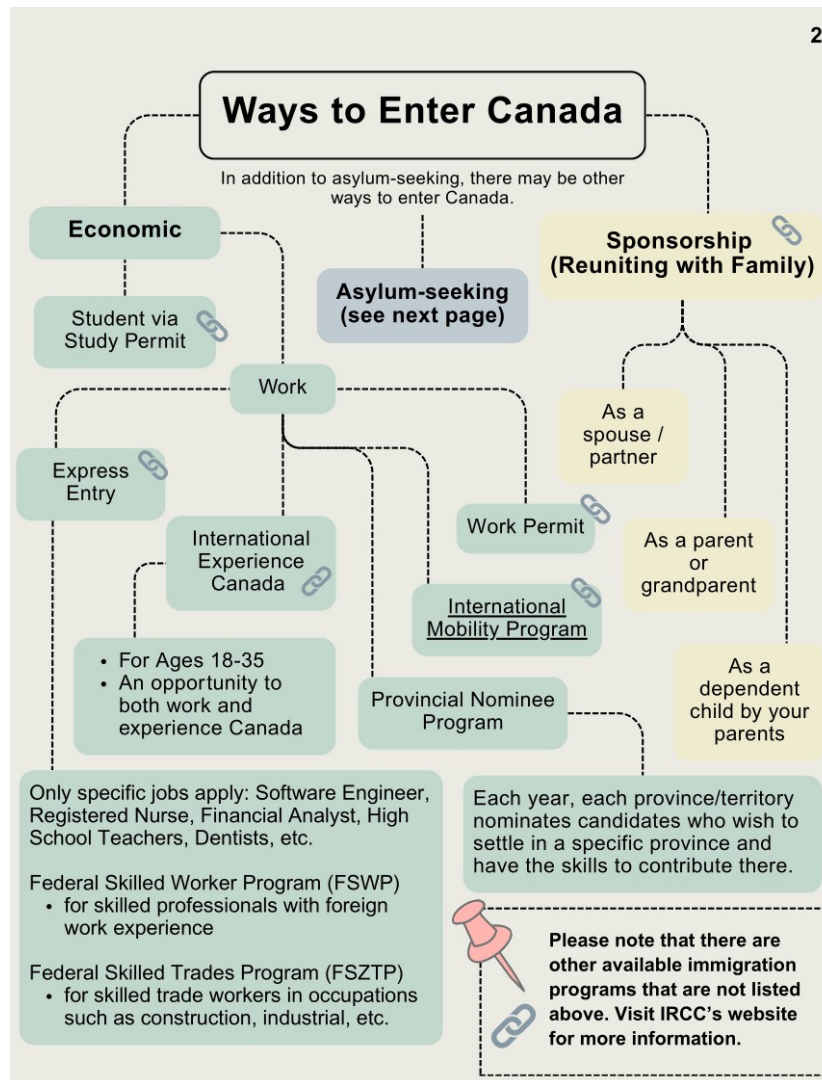
There are a ton of programs, and it can be unclear which ones meet your needs. Therefore, folks have provided guides.

- moving2canada.com
https://moving2canada.com/immigration/canada-immigration-quiz/?utm_source=news.moving2canada.com&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=resources-for-newcomers-march-1-2026

An interactive guide in the form of a quiz, to see what immigration program or strategy to use

- University of Toronto *Safe Haven Toolkit*
<https://haven.utoronto.ca/index.php/a-guide-for-lgbtqi-asylum-seekers-crossing-the-canada-u-s-border/>

The Asylum lab at the UofT has written a lovely quick-reference toolkit to immigration, with flowcharts and maps. It is aimed primarily at the community of gender and sexually diverse people, and at asylum seekers. I used some of it to guide the structure of this resource guide. For example, page 2 says



- Project Haven also has a map of services, shelters, pride centers and IRCC offices at <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1Ycmm2RnXbPcceYpjzie8sCQDumshNyA&ll=52.54292139355158%2C-87.64755717922108&z=4Map>

1.3 Resources Especially for Gender and Sexually Diverse People, and for Women

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (really!)

<https://www.prearrivalcanada.ca/e-library/>

The government would like everyone who comes here to know what they're doing. In part that's to save themselves effort, and in part because Canadians work hard at being nice. They offer some on-line e-learning and a web/youtube e-library, and more importantly, they offer personalized planning sessions, immigrant workshops and live webinars *in the real world*.

The 519

<https://www.the519.org/>

The 519 is a broad-based support network for the whole community of gender and sexually diverse people, and is supported in part by the City of Toronto. The name refers to its address, 519 Church Street in Toronto.

It has a rich collection of services, at least twenty-odd, specifically including:

- New to Canada – Support for LGBTQ+ Refugees and Newcomers, <https://www.the519.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Resource-Guide.pdf>
- Newcomer Information Session <https://www.the519.org/programs/nis/>
- Mock Hearing Program For LGBTQ+ Refugee Claimants, to prepare you for an immigration hearing <https://www.the519.org/programs/mock-hearing-program/>
- Legal Initiatives
 - *The 519 Pro Bono Legal Advice Clinic*, LegalClinic@The519.org, <https://www.the519.org/programs/legal-clinic/>
 - Gender Affirming Care Legal Support Clinic <https://www.the519.org/programs/gender-affirming-care-legal-support-clinic/>
 - Notary Clinic for 2SLGBTQ+ Communities <https://www.the519.org/programs/legalclinic-notary/>
- Trans-Specific
 - Racialized Trans Collective – bi-weekly meetup group for all racialized Trans identities to hang out and build community.
 - Trans People of Colour Project (TPOC) drop-in at <https://www.the519.org/programs/trans-bipoc/>
 - Trans ID Clinic <https://www.the519.org/programs/trans-id-clinic/>
- Financial services <https://www.the519.org/programs/project-unlock/>
- Health Services
- Housing Services
- Trans Youth Mentorship Program (TYMP)
- a large collection of YouTube videos are there as well,

and links to other organizations, like

- Volunteer Toronto <https://www.volunteertoronto.ca>

- The Amnesty International LGBTI+ Caucus <https://amnesty.ca/what-we-do/lgbti-rights/>

In particular, *The 519 Pro Bono Legal Advice Clinic* reports (paraphrased) that it can provide support to 2SLGBTQ+ Community Members through a one-time consultation with a lawyer, over telephone or video. Advice given is free of charge for advice and referral purposes only.

Compass Refugee Center

<https://compassrefugee.ca/>

<https://compassrefugee.ca/programs/assist/refugee-claim-process-support/>

A charitable organization, based in Kitchener, Ontario, helping immigrants navigate the refugee process in particular.

Rainbow Railroad

<https://www.rainbowrailroad.org/the-latest/a-future-in-the-balance>

Rainbow Railroad helps LGBTQ individuals to move to other countries to escape persecution and violence, in countries where their sexual orientation or gender identity puts them at risk. They are now receiving about two-thirds of their requests from US transgender individuals.

Metropolitan Community Church

<http://www.mccchurch.org/>

A supportive church for 2SLGBTQI+ people.

Capital Rainbow Refuge, in Ottawa

<https://capitalrainbow.ca/qrhp>

This volunteer group aims at “Helping LGBTQI+ Refugees Arrive and Thrive”. Notably, it provides a toolkit for preparing for refugee hearings, both as a downloadable document, and in the form of a do-it-yourself online toolkit for collecting the required information. (IMHO, this is a *huge* help)

Friends of Ruby, in Toronto

<http://www.friendsofruby.ca/>

This group concentrates on shelter for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, from 16 to 29, with a drop-in center and a 100-bed shelter of their own.

1.4 Canadian Government Services

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/come-canada-tool.html>

This Is by *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship*. We'll be back to this site many *many* times. An example is the tool above, a guided process to generate a visa application

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=By8F5jD_zM

As we mentioned above, they also provide Prearrival Canada, a guide for people to prepare to come here.

<https://www.youtube.com/citimmcanada>

They also have loads of YouTube videos in 9 categories of about 30 videos each.

The “please move here” guides we mentioned above from the federal and provincial governments are also valuable.

1.5 Refugee Sponsorship

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/sponsor-refugee/private-sponsorship-program/refugees-information.html>

Canada has a program for groups to “sponsor” existing refugees who are trapped in another country. Notably the US. The groups provide financial support for up to a year, or until they can get employment. Refugee claimants can apply for a work permit, while accepted refugees can immediately work in Canada. It’s called the “Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program”. It’s not related to *family* sponsorships of relatives.

Groups organizing sponsorships include:

United Church of Canada Refugee Program

<https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/sponsor-refugee>

Canada is one of only a few countries in the world with an LGBTIQ2+ Refugee program, and the United Church is one of only three national faith groups that can sponsor LGBTIQ2+ refugees.

Anglican Church Refugee Sponsorship

<https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/diocesan-life/social-justice-advocacy/welcoming-refugees/?lang=en>

Mennonite Central Committee

<https://mcc.org/what-we-do/initiatives/migration-refugees/refugee-sponsorship-canada>

Since 1979, MCC has helped existing refugees who have no prospect of returning home to start a new life in Canada through their sponsorship program.

Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS)

<https://jiastoronto.org/>

JIAS Toronto is the only Jewish Sponsorship Agreement Holder, allowing JIAS to sponsor existing refugees.

Rainbow Refugee

<https://www.rainbowrefugee.com/>

Supports LGBTQ refugees and refugee claimants in British Columbia who are seeking protection in Canada, including individual support in navigating the Canadian system.

End of the Rainbow Foundation

<http://endoftherainbow.ca/>

The End of the Rainbow Foundation in Calgary, Alberta creates refugee sponsorship circles (groups of five), and hosts support groups.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency

<https://help.unhcr.org/canada/how-to-apply-for-asylum-new/where-to-claim-asylum/>

1.6 Resources for Health-industry People in Particular

<https://engageq.notion.site/infusionhosts>

Because Canada has a shortage of doctors and nurses, a series of volunteer efforts have spring into being. There may well be other industry-specific groups, but the one I know about is Canada's Healthcare Infusions.

This started in Nanimo, British Columbia, and has 19 chapters across the country. It's been notably successful at the other end of the country, in Nova Scotia. There are approximately 6,000 positions open in the province, and they're doing their best to help Americans get a job and move here. *Nova Scotia Health* hired 50 Americans in the last year alone.

I know about it because it was written up by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in an article called "A no-brainer: Why some U.S. health-care workers are moving to Nova Scotia", at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/american-healthcare-workers-moving-nova-scotia-9.7025866>

They describe a five-step process in detail, starting at <https://novascotiahealthcareinfusion.notion.site/Nova-Scotia-Healthcare-Infusion-297e74c53bba81a4b908cd47106894a6>

1. Get Free Advice & Check out our Communities,
2. Get a Job

3. Start the Immigration Process
4. Move to Nova Scotia (or 18 other places)
5. You did it! You're here! Now What?

They have a discord server for several kinds of discussions, at <https://engageq.notion.site/Join-the-correct-Discord-2f43dc1abb94801ebe5ff41529f494e1?pvs=25>

It's working: "Hundreds of American nurses choose Canada over the U.S. under Trump", NPR, Feb 2026, <https://www.npr.org/2026/02/25/nx-s1-5725354/nurses-emigrate-us-canada-trump> Both British Columbia and Ontario have streamlined their process of licensing US-trained nurses.

For doctors in particular

Licensing of doctors can be tricky: there are programs to help internationally-trained ones, described in How To Work in Canada as a Doctor: A Guide for Internationally Trained Physicians, <https://moving2canada.com/features/how-to-work-in-canada-as-a-doctor/>

1.7 Resources for Everyone

There are several groups who help with all sorts of immigration questions, not having to do with 2SLGBTQI+ people specifically

COSTI Immigrant Services

<https://www.costi.org/>

<https://learn.costi.ca/moodle/>

Supported by Employment Ontario, it provides numerous online services, concentrating on career and employment counselling for workers,

Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta (CPLA)

- <https://www.lawcentralalberta.ca/en/refugee-hearing-preparation-guide>

Legal support for the general public, and preparation for refugee hearings, many videos on a wide range of subjects at

CICS, Centre for Immigrant and Community Services

<https://www.cicscanada.com/en/>

Volunteer charitable group in Toronto. Includes "Employment Programs for Newcomers and Internationally Trained Individuals"

CISO, Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization

<https://ociso.org/>

Charitable group in Ottawa, providing the gamut of services

Canada-U. S. Border Rights Clinic.

- This group provides resources and free consultations for legal advice, online or by phone
<https://canadaborderclinic.org/>

My Refugee Claim

<https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/orientation-booklet>,

The booklet is substantial, with 26 pages of help.

They also provide “ready tours”: free, virtual workshops at <https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/ready-tours/>

Reddit Discussion Groups

Start by looking at their FAQs and pinned posts: they’re a collections of often-noisy opinions.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/Canadiancitizenship/>

<https://www.reddit.com/r/ImmigrationCanada/>

Todd Maffin

YouTube videos about

- 11 Things Americans Must Know Before Moving to Canada! 2025,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnux5kWrVps>
- Moving to Canada: A Guide for Americans, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egRvtVTbPnY>

He is one of the founders of “Canada’s Healthcare Infusion”

1.8 Books about Moving to Canada

There are a lot of books on moving here. At least two novels, one for children, one a romance.

- SADE: We're Moving to Canada! by Yewande Daniel-Ayoade
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/49263990-sade>
- He's President And I'm Moving To Canada by Stephen Cadigan,
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/34328348-he-s-president-and-i-m-moving-to-canada>

And a *plethora* of specific technical books about parts of the process, including one about tax planning.

- AMERICANS MOVING TO CANADA ... - Tips To Maximize Your Assets, by Tariq Nadeem
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5944894-americans-moving-to-canada---how-to-move-what-you-need-to-know-for-str>

Goodreads, <https://www.goodreads.com/> is a good place to start. When I last looked, there were about

120 or so books on the subject. It's popular!

If anyone has recommendations, please post them at <https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues> and I'll list them here.

1.9 The Hard Part

Because the US hasn't recently been an enemy country, we have weak support for American citizens moving to Canada. As I describe in Chapter 5, the normal process is centered around ordinary skilled applicants from the US looking for Canadian jobs. Immigration is used to and understands programs like Canada-US-Mexico-Free Trade Agreement (CUSMA), the successor to NAFTA.

In *Toronto Life's*, "Dear Americans: Moving to Canada is Hard", <https://torontolife.com/life/dear-americans-moving-canada-hard>, Steve Kupferman tells about his struggles in moving here as a grad student and applying for permanent residence. As he says, "Canada's immigration system is, for the most part, designed to deal with four different types of people: students, wealthy-ish business people, skilled workers and refugees".

That's a fair description: he came here as a grad student and had to work his way through a process aimed at "average" business applicants, and currently under both load-stress and political attacks by the far right. And he had an immigration consultant that was suspiciously cash-only.

All the programs from our governments are like that. Some people fit well, or are just lucky: they breeze through. Others put a foot wrong and get stuck in the mud.

1.10 Commercial Resources

There are some commercial immigration sites of interest, part of a plethora of service providers and consultants.

Batista Migration Law Group

<https://www.migrationlawgroup.com/post/applying-for-a-canadian-visitor-visa-considerations-and-tips-for-avoiding-refusals>

Applying for a Canadian Visitor Visa? Considerations and Tips for Avoiding Refusals, a good resource on applying for a Canadian Visitor Visa, with dos and don'ts.

See 1.9, Law Firms. <https://www.migrationlawgroup.com/>

ICC Immigration

<https://iccimmigration.ca/new-express-entry-category-for-physicians-with-canadian-work-experience-pr-pathway-explained-2026-update/>

For-money consultancy, with a good article on an express entry program for doctors

Immigration.ca

<https://immigration.ca/>

A lawyer-sponsored advice site, sponsored by the Colin R. Singer law office.

moving2canada.com

<https://moving2canada.com/>

This is a free consultancy, funded by contributions and commissions from the services it recommends (eg, The Bank of Nova Scotia). One of the services is its own sister company, Outpost Recruitment.

It has a number of step-by-step guides, which will be mentioned throughout the book.

- A quiz on what immigration program or strategy to go for
https://moving2canada.com/immigration/canada-immigration-quiz/?utm_source=news.moving2canada.com&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=resources-for-newcomers-march-1-2026
- A list of which programs are open
https://moving2canada.com/immigration/pnp/pnp-canada-live-tracker/?utm_source=news.moving2canada.com&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=resources-for-newcomers-march-1-2026
- They provide a large collection of short videos at
<https://www.youtube.com/c/Moving2Canadainfo>

Visa HQ

<https://www.visahq.com/canada/>

A for-money consultancy with some initial steps and guides available free, funded by affiliate marketing and charging for visa application processing.

1.11 Immigration Law Firms

For non-contentious immigration cases, there is a large community of immigration consultants. Their college has a list at <https://college-ic.ca/>

For the kind of cases we're looking at, there are a number of law firms specializing in immigration. They're there to help you from getting stuck in an overloaded and/or bureaucratic process.

Four firms which have specifically 2SLGBTQI+ experience, with their contact information, are:

Law Firm/Clinic	Focus Areas	Contact Information
Battista Migration Law Group	Immigration law, specifically for LGBTQ+ individuals, including family sponsorship and asylum claims. A contributor to changing Canadian immigration law to include same-sex families	160 Bloor St E Suite 1000, Toronto, ON. Phone: (416) 203-2899, URL: https://www.migrationlawgroup.com/
Smith Immigration Law	The counsel in Jenkel vs Canada. Immigration law with a focus on LGBTQ+ immigration issues, including refugee claims and sponsorship applications. Frequent media expert on immigration issues	253 Danforth Ave, Suite 200, Toronto, ON. (647) 365-1801, https://www.smithimmigrationgroup.com/
Ivan Steele Law Office	Gay and Lesbian Family and Immigration Law- Specializes in LGBTQ+ immigration and family law. Personal experience as a gay immigrant	473 Sackville St., Toronto, ON M4X 1T5 ivansteele@ivansteelelaw.com 647-342-0568
Marku & Lee	LGBTQIA+ Immigration Advocacy- Trauma-informed care. Specialized in refugee claims and appeals	Damey Lee & Hana Marku, damey@markulee.com hana@markulee.com

The Canadian Bar Association, Ontario Immigration law section and Ontario Immigration Lawyers Association have membership lists at, respectively,

- <https://cba.org/ontario>
- <https://cila.co/directory/>

A colleague speaks well of Battista, and Smith was the lawyer in *Jenkel v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2025 FC 1178 (CanLII), which was a rare case of Canada giving refuge to a US resident.

Organizations like the519 will provide referrals to firms they have found helpful.

If anyone has specific experiences, post them at <https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues> and I'll add them here.

1.12 Planning Ahead

There are some slow thing that you can start early, all discussed in Chapter 10, *After You Get Here*:

- A place to live, described in Section 10.1
- A bank account, Section 10.2
- Travel medical insurance until you qualify for medicare, Section 10.3
- A school for your kids, Section 10.6

If you can, start these and anything else you think of before you move here, it will save you time and angst during the move.

This is a live document. These links will change. Always refer to the government pages for current rules. And please file an issue at <https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues> so I'll know what needs updating.

In Short

There are a *surprisingly* large number of sources of help, most of them free. That's very different from when I first looked at this.

I started collecting with *the519* in Toronto: I'd talk with them first, and talk to immigration lawyers second. Then everyone else.