

# Not a Canadian citizen?

## Why you should think about applying now

The law is changing. It will be harder to get and keep Canadian citizenship. The government is expected to make certain changes by June 2015.

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### Why should I apply for Canadian citizenship?

Canadian citizens have rights that permanent residents do not have.

- Canadian citizens have better protection against losing their status and being forced to leave Canada. Permanent residents can be deported no matter how long they have lived here.
- If you have children born outside Canada after you become a citizen, they will be Canadian citizens at birth.
- Canadian citizens can vote.
- A Canadian citizen can apply for a Canadian passport.

If you are a permanent resident and you have lived in Canada for at least 3 years, you should get legal advice about whether to apply for citizenship now.

### Will the changes affect everyone who applies?

Yes. But the changes will affect you even more if you are:

- 55 to 64 years old
- 14 to 17 years old

# What are some of the important changes?

After the rules change	Before the rules change
<p>If you are 14 to 64 years old, you will have to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• show <b>language ability</b> in English or French, and</li> <li>• prove your <b>knowledge of Canada</b> in English or French</li> </ul>	<p>Only if you are 18 to 54 years old do you have to <b>show language ability and knowledge of Canada</b>.</p> <p>And you may be able to have <b>an interpreter</b> in your own language to help you prove your knowledge of Canada.</p>
<p>You can apply only after you have <b>lived in Canada as a permanent resident</b> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at least 4 out of the last 6 years, and</li> <li>• at least 183 days each year for at least 4 out of the last 6 years</li> </ul>	<p>You can apply after you have lived in Canada for 3 out of the last 4 years.</p> <p>And you may be able to <b>include time that you lived here before becoming a permanent resident</b>.</p>
<p>Only time when you are <b>in Canada</b> will count as living in Canada.</p>	<p>Time when you are <b>outside Canada</b> may still count if your permanent home is here.</p>
<p>You need to file your <b>income tax returns</b> for 4 out of the last 6 years.</p>	<p>You <b>do not have to show</b> that you have filed income tax returns.</p>

After the rules change	Before the rules change
<p>You must plan to <b>continue living in Canada</b>. If you leave Canada and live somewhere else, the government may be able to take away your Canadian citizenship.</p>	<p>You <b>do not have to plan to live in Canada</b>. If you become a Canadian citizen before the rules change, you cannot lose your citizenship only because you live somewhere else in the future.</p>

## How do I decide if I should apply now?

To help you decide, you should [get legal advice](#) about:

- the rules to qualify for Canadian citizenship
- documents that you will need
- when to apply and any risks you might face if you apply

### If you are a refugee

If you were given refugee protection in Canada, applying for citizenship might put your right to stay here at risk if you have:

- travelled to your country of nationality
- applied for or renewed a passport issued by that country

## What if my English or French is not good enough or I can't show knowledge of Canada?

You might be excused from these requirements. But you need evidence that you are unable to meet them. For example, a doctor's letter might say that you have a medical condition that prevents you from learning enough to meet the requirements. Get legal advice about your situation and the evidence you will need.

# Getting legal help

It can be important to get legal advice before you apply for citizenship. Community legal clinics give free legal advice to people with low incomes.

Go to [www.yourlegalrights.on.ca/find-services](http://www.yourlegalrights.on.ca/find-services) to find a legal clinic. You can also go to the Legal Aid Ontario website at [www.legalaid.on.ca/en/contact](http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/contact) or call them at:

- Toll-free ..... **1-800-668-8258**
- Toronto area..... **416-979-1446**
- Toll-free TTY ..... **1-866-641-8867**
- Toronto area TTY ..... **416-598-8867**

This is general information only. It is not a substitute for legal advice in a particular situation.

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Visit [www.cleo.on.ca](http://www.cleo.on.ca) to find free resources on legal topics.