

2.5 - Preparing your Canadian resume and cover letter

It is worth spending some time becoming familiar with how job applications work in Canada before you arrive. Having a basic resume and cover letter prepared means you'll be able to hit the ground running once you're actually there. The following advice has been gained from personal experience (applying for work as well as receiving/reviewing resumes as part of job roles in Canada) and an interview with a WorkBC Employment Counsellor.

In North America, a Curriculum Vitae (CV) is usually only used for academic positions. Have no fear; the Canadian resume isn't too much different to what you are used to. I have listed some resources at the end of this section which will help to illustrate what Canadian resumes and cover letters typically look like.

A cover letter is expected for all but the most casual jobs. It introduces you to the employer, explains which position you are applying for and why you are applying. The most important part of the cover letter identifies how you are qualified for the role (match your experience and skills to the requirements in the job specification) and why you are the best candidate.

Keep it concise

Canadian resumes are generally shorter and less detailed than British CVs. Two pages is usually the maximum length of a resume. Employers generally only spend a few minutes looking at a resume, so one clean, concise and well-organised page is ideal.

Skills are paramount

Canadian resumes tend to be focused on what you have to offer the employer in terms of hands-on skills and qualifications. It is common to find 'Highlight of skills and qualifications,' 'Key Skills,' 'Summary of skills' near the top of the page. Work history and education are also important, but are usually listed later. Your listed skills should relate to the requirements of the job role as described in the job advert.

Tailor your resume and cover letter to every job

Yes, it is a lot of work but it is expected. Your resume and cover letter must match or exceed the required skills and qualifications for each job position you apply for. If you are applying for a lot of jobs within the same area of work (e.g. office/admin assistant), consider creating two or three different resume styles to cover the average requirements, then tweak as needed.

Keep it relevant

If you've had a lot of jobs, don't assume you need to include every position you've ever held in the work history section if it not relevant. Dependent on where you are looking for work (major world city used to immigrants or small rural town?) and what kind of job role you are looking for (professional or minimum wage job at a ski resort?), with most of your work experience being non-Canadian it may be hard for an employer to relate to.

Consider adding an objective statement or career summary (headline)

These are exceptionally common on Canadian resumes. Directly underneath basic contact details at the top of the resume (before a skills section), many applicants add a short sentence outlining their career or short term work aims. I don't personally use a statement or summary, but here are

3.1 - Receiving your IEC work permit

At the border or arrival airport you will need:

- Passport
- Valid Port of Entry Letter of Introduction
- Proof of funds
- Proof of health/travel insurance

If you completed a medical exam to be able to work with children or in the health services, I would be inclined to bring your proof of it with you.

[The CIC also recommends](#) to have 'copies of all the documents you provided for your International Experience Canada application (both the Conditional Acceptance Letter and work permit applications) available.' One option would be to have the PDF/Word documents downloaded on your phone.

Proof of funds

A bank statement from your bank is the best way to satisfy the financial requirements for the IEC work permit. Online statements are acceptable; at least it was in my case when I activated my second IEC at the end of 2012. A signed letter from your banking institution on official letterhead stating your account balance is another option. The statement or letter should be issued no more than a week before the date of your arrival in Canada.

If you fly to Canada on a one-way flight, remember that you will need to prove you have the financial resources to buy a departure ticket. I'd estimate this at \$1000 to be safe.

Proof of health/travel insurance

The insurance policy you present must cover medical care, hospitalization and repatriation to your country and be valid for the entirety of your planned stay. If you only have six months travel insurance, you may only receive a six months long work permit. No insurance at all and it is possible entry to Canada may be completely refused. It is not worth taking this chance. You must have travel insurance, even if you plan to apply for provincial healthcare as soon as possible or already have it and are activating your second IEC. I was asked for proof of funds and health insurance for my second IEC activation.

Receiving your work permit by air

After embarking from the aircraft, head to immigration as normal. Before I got to the queue for the immigration booths at Vancouver, I saw an airport official calling out for anyone with work visas of any kind. She directed me and some others to area by the side of the main immigration desks, where we joined a queue for those with working holiday visas and temporary work permits. If this doesn't happen for you, don't worry. Explain to a border official at the main desks and they will direct you if they cannot process your IEC there and then.

The Canada Border Services officer looked at my printed Letter of Introduction and my passport. That was all. I wasn't asked for proof of funds or travel insurance, but I did have printed proof ready (bank statement and insurance confirmation). The whole process took around five minutes total.

4.2 - Finding somewhere to live

For some people arriving in Canada, finding somewhere to live is the priority over a job. I think it really depends on your circumstances, whether you are travelling in a couple or a group for example, and how much money you have. Moving into your own place can eat up a lot of funds very quickly.

General advice

Renting a condominium ('condo') is a very popular option in cities. A condo is effectively an apartment or flat. A suite usually refers to a self-contained flat within a house. They are often rented from a private landlord living either up or downstairs.

Canadian properties are typically bigger than those in Europe. Outside big cities, you may experience landlords reluctant to rent a one-bedroomed condo or suite to a couple, believing it is 'too small' for two people.

If you're concerned about buying furniture, consider renting a room in a shared house. Furnished properties are available but they are few and far between.

Leases usually begin on the 1st or 15th of the month

Some rentals will be advertised as 'utilities included.' I prefer renting with utilities included, as at least in my experience it tends to be a pretty good deal. Hydro (electricity and often, heat) and water. Depending on the rental, Cable TV and internet may be included as well, but less often.

Location

If you want to live in one of Canada's largest cities, don't restrict yourself to just looking for rentals in downtown. Besides being expensive and exceptionally competitive to find a place here, there may be other areas of the city that suit your lifestyle and interests better. Examples for Vancouver would be Commercial Drive area, East Vancouver (no, not the notorious Downtown East Side, *further* east), South Granville and Mount Pleasant.

[Navut](#) is a useful website to check out neighbourhoods in the biggest cities.

Scams

In Vancouver specifically, competition for both shared and private accommodation can be fierce. There are unfortunately people out there taking advantage of this by scamming would-be tenants. The seemingly most popular scam involves the landlord being abroad and requiring a deposit on the rental by wire transfer. In the second type of scam, the fake landlord has access to a property to show would-be tenants, but the house is already sold or rented out. If you are suspicious of a landlord, ask for credentials. If it sounds too good to be true, it may well be fake.

Move-in deposits

The laws concerning security deposits and move-in fees vary widely between provinces. In British Columbia for example, landlords can only ask for a security deposit that is equal to a maximum of two week's rent. Over in Ontario, security deposits are treated as the '[last month's rent](#)' rather than something a landlord can keep if the property is damaged or needs cleaning when the tenant