

Winter in Canada

Cold-weather safety, clothing, home, travel and wellbeing

For newcomers, international students and families preparing for their first Canadian winter



PRACTICAL. CLEAR. SOURCE-BASED.

Revised August 2026

www.theworldbridge.ca





How to use this guide

Use the actions in the order that fits your status, province and circumstances. Write in the planning pages and return to the source page before a high-consequence decision.

01**Start with legal and safety steps**

Confirm documents, conditions, deadlines and immediate needs before optional purchases.

02**Use official sources**

The linked authorities are the primary reference. Rules and eligibility can change.

03**Keep evidence**

Save confirmations, receipts, records and written advice in a secure system.

04**Ask early**

Use free newcomer supports and seek individualized advice for high-consequence decisions.

**IMPORTANT**

This guide provides general information and practical orientation. It is not a substitute for individualized immigration, legal, tenancy, employment, financial, tax or medical advice. Eligibility, procedures and provincial or territorial rules can change. Verify current requirements with the linked authority before acting.

Read the weather before you act

A clear forecast does not mean every sidewalk or road is safe. Conditions can vary within the same community.

1

Know what can happen

- Winter conditions differ widely across Canada and can change quickly
- Extreme cold, blizzards, freezing rain, ice storms and strong wind can disrupt daily life
- Temperature alone does not show the full risk - also check wind chill and alerts
- Coastal, prairie, northern and mountain communities can face very different hazards

2

Build a daily weather routine

- Save your location in Environment Canada's official weather service
- Check the hourly forecast before work, school, appointments or outdoor activity
- Read the alert details, timing and expected impacts - not only the alert title
- Check official transit, school, road and municipal updates before leaving

3

Change plans when needed

- Allow extra travel time and use a backup route
- Delay or cancel non-essential travel when hazardous conditions are expected
- Charge your phone and tell someone your route for longer trips
- Carry warm clothing even when travelling in a heated vehicle

Dress for warmth, wind and moisture

1

Use three practical layers

- Base layer: clothing that moves moisture away from your skin
- Middle layer: fleece, wool or another insulating material
- Outer layer: a wind-resistant and water-resistant coat or shell
- Add or remove layers before you become sweaty or chilled

2

Protect hands, feet, face and head

- Wear a warm hat that covers the ears and a scarf or neck warmer
- Use insulated gloves or mittens and carry a dry spare pair
- Choose insulated, water-resistant boots with good traction
- Wear warm socks without making footwear so tight that circulation is reduced

3

Buy for function and fit

- Check warmth, waterproofing, traction and room for layers - not only appearance
- Try boots with the socks you expect to wear
- Use thrift stores, clothing exchanges and newcomer programs to reduce cost
- Label children's items and keep spare socks and mittens at school or child care

Recognize cold injuries early

Cold injury can develop before a person fully recognizes what is happening. Treat numbness, confusion and unusual drowsiness seriously.

1

Watch for frostbite

- Numbness, tingling or loss of feeling can be early warning signs
- Skin may appear pale, waxy, white or unusually firm
- Move to shelter, remove wet clothing and warm the area gently
- Do not rub or massage suspected frostbite; seek medical advice promptly

2

Watch for hypothermia

- Shivering, confusion, slurred speech, drowsiness and poor coordination are danger signs
- Move the person to shelter and replace wet clothing with dry layers
- Warm the centre of the body gradually while arranging help
- Call 911 for severe symptoms, unconsciousness or an immediate medical emergency

3

Reduce the risk

- Limit outdoor time during extreme cold and warm up indoors regularly
- Keep children, older adults and people with health conditions under closer watch
- Use a buddy system for long outdoor periods or unfamiliar routes
- Ask a health professional about personal risks, medications or circulation concerns

Keep your home warm and safe

1

Understand the heating system

- Learn how the thermostat and heating equipment work before the first cold night
- Ask whether heat is included in rent and how utility billing is calculated
- Report loss of heat or unsafe conditions promptly and keep written records
- Tenancy standards and snow-removal duties vary by province, municipality and lease

2

Prevent carbon monoxide exposure

- Use certified carbon monoxide alarms near sleeping areas and test them regularly
- Have fuel-burning appliances installed and maintained by qualified professionals
- Never use a barbecue, camping stove or fuel-burning generator indoors or in a garage
- If an alarm sounds or poisoning is suspected, move outside and call 911

3

Prepare the property

- Keep heating vents, exits and outdoor exhaust openings clear
- Know where the main water shutoff is and report frozen-pipe concerns quickly
- Use space heaters only as directed and keep them away from combustible materials
- Confirm who clears steps and walkways; use salt, sand or another suitable product

Walk and use transit safely

1

Reduce slips and falls

- Wear footwear with traction and consider removable ice grippers when appropriate
- Take shorter steps, slow down and keep your hands available for balance
- Use cleared routes and handrails; do not assume shiny pavement is only wet
- Carry fewer items and use a backpack when practical

2

Prepare for transit delays

- Dress for the outdoor wait, not only the heated bus or train
- Check service alerts before leaving and know a backup route
- Stand in visible designated areas and stay back from road spray and moving vehicles
- Carry a charged phone, emergency fare and the destination address

3

Plan for darkness and storms

- Winter days can be shorter; use reflective or visible clothing after dark
- Allow extra time for sidewalks, transfers and slower traffic
- Confirm school-bus, campus and workplace cancellation channels
- Tell the appropriate contact early when weather may make you late or absent

Drive for winter conditions

Winter-tire requirements are not identical across Canada. Confirm the current rule for the province and roads where you will drive.

1

Prepare the vehicle

- Check provincial or territorial tire rules and use suitable winter tires
- Clear snow and ice from all windows, lights, mirrors and the roof
- Maintain the battery, brakes, wipers and winter windshield-washer fluid
- Check official forecasts and road conditions before a longer trip

2

Change how you drive

- Slow down and leave more space for braking and turning
- Use gentle steering, braking and acceleration on slippery roads
- Avoid unnecessary travel during a warning or when visibility is poor
- Choose a safe place to stop if conditions become worse than expected

3

Keep a winter car kit

- Food, water, blanket, extra clothing and first-aid supplies
- Flashlight, phone charger, warning light and basic tools
- Ice scraper, snow brush, small shovel and traction material
- Emergency contacts, roadside-assistance details and medication needed during travel

Prepare for storms and power outages

1

Build a household emergency kit

- Water, non-perishable food and a manual can opener
- Flashlight, radio, batteries and charged power banks
- Essential medication, first-aid supplies and hygiene items
- Warm clothing, blankets, copies of key records and some cash

2

Make a simple household plan

- Choose an emergency contact and two meeting places
- Know how family members will communicate if mobile service is limited
- Plan for infants, disability needs, medical equipment and pets
- Keep the kit portable, accessible and known to everyone in the home

3

Respond safely to an outage

- Use generators only outdoors and well away from doors, windows and vents
- Avoid opening refrigerators and freezers unnecessarily
- Follow local instructions about warming centres, water and evacuation
- Leave immediately and call 911 if a carbon monoxide alarm sounds

Plan for children, school and work

1

Children and school

- Check the school board or child-care provider for closure and bus-cancellation rules
- Keep a backup supervision plan for snow days and late starts
- Pack dry mittens, socks and labelled winter clothing
- Ask staff what outdoor-weather thresholds and clothing expectations they use

2

Workplace routines

- Learn the employer's weather, lateness, remote-work and absence policies
- Contact the employer as early as possible when travel may be unsafe
- Follow workplace cold-stress procedures and use required protective equipment
- Employment standards and unsafe-work processes are provincial or territorial

3

Check on people who may need help

- Older adults, new parents and people with mobility or health concerns
- Neighbours who may need help obtaining food, medicine or snow removal
- Family members who are unfamiliar with alerts, heating or transit changes
- Use professional or emergency services when the need exceeds what you can safely provide

Protect health and wellbeing

1

Reduce winter illness

- Respiratory illnesses often increase during fall and winter
- Ask local public health or a health professional about recommended vaccines
- Wash hands, improve ventilation where possible and stay home when seriously unwell
- Use your province or territory's health advice line where available

2

Support daily wellbeing

- Keep a regular sleep, meal and activity routine
- Seek daylight and safe physical activity when possible
- Stay hydrated and protect dry skin and lips
- Plan regular contact with friends, family, faith or community networks

3

Get help when needed

- Persistent sadness, anxiety, isolation or sleep changes deserve attention
- Contact a health professional or local mental-health service
- Call or text 988 for suicide crisis support anywhere in Canada
- Call 911 for immediate danger or urgent medical support

Manage winter costs and find support

1

Budget for seasonal costs

- Winter clothing and footwear for each household member
- Heating, electricity and possible utility deposits
- Transit changes, winter tires, maintenance and emergency supplies
- Child-care changes, food delivery or missed-work contingencies

2

Reduce cost without reducing safety

- Compare total value, durability and fit before buying
- Use reputable second-hand stores and community clothing programs
- Ask utility providers about equal-billing or assistance options
- Buy essentials first and add recreational items later

3

Use trusted community help

- Find eligible free newcomer services through IRCC
- Contact 211 where available for local social and community services
- Ask libraries, community centres and settlement agencies about winter programs
- Verify charities, fees and payment requests before sharing personal information

My first-winter action plan

Review this plan with every household member and update it after moving, changing schools or jobs, or purchasing a vehicle.

1

Before the first storm

- Weather alerts saved: _____
- Household kit location: _____
- School/work update channel: _____
- Heating and carbon monoxide alarms checked: _____

2

Clothing and travel

- Missing winter items: _____
- Primary transit/road source: _____
- Backup route or ride: _____
- Vehicle kit completed on: _____

3

Support and emergencies

- Local settlement agency: _____
- Health advice line: _____
- Emergency contact: _____
- Warming centre or safe backup location: _____

Reliable sources and next steps

Open the linked authority and confirm the current rule before acting.

01 **Environment Canada - Be prepared for winter weather**
www.canada.ca

02 **Health Canada - Extreme cold and cold injuries**
www.canada.ca

03 **Environment Canada - Wind chill index**
www.canada.ca

04 **Get Prepared - Winter storms**
www.canada.ca

05 **Transport Canada - Winter driving emergency kit**
tc.canada.ca

06 **Health Canada - Carbon monoxide**
www.canada.ca

07 **Public Health Agency - Mental health support**
www.canada.ca

08 **IRCC - Find free newcomer services**
ircc.canada.ca

GENERAL INFORMATION NOTICE

This guide provides general information and practical orientation. It is not a substitute for individualized immigration, legal, tenancy, employment, financial, tax or medical advice. Eligibility, procedures and provincial or territorial rules can change. Verify current requirements with the linked authority before acting.

Dauda Raji, RCIC R710077 | raji@theworldbridge.ca | www.theworldbridge.ca