



*Newcomers* SERIES

# Immigrate to Canada

## A Practical Guide

**Nick Noorani**

Best-selling author “Arrival Survival Canada”

**and Catherine A. Sas, qc**

**Self-Counsel Press**

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## Dedication

Writing a book like this cannot happen without many people. We would like to acknowledge the tremendous support of our families and teams for their enthusiasm, patience, encouragement, resilience, and, most of all, ceaseless assistance in completing this book.

Special thanks to my wife, Sabrina, for helping edit, format and reformat, and then once again reformatting the book!

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To Pacifico Restaurant for being a welcome haven providing us both with nourishment and Wi-Fi!

To my granddaughter, Laila — the first Noorani born in Canada! The first generation plants the trees for the second generation to enjoy the shade.

— Naeem “Nick” Noorani

To my Great Grandparents and Grandfather Paul who immigrated to Canada from Russia and Poland to give all of my family a better life.

To my husband, Paul, who immigrated to Canada to be with me.

To my sons, Louis and William, who remind me every day of the significance of assisting people through the Canadian immigrant journey.

A big thanks to the Miller Thomson Vancouver immigration team for their editing assistance — Victor Ing, Puneet Mann, Judy Solinap, Fred Li, and Tanya Wilson.

— Catherine Sas



## **Foreword: A Message from Senator Yonah Martin**

Nick Noorani is an award-winning Canadian immigrant, who, by his example, demonstrates the best of Canada and the opportunities that Canada affords to each immigrant.

Thank you, Nick, for writing this book to share the wealth of your immigrant experiences with others preparing to experience Canada themselves.

May all who read this book be blessed with greater insight and knowledge for a successful immigrant life in Canada.

At your service,

The Honourable Yonah Martin  
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate  
[yonahmartin.sencanada.ca](http://yonahmartin.sencanada.ca)



## **A Word from the Authors**

It has been 16 years since I first landed in Canada, and it has been a journey of tremendous challenges and wonderful discoveries. Born in Mumbai, India, I had a terrific career in advertising and marketing, working with some great companies and people. Like most parents, my wife, Sabrina, and I wanted to give our children the best in the world. With my family in tow, I moved to the Middle East (Muscat, Abu Dhabi, and then Dubai) to seek my fortune.

A few years later, it was Sabrina who suggested that we move to Canada. With my brother already here, we knew a little bit about the country, or at least we thought we did. We felt it was the right place for us to build a new life, not only for ourselves, but for our children and our future grandchildren. We no longer wanted to be just “visitors”; we wanted to settle in a place we could call home. We weren’t alone in this sentiment; most newcomers to Canada come with similar dreams and hopes for their future as “Canadians.”

We applied for immigration under the Federal Skilled Worker category and received our letter of acceptance a few months later. Back then, it was easier to get into Canada, even though the wait time was still lengthy. Since coming to Canada, I have been working with immigrants helping them find their success. The first step

was a book my wife and I coauthored called *Arrival Survival Canada*, which is now in its third edition published by Oxford University Press; it's a Canadian bestseller (<http://arrivalsurvival.com/>).

You could consider *Immigrate to Canada* as a prequel to *Arrival Survival Canada*. While that book goes into everything you need to know in your first year after arriving in Canada, this book concentrates on how to get here, and some of the initial steps you need to take before and after you arrive.

Over the years, I have met thousands of immigrants face to face through my “7 Success Secrets for Canadian Immigrants” seminar and on the streets of Canada. In 2012, I did ten seminars in five cities in India speaking to hundreds of brilliant professionals who wanted to come to Canada but didn't know where to start!

Skilled workers who want to migrate to Canada often fall victim to fraudulent immigration consultants, paying huge fees with no results. Even legitimate immigration lawyers and consultants will cost you a lot of money with no guarantee of getting you approved to come to Canada.

I wanted to create a level playing field for prospective immigrants. I wanted to write a book that would be a quick and simple read for immigrants who could use the information to apply themselves, and learn pertinent information on Canada at the same time.

Several reports have shown that immigrants who do not do their research prior to arriving have a harder time settling here!

My “Know Before you Go!” program and “Prepare for Canada” (<http://www.prepareforcanada.com/>) website provide a wealth of information to prospective immigrants. Please do use it!

Catherine Sas is a well-known Canadian immigration lawyer and a friend of mine, so when I asked her about contributing to this book, she responded enthusiastically.

Immigration policies change all the time and it's important to keep on top of new policies and rules, so Catherine and I have included web links for the programs so if there are any changes, you always have the latest information!

Immigrating to Canada means so many things to so many people. All immigrants, be they skilled immigrants, students, or temporary

workers have one thing in common — dreams of a better tomorrow for themselves and their families. Welcome to the beginning of your Canadian dream! I hope this book helps you on your journey to Canada.

— Naeem “Nick” Noorani  
[www.nicknoorani.com](http://www.nicknoorani.com)

As an immigration lawyer, I have been assisting immigrants and their families to settle in Canada for more than 20 years. The immigrant journey is far more than coming to a new country. It is a complicated application process that may take many years; it is the leaving of familiar territory to a strange new one; and it is an emotional journey of resettling and adapting to a new homeland.

While Canada is a welcoming country, the immigration experience can still be a challenge. This book is meant to demystify that ever-changing process by explaining the various avenues for immigration as well as important tips for arriving and settling in Canada.

Naeem “Nick” Noorani has experienced firsthand becoming a Canadian. These pages offer considerable insight to the immigrant experience. The immigrant’s story is Canada’s story: Its past, its present, and its future, and it will be Canada’s future for many years to come. May this book smooth the process of immigration for you. Nick and I will also keep you informed with regular updates and new editions found at [www.canadacountdown.ca](http://www.canadacountdown.ca).

— Catherine Sas, QC

## **What This Book Will Do For You**

With so many different programs, finding the correct category to apply is critical to getting your visa approved! This book will help you with the following:

1. Provide you with the detailed information you need to know to determine if you are eligible and how to successfully apply.
2. Cut through government jargon so Canada’s immigration process is easier to understand.

3. Provide an overview of what immigrating to Canada will actually be like — challenges and all!
4. Save you money by helping you apply and arrive!
5. Help you choose which immigration category to apply to your situation.



## Abbreviations

<b>ADR:</b>	Alternative Dispute Resolution
<b>CBSA:</b>	Canada Border Services Agency
<b>CELP/IP:</b>	Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program
<b>CIC:</b>	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
<b>CLB:</b>	Canadian Language Benchmarks
<b>COPR:</b>	Confirmation of Permanent Residence
<b>CPC:</b>	Case Processing Centre
<b>CRA:</b>	Canada Revenue Agency
<b>DMP:</b>	Designated Medical Practitioner
<b>EI:</b>	Employment Insurance
<b>ELT:</b>	Enhanced Language Training
<b>ESL:</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>FCRO:</b>	Foreign Credential Referral Office

<b>FLE:</b>	Français Langue Étrangère
<b>GST:</b>	Goods and Services Tax
<b>HST:</b>	Harmonized Sales Tax
<b>IELTS:</b>	International English Language Testing System for English
<b>IAD:</b>	Immigration Appeal Division
<b>ID:</b>	Immigration Division
<b>IELTS:</b>	International English Language Testing System
<b>IRB:</b>	Immigration Refugee Board
<b>ICCRC:</b>	Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council
<b>LINC:</b>	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
<b>LMIA:</b>	Labour Market Impact Assessment
<b>NOC:</b>	National Occupation Classification
<b>PNP:</b>	Provincial Nominee Program
<b>PR:</b>	Permanent Resident
<b>PST:</b>	Provincial Sales Tax
<b>RPD:</b>	Refugee Protection Division
<b>RPO:</b>	Refugee Protection Officer
<b>ROPR:</b>	Right of Permanent Residence Fee
<b>SIN:</b>	Social Insurance Number
<b>TEF:</b>	Test d'Évaluation française



# 1

## The Basics of Coming to Canada

*“... what keeps the earth turning are the thousands of immigrants walking to new destinations every day, pushing the planet around and around with their millions of footsteps.”*

— ANONYMOUS

I still remember my first day in Canada like it was yesterday. It was a chilly day in April of 1998. My family and I were moving from Dubai so we didn't have warm jackets, but my brother who had migrated two years earlier had the car heater on so we didn't feel cold. My first view of the North Vancouver mountains made me fall in love with the place I was to live.

It took a lot of research and planning before I finally settled. In this book I want to share the basics of what I learned with you.

For starters, the organization handling all the applications and issues regarding immigration and citizenship is called Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). This federal department determines immigration policy in Canada, works to ensure all applicants (i.e., temporary workers, international students, and permanent residents) get competent and fair decisions, and also strives to

make immigrants first steps toward integration easier. It also offers assistance and protection to refugees and other persons in need.

On the CIC website you can download all the application forms you need to apply for coming either temporarily or permanently to Canada as well as information on how to complete and submit them and payment of the applicable fees.

You can also contact the closest visa office to your city for information on applying for immigration. Visa officers work in Canadian embassies, high commissions, and consulates around the world to process applications for immigration, refugee resettlement, temporary resident visas, study, and temporary work permits. See the CIC website for visa office locations ([www.cic.gc.ca/](http://www.cic.gc.ca/)).

**Tip:** Be sure that you follow the specific instructions for the visa office serving your country.

Completing an application form is one thing; getting it approved is entirely different. The number of applicants far exceeds the number of people approved for immigration. Applying to immigrate can be riddled with an endless stream of complicated forms and confusing requirements. Together with Vancouver, British Columbia-based immigration lawyer Catherine Sas, QC, we have streamlined all the information on the immigration process to Canada.

Note that immigration policies are always changing! It's important to keep on top of new policies and rules, so Catherine and I will keep you informed with regular updates and new editions to this book found at [www.canadacountdown.ca](http://www.canadacountdown.ca).

When you arrive, I'll keep guiding your journey with my best-selling guide to your first year in Canada, *Arrival Survival Canada* ([www.arrivalsurvival.com](http://www.arrivalsurvival.com)). You may also want to read *365 Tips for Newcomers: Your First Year in Canada*, published by Self-Counsel Press.

## 1. The Changing Canadian Immigration Environment

For someone who immigrated five years ago, Canada's immigration landscape has been completely transformed. Catherine has

people coming into her office and asking to do things which no longer exist and fighting with her about why they can't be done the way they want! Our readers need to be prepared for changes to the system.

Here are some of the changes:

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) wants to make assessing applications fast and transparent so it is requiring objective third-party services to evaluate language skills and educational qualifications. Applicants will need to have the results of these evaluations before submitting an application. This will enable applicants to see whether they qualify from the outset of the process.
- CIC is going electronic. More and more applications are being made online. This trend will continue but it may have potential challenges. You have to be sure you understand the entire online application process. Make sure that you have a complete copy of your application and supporting documents before you submit them. Once you hit “send” your application is gone to CIC cyberspace.
- CIC wants to be able to process applications quickly and manage its workload, which could mean the end of wait-lists. Expect to see annual caps on the number of applicants eligible in all program categories.

The Minister has also introduced two new immigration programs and announced a third:

- **The Federal Skilled Trades Program:** In order to address Canada's shortage of tradespeople, this new program allows certain skilled tradespeople to come to Canada under their own unique program
- **The Start-up Visa Program:** This new business program is the first of its kind “in the world,” as described on the CIC website, by granting immediate permanent residence to promising entrepreneurs who are selected by and matched with approved industry partners.
- **Express Entry Program:** This program will commence in early 2015. Express Entry will transform Canada's immigration program from a passive/responsive system, to a new

active recruitment model that will prioritize processing for people with the skills to succeed in Canada.

On May 1, 2014, federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Chris Alexander, introduced the latest changes to the Federal Skilled Worker category. The Minister increased the total number of applications in this category to 25,000 through to April 30, 2015, in 50 different occupational categories with a 1,000 sub-cap for each occupation.

You should also be aware of the following changes:

- Language proficiency is now the single most important factor to qualify under the skilled worker category. A principal applicant can earn up to 24 points for his or her first official language and a further four points for his or her second language for a total of 28 points out of a required 67. Points are now allocated for a spouse's language proficiency rather than education. The message is clear; Canada needs immigrants who can communicate effectively in one of the two official languages — English or French. This overall emphasis on language proficiency can also be seen in the Canadian Experience Class (CEC), Live-in Caregiver, Skilled Trades, and Citizenship programs. Expect this to continue.
- There is a new focus on younger immigrants. The old system gave ten points to anyone between 21 to 49 years of age and continued awarding points until age 53! The revised selection grid will favour younger immigrants by awarding a maximum of 12 points for applicants aged between 18 to 35; one point will be deducted per year after age 35.
- The number of points allocated for past (foreign) work experience will be reduced to 15 from 21. The rationale for this change is that research reveals an ongoing difficulty in transferring work experience from different countries. Concurrent with a reduction of points for foreign work experience is an increase of ten points in the adaptability category for one year of Canadian work experience.
- To achieve speedier processing objective-testing services will be required for both language proficiency as well as educational credential evaluations. Applicants will need to include

a language test as well as an education credential evaluation at the time the application is submitted.

- Permanent Labour Market Opinions (LMO) are now called Permanent Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIA).

## 2. How Immigrants Can Succeed in Canada

I'm often asked by immigrants, social workers, government officials, and members of corporations how immigrants can succeed in Canada. Every year, approximately 250,000 immigrants come to Canada with dreams of a better life. Most of them have educational qualifications exceeding the Canadian populace but are unable to get employment commensurate with their education and work experience. Some arrive here, but they have to start from the bottom, get retrained, and suffer in "survival" jobs at first.

Corporate Canada, with a few notable exceptions, has not been successful at integrating immigrant talent into its workforce. Part of the challenge has been a shift since the 1990s from European-based immigration to an Asian- and South Asian-dominated immigrant base, which has resulted in companies struggling to understand new immigrants' cultural nuances. With the risk-averse nature of Canadian employers, it's easy to see why professional immigrants are often on the outside looking in. However, some immigrants do make it. So what is the difference between those who do and those who don't?

Having worked with immigrants for the past 15 years, I have observed huge differences between immigrants who succeed and those who fail. While I often talk about success secrets for immigrants, I want to look at this question from the flip side: Why do immigrants fail?

Here are a few pointers that I hope will prompt a better understanding of what can actually help create positive outcomes for immigrants:

- **Know before you go!** I have met immigrants who say, "I am deciding between living in Toronto or Ontario." Toronto is a city in the province of Ontario! This statement demonstrates a clear lack of understanding about the country this immigrant wants to call home! I find it hard to accept that a professional immigrant lands here without having done adequate

research not only about the cities, but the professional barriers he or she will face. This is precisely the reason we decided that if you are thinking of moving to Canada, you should have information on your new country (see Chapter 15).

- **Have realistic expectations.** Most immigrants I have met expect to land a job immediately in a company at the same level as their home country. I tell them to be realistic and to think about how long it took them in their home country to get the position they had.
- **Understand your strengths and weaknesses.** I'm talking about language proficiency, soft skills, and corporate etiquette. Note that many immigrants come to Canada with a 90:10 ratio of technical skills to soft skills (see section 2.1 for more information about soft skills). Canadian employers want 40 percent technical skills and 60 percent soft skills but many newcomers can't seem to accept this reality.
- **Embrace change.** I have met hundreds, even thousands of immigrants, and what amazes me is their reluctance to use their geographic change to create other changes. What worked "back home" will probably not work here. A study conducted in 2013 at York's School of Human Resource Management found that immigrants who embraced change were more likely to succeed.
- **Do not become a victim!** The honeymoon period for immigrants lasts a few weeks, which are typically spent sending résumé after résumé in response to job postings. Immigrants go to a settlement centre and learn about Canadian résumé writing and networking. While they are going through this, the immigrants look at their shrinking bank balances and the fear sets in. That fear leads to anger and, in a short period of time, immigrants get into a "victim" mentality, full of anger for a system that doesn't recognize immigrant qualifications.
- **Avoid rearview mirror driving.** The next stage is when an immigrant takes a job not commensurate with his or her qualifications. The immigrant now gets frustrated with his or her lot in life and in order to redeem some of his or her waning self-esteem, he or she spends time talking to everyone about what his or her life was like back home. Often this leads to the person packing his or her bags and leaving Canada.

- **Move out of ethnic silos.** Unable to deal with the newness of interacting with Canadians, many immigrants gravitate toward their own communities where they feel more secure in their language and culture. These ethnic silos hold immigrants back, preventing successful integration with the larger populace. More importantly, it disallows immigrants the ability to work in a multicultural environment.
- **Create new networks.** When immigrants migrate, their networks in their new country are primarily either relatives or friends they know from back home. Most immigrants tend to be unfamiliar with the concept of networking, but without it, they are missing out on key information and potential opportunities.
- **Canada is different.** Canada is not the United States of America. It is also very different from your home country. You must understand that what worked in your home country will not work in Canada.

There is good news! The labour shortage propelled by an aging population and a declining birthrate was put on hold for a while because of the economic downturn between 2008 and 2010. The shortage hasn't gone away, however, and corporations and businesses across Canada, especially in the natural resources category, are facing a huge demand for skilled labour. Immigrants will continue to be the leading source of labour for Canada in the coming years.

## 2.1 Language barriers and soft skills

When I immigrated to Canada, I had a distinct advantage as English was my first language. I went to a good private school so my basic grounding in grammar and writing skills stood me in good stead. However, I spoke a different dialect of English when I arrived in Canada. I now speak Canadian English. There are several words we pronounce differently in India because of the obvious British influence.

From the time I started on this roller coaster journey working with immigrants 15 years ago, I saw that language (or lack thereof) was the single largest barrier for immigrants. I met with engineers, accountants, human resources specialists, among others. Yes, they “spoke” English, but not at the level that their professions needed. When an employer had to choose between a native

English or French speaker and someone who obviously struggled with the language, no prizes for guessing who won!

However, it wasn't just about the language skills. It expanded to soft skills. Research showed that Canadian employers wanted more soft skills than technical skills as the latter people always picked up on the job. A research study conducted some years ago between immigrants and Canadian employers showed a marked disconnect in how employers view immigrants and vice versa. While an overwhelming majority of employers found language skills and soft skills were a barrier for immigrants in the workplace, immigrants did not see this as a problem!

“Soft skills” is a term you will hear quite often in Canada. What does it mean? To help define it, let's first look at the term with the opposite meaning, “hard skills.” Hard skills are all the technical know-how, credentials, and experience you have in your field of expertise. For example, if you're a chef, your hard skills are cooking, know-how with kitchen equipment, and so on. An employer looking for an experienced chef will want to know the candidate's abilities in the kitchen, where he or she studied and trained, and any other important credentials.

What would the chef's soft skills be? They are all the intangible qualities that aren't as quantifiable. For example, how does the chef work in a team? Does he or she have good leadership skills? Is he or she organized, dependable, punctual, and friendly? When we are talking about immigrant soft skills, perhaps the most important question is: Can he or she communicate well in English? Unfortunately, many immigrants don't fully understand or want to accept the importance of soft skills in getting ahead in Canada.

My suggestion is to read about developing soft skills or download it for free on the Prepare for Canada website (<http://www.prepareforcanada.com/working/nine-soft-skills/nine-soft-skills-no-immigrant-should-be-without/>). Note that you will need to sign up as a member to get this and more valuable information.

### **3. Immigration Categories**

If you know for certain that you want to call Canada home, you will be faced with the challenging and often confusing task of applying for permanent immigration. There is not just “one” way of coming to Canada permanently.

Note that Canada's immigration program has gone through tremendous changes in the past several years. If you have friends or relatives who have immigrated to Canada in the past five years or longer, it is almost certain that the process has changed since then. Be sure to become familiar with the current immigration process.

There are several classes of immigration under which you can apply. It is important to choose your category wisely, as there are many intricate rules and regulations for eligibility. If you apply under a class for which you are ineligible, you will find it difficult if not impossible to switch categories midstream, which will delay the process and you will incur additional expenses. You need to ensure that you meet the eligibility criteria so that you are certain you qualify for that category of immigration. The following are the leading immigration categories:

- Federal Skilled Worker Class
- Business Immigration Program
- Provincial Nominee Programs
- Family Class
- Canadian Experience Class
- Federal Skilled Trades Class

Each category has its own set of procedures and criteria that we will explain in the following chapters. However, what is common for all types of applicants (together with their dependants) is that they must undergo a medical exam and a criminal record check (see Chapter 3).

While you are able to apply for immigration on your own, if immigrating to Canada is really important to you, it's wise to seek help from a qualified immigration lawyer or consultant to help you navigate the application process (see Chapter 4).