

Welcome to Canada and to BC!

The following webpages are a great resource for newcomers to BC.

- [WelcomeBC - Immigration, moving to and working in BC - WelcomeBC](#)
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/publication-welcome-canada-what-you-should-know.html>

Below you will find local resources and suggested steps to make your acclimation to Vernon easier:

1. Complete Immigration Formalities

- **Landing Procedures:** Present your Confirmation of Permanent Residence (COPR) to an immigration officer at the port of entry or local Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) office.
 - **Permanent Resident (PR) Card:** If not received during your landing, apply for your PR card. This is your proof of status in Canada.
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2. Get Your SIN (Social Insurance Number)

- **Apply for a SIN:** A SIN is required to work, pay taxes, and access government services. Visit a Service Canada office or apply online. You'll need your passport and COPR.
 - **Apply for your SIN here:** <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/sin/apply.html>
 - You can apply online or visit a **Service Canada office** in Vernon:
Address: 3101 48 Avenue, Vernon, BC.
Hours: Monday to Friday, 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM.
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3. Apply for Health Insurance (MSP in BC)

- **Medical Services Plan (MSP):** All BC residents need MSP coverage. There's a waiting period of up to 3 months, so get private insurance for this interim.
- **Apply for MSP here:** <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/msp/bc-residents/eligibility-and-enrolment/apply-for-msp>

- **Private Health Insurance options:** Blue Cross, Canada Life
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4. Find Housing

- **Short-term Housing:** Consider Airbnb, hotels, or temporary rentals while you search for a permanent home.
 - **Long-term Housing:** Check websites like Craigslist, Kijiji, or PadMapper, Facebook Marketplace. Look for rentals in safe neighborhoods with access to public transportation and amenities.
 - **Short-term Rentals:** Use Airbnb, hotels, or vacation rentals until you secure long-term accommodation.
 - **Neighborhoods to consider:**
 - **Mission Hill:** Family-friendly, with schools and parks.
 - **Okanagan Landing:** Near the lake, great for outdoor lovers.
 - **East Hill:** Central and close to amenities.
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5. Open a Canadian Bank Account

- Choose a bank (e.g., RBC, TD, CIBC, Scotiabank, or BMO) and open a checking account for daily use and savings.
 - Many banks offer special accounts for newcomers with perks like no monthly fees for the first year.
 - Bring your passport, SIN, and proof of address.
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6. Get a Canadian Phone Number

- Choose from major carriers like Telus, Rogers, or Bell, or affordable options like Freedom Mobile, Fido, or Public Mobile.
 - Decide between a monthly plan or prepaid option based on your needs.
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7. Apply for a BC Driver's License or ID

- **Driver's License:** If you have a license from your home country, you may exchange it or take a driving test. Check if your country has a reciprocal agreement with BC.
 - **BC Services Card:** If you don't drive, apply for a BC ID card for official identification.
 - Learn more: ICBC Licensing: <https://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing>
 - Visit the Vernon ICBC office: **Address:** 2809 48 Avenue, Vernon, BC.
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8. Enroll Children in School (If Applicable)

- Public schools are free for children under 18. Register your child at the local school district office.
 - Bring documents like passports, PR cards, proof of address, and vaccination records.
 - Vernon has excellent schools under **School District 22**. Register your child at the school district office:
 - **Address:** 1401 15 Street, Vernon, BC.
 - Consider private schools like **Vernon Christian School** if preferred.
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9. Look for Employment for your Spouse / Partner

- **Update Resume:** Tailor your resume to Canadian standards.
 - **Networking:** Join LinkedIn and local immigrant support groups.
 - **Job Search Websites:** Check Indeed, WorkBC, and Job Bank.
 - **Credential Recognition:** If your profession is regulated (e.g., healthcare or engineering), verify if you need Canadian certification.
 - Explore job opportunities through:
 - [WorkBC Vernon](#)
 - Indeed
 - Local resources like Castanet Jobs.
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10. Learn About Taxes and Canada Child Benefits

- File your taxes annually. Even with no income, filing is mandatory to qualify for benefits.
 - Learn about tax credits and benefits (e.g., Canada Child Benefit).
 - **GST/HST Credit:** Apply for quarterly payments to offset taxes on goods and services.
 - Learn about taxes here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/educational-programs.html>
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11. Connect with Community and Resources

- **Immigrant Services:** Reach out to [KCR Community Resources](#) or **Vernon and District Immigrant Services Society (VDISS)** for settlement help.
- **Library Card:** Sign up for a library card at the **Okanagan Regional Library (Vernon Branch)**. They offer free Wi-Fi, books, and community programs.

- **Cultural Associations:** Join groups like VDISS or cultural organizations to meet others from your background.
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12. Learn About Vernon's Transportation

- **Public Transit:** Vernon has a small bus network operated by BC Transit. Purchase bus passes at local retailers like London Drugs or online.
 - **Driving:** Invest in winter tires if you'll drive during the colder months.
 - **Cycling and Walking:** Vernon is a bike-friendly city with scenic trails.
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13. Build Credit History

- Apply for a newcomer credit card. Responsible use will help you build a credit score, crucial for renting apartments, buying a car, or getting loans.
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14. Explore Education and Language Classes

- Enroll in free English classes through **LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)**.
 - Check courses at **Okanagan College Vernon Campus** for career advancement.
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15. Register for Recreation and Community Programs

- Vernon offers incredible recreational facilities, like the **Vernon Recreation Centre** and **Kal Tire Place Arena**.
 - Explore programs for kids and adults through the **City of Vernon Recreation Guide**.
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16. Enjoy Vernon's Attractions and Lifestyle

- **Outdoor Activities:**
 - Visit **Kalamalka Lake** and **Okanagan Lake** for kayaking, swimming, and paddleboarding.
 - Ski or snowboard at **SilverStar Mountain Resort** in winter.
 - **Local Wineries:** Tour Okanagan wineries for wine tastings.
 - **Farmers' Markets:** The Vernon Farmers' Market is a great place to shop local and connect with the community.
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17. Emergency Numbers and Contacts

- **911:** For emergencies (police, fire, ambulance).

- **HealthLink BC (811):** Free medical advice.
 - **Vernon Jubilee Hospital:** 2101 32 Street, Vernon, BC.
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18. Build Credit and Financial Knowledge

- Apply for a credit card to build your credit score, which is essential for renting or buying property in the future.
 - Attend financial literacy workshops offered by local banks or immigrant support organizations.
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19. Stay Safe and Informed

- **Weather:** Vernon experiences snowy winters and hot summers. Dress appropriately and prepare your home for seasonal changes.
 - **Wildfire Preparedness:** Learn about wildfire safety and evacuation plans, as the Okanagan region can experience wildfires in the summer.
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20. Get Familiar with BC's Culture and Laws

- **BC Legal Rights:** Familiarize yourself with tenant rights, employment standards, and human rights.
 - **Explore Nature:** BC is known for its parks and outdoor activities. Visit Stanley Park, Whistler, or the Okanagan Valley.
 - Explore programs for kids and adults through the **City of Vernon Recreation Guide**.
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21. Stay Connected to Your Roots

- Find cultural associations, religious centers, or community groups for a sense of belonging.