

Watch Out for Unethical Immigration Consultants

The Canadian immigration process can be complex and difficult to navigate alone. If you choose to pay someone to help, make sure you work with someone who has proper knowledge and certification. Do not become a victim of a scam or an unethical immigration consultant.

Authorized representatives

An authorized representative is a person you have appointed to represent you in your immigration application. Having an authorized representative is not mandatory but, if you need advice or guidance with your immigration file, a knowledgeable representative can be a real help.

Authorized representatives may be **paid** or **unpaid**.

Examples of **unpaid** representatives are family members and friends or someone at a community organization.

Paid representatives **MUST** be one of the following:

1. a Canadian lawyer;
2. a licensed immigration consultant — the current governing body is the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants (CSIC); or
3. a member of the Chambre des notaires du Quebec.

You appoint your representative by completing Citizenship and Immigration Canada's form: Use of a Representative. This form should also be used when you change your representative.

Common scams to be aware of

Beware of ghost consultants. Some people calling themselves immigration consultants are not members of any of the groups of professionals who qualify as authorized representatives. These people are often unqualified, unregulated and may be dishonest. They may charge excessive fees. They are referred to as ghost consultants because they don't want their names on the documents you send to the government. Only hire an immigration consultant who is properly licensed.

Don't believe promises of special treatment for a fee. No one can guarantee positive results. It is not possible to speed up your application or guarantee you a job, visa or school placement for a fee.

Do not lie on the application form. Never be persuaded into putting false information on a form or allowing false documents to be sent with your application. This is against the law and you may be refused entry to Canada or deported.

Be sure before you sign: Get an agreement in writing that explains the fees you will be charged and what they're for. Obtain a receipt for your payment. Make sure everything is clear to you before you sign any forms. If you don't understand English, bring someone you trust to translate for you. Don't ever sign a blank form.

Resources

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)

CIC provides immigration applications and guides. Call centre agents can give general information, but cannot give advice. Phone conversations may be recorded.
1-888-242-2100

www.cic.gc.ca

Law Society of BC

This regulatory body for B.C. lawyers takes complaints and can confirm if a lawyer is registered.

Toll-free in B.C.: 1 800 903-5300 or 604 669-2533 (Vancouver)

www.lawsociety.bc.ca

Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants

This is the current regulatory body for immigration consultants. They take complaints and can confirm if a consultant is licensed.

1 866 308-2742

www.csic-scci.ca

Legal Services Society of BC

The society provides legal aid services in B.C., including legal information and referral. They may provide a free lawyer to low-income people with serious immigration problems, such as removal hearings or refugee applications.

Interpreters are available if needed.

604 408-2172 (Greater Vancouver) or 1 866 577-2525 (elsewhere in B.C.)

www.lss.bc.ca

Notes

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