



Top 10 Things to Take Care of BEFORE You Move from the USA to Canada



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Save Time and Resources by Planning Your Move the Right Way

Your Essential Planning Checklist for Moving from the USA to Canada

1. Arrange a pre-move consultation with a Cross border Tax Accountant in Canada who deals with (cross-border) CDN and US clients.

You may have a US accountant but a cross border move can come with many tax implications you or your current accountant aren't aware of. A consultation with an accountant that specializes in cross border taxation can explain those implications and assist in any actions you can take before you move, to mitigate the tax consequences. Put together a list of income sources, as well as your assets at book and fair market values to help facilitate the discussion. Once living in Canada, your worldwide income will be taxable in Canada and if you are a US citizen, you will also have to report your worldwide income on your US tax return. A cross-border accountant understands how to utilize foreign tax credits to ensure you are not double taxed.

2. Consult with an Immigration Lawyer prior to the move.

Confirm all members of the household are Canadian citizens/permanent residents in advance of the move and consult with a Canadian immigration lawyer. If you are a green card holder, get advice on either retaining or surrendering the green card after the move to Canada. Note if you have been a green card holder for over 8 years, there are tax consequences to consider on surrendering.

3. Consult with a Cross Border Financial Advisor before you move.

Your US advisor is not licensed to help you once you move to Canada. Your accounts could be frozen or you may receive a letter saying your advisor can no longer help you and that you have 30-90 days to find a new advisor before your account(s) will be liquidated. Retirement accounts such as IRAs can be managed by a dual licensed financial advisor in Canada to enable you to keep the tax-deferred status and to have your investments actively managed to meet your goals. (Active investing requires someone in the role of a portfolio manager and is a hands-on approach.)

4. Sign up for Social Security online services before you move.

Sign up at www.ssa.gov/benefits/forms/. You will need a US address to create an account. If you try to set up the account after you are in Canada, you will have to deal with a foreign affairs office, which can be time consuming and frustrating as certain 1-800 numbers only work from the US. Once you have an account, you can sign in from Canada to review your information. Then apply for benefits and change your address.



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5. Beware of Canadian Mutual Funds and ETFs.

A Canadian Advisor or bank likely is not familiar with the tax obligations a US person has and may recommend investments that cause complicated and punitive damages to a US person. Do not invest in Canadian Mutual Funds or ETF's as these are Passive Foreign Investment Companies (PFIC's). Working with a cross-border financial advisor who specializes in helping US person's can alleviate this problem.

6. Get your Driving History, address and contact information of the car insurance company you use in the US.

It takes two years of driver's history to get a driver's license in Canada. In addition, a driving record with 10 years of good driving can give you the highest reduction in insurance costs.

7. Get private health insurance while you wait for public medical coverage.

In most provinces, it takes three months after you apply to get medical coverage. You should get private health care insurance while you wait.

8. Apply for a Canadian Credit Card right away and start to build up your credit.

Why is this so important? **Your credit rating in the US doesn't transfer to Canada.** When clients move to Canada, they are often surprised that their credit rating doesn't transfer too. They have a difficult time getting a credit card with a credit limit they want. If you have an American Express card in the US, it can be helpful and used at many locations in Canada. Apply for a Canadian credit card right away and start to build up your credit.

9. Get your banking in order on both sides of the border.

If your house and/or bank account are in a trust in the US, you will need to set up a trust account in the province you are moving to because the money will have to be in a trust account. Then once the money is transferred, you can move it from your newly created trust account to a regular account and close the trust account. It is less complicated if you can get rid of trusts before you move to Canada. You can move money ahead of arrival. **Keep a bank account in the US for social security or other pensions in the future.** Ahead of your arrival, if you are bringing more than \$10,000 CDN, you must report it to Canada Border Services Agency. Many clients have told us it was helpful to have a power of attorney to attach to bank accounts in the US prior to moving.

10. Prepare for Customs well in advance.

When moving personal items across the border, create an itemized value of everything you will be bringing. Have two copies of the list — one with you and one with the items. Only the items that were on the original list will qualify for duty and tax free importation. For more information go to:

www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/new-immigrants/prepare-life-canada/border-entry/bringing-goods.html

Six More Bonus Tips!

1. **Gather essential documentation to bring.**

You will need to have a list of what you are bringing into Canada as well as the list of items you are shipping. When packing, you could take pictures and write out what is in each box, or hire someone to help you do this. You will also need confirmation of Permanent Residency for you and each family member, and a valid passport or other travel documents for you and each family member. [For more info go here >](#)

2. **Fill Prescriptions before you depart the US.**

You may find brands different in Canada and prices could be more expensive if you are paying out-of-pocket.

3. **Consider the Cost of Living.**

Some of our clients who have moved have commented they find the cost of living on many items close to double in CDN dollars compared to what it was in the US. Of course, this depends on where you reside. Things such as transportation, food, entertainment, clothing and utilities are more expensive.

4. **Price check how you'll move your items across the border.**

It is expensive to drive a rental car/truck to move to Canada from the US, and you would pay a surcharge for someone to bring the vehicle back to the United States. Uhaul has a service called Ubox which has worked successfully for several of our clients. [U Box Cross Border Important Information](#)

5. **Think of your Pets.**

Research the best way to bring your pets across the border. If you are flying, confirm with the airline how many pets can be on the plane at the same time. If they are flying in cargo, you will need to pre-book to ensure they have a confirmed spot. Also, make sure they are healthy and have been to a vet recently to confirm all their shots are up to date. Clients have used Ipata to transport pets across countries. For more information go to <https://www.ipata.org/>

6. **Contact the Registrar of Imported Vehicles before you import an automobile.**

Canada's safety standards are different than the US's; vehicles must meet Transport Canada's import and admissibility requirements before they can be imported. [Click here to learn more >](#)

Was this checklist helpful to you?

If you're planning a move from the USA to Canada, schedule a call with a financial advisor at SWAN Wealth Management to find out how we can help make your move an easy one.

Ready for Your Next Adventure?

Cross-Border Financial Planning Made Simple

Without a comprehensive cross-border financial plan you could end up overpaying your taxes or losing access to your state-side investments. You don't know what you don't know, and this transition can feel complex and overwhelming. But when working with dual-licensed Financial Advisors, you don't have to worry about your cross-border financial picture — you'll be covered in both countries no matter where you live.

While some advisors offer cross-border financial services, few have specialized in this area. At SWAN Wealth, our goal is to provide you with stress-free cross-border financial planning, so you can relax and enjoy your next chapter.

Schedule a call to speak with a SWAN Wealth Financial Advisor and begin the process of simplifying your cross-border finances.



Tiffany Woodfield, CRPC® CIM® and
John Woodfield, CFP, CIM, FMA, FCSI
of SWAN Wealth Management.

Phone: 250 979 2710
Toll Free: 1-877-979-2700
www.swanwealthcoaching.com

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