



# WELCOME TO WINNIPEG

**A Handbook for  
Newcomers**

# Welcome To Winnipeg

My friend, welcome to Winnipeg, the friendly capital of Manitoba. Winnipeg is a growing city with a strong economy and affordable living costs for newcomers. We stand on Treaty One territory (the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Dakota, and Métis), and the city prides itself on being welcoming and multicultural. Here's a friendly how-to guide to help you get settled, covering housing, jobs, services, and more.

Winnipeg's community is diverse — you'll find dozens of ethnic and cultural associations (e.g. African, Indo-Canadian, Filipino, Jewish, Ukrainian, Hellenic, Muslim, and many others) offering social support, festivals and cultural events.

*The city has many newcomer-serving agencies and programs. For example, Immigrant Centre Manitoba is a one-stop settlement resource, and Manitoba Start (Employment Solutions for Immigrants) provides job-search training and coaching.*

There are also French-language services (e.g. *Accueil Francophone*, *Réseauen Immigration Francophone*) and women's and family centres offering parenting classes and English programs (e.g. *MOSAIC*, *Mount Carmel Clinic*, *West Central Women's Resource Centre*). See the list of community organizations at the end of this guide for many more.

Key phone numbers: For city service issues (snow removal, garbage, parks, etc.), dial 3-1-1. For social and health referrals (housing help, food programs, mental health resources, etc.), dial 2-1-1. In any emergency (police, fire or ambulance), dial 9-1-1. (211 Manitoba is toll-free, 24/7, confidential and multi-lingual, and will connect you to the right community support.)

## Housing & Neighbourhoods

**Renting:** Winnipeg has a range of housing, from apartments to houses. Popular areas for newcomers include Downtown (close to amenities), St. Vital (family-friendly), and Fort Garry (near universities). To find rentals, try local sites like Kijiji or RentBoard, or contact a newcomer housing agency like *New Journey Housing*. Remember these basics: landlords can require a **security deposit up to ½ the first month's rent** (or a pet deposit). By law, you must get a written receipt showing the deposit amount.

***Always ask your landlord to do a move-in “condition report” together to document any pre-existing damage. Rent increases can only happen once per year and require 3 months' written notice.***

**Tenant rights (Manitoba):** You get receipts for any deposits, and you will get your deposit back in the same form (cheque or cash) when you move out, minus deductions for damages. Keep the final inspection report! If disputes arise, the Residential Tenancies Branch can help mediate or decide cases. (You can find details on renting in Manitoba by downloading the free “*Renting a Home in Manitoba*” booklet from New Journey Housing.)

**Affordable housing:** If you have very low income or special needs, look into Manitoba Housing (subsidized apartments) and Rent Assist (provincial rent subsidy for families). You can apply for Rent Assist by contacting Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) or visiting [manitoba.ca/EIA](http://manitoba.ca/EIA). (New Journey Housing's website has links to these applications.)

• **Utilities:** *Once you have a home, you'll need to set up utilities. Electricity in Winnipeg is supplied by Manitoba Hydro.*

Many homes heat with natural gas (provided by Hydro's Centra Gas Manitoba). In winter months your energy bills will be higher, so ask your landlord if heating is included or not. You typically call Manitoba Hydro (or its website) to start or transfer service. Renters should ask the landlord about how utilities are handled before signing a lease.

**Phone & Internet:** There are several providers. For newcomers, *Bell MTS* (formerly MTS) often has special newcomer plans on cell phones and home internet. (For example, Bell has offered low-cost monthly mobile plans for new immigrants.) Compare deals from Rogers, Bell, Telus, and Shaw. They all require ID and a credit check.

**Banking:** Open a bank account soon after arrival. Most banks (RBC, TD, Scotiabank, CIBC, BMO, etc.) have New to Canada programs. Bring your passport, immigration papers (PR card or visa documents), and proof of address. Look for offers like free banking for a year or small cash bonuses. Applying for a Canadian Social Insurance Number (SIN) is also crucial — you'll need it to work, file taxes, and access government services. Visit Service Canada (the local offices are on Taylor Ave or Notre Dame, etc.) to apply for a SIN; bring identity and immigration documents.

**Taxes & Benefits:** Be sure to file a Canadian income tax return every year (even if you have no income) so you can receive benefits like GST/HST credits or Canada Child Benefit if you have kids. The deadline is usually April 30 each year. Volunteer tax clinics (e.g. through community centres or Welcome Place) often help newcomers file for free.



# Getting Around

- **Winnipeg Transit:** ***Winnipeg's public buses cover the city. You pay with a Peggo card (a reloadable smartcard).***

A Peggo card costs \$5 (plus a \$5 minimum load). You can get one at select retail locations or by calling 311. Load “e-cash” for pay-as-you-go fares, or buy “e-passes” for unlimited rides (daily, weekly or monthly). As of 2025 a single adult fare is ~\$3.15 (exact change still accepted in cash). (If you'll ride often, a monthly pass saves money.) Plan trips with the Winnipeg Transit app or website.

- **Driving:** If you brought a car or plan to drive, note that all drivers in Manitoba must have a Manitoba license and insurance after 3 months of residency. Your valid out-of-province or foreign license can be used for the first 3 months. Before then, visit an Autopac agent (MPI office or agent) to exchange your licence and register your vehicle. You will need your current license, passport, proof of status (PR card or work visa), proof of Manitoba address, and you pay a fee of CAN\$75. MPI (Manitoba Public Insurance) will give you a temporary license and plates until your new license is mailed to you. Only after switching to a Manitoba license can you get auto insurance in the province. Ask MPI staff about mandatory coverage (liability, personal injury) and optional add-ons (collision, etc.).

*Note: **There are no toll highways around Winnipeg, but dial 511 Manitoba (online at [manitoba511.ca](http://manitoba511.ca)) for live highway and weather condition reports if you drive long distances.***

- **Cycling & Walking:** Winnipeg has bike lanes and walking trails (Assiniboine Forest, river trails, etc.). Biking is popular in summer (there is a bicycle share program in downtown). Always wear a helmet and use lights at night. Shoveling snow from sidewalks is required by law after a snowfall.



# Health & Safety

- **Manitoba Health Card:** Apply immediately for provincial health coverage. All Canadian citizens and permanent residents can apply from the day they arrive. Those coming from another Canadian province should apply within 3 months (coverage will begin on the first day of the 3rd month after arrival). To register, visit any Manitoba Health card office or apply online. You will need identity and immigration documents (passport, PR card or immigration papers) and proof of your local address. Carry your Health Card at all times, as you need it for doctor visits, hospital care and emergency services. Note that dental, vision, and prescriptions are *not* covered — consider private insurance or ask about free clinic programs.
- **Doctors and Clinics:** Manitoba has *no* walk-in fee for those covered by Manitoba Health, but you usually need to register with a family doctor or use a walk-in clinic. Registering with a family physician ensures continuity of care.

***You can find a doctor through referrals from friends or the WRHA website, or by calling Health Links—Info Santé (204-788-8200).***

Many newcomers use the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op (Mount Carmel Clinic) for assistance and culturally sensitive services. For urgent but non-emergency needs (fever, minor injuries), there are Emergency Rooms (ERs) at HSC, St. Boniface, Concordia, Grace, etc., and the 24/7 Urgent Care Centre at Seven Oaks. In a *life-threatening* emergency, always call 9-1-1.

- **Pharmacies & Supplies:** Pharmacies (Shoppers Drug Mart, Rexall, Walmart Pharmacy, etc.) are everywhere. You can see a pharmacist for minor health issues (colds, minor pain, allergies) without an appointment. Over-the-counter meds and health supplies are sold in drug stores and grocery stores (Safeway, No Frills, etc.).

- **Safety:** ***Winnipeg is generally safe and community-oriented. However, like any city, be aware of winter hazards: roads may be icy (drive slowly, use winter tires) and sidewalks can be slippery.***

At night in winter, have a flashlight or phone handy (some areas get very dark). If you go skating, stay on designated rinks (The Forks, Assiniboine Park) and never skate on the river ice! For any weather alerts (blizzards, extreme cold), check the local news or Environment Canada. In a severe storm or if your power goes out, call Manitoba Hydro's outage line.





# Jobs & Education

- **Finding Work:** Winnipeg's major employers include healthcare, education, manufacturing, and IT.

***Good entry steps are: create a Canadian-style resume, improve English if needed, and start with local job boards (Job Bank, Indeed, WinnipegJobs.com).***

*Manitoba Start* (Employment Solutions for Immigrants) offers free orientation workshops, career counselling, resume clinics and job fairs. There are also private agencies (Pinnacle, David Aplin, etc.) and an *Immigrant Employment Council* assisting skilled professionals. Networking (volunteering, community groups, church/temple meetings) is very helpful in Winnipeg. If your profession is regulated (teacher, nurse, engineer, etc.), investigate credential recognition and bridging programs early on.

- **English Language (EAL/LINC):** If you need to improve English, Winnipeg has many programs. The Winnipeg English Language Assessment and Referral Centre (WELARC) will assess your level and refer you to the right classes. Funded English classes (LINC programs) are offered by community colleges (Red River College, MITT), school divisions, and settlement agencies. For example, Red River College and *Winnipeg Institute of Trades & Technology* offer free EAL courses (MITT's courses are accessed via WELARC). There are also more informal conversation clubs and tutoring at libraries, schools and community centres. Immerse yourself: use your public library's free English resources and attend free "language cafes" if available.

- **Schools & Childcare:** ***If you have kids, public schooling (K—12) is free. Find your catchment school division by address (Winnipeg has seven main divisions: Winnipeg SD, St. James-Assiniboia, St. Vital, Pembina Trails, Louis Riel, Seven Oaks, and River East Transcona).***

Each division has a *Newcomer or Cross-Cultural Centre* to help enroll children and provide EAL support in schools (Louis Riel SD's “Reception Centre” is one example). To register, bring proof of address, immigration papers, and immunization records to the school board office. Kindergarten to Grade 12 is fully subsidized; if your children need child care or preschool, apply early (space is limited and subsidized daycare requires an income test). For post-secondary education, Winnipeg has the University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, and colleges like Red River College. Many programs are open to residents, and scholarships/bursaries for immigrants may be available.





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# Daily Life & Shopping

- **Groceries:** Major supermarkets include No Frills, Safeway, Sobeys, Co-op, Giant Tiger, and FreshCo. For discount prices try Food Barn or local dollar stores. Winnipeg has excellent farmers' markets in summer: the famous *St. Norbert Farmers' Market* (Wednesdays and Saturdays) and many neighborhood markets offer fresh local fruits, vegetables and baked goods. Ethnic groceries abound: you'll find large Asian markets (e.g. Dragon City), Indian/Pakistani stores, Latin and Middle-Eastern grocers (e.g. Middle East Foods on Ellice). Shopping malls like Polo Park and Kildonan Place have clothing, appliances, and specialty shops. In winter, shops will have big sales on winter clothing in November/January — you can buy parkas, boots, gloves at Mark's, Mountain Equipment Co-op, or bargain stores.

• **Seasonal Gear:** *Winnipeg's winters are harsh. Temperatures often fall below  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , with wind chill well below  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Summers can be warm ( $30^{\circ}\text{C}+$ ) and humid.*

Shop accordingly: in fall, pick up a heavy winter coat, warm boots (insulated, waterproof), hats, scarves and gloves at stores like Walmart, Arctic Den (local chain), or retail outlets. Layering is key — thermal underwear (“long johns”) under pants/shirts is common. If you drive, install winter tires by October for safety. In spring and fall, raincoat and boots are useful as snow melts. Summer is relatively short; light clothing, sunblock, and insect repellent (for mosquitoes by river) will get you through.

- **Community & Recreation:** The city has lots of free and cheap recreation. Winnipeg Public Libraries (20 branches) offer free Internet, books in many languages, storytimes, and conversation circles. The YMCA-YWCA provides a *free 4-month gym membership* for newcomer families, and even women-only fitness and EAL classes. Community centres host drop-in badminton, skating, and crafts for a small fee. Parks and trails are plentiful: Assiniboine Park (with a free zoo and English Garden), The Forks (historic market with riverboat tours in summer and skating rink in winter), and the Exchange District (art gallery and festival hub) are great places to explore. Check local listings for free multicultural festivals (Folklorama, Fringe Festival, Ukrainian Festival, etc.).





# Helpful Resources & Organizations

- **211 Manitoba** — a free, 24/7 multilingual referral service. Call 2-1-1 for help finding housing, food banks, mental health supports, employment services and more. You can also chat online at [mb.211.ca](https://mb.211.ca) or email [211mb@findhelp.ca](mailto:211mb@findhelp.ca).
- **311 City of Winnipeg** — dial 3-1-1 or visit [winnipeg.ca](https://winnipeg.ca) to report city service issues (potholes, snow removal, park info) and get non-emergency municipal information.
- **Manitoba Health Card** — apply immediately for provincial health coverage. Offices are in Winnipeg (e.g. 980 Portage Ave.). Bring ID and immigration papers.
- **Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI)** — for driver's licenses and car insurance. Visit any Autopac location (e.g. 1515 Buffalo Pl) to exchange your license and register a vehicle. Website: [mpi.mb.ca](https://mpi.mb.ca).
- **Income Assistance & Benefits** — If needed, call Winnipeg Employment and Income Assistance at 204-948-4000 for help with RentAssist (rent subsidy) and basic needs support. You may also qualify for EI (if you have work history), child tax benefits, or provincial benefits like Child Tax Benefit.
- **Settlement Agencies:** Beyond the Immigrant Centre (204-943-9158) and Manitoba Start (204-934-8760), here are a few key ones:
- **Welcome Place (MIIC):** Helps government-assisted refugees with temporary housing and orientation.
- **New Journey Housing:** Offers newcomer housing advice workshops.
- **SAC (Settlement Assistance) at community centres** — some neighborhoods have settlement workers.

- **Language Bank:** volunteer interpreters (through Immigrant Centre) for medical/legal appointments.
- **Ethno-cultural groups:** support and networking — see list of associations.
- **Libraries & Learning:** Winnipeg Public Library is free to join — get a library card for books, internet access and free adult classes (English conversation, digital skills, etc.). They even have guides for newcomers and language learning resources.
- **Schools and Child Services:** Call the local school division office in your area to enroll children. All school divisions have *Immigrant or Cross-Cultural Support* teams. For adults, organizations like *A & O Seniors Centre* offer newcomer EAL and social programs for older immigrants.
- **Legal Aid and Advice:** If you need legal information (tenant rights, workplace issues, family law, etc.), contact Legal Aid Manitoba or the Legal Help Centre in Winnipeg. They have newcomer info in many languages.
- **Volunteer and Community Engagement:** Volunteering is a great way to meet people and gain skills. Check Volunteer Manitoba ([volunteermanitoba.ca](http://volunteermanitoba.ca)) or sign up for a language exchange/conversation program at schools or community centres. The Immigrant Centre and Welcome Place often need volunteers to help run programs.





# The R.C.C.G Dominion Sanctuary Parish Family

The Dominion Sanctuary Family is a parish of The Redeemed Christian Church. We are a Christian-faith based organization and we have a team of volunteers that are always eager to help newcomers navigate their settling down experience.

If you wish to reach out for more help, please send a mail to :  
[newcommers@dominionsanctuary.ca](mailto:newcommers@dominionsanctuary.ca).

One of our team members will reach contact you immediately.

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