

Backgrounder

Canada's Immigration Policies

Over the years, the government of Canada has passed acts of legislation that deal with immigration. These become the laws that say who can and cannot immigrate to Canada. Below is a list of most of the immigration legislation

■ **1869** *Immigration Act*

Canada's first immigration policy was passed two years after Canada became a country. It focused on making sure immigrants were safe while travelling to Canada and when they arrived.

■ **1885** *The Chinese Immigration Act*

This was the first Act that tried to keep people out of Canada based on where they were coming from. It required a tax to be paid by any Chinese person coming into Canada. Over the years, the tax was increased:

- 1885: \$50
- 1900: \$100
- 1903: \$500

■ **1906** *Immigration Act*

This Act tried to keep out more people from Asia coming to Canada. It did not identify people by race, but had more general rules of what "type" of person should not be allowed in. It also gave government officials the power to send people back to where they had travelled from.

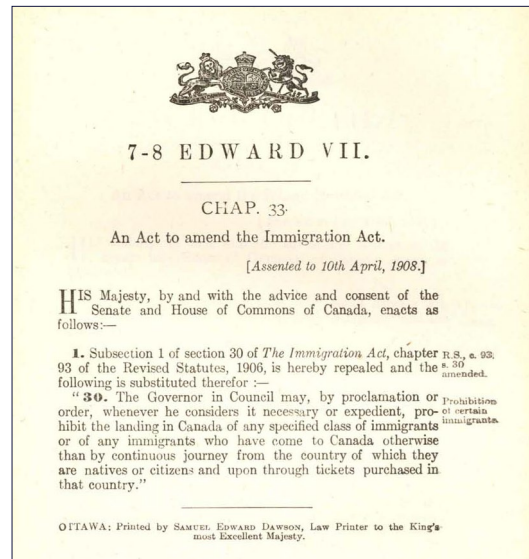


Image: Library and Archives Canada. Statutes of Canada. An Act to Amend the Immigration Act, 1908. Ottawa: SC 7-8 Edward VII, Ch 33

■ 1908 *Continuous Journey Regulation*

This regulation was added to the Immigration Act. The rule was that immigrants must travel to Canada from their home country without stopping. This regulation was to try to stop South Asians from immigrating to Canada. At the time there were no steamship companies offering travel directly from India. It also made immigrating from Japan very difficult.

■ 1910 *Immigration Act*

This new Act included the continuous journey regulation. It also had a larger list of people not allowed to immigrate to Canada. It gave government officials the power to turn away people for many reasons. One reason was if they thought a person's race was "unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada". Courts were not allowed to review or rule against these decisions. The Act also required immigrants from Asia to have \$200 to enter the country. European immigrants were required to have \$25.

■ 1919 *Immigration Act Amendment*

The Immigration Act was added to after World War I. Immigrants from countries Canada had been at war with were not allowed into Canada. Government officials had the power to not allow immigrants because of their "peculiar customs, habits, modes of life and methods of holding property."



■ 1923 *Chinese Immigration Act*

This Act had many rules to limit people from China being allowed into Canada. Between 1923 and 1946 only 15 Chinese people were able to immigrate to Canada.

■ 1962 *Immigration Regulations*

These regulations began to get rid of the racial discrimination of earlier acts. A person's skillset was what was important for seeing if they could immigrate to Canada. It no longer mattered what country they came from. Canadian citizens could sponsor their family members to immigrate to Canada. But sponsorship was only for certain countries for some relatives and did not include Asia.

■ 1967 *Immigration Regulations*

A point system was set up so immigration approval could be more objective. People gained points for their education, work skills, job potential, age, character, and English or French skills. People who earned a set number of points were accepted to immigrate to Canada. They did not lose points for their race or the country they were coming from.

■ 1976 *Immigration Act*

This was the first Act to outline the objectives of immigration in Canada. It required the federal government to work with other governments in Canada to plan and manage immigration. It also recognized refugees as a special case for immigration.

■ 1988 *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*

Canada was the first country to pass a national multicultural law. It addressed Canada's diverse population by:

- Protecting the cultural heritage of all Canadians
- Reducing discrimination
- Encouraging multicultural programs and initiatives