



Newcomer's guide to starting your career in Canada



Table of content

Overview: Starting your career in Canada	3
Prepare for your job search	4
Building your resume and cover letter	4
Creating your personal brand	7
Finding your desired role in Canada	8
Where to start searching	8
Transform your job search with networking	9
Interview like a pro	11
Interview etiquette	12
Common job interview questions	12
After the interview	13
What you need to get hired in Canada	13
Accepting a job offer	14
Get your social insurance number (SIN)	14
Open a bank account	14
Key Takeaways	15
Sources	16

Overview: Starting your career in Canada

When coming to Canada, one of the most important things on many newcomers' minds is finding a job. It is the foundation of life, career, and financial success in Canada. Arrive offers the guidance and resources you need to help land a job and launch your career in Canada.

In this guide, we will walk you through the steps of finding employment in Canada. Get tools and tips for every stage, from crafting the perfect resume and finding your personal brand to acing the final interview at your dream job and getting hired.

But first, remember that everyone has a different path to success. Your job search may take a little longer than you planned, or you may end up with a new opportunity in front of you that you had never considered before. Keeping an open mind and a positive outlook will help you discover a great opportunity in Canada.

This guide has two main objectives:

- To help you prepare for your career search in pre- and post-arrival; and,
- To provide resources to help you fast-track your job search in Canada.

For this guide, we've also partnered with [Prepped](#), career advice experts, to bring you well-researched career advice on every step of the journey. Most importantly, the career tips and resources we have included in this guide have been specifically tailored to support newcomers.

Inside this guide, you'll find tips, resources, and tools on these career topics:

- Building a Canadian-style resume and cover letter
- How to develop your personal brand
- Starting your career search in Canada
- Networking to access the hidden job market
- Creating meaningful connections over a coffee chat
- How to prepare for your job interview
- Getting and accepting a job offer

We hope this guide helps you feel prepared and supported at every step of your career search in Canada.



Prepare for your job search

Just like planning to come to a new country, finding your desired role takes preparation. There are several steps you can take before you even move to Canada. First of all, you will need to prepare a Canadian-style resume and cover letter that highlights your education and work experience. After you've crafted a stand-out resume, you can continue to enhance your personal, professional brand through online profiles, networking, and more.

Building your resume and cover letter

Your resume is one of the most important pieces of your career search, so take special time and care to be sure it is the best representation of you and your skills. Essentially, your resume is a summary of your work experience, which potential employers can use to determine if you have the right experience to succeed in a role.

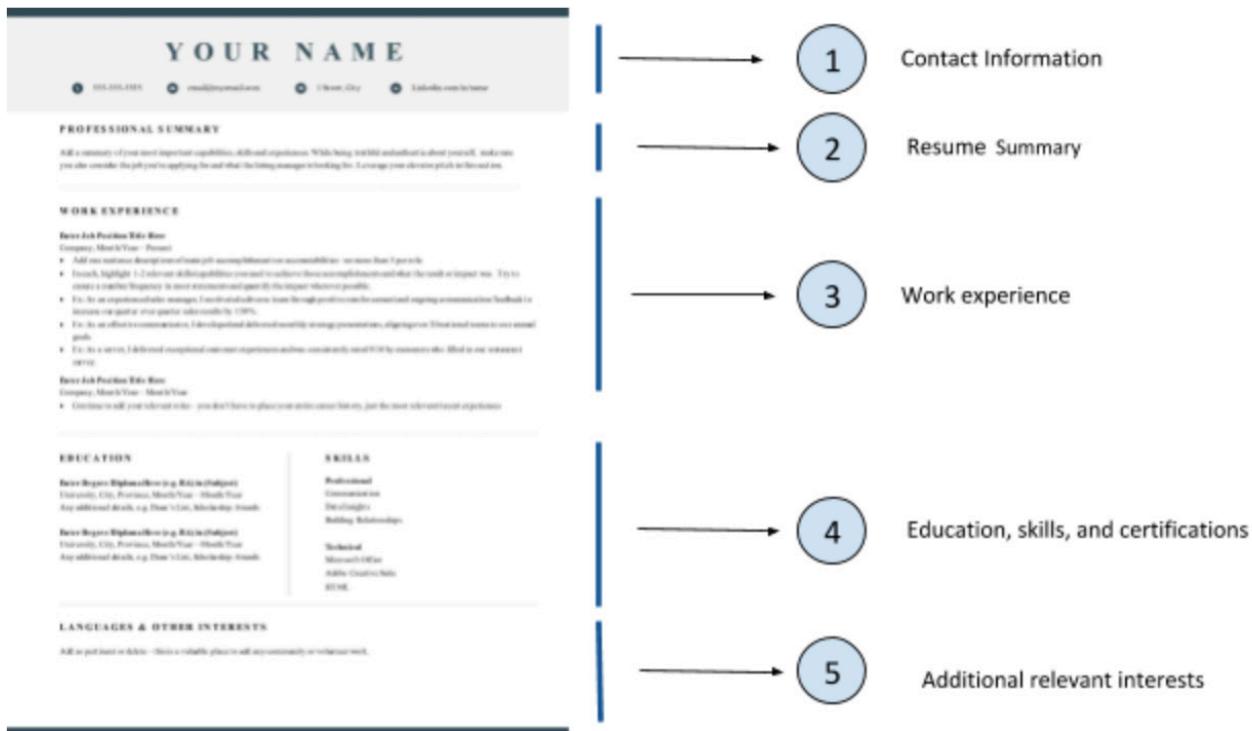


Resumes in Canada may be shorter than you are used to — typically only one or two pages long. A two-page resume is only recommended for professionals with over ten years of work experience in various positions. Make your resume stand out in one brief page by following these tips:

- Pick a professional format and template:** Before an employer even begins reading about the skills and experience in your resume, their first impression will come from the professional look and layout of the document. Clean lines, ample white space, and bold headers all make your resume stand out. There are three types of commonly used resume formats:
 - Chronological resume:** This type of resume lists your work experience from most recent to least recent. This is the most common form of resume format used in Canada. We have two templates available for you to download: [Chronological Resume Template \(1 page\)](#) or [Chronological Resume Template \(2 pages\)](#).
 - Skills-based resume:** This type of resume focuses on functional abilities and skills, rather than career progression. A skills-based resume template is preferred when one is switching careers, just entering the workforce, has gaps in their work history, or has frequently changed jobs. We have two skills-based resume templates available for you to download: [Skills-based Resume Template \(1 page\)](#) or [Skills-based Resume \(2 pages\)](#).
 - Combination resume:** A combination resume is a mix of chronological and skills-based. A combination resume template is ideal if the intention is to highlight transferable skills while also showcasing work experience. We have two combination templates available for you to download: [Combination template 1](#) or [Combination template 2](#).

2. Plan the anatomy of your resume: Packing all of the relevant information into a one- or two-page resume can be tricky, so plan out your sections first. Resumes typically always include:

- Your name and contact information (address, phone number, and email address);
- Your professional experience including positions, names of your employer, the dates you worked in those positions, and 3-4 of your key responsibilities in each role; and
- Your educational background and professional achievements



Sample resumes like this one show you how to set up these sections. Optionally, you can include a brief summary at the beginning of your resume, which outlines a few of your strongest and most relevant skills to catch your reader's eye right away.

Tip: Depending on your field of work, you may want to link additional resources to your resume to give your employer a better idea of the work you can perform, such as:

- Your [LinkedIn](#) profile
- An e-portfolio (can include written work, graphic design, photography, and more)
- Websites you have designed
- Social media pages you have managed

Be sure to only include relevant links that show your experience and explain this relevance in your resume.

3. **Fill in the details:** Make your resume stand out from others with similar experience to you by personalizing your resume in the details. Every sentence included in your resume should display a relevant skill or experience. First, bring your resume to life with [relevant action words](#) describing your job responsibilities under each position heading, such as “spearheaded,” “managed,” “achieved,” or “created.”

After you have filled in your most important experience, it is a good idea to tailor your resume slightly to match each job application you submit. Use the same keywords in your resume as your potential employer has used in the job description to show the relevance of your past experience to this new role.

4. **Write a cover letter:** Submitting a cover letter along with your resume is standard practice in Canada, though not mandatory. A well-written cover letter is important because it allows you to bridge the gap between the position and your job experience while highlighting the value you would bring to a potential role. Tailoring your cover letter to each specific position you apply for, as you have done with your resume, will help you elevate your application by showing the employer your high engagement and qualification for the role.

Download our [free cover letter template](#) that you can customize to make your own.

A cover letter is not meant to rephrase your resume; rather, it should supplement your resume with persuasive and clear reasons why your experience and skill set make you well-qualified for the job you are applying for. Your cover letter should be in letter format, and include:

- Your contact information
- A personal and formal salutation (Avoid a generalized salutation like “To whom it may concern.” It is advisable to try to find your head of department’s name on a site like [LinkedIn](#), if possible)
- An introductory paragraph
- 2-3 brief paragraphs highlighting your interest and qualification for the job
- A closing statement
- Your name and signature

Tip: Include keywords in your cover letter that your employer has listed in the job description, to show the relevance of your qualifications to the role. For example, if an employer asked for a “problem-solver” in the job description, you can reflect that keyword back into your application: “In my role as a software developer, I displayed strong problem-solving ability working through bugs in the development of an app.”

Learn more: See [how to write an effective cover letter](#) for more tips and best.

5. **Proofread, proofread, proofread:** After completing your resume and cover letter, it is critical that you check for grammatical errors. Your resume may be full of amazing work experience and relevant skills, but just one spelling or punctuation error can cause a hiring manager to disregard your whole application. Once you finish writing, come back to your resume and cover letter with fresh eyes (a few hours or days later) to catch any mistakes you may have missed the first time. It is always a good idea to have a friend or close professional contact proofread your resume and make suggestions for you to improve it.

Tip: If English is not your first language (or you don't feel confident in your grammatical ability), consider using a built-in spelling and grammar tool on your word processor, or a downloadable tool like [Grammarly](#), after completing your resume to check for errors.

Learn more: Read [how to write a resume for the Canadian job market](#) for an in-depth explanation of this process.

Creating your personal brand

Creating your personal brand is all about finding what defines you and sets you apart from others in your field. Each component of your professional life, including your past work experience, future career goals, and professional network, and personality, is summarized in your personal brand. There are many ways to start cultivating your personal brand so that when you touch down in Canada, you can easily communicate who you are to your growing professional network. Start developing these assets to reflect your personal brand:

- **Resume:** Use the introductory section to emphasize your personal brand by summarizing your most significant professional achievements, experience, and goals.
- **Your cover letter:** Expand on your brand and connect it to the job you are applying for.
- **Job interviews:** The question, "Tell me about yourself," is the perfect opportunity to explain your personal brand.
- **Starting a blog:** Whether work-related or personal, your blog should communicate your values and personal perspectives in a professional way.
- **Creating an e-portfolio:** Creating a portfolio of your past work is a great way to show your personal brand, rather than just describing it.
- **Updating your social media profiles to reflect your brand:** A consistent personality across Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn will emphasize your brand.
- **Elevator pitches:** Test your personal brand by condensing it into a short, memorable elevator pitch to make effective networking introductions.

Learn more: Read how to [build your personal brand in 3 simple steps.](#)

Perfecting the elevator pitch

Once you have begun building your personal brand, think about how you can communicate it to new people you meet. Elevator pitches, as the name implies, are short (20-30 seconds, or approximately 75 words) introductory speeches to introduce yourself while [networking](#). The name comes from the amount of time it would take to introduce yourself while riding an elevator — it may help to imagine this scenario while you create your elevator pitch. A good elevator pitch sounds natural and compelling and is a great asset to create as it can help you make professional connections

Learn more: See [how to craft an impressive elevator pitch to enhance your personal brand.](#)

Tip: Try the [Elevator Pitch Generator](#) from Prepped to give you a few ideas on how to effectively condense your brand into a compelling 30-second pitch and practise sharing it with confidence.

Finding your desired role in Canada

Where to start searching

You never know where your next job opportunity could come from, so cover your bases by starting your job search in these areas:

- 1. Use online job search tools:** If you are just starting your job search, you will be able to begin researching career options by location, position, employer, using online job search tools like [LinkedIn](#) and [Indeed](#). Keeping your profile updated with current job experience and a professional-looking photo will greatly improve your chances of success on these platforms

Learn more: See the [top ten tips to optimize your LinkedIn profile for job search in Canada.](#)

- 2. Look at companies you want to work for:** Visit the website of the company you are interested in. Typically, companies have a page that lists current job openings. If you don't see any job postings for a specific company, don't be afraid to contact them directly. Give them a call or send them an email to ask if they are hiring. Workplace information sites like [Glassdoor](#) can give you a sense of a company's workplace culture through reviews from current and former employees.

- Research and plan to visit job fairs:** Once you land in Canada, look for upcoming, relevant job fairs. Many newcomer settlement agencies organize job fairs. Reach out to newcomer organizations in your community about upcoming events, as well as frequently searching on Google, social media sites like [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#), and event listing websites like [Eventbrite](#). Even if a job fair doesn't exactly match what you are looking for, it is still a good idea to go and meet new people. You may be given a tip that will lead you to a better opportunity.
- Use an employment agency:** Connecting yourself with an employment or recruitment agency means that they will look for jobs on your behalf. Research newcomer employment agencies in your area of Canada, or use the [Government of Canada newcomer services search tool](#) to find organizations that can connect you with employment or recruitment agencies.

Tip: Keep your career search on-track with [Prepped](#)'s free personalized job search plans. By signing up for a learning plan, you receive access to expert career advice, weekly goal check-ins, and free tools, templates and learning modules to supplement and organize your job search.

Transform your job search with networking

Networking is often touted as one of the most important steps in building your career in Canada as a newcomer. This is because of [Canada's hidden job market](#): many jobs are filled by personal recommendations through networks, rather than being posted publicly. It is said that as many as [65-85 per cent of the jobs are not posted online](#) and instead are filled internally or through recommendations. The more authentic personal connections you are able to make, the greater access you will have to the hidden job market. Your [personal brand](#) is the key to [effective networking](#); making a memorable impression on a new connection with your personal brand may lead to future opportunities or introductions from them down the road.

What is networking?

At its core, networking is building relationships with people. Though your goal is to ultimately secure employment, it is important in the [culture of networking in Canada](#) that you make a genuine effort to make real connections. Being pushy about asking for a job without getting to know someone first may come across as insincere.

Making a meaningful connection with a new contact takes active engagement. Follow these tips to add value and meaning to your conversations with new connections:

- Keep a note of their interests and the interests you have in common
- Learn about their passion projects
- Provide them with a deeper understanding of who you are beyond your professional interest
- Follow-up on previous discussion topics to show your engagement
- Ask for a further connection on a topic you have connected over

Learn more: For effective networking strategies, see our [networking tips for newcomers to Canada](#).

Connect with a coffee chat

Coffee chats — also called coffee interviews or informational interviews, are a common networking tool in Canada. A coffee chat is an opportunity to connect one-on-one with another professional to learn more about them and their role, and for them to learn more about you (often involving meeting for coffee, as the name suggests). If you are interested in learning more about someone or their company, reach out to them through email or LinkedIn for a coffee chat. Remember, coffee chats are informal and just meant for you to make a sincere connection with someone — not to immediately ask them for a job opportunity. Focus on making a good impression and learning as much as you can.

Tip: Coffee chats can also be done virtually or over the phone. Though an in-person coffee meeting is ideal for connecting with someone, a virtual coffee chat can be more flexible if you or your contact have a busy schedule.

Learn more: Read about how to best utilize the [coffee chat](#) to build your network.

Building your Canadian network

When looking for a job, it's crucial to build and nurture your network in Canada. So, the more people you talk to, the more your network grows, along with your chances of getting that job. It is also important to stay in touch with people because you never know where they will end up. Here are a few places to begin building your Canadian network:

1. **LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is the largest online career platform, with millions of professional users in all types of fields. By searching for companies and positions that are relevant to you, you will be able to see the profiles of other professionals in your chosen field. You can send a connection request to anyone whose job experience interests you to start building your professional network. When sending a request, be sure to include a message explaining who you are and why you want to connect. Try using icebreakers — like asking for career advice from someone who works in a position you are interested in — to initiate the conversation

Tip: Watch our webinar "[How to optimize your LinkedIn profile and network](#)" for even more tips on getting the most out of online networking.

2. **Attend events that interest you:** One of the best ways to meet people with mutual career interests is to attend industry workshops and networking events and introduce yourself. This is a great way to make yourself known in your field. Exchange business cards, contact information, or LinkedIn profiles with new contacts so that you can follow up after the event. You can find professional networking events through a Google search, social media sites like [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#), or event listing sites like [Eventbrite](#).

Use your network for research

Networking is also useful to discover information about new career fields, positions, and salary expectations. Many Canadian jobs don't put salaries directly on a job posting, so you should use professional contacts in your network in similar fields to determine your salary expectations before you interview.

Tip: Explicitly discussing salaries can be considered rude, so try to avoid directly asking someone their salary. Instead, frame your question neutrally, structuring it around your own skills and experience. For example, you can ask: "Given your understanding of my background, what would be a good salary for me?"

Learn more: See how to properly research and negotiate your [salary expectations](#).

Interview like a pro

The hiring process in Canada takes longer than what you may be used to. You may have several rounds of interviews, spanning up to a couple of months before being hired. Being prepared for your interview can significantly increase your success rate and possibly reduce the time it takes to find a job.

Tip: For more interview tips, watch our webinar: How to master your interview and get the job.

If you have managed to secure an interview, the employer has already seen your resume and application, and now wants to know if you would be a good fit for the company. Avoid repeating your resume verbatim — instead, use the opportunity to allow your personality and skills to shine through in a confident manner.



Interview etiquette

Generally, a job interview lasts between 45 minutes and one hour. Here are a few pieces of advice from [Prepped](#) on typical interview best practices.

- **Dress code:** “Business Formal” clothing usually consists of professional-looking dress pants, blazers, skirts or dresses, and blouses.
- **Bring a printed copy of your resume and cover letter:** Consider bringing a few printed copies of your resume and cover letter to your interview, in case the interviewer(s) don’t have a copy handy.
- **Research your potential employer beforehand:** Don’t go into your interview blind. Know your potential employer’s mission statement and current projects by checking out their website and social media pages like [LinkedIn](#) beforehand.
- **Make eye contact:** Show confidence and engagement by making eye contact with your interviewer.
- **Ask productive questions:** Typically, an interview ends with an opportunity for you to ask questions to the employer. Try not to ask simple questions that could be answered with a Google search — show your engagement and interest by asking thoughtful questions.

Tip: It is customary to send a thank you note or email to your interviewer after your interview. Don’t skip this step! See the [Do's and Don'ts of Interview thank-you notes](#) for help crafting the perfect note.

Common job interview questions

As you refer to these common interview questions, it’s important not to memorize answers for each question but instead have an overall idea of key points that you would like to convey and adopt a very natural, conversational style while answering them. To get you started, here are some common interview questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why do you want to work at this company?
3. Tell me about a time you faced a challenge or conflict at work, and how you dealt with it?
4. Tell me about a time you failed.
5. What motivates you?
6. What are your strengths?
7. What are your weaknesses?
8. Where do you see yourself in ‘X-number’ of years? OR What are your goals?
9. What do you consider your biggest professional achievement
10. What is your salary expectation?

Learn more: Read [10 common job interview questions and how to answer them](#) to decipher these questions and give the response your interviewer is looking for.

- Tip:** If you are unsure how to structure your responses, the STAR formula is a great place to start:
- **S = Situation:** Describe the scenario or challenge that existed.
 - **T = Task:** Outline the goal that needed to be met (or achieved) to resolve the situation.
 - **A = Action:** Discuss the specific steps you took towards resolution.
 - **R = Result:** Share qualitative and quantitative outcomes from your actions.

After the interview

If your interview goes well, your potential employer may ask for background information from your professional references. Have two or three contacts lined up who are familiar with your professional life, personality, and work ethic and can vouch for your ability. A former manager from a previous job is an ideal reference. Let your references know that they may be receiving a call from your potential employer and be sure to thank them for their help.

Learn more: A great way to find Canadian references is to spend time volunteering in your community. Volunteering in Canada can help you build your network and gain Canadian experience while you job search. See more about the [benefits of volunteering as a newcomer in Canada](#).

You may also be required to complete a background check at this stage, depending on your position and the nature of your work.

What you need to get hired in Canada

When you get hired, it may take a few weeks or even months before your first day of work, depending on your employer's hiring needs. Many Canadian employers tend to plan their hiring quite far ahead of when they require an employee to be sure they have enough time to find the right candidate. Once you begin work, it may take an additional two to four weeks before you receive your first paycheque, depending on your payroll processing time.



Accepting a job offer

Once you are offered a job, there are a few points that you will need to discuss and confirm with your new employer. The written offer letter you receive should include:

- Your job title and main duties as discussed at your interview
- The details of your salary and benefits (vacation time, bonuses, etc.)
- Your work location and address
- Your official start date

If the offer does not meet your expectations or is different from what you had previously discussed, you have the opportunity to negotiate your offer terms. Watch our webinar "[How to negotiate a Canadian job offer](#)," to understand how to thoroughly research and tactfully negotiate your salary and benefits.

Learn more: If you are looking for your first job in Canada, see these [5 things you should know about your salary](#).

Get your social insurance number (SIN)

To work in Canada, you are required to have a valid [social insurance number \(SIN\)](#). Employers will require evidence that you are eligible to work in Canada. See the [Government of Canada website](#) to learn how to apply for your SIN.

Learn more: If you are also studying in Canada while looking for a job, see [What international students need to know about working in Canada](#).

Open a bank account

Once you start working, you'll need a Canadian bank account to deposit your hard-earned money. You can [start your application for a Canadian bank account](#) from inside or outside of Canada. This is the best way to keep your money safe and secure in Canada. You will need one of the following documents to open a Canadian bank account:

- [A driver's license issued in Canada](#)
- A Canadian or foreign passport
- Permanent Resident card
- Immigration Canada Form IMM 1000 or IMM 1442

Tip: [Book an appointment to chat with an RBC Advisor](#) to know more about how you can open a Canadian bank account. Once booked, an advisor will reach out to find out whether you'd like to meet via phone, video or in-branch.

Learn more: For a full overview of Canadian banking and how to budget for your life in Canada, download [From Banking to Budgeting in Canada: A Quick Guide](#).

In Summary: Key takeaways

Now that you have reviewed this guide, you have the tools you need to begin your Canadian job search. The resources in this guide will give you the confidence to showcase your best skills and career aspirations to land a great position in Canada but remember — you are your own best asset in your career search. Have confidence and trust in yourself to reach your career goals.

Learn more: If you want to know more about job searches in specific fields, see the [Newcomer's Guide to the Canadian job market](#).

Key takeaways:

- 1. Prepare for the Canadian job market:** Prepare for your job search in Canada by creating a Canadian-style resume and cover letter, building your personal brand, researching opportunities, and starting to network.
- 2. Network actively:** You never know where your next opportunity will come from. Using all of your available resources in your job search, including strategic networking, can speed up the process of finding a job in Canada.
- 3. Don't lose hope:** Patience and persistence are the keys to staying optimistic, even when your job search takes longer than expected.

By using the tools in this guide to start preparing for your job search early, you may save time and resources and find your desired career in Canada more quickly. Millions of successful newcomers have found their careers in Canada; hopefully, soon, you will be able to tell your own newcomer career success story.

Sources:

Prepped | Learning Library

<https://www.fullyprepared.ca/en/learning-library>

LinkedIn (18 August 2016) Top 50 Verbs to put in your resume

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/top-50-verbs-put-your-resume-james-hu/>

Prepped | Resources

<https://www.fullyprepared.ca/en/resources/templates/messages>

Prepped | Blog

<https://www.fullyprepared.ca/blog/finding-a-job/the-dos-and-donts-of-interview-thank-you-notes/>

Prepped | Exercises

<https://www.fullyprepared.ca/en/exercise/elevatorPitch/overview>

<https://www.fullyprepared.ca/en/exercise/interviewing101/overview>

Government of Canada (2020) Find free newcomer services near you

<https://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomers/services/index.asp>

Disclaimers:

Arrive is powered by RBC Ventures Inc, a subsidiary of Royal Bank of Canada. In collaboration with RBC, Arrive is dedicated to helping newcomers achieve their life, career, and financial goals in Canada. An important part of establishing your financial life in Canada is finding the right partner to invest in your financial success. RBC is the largest bank in Canada* and here to be your partner in all of your financial needs. RBC supports Arrive, and with a 150-year commitment to newcomer success in Canada, RBC goes the extra mile in support and funding to ensure that the Arrive newcomer platform is FREE to all. Working with RBC, Arrive can help you get your financial life in Canada started – right now. Learn about your banking options in Canada and be prepared.

* Based on market capitalization.

This article offers general information only and is not intended as legal, financial or other professional advice. A professional advisor should be consulted regarding your specific situation. While the information presented is believed to be factual and current, its accuracy is not guaranteed and it should not be regarded as a complete analysis of the subjects discussed. All expressions of opinion reflect the judgment of the author(s) as of the date of publication and are subject to change. No endorsement of any third parties or their advice, opinions, information, products or services is expressly given or implied by RBC Ventures Inc. or its affiliates.