

**EGYPTIAN STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION IN NORTH AMERICA  
(ESANA)  
EDMONTON CHAPTER  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**



**NEW STUDENTS' GUIDE TO LIVING AND STUDYING IN  
CANADA**

Last updated February 2007

# Welcome to Edmonton



## Acknowledgment

This booklet is intended only to give a guideline for Egyptian students' newcomers to Edmonton. It was made by students just like you with their best intention to give you their experience during the time they stayed in Edmonton. We wish that your stay would be as pleasant as possible. Please take your time in reading this guide thoroughly. We welcome any questions and we are here to help.

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The Egyptian Students' Association (ESA) would like to thank all who participated in preparing this guide, especially Mrs. Heba Ibrahim who put a big effort towards updating the original guide.

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# I. Introduction

## 1. ESANA

### A. What is ESANA?

The Egyptian Students' Association in North America (ESANA) is a national, democratic and independent students' organization. Membership in ESANA is open to all Egyptian citizens who study or conduct scientific research in USA or Canada. The total number of members is about 1500 distributed in about 43 units across USA and Canada. ESA-NA membership can be classified as follows:

**1. Active Member 'A':** students who are under the supervision of the Egyptian Cultural and Educational Bureaus (ECEB) in Canada and USA, i.e. students who have files in the Missions Department of the Ministry of Higher Education in Egypt. 'A' members are eligible to vote and be nominated for all positions in either the ESANA or the local units (ESA).

**2. Active Member 'B':** students who are NOT under the supervision of the ECEB are 'B' members are eligible for voting and nomination for all positions as well. The old rules had banned them from nomination to local chapters' presidency or being an Executive Committee member in ESANA; yet these rules have been changed.

**3. Honorary Member 'C':** all Egyptian citizens living in North America, Egyptian undergraduate students, and spouses of members A and B. ESANA is sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education in Egypt and the Egyptian Cultural and Educational Bureaus in USA and Canada. These sponsors provide ESANA with its main budget, which ranges between 10,000 and 13,000 US dollars per year. ESANA is currently registered as a Non-Profit Organization in USA.

### Organization Structure

The main structure of ESA-NA can be divided into:

1. The Executive Committee (EC)
2. Local ESA Chapters (LC)

**ESANA Executive Committee (EC)** is the executive branch body of the ESA. This committee is elected during the annual general meeting of ESANA which is held annually in Washington D.C., USA. Chairmanship and membership of ESA-NA EC is one year and can be extended for an additional year only. A semiannual meeting of ESANA EC is usually held at the Egyptian Cultural and Educational Bureau in Montreal, Canada. ESANA EC is composed of 7 members:

1. ESANA EC President,
2. ESANA EC Vice President,
3. Units Affairs and Coordination Officer,
4. Science Affairs Officer,
5. Media Affairs Officer,

6. Social Affairs Officer, and
7. Treasurer.

*ESANA local chapters* are branches of ESANA in different American and Canadian cities. A local Chapter can be formed if the Active Members in any city in USA or Canada are at least 5. If the number of active members in a city is less than 5, this city can join the geographical closest local ESANA Chapter. No more than one local ESANA Chapter can exist in one city.

## **B. Services Provided to the ESANA Members**

### **1. Representation before North American and Egyptian Authorities**

ESANA represents its members before Egyptian and North American governmental authorities, which help solving different problems that may face ESANA members, such as:

- Problems associated with governmental missions' regulations and their implications on student life.
- Problems regarding health insurance problems in USA.
- Problems associated with recognizing post-graduate degrees obtained from North American Universities.

### **2. Social fund**

ESANA provides social assistance to its members to help decrease the hardships facing Egyptian students in North America in the following forms:

- Subsidizing medical bills by 35% with a maximum limit of \$120 US for single students and \$150 for married students.
- Subsidizing purchase of eye glasses by 35% with a maximum limit of \$50 US.
- A gift certificate of \$50 US for newborns.

### **3. ESANA emailing list**

ESANA provides its member with an emailing list service where ESANA members can interact with each other and discuss:

- Topics related to their studies.
- News about political, economical, and scientific events in Egypt and the Arab and Muslim world.

### **4. ESA-link**

This service helps the ESANA members traveling within North America, usually to attend conferences, to obtain information about different cities regarding accommodation, transportation ...etc. ESANA Executive Committee assigns a manager from ESANA members to supervise this project. The manager usually takes care of members' requests by posting them on ESANA emailing list and by making sure the ESA-NA members get the information they are looking for.

## **C. Services Provided to the Scientific Community in Egypt**

### **1. Book Campaign**

This project aims at helping Egyptian universities overcome the lack of research materials in their libraries. This has been carried out through collecting donations from universities and research institutes in USA and Canada in the form of research materials, such as books and scientific journals. The donated materials are then sent to a different Egyptian university every year based on its position on a priority list. The priority list is developed by contacting several Egyptian universities by ESANA Executive Committee to investigate their interest in receiving such donated materials. ESANA Executive Committee assigns two new managers, one for Canada and one for USA, for this project every year to supervise the project and to coordinate the efforts of ESANA members towards the success of this project. The Book Campaign Started in 1997 and since then research materials worth over 6 million US dollars have been sent to Egypt. Egyptian universities are asked to cover the shipping expenses only. As a result, the total amount paid by these universities in the last six years has not exceeded 36,000 US dollars. The following Egyptian universities are examples of the beneficiaries of the project for the last years: Al-Azhar University, Assiut University, Ganoub Elwady University, Cairo University, Menofia University and Helwan University (2002).

### **2. Study in North America (SiNA)**

This project aims at helping Egyptian researchers joining accredited universities in USA and Canada and advising them on different financial support resources in their field of study. A manager for this project is assigned every year by ESANA Executive Committee. The project manager, whose contact information is posted on ESANA website, receives assistance requests to join universities in North America either through electronic or regular mails and delivers them to ESANA members, through ESANA emailing list, asking for their support. ESANA members in collaboration with the project manager exhaust all possible avenues to respond to these assistance requests by tracking down announcement for assistantships, studentships, and employment opportunities in North America. This project was launched in 1998 in its current form and has helped more than 90 Egyptian researchers to obtain acceptance and financial support in different research institutes in USA and Canada.

### **3. ESA-link**

This project aims at providing links between the Egyptian scientific and academic community in North America and their fellow researcher in Egypt. This link helps provide some services to prospective researchers in Egypt such as:

- Information about Egyptian professors in different universities in USA and Canada.
- Assessment of different research areas in North American universities.
- Estimation of living expenses in several cities in USA and Canada.
- Help new Egyptian students find suitable accommodation prior to their arrival to North America.
- Pickup service to newly arrived Egyptian students at several Airports in USA and Canada.

A manager for this project is assigned every year by ESANA Executive Committee to coordinate the efforts of the volunteers working on this project. The project manager is responsible for receiving assistance requests, in a manner similar to the SiNA project mentioned above, and for delivering them to ESANA members asking for their support. This project was launched in its current form in 1998.

#### 4. ESANA Research Support project (ERS)

This project is under development. The main objective of the ESANA research support (ERS) project is to provide researcher in Egypt with research support. This support can take several forms as explained below:

- Help with finding research materials such as papers, theses, manuals, etc.
- Posting the web address of online research materials on the ESANA website.
- Scientific discussion and advice.

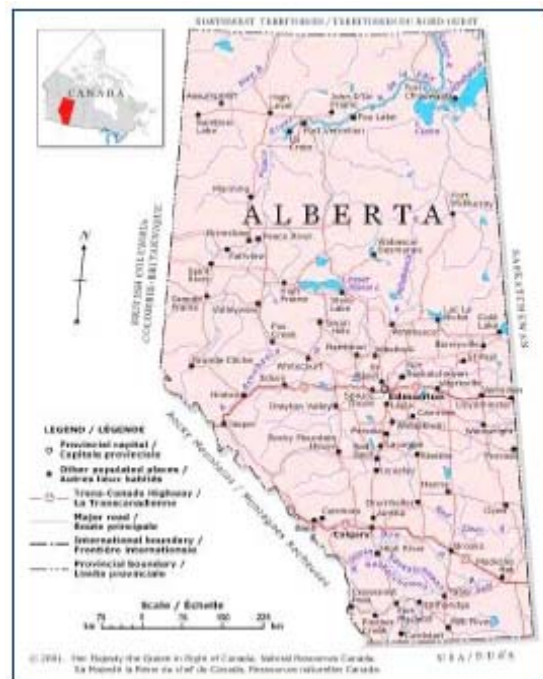
ESANA members have been classified according to their research area and have been contacted to work as volunteers in this project. ESANA executive committee has assigned a manager for this project to coordinate the efforts of the volunteers. The manager will be responsible for receiving assistance requests from researchers in Egypt and direct them to the volunteers asking for their support. The project will be publicized on ESANA website and various avenues will be exhausted to arrange for a massive media campaign in Egyptian media.

## 2. Edmonton

### A. Location and Activities

- It is the capital of the province of Alberta.
- It was founded in 1795.
- It covers about 700 square kilometers.
- Population: ~712,391 (2006)

**Alberta** is the largest producer of conventional crude, synthetic crude, and natural gas and gas products in the country. Two of the largest producers of petrochemicals in North America are located in central and north central Alberta. In both Red Deer and Edmonton, world class polyethylene and vinyl manufacturers produce products shipped all over the world, and Edmonton's oil refineries provide the raw materials for a large petrochemical industry to the east of Edmonton..



## B. Map

You can get a map free from any bus station in Canada or you can buy one from any store ranging \$3 CAD a map

## C. Climate

Edmonton's climate varies considerably throughout the year.

**Summer** is very pleasant with daytime high temperatures averaging around 20<sup>0</sup>C and overnight lows around 10<sup>0</sup>C. Occasionally the daytime high surpasses 30<sup>0</sup>C. Due to the low humidity, the heat is dry and seldom oppressive. During June and much of July, daylight lasts about 17 hours. The sun rises around 5 am and sets around 10 pm.

**Autumn**: Normally the first frost appears sometime near the end of September. Daytime highs are usually around 15<sup>0</sup>C, but evenings require a jacket or sweater. The first permanent snowfall usually occurs in early November, although this may vary by a week or two.

**Winter**: The first real taste of the colder winter temperatures usually occurs in November. January and early February are the coldest months of the year, and the overnight lows are usually around -25<sup>0</sup>C but can reach -40<sup>0</sup>C sometimes. Usually a cold spell lasts a week or so and then there is relief. Most of the colder days are usually sunny. During most of December and early January the days are short. The sun rises around 8:30 am and sets around 4:30 pm.

**Spring** can be quite unpredictable, although most of the winter snow has usually melted by the beginning of April. The leaves reappear on most trees near the middle of May. You should be aware of the following when coming to live in Edmonton:

- All buildings have **central heating**. It is not necessary to wear heavy clothing indoors, even during the winter. Most people only wear heavy overcoats and shoes when going outdoors.
- You should prepare for winter by purchasing in September or October a good winter jacket, gloves, something to cover your head and warm boots. Be sure to **wear a hat** that covers your ears on those cold days. You may even consider wearing a scarf to cover your face. Most heat loss occurs from the head, and wind-chill in winter can result in exposed flesh freezing in a matter of minutes.
- If you **own a car**, make sure your car has an in-block heater. At home, it is helpful to have access to a plug-in when parking your car outdoors overnight. Most University of Alberta parking stalls come equipped with electrical outlets. Be sure to equip your car with a set of booster cables. You should also consider an emergency survival kit consisting of a blanket, candles, and matches, especially if you travel at night in rural areas. Beware of slippery street conditions, especially after a snowfall! Watch for black ice on the roads, and always drive at a safe speed.
- Overall, the city has four distinct seasons and the weather most of the time is pleasant and sunny. In fact, Edmonton has more hours of sunshine than any other major Canadian city, and the province itself has earned the nickname *Sunny Alberta*.

Prepare your bags way ahead to avoid last day stress and to enjoy your time with your family. **DO NOT FORGET** to write a clear address and phone number on your bags (they might get lost).

## II. Before You Come to Canada

### 1. Passport and Visa

Apply for a Multiple Visa for both of you and your wife/husband. You may need to go to many conferences outside Canada so having a multiple visa will make everything easy. Also, it is important for your wife if she/he decided to visit Egypt during your stay. Also, make sure that your passport is valid for a long time so you don't have to renew it during your stay here and hence have to carry the two passports to show your visa. Also, it is **very important** to apply for a work permit for your wife/husband from Egypt.

### 2. Tickets

There is no direct flight from Egypt to Edmonton. Egypt Air has a direct flight during summer months only from Cairo to Montreal. However, the arrival time of this flight does not allow you to come to Edmonton on the same day and you will have to stay one night in Montreal.

Students who are funded from the Egyptian Government can have their reservation either on Egypt Air or any foreign airlines but through Misr Tourism. For students who are self funded or receiving their funds from the North American university, Ain Shams and Helwan universities pay one way ticket for their students, but not for their families. All students have their final return tickets paid by the Cultural Bureau as well as their families.

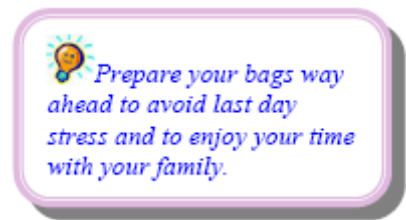
Regarding foreign airlines, it has been almost a “rule of thumb” to travel on the Deutsch Airlines “Lufthansa” rather than any other lines. Alitalia, British Airways and Air France come next in their appeal to Egyptian Students.

Muslim students can ask for a Muslim meal.

### 3. Baggage

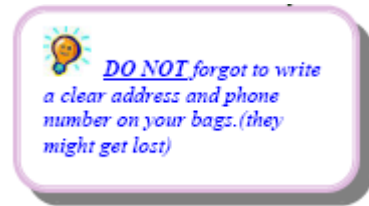
Prepare two large light but heavy-duty bags (each of 50 lb, or 22 kg) per an adult and a child having a seat, and only one small bag (not a handbag but a little larger) for an infant on his mother lab. You can get the luggage specification available on the airlines website or from the travel agent. Write a clear address and a phone number and better the date and the trip itinerary on your bag or any necessary information you might think of.

For Air Canada regulation for weight and size please visit <http://www.aircanada.ca/services/luggage/>



## **Money**

There are no restrictions on the amount of money that you can bring into or take out of Canada, nor is it illegal to do so. However, you now have to report to a customs officer amounts equal to or greater than CAN\$10,000 that you are bringing into or taking out of Canada.



## **4. Prepare your Papers**

It is always a good idea to translate and make copies of all your important papers and certificates before you come to Canada even if you don't think that you will need it. This applies for you and your family too.



The important documents include:

- Birth certificates,
- College or university document: certification of completion of your university B.Sc. degree,
- Original Transcript of all university degrees “preferably in a closed envelop sealed by the university stamp”,
- Marriage certificate or final divorce certificates for you and your spouse,
- Death certificate for former spouse,
- Police clearance (Feesh wa Tashbeeh or Finger Printing Prints Document).
- Letters of references from your current and old employers printed on stamped original company's letter head. Also, you should bring a business card for your employer who signed the certificate to prove his position in that organization. Try to mention in that document your full name in the same spelling as that in your passport, your position, job definition, period of employment, and the salary if possible,
- School records for your children,
- TOFEL certificates or any other language certificate (If the University of Alberta or any other institution in North America requested either TOEFL or IELTS exams, the IELTS exam will be better for future use to apply for Immigration), and
- International Driver license,
- A certificate from your syndicate "Neqaba" saying that you are a member of that syndicate.

After getting all these papers, go to the office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs "Wezaret Elkharegeyya" to get a certification on all of these papers (Arabic and English versions), then go to the Canadian Embassy in Cairo to stamp the most important documents of these; as the Canadian Embassy stamps are getting so much expensive. You can stamp only birth and marriage certificates.

Take care that the embassy will not stamp unless they see the stamp of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Take care also that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sometimes refuses to stamp an original papers saying that some important signatures are missing so start this process as early as you can to have a time if any unexpected issues appear.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada  
[www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)

## 5. Clothes and Accessories

**Heavy jackets and raincoats** are good investment but don't bring many heavy clothes. Although it reaches  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the winter, all the houses, cars, malls are centrally heated to a temperature reaching  $+25^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Most of us wear summer cloth inside houses both in summer and winter.

**Eye Glasses** are quite expensive compared to Egypt. You might want to bring two or three pairs of glasses.

**Men:** socks, underwear and autumn jacket.

**Women:** Women who are wearing Hijab might find difficulty in finding summer clothes in Canada. The quality and the models are better in Egypt. Bring your scarves, shoes and any other accessory that you might need.

**Children:** preferably bring their underwear and pajamas from Egypt for better quality and price. Toys are inexpensive in Canada.

Things that you might also consider to have with you:

- Praying mats for Muslim students,
- Pair of bed sheets,
- Towels,
- Medicine, and
- Whatever you wear inside the house in Egypt (summer clothes and slippers).
- List of addresses and phone numbers of your family and friends in Egypt and your contact persons in Canada.

## 6. Food and Utensils

**Kitchen utensils:** good quality Stainless Steel cookers. They are highly expensive here. You might want to get a good set of cooking pots and a couple of non-stick pans. All the other utensils are relatively cheap and of good quality. Shopping tips will come later.

**Food:** you might notice that the taste of food differ from Egypt, you will get used to it. Although almost everything you can think of is found here, some women prefer to get their spices (pepper, cumin...etc) or drinks (coffee, Anise, Helba...etc.) and also Vanilla (as most vanilla here has alcohol in it) from Egypt.

Please visit [http://canadainternational.gc.ca/Going\\_To\\_Canada-en.asp](http://canadainternational.gc.ca/Going_To_Canada-en.asp)

**Bathroom:** you might want to consider bringing one or two pipes (Shattaf) and its fittings (Sawameel). You can install it to your toilets. Ask your friends in Canada when you come how to install it.



## 7. Update your Family's Computer

One of the cheapest and easiest ways to talk and to see your family is the computer. Install a camera and a microphone in your family's computer and make sure they work and make sure that your family can use it well.



## 8. General Tips

- You might want to pay a visit for the dentist before you come here, as it might cost you a fortune (not kidding!!) here.
- Learn to cook at least the basics if you are coming without your wife.
- Rest well before you travel. The trip takes about 24 hours more or less.
- Please check the credit card section for important information.












## 9. Checklist

Item	Check
Passports	
Tickets	
Cash Money	
Telephone	
Card	
Papers	

### III. First Time in Canada

#### 1. Customs

Usually you will not face any difficulty with the customs office.

Allowed into Canada. All items must be clean and free of pests, soil and roots.		
	Cheese	Except if packed in whey. 20 kg/person to a maximum of \$20.
	Baby formula	Commercially packaged
	Seeds	Small seed: 500 g/person, Large seed (such as beans): 5 kg
	Cut flowers	Except coniferous foliage/green cones. Must not be for propagation.
	Fresh fruits: tropical	250 kg/person
	Fruits and vegetables: frozen, canned or dried	20 kg/person
	Some fresh vegetables	Root crops are regulated. Contact CFIA
	Herbs, spices, tea, coffee, condiments	Allowed
	Bakery goods, candies, etc.	Except those containing meat
	Fish and seafood	All species except puffer fish and Chinese mitten crab (Eriocheir)
	Leather goods and skins	Fully tanned hides and skins
	Wood, carvings	Must be free of bark, insects

**VERY IMPORTANT:** When you are in the flight coming to Canada, you will be given a declaration form to fill in. It is extremely important to report any kinds of foods you carry with you even if they are in the allowed list above. If the customs officer found something not allowed that you did not report, they always consider this a misrepresentation of facts, which is an offence here and may cause you some problems. There are porters in the Canadian airports that can help you with your luggage for a fee ranging from 5 to 10 US (*make sure you have a change*). Just make sure you both agree on the fee before he carries your luggage.

## 2. Airport Pickup

An ESA member will be waiting for you in the airport for pickup to your destination in Edmonton. We just need you to inform us ahead of your arrival by your arrival time and flight number. You can contact ESA Edmonton through the “Contact us” web page: <http://www.ualberta.ca/~esa106/contact.html>

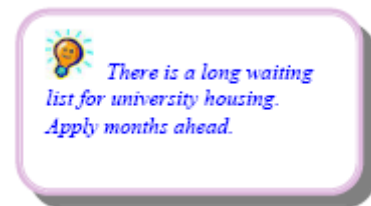
ESA’s website homepage: <http://www.ualberta.ca/~esa106/>

## 3. Finding a House

Edmonton is actually experiencing since last year a booming in the number of work and study opportunities. Consequently, the search for an accommodation outside university housing is becoming too difficult. In addition, the rent prices became now as high as \$700 to \$800 for one-bedroom units and up to \$1000 for two bedroom units. University housing rents, although increased by 10% effective September 2007, are still the better choice than off-campus accommodations.

**Accordingly, we strongly recommend applying for university housing from NOW. Once you get your admission letter from U of A, you can apply for university housing.**

Most houses and apartments contain refrigerator and stove. *Public coin-operated* washing machines and dryers are often in a separate room in the building.



### A. Where to Search

It is more convenient for a student’s budget to live in the university residences. The Department of Housing and Food services operated seven residence communities: Lister hall, HUB, Garneau residence, Faculte Saint-Jean, Newton place, Vanier House (for couples) and Michener Park (for families with children), see links below. If you are a bachelor and want to have a roommate to cut rental costs, you cans search in areas near the university. Also U of A is connected to central and north Edmonton by Light Trail Transit (LRT) (underground train).

#### *House hunts Internet resources:*

The Department of Housing and Food services

<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/residences/>

The student’s union housing registry:

<http://rentingspaces.ca/search.htm?ref=2>

Edmonton Journal

<http://homes.canada.com/edmonton/browsecategory.aspx?id=2935>

#### *Ads house abbreviation*

appls. – appliances

avail. – available

bach. – combined bedroom / living room

bsmt. – basement  
bdrm. – bedroom  
bldg. – building  
dam. dep. – damage deposit  
fem. - female  
m. – male  
flr. – floor  
immed. – immediately  
priv. ent. private entrance  
sh. accom. – shared accommodation  
utls. incl. – utilities included  
w/lease – with lease

## **B. Rates**

Rates are rising as pointed above. While searching, the renting price will appear with each available unit.

## **C. Rules and Regulations**

A security deposit, not exceeding one month's rent, is deposited with the landlord to cover any damage. University Students housing would usually take 150\$ as a security deposit (refundable by the end of the lease if no damages occurred) and an application fee \$25 (non refundable).

Yearly lease usually gives better rental rate, yet if you decided to move within the year a fine usually equals to the damage deposit will be applied.

## **4. Opening Bank Account**

You should open a bank account as soon as you can, to do so you have to select a bank first. The most popular ones are listed below. To find the one nearest to your resident or the university call the toll free numbers provided.

CIBC – call 1 800 465 4653

Royal Bank – call 1 800 769 2511

Bank of Montreal – call 1 800 363 9992

TD-Canada Trust – call 1 866 567 8888

When you come, an ESA member will guide you through this process together with registration.

## **5. Getting a Credit Card**

One of the major problems that face new comers, who are not landed immigrants, is that they don't have credit history in Canada. This might cause them not to have credit cards unless they make hold on some of their money at the bank to have a credit card coverage. Moreover, they can't get any Gold or Platinum credit cards of large credit limit, and can't enjoy their benefits. Most of the banks usually ask for a minimum of 2 years in Canada to consider your request. Here are some tips that greatly help in building a credit history very quickly:

- 1) Apply for a work permit for your wife/husband if she/he doesn't have one. This is legal for students. Their spouses can get a work permit even without having a job offer. This will also help in getting subsidy from the Alberta Health Care according to the family income after one year from the date of enrolling in Alberta Health Care system.
- 2) Apply for a credit card, even if they asked you to make hold over some of your money at the bank, and make the limit NOT MORE than \$500, even if you need larger limit. Make your wife the main card holder.
- 3) Apply for an additional card for yourself.
- 4) Try to use your the credit card regularly and pay your card statement in time. Pay your rent, buy grocery ...etc.

If you need to purchase stuff over \$500, which is the card limit, put extra money in the card and use it.. Do not apply for more than one card at a time or in short period as this can affect your credit history. The point of making your wife/husband the main holder for the credit card is because the credit cards companies will not give cards to International Students as they are assumed of limited income families, but they can give cards to foreign people with work permits as they assumed getting good income as they are working here. However, many of us applied for cards with holds and we were granted them; it differs case by case. After a short period, your wife and you will receive offers for Platinum and Gold credit cards and you will be accepted if you applied for any of them.

Recommended credit cards for travelers in order to have points on your flights are:

Aeroplan: <https://www.aeroplan.com>

Airmiles: <https://www.airmiles.ca>

You can apply online and the card will get to you by mail.

## 6. Television

**Antenna:** You can have a free reception of up to 7 Canadian channels using an internal antenna.

**Satellite:** Arabic satellite Programs (ART programs): ~\$400 initial cost + \$40 to 50\$ monthly fees, or Satellite System (on-air programs, without ART): \$400 initial cost + no monthly fees.

**Cable:** there are two major companies that provide internet, telephone and cable TV. The first one is Shaw ([www.shaw.ca](http://www.shaw.ca)) and the second is TELUS (<http://www.telus.com>). On Cable Telus you can subscribe to the Arabic channel "Abou Zabi". Look for special offers.

## 7. Telephone

There are two phone companies in Canada the first one is TELUS and the second one is Primus. Primus is of higher monthly rate but the international phone calls are the cheapest rate that we have found. Please check its website for more details:

<http://www.primus.ca/en/residential/homephone/index.html> the following rates are for TELUS:

## A. Local Calls

Installation fee: \$35

Unlimited phone calls for ~\$30 / month

You will receive a free copy of the yellow (business and organizations) and white pages (individual listings) upon subscribing. To have a telephone connected contact TELUS at 493-4965 (7days a week/24 hours a day). When you receive your new telephone number please inform the ESA Executive Committee who holds records of the members.

## B. International Calls

In order to make international calls (e.g. to Egypt) you might have to do any of the following:

- Subscribe in the long distance services with TELUS.
- Use YAK service through TELUS
- Subscribe with a secondary carrier, Startec (47 c/min to Egypt and 7 c/min within USA and Canada).
- Use pre-paid phone cards; there are many types of them each with different rates and service quality. You have to be careful and pick the most suitable card for you. You can get the calling cards from most of the convenient stores or online ([www.phonecardstore.ca](http://www.phonecardstore.ca))
- Use FREE MSN/Yahoo messenger on the Internet.

## 8. Internet

You can have Internet connection with variety of speed and prices with Shaw (TV cable company) or TELUS (telephone company) You can also have a free dial up Internet from the university.

## 9. Furniture and Household Items

Household items and furniture can be found at greatly reduced price in **Second hand stores:**

- “The Salvation Army” 9616 – 101A Avenue phone 425-9908.
- “Value Village: 8930-82 Avenue phone 468-1259.
- “Good Will”: 89 Street – 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue.

**Bargain finder:** like (Al-Waseet) in Egypt you can buy it for \$3 or view it online for free on the net at [www.buysell.com](http://www.buysell.com)

**Garage and yard sales:** take place only in the summer. You will find their posts across the streets or you can see ads in Edmonton journal on Friday. Give your self some time to explore the market before buying any of your items. It is always a good idea to compare prices and ask others before buying. ESA can guide you to have free donated furniture if needed.

## 10. Social Insurance Number

The Social Insurance Number (SIN) is a government-issued number that is legally required for all work in Canada. You will need to have SIN in order to receive your

salary from the university. Even if you don't work you may need the SIN for filing a tax return and claiming a Goods and Services Tax Refund. No fee is charged for an initial application for a social insurance number card.

An ESA member will be with you on your first days on campus and will guide you for that as well.

## 11. Health Care

### A. Alberta Health Care

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP) was established by the Government of Alberta to provide Alberta residents, as well as international students, with medical coverage for physician and some of the hospital services. You must register within three months of your arrival.

There are two regular premium rates:

- \$44 per month for single coverage, and
- \$88 per month for family coverage (two or more persons).

As a student you are not eligible for a subsidy. You can be eligible for a premium subsidy (you won't have to pay a thing) if the main holder of the account is your wife/husband who has a **work permit**, and since all of us are low income families, so the holder of the work permit will be eligible for this subsidy after one year from the work permit's holder entrance to Canada. Check their website for exact income limit. You will only have to report your taxes for the first year.

<http://www.health.gov.ab.ca>

### B. Blue Cross

It provides supplementary health and dental benefit programs to meet the health needs of over one million Albertans. It is an additional plan that you can join to cover other services that the Alberta health care doesn't cover like eye and dental diseases. It is completely optional. The rates depend on your budget and requirements. You can visit their site for more information.

<http://www.ab.bluecross.ca>

### C. University Health Care

Participation in this plan is mandatory even if you have Alberta Health Care Insurance. However, enrollment to Blue Cross plan may opt you out of the University health care plan. The payment is added to your university fees.

For more information:

[http://www.international.ualberta.ca/incoming\\_preparing.php?id=82&SearchType=AND&terms=medical](http://www.international.ualberta.ca/incoming_preparing.php?id=82&SearchType=AND&terms=medical)

## 12. To Do List upon your Arrival

Task	Check
Finding a house	
Open a bank account	
Hook your phone	
Social insurance number	
Alberta health care	
Register in the university	

## IV. Living in Edmonton

### 1. Getting a Car

#### A. Buy a Car

New cars are expensive to buy. You can get a relatively good used car in the range between \$2000 and 4000. You have to make sure that it works properly as the mechanics labor here is highly expensive. A Mechanic hour would cost around 86 \$/ hour. Currently the gas prices are around \$0.80 to 0.90 /liter. You may consider applying for a membership with AMA Alberta Motor Association for about \$80 - \$120 a year where it gives access to emergency road services (boosting or towing your car) [www.ama.ab.ca](http://www.ama.ab.ca) Most of the cars are automatic.

#### B. Car Insurance

Car insurance is mandatory. You will have to call an insurance company for a quote. It would range for a student \$100-150 a month. This amount will increase if you share the car with your wife.

<http://www.melochemonnex.com/en/home>

#### C. Driver's License

You will need to make a written exam to get your class seven license. As a class seven license holder, you are not allowed to drive by yourself; you can only have training with a class five holder. You will need to take a road test to get a class five to drive alone. (If you do not have your international driving license AND a translation of your Egyptian driving license, you will have to wait a whole year to get a class 5 license).

<http://www.saferoads.com/index.html>

[http://www.saferoads.com/pdf/workbook\\_newdrivers.pdf](http://www.saferoads.com/pdf/workbook_newdrivers.pdf)

## D. Rent a Car

There are several companies that rent cars in Edmonton. Look for special deals. You might need to get a special credit card to exclude you from paying a high insurance on the rented car.

<http://www.rentalcarmomma.com/cities/edmonton.htm>

You will find several links to several companies; look for special deals and promotions. Note: You can rent cars using your international driver's license.

## E. Parking

Parking at the university cost more than \$75/month depending on the location. Parking in Michener park costs around 23\$/month. Parking in down town or other places ~\$2.50/hour

## 2. Transportation

Edmonton Transit System (ETS) serves Edmonton with buses and Light Rail Transit (LRT) system. The LRT is a train system that transports ETS passengers from Clairview in the Northeast to the University of Alberta Campus on the Southside. It is currently being extended to serve Michener Park as well. If you are using the ETS regularly you might need to get the monthly student pass or the 10 ticket book which are found at:



- The Students' Union Information office (In the SUB), or
- The university bookstore (In the SUB), or
- The Varsity Drugs (In the HUB).

If you need to transfer from one bus to another in order to reach your destination and you don't have the monthly pass, you can ask the driver for a "transfer" which is valid for 90 minutes, you can use the transfer on any bus or LRT traveling in any direction. Please visit [www.takeets.com](http://www.takeets.com) under tab "transit" for more information and transit schedules.



## 3. Groceries

No one can tell you actually of how much you would spend on groceries. Don't rush into buying until one of us accompanies you for the first time at least. ***Always keep your receipt.***

***Superstore*** is a mega store where you can find everything you can imagine. It is like "Carfour" in Egypt but much bigger and has branches all over Edmonton and Canada. Most likely you will find it cheaper than any other supermarket. Make sure to look for the special coupons inside and outside the every Saturday flyer of the superstore. "No Name" brand is usually the cheapest and with relatively good quality. Look for it.

[www.superstore.ca](http://www.superstore.ca)

***H&W*** for fresh vegetables and fruits with low prices

9261 – 34 Avenue Tel: 436-7970

14083 Victoria Trail Tel: 478-8780

**Arabs shops:** Edmonton has few shops that sell its ethnic products and Halal Meat. Their ads are available in the Islamic calendar from the mosque, or you can ask one of us.

**West Gate Halal food:** 444-8997, 9550-163 street

It is a good idea to visit the following site: [www.save.ca](http://www.save.ca) as you can get by mail different kinds of coupons.

**Note:**

The following ingredients may be derived from pork or contain alcohols; so they may be avoided by Muslim students. Read the ingredients labels before you buy anything:

1. Alcohol
  2. Animal Shortening\*
  3. Animal Fat \*
  4. Bacon
  5. Broth\* (from animals)
  6. Enzymes\*: Microbial Enzymes are okay
  7. Ethanol
  8. Ethyl alcohol
  9. Gelatin\*
  10. Gin
  11. Ham
  12. L-cysteine (if from human hair)
  13. Lard
  14. Lipase\*: Only animal lipase should be avoided
  15. Pepsin
  16. Rennet\*: All forms should be avoided except for plant/microbial/synthetic.
  17. Rum
  18. Stock\* (from animals)
  19. Wine
  20. Tallow\*
  21. Vanilla Extract/Flavour
  22. Whey : Should be avoided unless the rennet used in its production is plant/microbial/synthetic.
- \* May be consumed if from Halal, Zabihah, animals

Some useful information is posted on the following website for a pork-free food:

<http://www.eat-halal.com>

Islamic Halal Food Monitor of Canada

<http://www.ifanca.org/>

The Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA) is a non-profit Islamic organization.

## 4. Shopping

Don't buy anything unless it is on sale and a good one too.

**ALWAYS** keep the receipts in order to have price adjustments if there are any later discounts.

There are two major sales events: one in August and the other in December.

Check your calendar for Boxing Day on December 26<sup>th</sup> every year for extra savings.

Edmonton has many shopping malls, yet the largest in the world is West Edmonton Mall

<http://www.westedmall.com/home/default.asp>

Consider visiting the WallMart, XS Cargo, and liquidation world. You can find lots of deals and cheap prices for certain products.

You might want to visit something called the “outlet”. Every big store has an outlet where they sell extra reduced stuff that they want to get rid of it. – Like Aldo (for shoes).

## **5. Taxes**

As a student in a Canadian university you are subject to federal and provincial taxation laws, whether you receive your salary from U of A or from the Egyptian Government. Anyone earning income in Canada must file an income tax return. Canada has a self-assessment system. Each person is required to determine his or her tax payable amounts each year. The completed tax return should be filed by April 30 of the following year (the taxation year is based on the calendar year, from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>). Taxes are calculated based on your income, deductions, non-refundable tax credits and refundable tax credits.

Students with low income usually don’t pay taxes, but on the contrary the government pays for them any taxes deducted from their salaries during the taxing year and most of the low-income students are eligible for the GST refund. Also, low-income families with children who stayed in Canada for more than 18 months are eligible to receive Child Tax Benefits from the government. For more information on Revenue Canada, go to their web site at:

<http://www.rc.gc.ca>

It is very important that you obtain the information slips required by the average student (T4, T4A and T2202A). The university will mail these to you before April. If you don’t get them you should contact your department. Every year the international center holds an income tax return workshop that will help you understand and fill in the income tax return forms. Look for their posters in February or March. Also, you might find it useful to collect a “Foreign Student Handbook” from the International Center on campus.

## **6. Immigration and Employment**

The student authorization allows you to study in Canada; it may specify terms and conditions that govern your stay in Canada. For example, the duration of study, the name of the institution or the level of study you are allowed to undertake. Please read your student authorization carefully. If you don’t understand its contents, talk to Canadian officials. Your student authorization for post-secondary study should be valid for the duration of your course of studies.

Canada Immigration cannot extend documents beyond the expiry of your passport. Passport renewal can take a long time, so be sure to note the passport expiry date and begin the renewal early. To renew your passport while you are in Canada, contact the Egyptian Embassy at least 3 months before the passport expires. The Egyptian Embassy contact information could be found on the following link:

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~esa106/Embassy%20Address%20Change.pdf>

As an international student studying in Canada, you are eligible for certain customs benefits, including the temporary importation into Canada of your household and personal effects. A number of conditions apply, so before coming to Canada you should

refer to the booklet “Entering Canada to Study or To Work”, this is available from the Canadian Consulate in Cairo or Alexandria.

As an International student you may be allowed to work while attending university. Foreign students studying in Canada can apply for off-campus work permits. Details are posted on this link:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/press/06/0601-e.html>

Be ware that if you work without an employment authorization, you may be in violation of the Immigration Act and may be required to leave Canada.

If your circumstances change, or if anything about your studies, funding or documentation changes, you must contact the Canada Immigration Center (CIC) office in Edmonton immediately. Contact the CIC office if your course is longer than expected, you finished your studies before the course ended or you wish to change terms and conditions noted on your student authorization.

## **7. Islamic Community in Edmonton**

The Islamic community in Edmonton is one of the oldest in North America. It was established in the early 1900’s when Muslims arrived in Canada from all over the world. Edmonton’s Muslim population is over 30,000 representing over 30 nationalities. Edmonton is also home to the first mosque built in North America: The Canadian Islamic Center is also known as Al-Rashid Mosque. Edmonton has 6 mosques, the major ones are:

- Canadian Islamic Center (Al-Rashid Mosque) – phone: 451-6694.
- Muslim Community of Edmonton Mosque (University Mosque or MCE).  
Phone: 432-0208.

For more information about the Islamic community in Edmonton go to the Muslim Students’ Association (MSA) website at: <http://www.ualberta.ca/~msa/>

## **8. Having a Visitor**

You can invite any of your or your spouse’s parents to visit you for a period up to six months. You will have then to apply for an official certification from the university that you are a student and includes information about your salary. You may get this certification from “Staff and Students’ Payments” located in Assioniboia Hall on campus. You may as well get this certification from your department. Send it to your guest, and ask her/him to take it to the Canadian Embassy, together with two 4X6 cms size photos, visitor application, and a bank statement. Generally for guests, the visa is issued on the same day.

Visitors can get their money back (goods and services tax refunds) by getting a rebate of sales tax (GST) paid on accommodation in Canada and certain purchases of goods removed from Canada. See this site

<http://www.canadasalestaxrefunds.com/index.html>

## V. Children

### 1. Governmental Services

Follow this link to learn more about the services provided by the government of Canada for children and families.

<http://servicecanada.gc.ca/en/children/children.html>

### 2. Public and Islamic Schools

<http://www.epsb.ca/index.shtml>

Edmonton Public Schools is committed to providing options when it comes to education. Their diverse programming and open boundary policy ensures that parents and students have choice at Edmonton Public Schools!

To enroll your children in public school, you can contact Edmonton Public School Board at 428-8000

<http://www.islamicschool.ca/index.htm>

To enroll your children in the Edmonton Islamic school call 454-4573.

### 3. FREE Car Seat Program:

Contact the nearest public health center and ask them about a car seat for your child (use the yellow pages). It requires that you have a private car. The new car seat is offered for \$20 and it should be returned back after your child exceeds the age. If you need a booster they can provide you with it.

### 4. Child Care Tax Benefit:

Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) is a tax-free monthly payment provided to eligible families to help them with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age. You can apply for CCTB after 18 months of your entering date to Canada. For newborn, you will receive an application for the CCTB in the hospital or you can print it on line. The amount of CCTB is based on a number of factors taken mostly from the income tax return. These factors include:

- The number of children and their ages (taken from the CCTB application),
- The province or territory that the client resides in,
- Family's net income, and
- Deduction claimed for childcare expenses.

It is paid to the person who is primarily responsible for the care of a child (usually the mother).

For more information, follow this link, or call 1-800-387-1193:

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/benefits/cctb/menu-e.html>

### 5. Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit

If you applied for CCTB you will get automatically Alberta Family employment tax credit. Payments will be mailed twice a year near the end of January and July. The amount will vary according to your income.

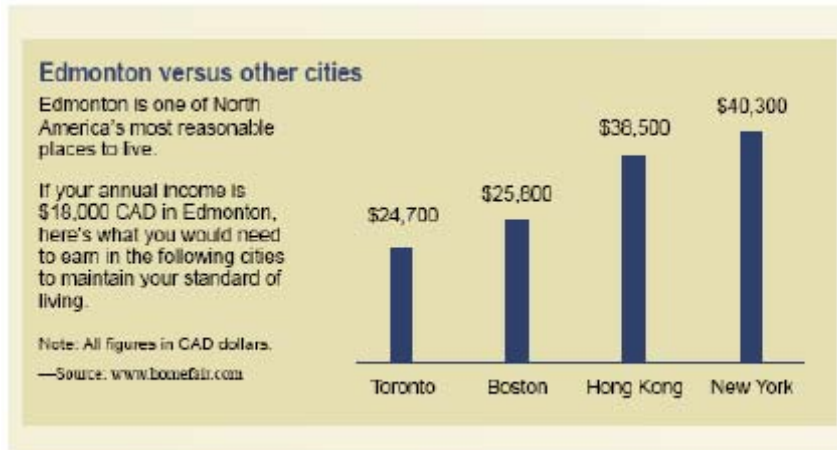
[http://www.finance.gov.ab.ca/business/tax\\_rebates/alberta\\_family\\_employment\\_taxcredit.html#calculatorpplication](http://www.finance.gov.ab.ca/business/tax_rebates/alberta_family_employment_taxcredit.html#calculatorpplication).

## VI. Budget

### 1. Settling Expenses

Settling Expenses for the first time	\$
Car	
Rent deposit	
Computer	
Clothes, coats and shoes (for the winter)	
Tv	
Telephone	
Groceries and household items	

The first 18 months are the hardest, if you can overcome them, you will manage.



## VII. Universities in Canada

### 1. Financial Support

#### A. Department Funding

Because funding approaches vary among departments, you should contact the department offering your program of interest to find out how they support their graduate students and the type and level of financial support they are prepared to offer.

#### B. Graduate Intern Tuition Supplement (GITS)

This \$1.7-million fund enables departments to offer outstanding graduate students full or partial tuition support in combination with other funding sources. GITS funding is provided for a defined enrolment period and in most cases, the minimum duration of support is:

- 12 months for a master's program
- 4 years for a doctoral program following a master's degree
- 5 years for a doctoral program following a bachelor's degree

#### C. Graduate Teaching or Research Assistantship

More than \$11.4 million in teaching and research assistantships are offered to University of Alberta graduate students each year. These assistantships supply graduate students with practical teaching and research experience in the classroom or lab while offsetting the costs of education. Many departments offer further research assistantships funded by research grants. The minimum remuneration for a four-month, full-time assistantship is approximately:

- \$1,650 per month for a principal instructor
- \$1,430 per month for a doctoral student who is not a principal instructor
- \$1,370 per month for a master's student who is not a principal instructor

Most assistantships are offered for the eight-month academic year between September and April. However some assistantships continue through the summer months like the Research Assistantship you receive from your supervisor as a salary. Part-time assistantships also are available in some departments. Most departments suggest students apply by March 1 to be eligible for an assistantship that begins the following September. Contact the graduate coordinator of your chosen department for more information.

### 2. How to Apply

#### A. Check the Department Website

Departments have different application approaches, so your first step is to visit the website of the department offering your program of interest. Each department website should contain program outlines, admission requirements and application procedures specific to that department. It's also a great way to find a professor to best match your research interests.

## **B. Applying Online**

The department offering your program of interest may use the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research's central online application ([www.ualberta.ca/gradstudies/apply](http://www.ualberta.ca/gradstudies/apply)). However, some departments have their own customized online applications. That's why it is best to visit the department website before applying to make sure your academic goals and qualifications are compatible with the department's expectations. A \$100 CAD application fee is required for all applications submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

## **C. When Should I Apply?**

Much like the wide array of graduate programs, application deadlines vary among departments and programs; some are as early as 12 months prior to commencing studies. It's best to start the application process approximately eight to twelve months before you plan to attend. This will leave you sufficient time to make arrangements to enter Canada, which can take up to six months in some cases. The Faculty's deadlines for receipt of completed applications from the departments are generally:

July 1 for September admission

November 1 for January admission

March 1 for May admission

May 1 for July admission

## **D. Should I Send Documents?**

Departments require different documentation at different stages of the application process, so there is no need to start submitting documents until you receive guidance from your department.

## **E. Status of Your Application**

You can track the status of your application using the University of Alberta's online service called Bear Tracks. You will receive a Bear Tracks login ID and password after submitting your online application. The application status feature in Bear Tracks will show you the program(s) to which you have applied and documents that may be required to complete your application and the admission decision, once the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research has reviewed and approved the admission recommendation from the department.

For more information and advice on immigration regulations, check the Canadian Citizenship and Immigration website ([www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)) or contact a Canadian Embassy, High Commission, or Consulate office nearest to you.

*Ref: Guide for International Applicants*

## **3. First Day at the University**

Things to be done as soon as you arrive in the university:

- Try to contact the graduate coordinator of your department to know the registration procedure.
- Go to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR).



## **IX. Important Links**

### **The Egyptian Cultural and Educational Bureau (ECEB) in Montreal**

When you arrive to Canada, you have to register with the Egyptian Cultural and Educational Bureau (ECEB) in Montreal. You can do that by calling them at 514-866-0239. This bureau works as a link between Egyptian students in Canada and the Ministry of Higher Education in Egypt.

<http://www.egypt-edu-can.net>

### **The Council on American-Islamic Relations CANADA (CAIR-CAN)**

is an Ottawa-based, nonprofit organization with a grassroots membership. It shares close but distinct relations with the Washington, D.C.-based CAIR. Through activism in the areas of media relations, anti-discrimination and political advocacy, CAIR-CAN aims to educate Canadians and empower Canadian Muslims. We believe misrepresentations of Islam are most often the result of a lack of knowledge on the part of non-Muslims and reluctance on the part of Muslims to articulate their cause.

<http://www.caircan.ca>