

Documents and Procedures for Michigan Crossroads Council Contingents

Driving to and from Activities in Canada

International Committee, Michigan Crossroads Council BSA

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This is one of three companion documents that are available in the International Scouting section of the Michigan Crossroads Council (MCC) website at <https://michiganscouting.org/international-scouting/>. The others are:

- **OPPORTUNITIES FOR MCC TROOPS AND CREWS TO CAMP WITH CANADIAN SCOUTS**
- **HOW A CONTINGENT FROM AN MCC TROOP OR CREW CAN MEET SCOUTS CANADA REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR EVENTS (Essential for Troops and Crews Planning to Participate in Scouts Canada Camporees or Jamborees or Stay at Scouts Canada Camps)**

Select the one(s) you need and check back every few months to make sure you have the latest revisions.

CROSSING THE BORDER INTO CANADA AND BACK INTO THE USA

A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies a person's identity and nationality and is accepted for travel by air, land, and sea. For almost all travel to other countries, U.S. citizens must have U.S. passports. For anyone 16 or older, a new U.S. passport is valid for 10 years and has a total cost of \$165. For anyone under 16, a new U.S. passport is valid for 5 years and has a total cost of \$135. Fortunately, a provision of an agreement between the U.S. and Canadian governments called the "Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative" allows members of organized youth groups such as BSA troops, crews, and ships who were born in the USA and are under the age of 19 to cross the border between the U.S. and Canada by land on a contingent trip using birth certificates as substitutes for passports, and Michigan is one of five states that offers Enhanced Driver's Licenses as a low cost alternative to passports for U.S.-Canada border crossings by adults.

The U.S. government explains "**What types of documents are accepted for entry into the United States via land and sea?**" at <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/western-hemisphere-travel-initiative>. The second bulleted statement under that heading is "U.S. and Canadian citizen children under the age of 16 (or under 19, if traveling with a school, religious group, or other youth group) need only present a birth certificate or other proof of citizenship. The birth certificate can be original, photocopy, or certified copy." The same statement is on the Fact Sheet at <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2018-Jan/fieldops-whiti-fact-sheet.pdf>. This covers a BSA contingent reentering the U.S. after spending time in Canada.

There is not a similar statement on the Canadian government website. However, it makes sense that the agreement is reciprocal, contingents from troops in our council have successfully used birth certificates to cross the U.S.-Canada border into Canada by land.

A web page titled "Do Children Need a Passport to Enter Canada?" at <https://www.tripsavvy.com/canada-passport-info-for-children-1481714> contains this section:

Approved Documents for Children Traveling in a Group

U.S. and Canadian citizens under the age of 19 traveling between the U.S. and Canada by land or sea with school, religious, cultural, or athletic groups and under adult supervision will also be allowed to travel with only proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate. The group must also carry a letter on company letterhead that names the organization; supervising adults; and each child, along with their address, phone number, birth date, and parent or legal guardian. The supervising adult must also write and sign a statement certifying that each parent or legal guardian has given them consent.

A Canadian web page titled "School or Organized Groups I.D. Requirements" at <https://fdfa.ca/border-crossing-information/school-or-organized-groups-i-d-requirements/> states:

Canadian and U.S. citizens 18 years of age and under **DO NOT** require a passport to cross the Canada/U.S. by land or water when traveling with a **school or other organized group**.

When schools or organized groups, such as sports teams, cross the border by land or water and are under adult supervision with parental/guardian consent, children 18 and under do not require a passport. They are only required to present proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, naturalization certificate (applies to American citizens only) or citizenship card.

Schools and organizations bringing groups across the border by land or water should be prepared to present a letter on the organization's letterhead with the following information:

- The name of the group and supervising adult;
- A list of the children on the trip, and the primary address, phone number, date of birth, place of birth, and name of at least one parent or legal guardian for each child;
- A written and signed statement of the supervising adult certifying that he or she has obtained parental or legal guardian consent for each participating child.

It is suggested that you print a copy of one of these statements and take it with you.

Any Scout, Venturer, or Sea Scout planning to use their birth certificate as a substitute for a passport on a troop or crew trip to Canada should bring a photo ID such as a school ID, a state ID, or a driver's license with them on the trip so they can show that they are the person named on the birth certificate.

Any trip participant who will be 19 or older at the time of the trip and does not already have a U.S. passport might want to apply for a passport as discussed at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply.html>. A low-cost alternative to a passport for travel by land between the U.S. and Canada that is available in Michigan and 4 other states, Minnesota, New York, Vermont, and Washington, is an **Enhanced Driver's License (EDL)**.

From the Canada Border Services Agency at <https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/trans/guide-eng.html#s4c2>

U.S. Citizens/Nationals

Although exempt from document entry requirements, U.S. citizens must satisfy a CBSA officer of their status and identity. Documents that can be used for proof of U.S. citizenship are:

- U.S. Passport
- U.S. Passport Card (for land and marine travel **only**)
- NEXUS card (see Part 6 for more information)
- Enhanced Driver's License (for land and marine travel **only**)

State of Michigan EDL information is at <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/faqs/license-and-id/enhanced-license-and-ids>. In addition to serving as a passport substitute for travel by land between the U.S. and Canada, a Michigan EDL will also satisfy the Real ID requirement for all U.S. domestic air travel that will take effect on May 7, 2025. The cost of a first time Michigan Enhanced Driver's License is \$45, and a 4-year renewal is \$38.

It is important that you take with you a parental consent letter for every youth participant in your trip. The Canadian government web page at <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/children/consent-letter> explains what should be included in a consent letter and provides examples.

If your group is traveling in several vehicles, the paperwork for each group member must be in the vehicle that person is riding in. Scouts and Venturers should be in uniform when they cross the border and be polite during the border crossing. All the border crossing documents should be locked in one of your vehicles any time on your trip that the vehicles are parked.

ADDITIONAL SAFE SCOUTING PROCEDURES THAT SHOULD BE FOLLOWED ON A TRIP TO CANADA

All provisions of the BSA *Guide to Safe Scouting* at <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/> apply to your entire trip including the time you are in Canada. These are additions to those provisions because part of the trip is in Canada.

1. Additions to “Medical Information and First Aid” at <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss05/>

G2SS states that Parts A, B1, and B2 of the BSA Health and Medical Record Form (HMRF) are required of “ALL participants in basic Scouting activities such as local tours and weekend camping trips less than 72 hours in duration.” That includes weekend BSA trips to Canada. In addition to Parts A, B1, and B2, Part C, which is the Pre-Participation Physical, is required for all trips of “72 hours or more” including trips to Canada.

It is recommended that one of the adult leaders of a BSA troop or crew contingent traveling to Canada collect the HMRFs for all the members of the contingent, review them to make sure they have all the necessary information and signatures, share any concerns with the other adult leaders on the trip, and take the forms with them on the trip. If the group is participating in a camporee or jamboree, the forms and all participant medications should be locked in one of the group’s vehicles during the event if the event organizers do not have a secure place to store them.

Part B1 has spaces for “Health/Accident Insurance Company” and “Policy No.” plus the statement “**Please attach a photocopy of both sides of the insurance card.**” For a trip to Canada, that information should be required, and each participant or parent of a youth participant should also be required to provide confirmation that their family’s health insurance is accepted in Canada and instructions on how to submit a claim while in Canada. If any participant is insured by Blue Cross Blue Shield, the leader carrying the Health and Medical Record forms should download the Blue Cross Blue Shield Global Core mobile app with information at <https://www.bcbsglobalcore.com/Home/MobileApp/> on their phone. Other insurance companies might have similar mobile apps.

3. Addition to “Transportation” at <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss11/>

Most U.S. auto insurance policies provide coverage when you are driving the vehicle in Canada. As soon as the drivers and vehicles that will be used on your trip have been confirmed, the owners of those vehicles should request and receive from their auto insurance company (a) confirmation that their auto insurance is usable in Canada (b) any documentation they should have with them on the trip to prove that is true, and (c) the procedure they should follow if their vehicle is involved in an accident while they are in Canada. If you will be taking an equipment trailer, that request should include the trailer and the vehicle pulling the trailer. Anyone driving in Canada should remember that Canadian speed limits are in kilometers per hour not miles per hour.

According to AAA: “When an accident (in Canada) involves death, injury or property damage, Canadian provinces and territories require evidence of financial responsibility. You may be asked to show this evidence at any time.

U.S. motorists should check with their own U.S. insurance companies on acquiring proper evidence of financial responsibility, which could include a yellow Non-Resident Inter-Province Motor Vehicle Liability Insurance Card (accepted as evidence of financial responsibility throughout Canada). Those not carrying proper proof may be subject to a substantial fine in some jurisdictions in Canada. ... The minimum liability insurance requirement is Cdn \$200,000.”

MAKING PAYMENTS IN CANADIAN DOLLARS

The fees for the event you are participating in or the campsite(s) you will be staying at and the prices of your purchases while you are in Canada will be in Canadian \$. The exchange rate between U.S. \$ and Canadian \$ is determined by supply and demand and fluctuates over time. On December 31, 2023, U.S. \$1 = Cdn \$1.333. The exchange rates from the point of view of the two countries are reciprocals, so, if U.S. \$1 = Cdn \$1.333, then Cdn \$1 = $1/1.333 = \text{U.S. } \$0.75$. If there is something you are interested in purchasing with a price of Cdn \$10, the equivalent in U.S. \$ at that exchange rate is approximately Cdn \$10 times 0.75 equals U.S. \$7.50. You should search the web for the current U.S. \$ - Canadian \$ exchange rate a few days before you depart and make sure all your contingent members are aware of it.

The easiest way for you to make payments in Canadian \$ is to use a credit card. The credit card company will do the currency conversion. This should be your plan for expenses during the time you are in Canada traveling to and from the event. It is important for every member of your contingent who plans to use an American credit card in Canada to inform their credit card company before the trip of the dates they plan to be in Canada. This prevents the company from flagging a credit card transaction in Canada as a possible fraudulent purchase. Credit cards with no “foreign transaction fee” are the best choice. If you will be participating in a camporee or jamboree, the organizers of the event will recommend the best way for your contingent to pay the camp fees and for your contingent members to make purchases while they are in camp