

Professional Immigration Help: Making the Right Choice

Immigration Consultants are on the front line of service to consumers. It is estimated that Immigration Consultants handle well over 100,000 applications per year affecting the lives of an estimated half million people. Impacting the lives of so many people is a serious matter and professionalism is mandatory.

Unfortunately, there are those who would claim to be what they are not and claim to do what they cannot. Canadian law requires that to give advice a person must be a Certified Canadian Immigration Consultant (CCIC). Those who would sell you a service without meeting the requirements are breaking the law and are putting you and your family at risk.

There are those who give immigration advice believing they are helping and sometimes they really want to help. Unfortunately as the saying goes, "a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing." The best advice and help someone could give is to send their family, friend or stranger to a recognized professional.

With the amendment of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations in 2004 the government of Canada specified who may act as an Authorized Representative in an application or matter before Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The regulations state that only Immigration Consultants who are members in good standing of the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants; lawyers who are members in good standing of a Canadian law society and students-at-law under their supervision; and

notaries who are members in good standing of the Chambre des notaires du Québec and students-at-law under their supervision may act on behalf of clients.

April 13, 2006 marked the long anticipated "self-regulation" date for Immigration Consultants. On this date the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants began using the term, Certified Canadian Immigration Consultant (CCIC). A Certified Canadian Immigration Consultant (CCIC) is a person who has passed a rigorous certification process including meeting and surpassing experience requirements, competency to practice testing, language standards and a full membership examination.

When an Immigration Consultant is bestowed recognition as a Certified Canadian Immigration Consultant (CCIC) a client can feel a sense of security in knowing that the consultant is qualified to practice. Further, Certified Canadian Immigration Consultants (CCICs) must also maintain professionalism by meeting on-going professional development standards and conforming to Rules of Professional Conduct.

Choosing the right consultant to help with your important immigration matter takes a little bit of homework and trying to separate fact from fiction. If someone is telling you exactly what you want to hear and it sounds like they are selling you your dream, do some more homework. Immigration is a complicated matter.

Here is a quick list of what to look for or ask when making your choice.

1. Use a Certified Canadian Immigration Consultant (CCIC). These are listed at the website of the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants (www.csic-scci.ca). All CCICs have a membership number and are designated as Full Members of the Society. Most CCICs are very proud of their profession and will predominately display their membership certificate and card.

2. Ask about the background of the CCIC. How many years in practice? How much experience with the particular problem you have? What formal training and/or education?

3. Who will do or supervise the work? A CCIC is responsible for all the work that comes out of their office. They must sign all the documents.

4. Service. Review the contract. All CCICs will have a contract and you should read and ask questions about the contract. Understand fully what work will be done and at what cost including service fees and other fees if any.

5. Fees. Is the fee reasonable for the work that will be done? Remember, if you are paying a professional, there will be an appropriate fee. Consider the actual time involved, the experience of the CCIC and the benefit you will receive. If the fee is too low, consider why. If the fee is considerably higher, ask why?

They say dreaming is free. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Article Courtesy: Canadian Association of Professional Immigration Consultants (CAPIC-ACCPIC).

