

# The Navigator



Wealth  
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INVESTMENT, TAX AND LIFESTYLE PERSPECTIVES FROM RBC WEALTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES



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## Determining your tax residency status in Canada

### The basis for Canadian taxation

The Canadian income tax system is based on Canadian residency status. A common misunderstanding is that it is based on citizenship or immigration status. You may actually be considered a resident of Canada for income tax purposes even if you are not a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant. On the other hand, you may not be a resident of Canada for income tax purposes even if you are a Canadian citizen. This article discusses some of the factors that are considered when determining your residency status for Canadian tax purposes and the tax implications of your residency status.

#### Tax residency status in Canada

As an individual, your Canadian tax residency status falls into one of the following categories for federal tax purposes: Canadian resident or non-resident. If you are a Canadian resident, you may be factually or deemed to be resident. Under the category of non-resident, you may be factually a non-resident or deemed to be a non-resident. You may also be a resident for part of the year and a non-resident for the other part of the year.

#### Residential ties to Canada

The residential ties you maintain or establish in Canada are the most important factors the CRA considers in assessing factual residency. Residential ties are broken down into significant and secondary ties.

#### Significant residential ties to Canada

These ties provide a strong indication of factual residency status in Canada:

- A home in Canada
- A spouse or common-law partner in Canada
- Dependants in Canada

#### Secondary residential ties to Canada

The CRA may also consider whether you have the following secondary residential ties collectively to determine factual residency status:

- Personal property held in Canada (e.g. furniture, clothing, car and recreational vehicles)
- Social ties in Canada (e.g. memberships in recreational or religious organizations)
- Economic ties in Canada (e.g. employment with Canadian employer, active involvement in Canadian business, bank account, retirement accounts, credit cards and investment accounts)

If you are a factual resident of Canada and you decide to move to another country, the CRA will consider whether you have maintained factual residency status in Canada.

- Landed immigrant or appropriate work permits in Canada
- A Canadian driver's licence
- A Canadian passport
- Seasonal dwelling place or leased dwelling place
- Medical and hospitalization insurance with a Canadian province or territory

The secondary ties are reviewed together with all the other facts and circumstances to determine your factual residency status. If you have one secondary residential tie, then it is not necessarily sufficient to establish residency in Canada, (especially in the absence of having significant residential ties to Canada).

There are other residential ties the CRA may consider to be relevant in particular circumstances. These residential ties include: retaining mailing address, post office box, or safety deposit box, personal stationery with a Canadian address, Canadian telephone listings, and Canadian newspaper and magazine subscriptions.

### **Factual residency – leaving Canada**

If you are a factual resident of Canada and you decide to move to another country, the CRA will consider whether you have maintained factual residency status in Canada. Generally, unless you have severed all significant residential ties, you will maintain factual residency in Canada. As a result, you will be subject to Canadian income tax on the income you earn from anywhere in the world.

See the Appendix for some examples of how the CRA may assess your residency status if you leave Canada.

### **Tax implications**

If you have severed sufficient residential ties to Canada during the year, you will be considered to be a factual resident for part of the year

and a non-resident for rest of the year. For the period you are resident for part of the year you are subject to income tax on your worldwide income. In the following year, if you are a non-resident the entire time, you are subject to Canadian income tax on Canadian source income only.

### **Date you cease residency in Canada**

The CRA generally considers the date you cease residency in Canada and acquire non-resident status, as of the date you have severed all residential ties with Canada. This date usually corresponds with the latest of the dates:

- you leave Canada
- your spouse or common-law partner and/or dependents leave Canada (if applicable)
- you become a resident of the new country

If you were a resident of another country prior to being resident in Canada and are leaving to re-establish residency in that country, you will be considered a non-resident on the date you leave Canada, even if, your spouse or common law partner or dependants remain in Canada temporarily.

### **Factual residency – moving to Canada**

If you move to Canada, the CRA will consider whether you established residential ties in Canada in order to determine if you are a factual resident for tax purposes.

Specifically, the CRA has stated they will consider:

- Whether you have established significant residential ties such as having a dwelling place in Canada and a spouse or common-law partner that lives in Canada (Note: if you don't relocate to Canada and simply acquire a dwelling place in Canada for your retirement in the future and in the meantime you



If you are not factually resident in Canada, you may still be deemed a resident of Canada if you “sojourn” in Canada for a total of 183 days or more in a calendar year.

lease the property to a non-arm’s length third-party for the period between acquiring the property and residing in it, then unless you have other residential ties with Canada, the dwelling place, in and of itself, may not be a significant residential tie.)

- Whether you applied for and obtained landed immigrant status and provincial health coverage, which generally constitutes significant ties with Canada
- Whether you establish or maintain residential ties in other countries. For example, if you are moving to Canada, the sale of a former residence in another country would support the establishment of residency in Canada

The CRA says that there must also be a degree of permanence to an individual’s stay in Canada or outside Canada. Therefore, they will consider regularity and length of visits to Canada in addition to the residential ties you have inside and outside Canada.

### Tax implications

If you establish Canadian residency part way through the year, you are subject to Canadian income tax on your worldwide income during the period of time you are a resident of Canada. In the following year, provided you maintain Canadian residency, you will be a factual resident for the entire year and subject tax on your worldwide income for the entire year. During the period that is part way through the year in which you were a non-resident of Canada, you are subject to Canadian tax on Canadian source income only.

### Date you acquire factual residency in Canada

When you move to Canada and become a factual resident of Canada,

you will generally be considered to have become a resident of Canada for income tax purposes on the date you entered Canada.

### Deemed resident

If you are not factually resident in Canada, you may still be deemed a resident of Canada if you “sojourn” in Canada for a total of 183 days or more in a calendar year. To sojourn means to have a temporary stay in the sense of establishing a temporary residence.


The stay may be very short, for example, the days you are considered to sojourn in Canada include:

- the days you spend vacationing in Canada
- the days, if you are a commuter, that you decide to spend in Canada when you are not required to be at your workplace (note: the actual days you commute to Canada for work and return at night to your normal place of residence outside Canada are not included, but if you stay an extra day before returning to your residence outside Canada, you would have to include that day)

A part day is a day for purposes of determining the number of days you have sojourned in Canada in a calendar year.

If you are a factual resident of Canada, you cannot be a deemed resident of Canada under the sojourning rules. Therefore, the CRA will consider whether you are a factual resident of Canada first.

In addition to sojourners, in certain instances, other individuals may be deemed residents of Canada. For example, if you left Canada and you are government employee outside Canada, which includes members of the Canadian Forces posted abroad, you are a deemed a Canadian resident if you are not otherwise still a factual resident of Canada.



If you are a dual resident and Canada has an income tax treaty with the other country, the treaty may provide “tie-breaker rules” so that you are deemed to be a resident of only one of the countries.

### Tax implications

Deemed residents of Canada are subject to Canadian income tax on their worldwide income for the entire year, even if they were not present in Canada on January 1.

### Date you acquire deemed residency in Canada

You are considered a resident of Canada for income tax purposes for the entire calendar year if you are a deemed resident of Canada under the sojourning rules for that particular year.

### Deemed non-resident – dual residents and tax treaties

It is possible to be a resident of Canada under the Canadian income tax rules and at the same time, a tax resident of another country under the other country’s tax rules (i.e. you may be a dual resident).

If you are a dual resident and Canada has an income tax treaty with the other country, the treaty may provide “tie-breaker rules” so that you are deemed to be a resident of only one of the countries. The relevant tax treaty should be consulted to determine if tie-breaker rules are available.

### Permanent home test

Usually, the tie-breaker rules found in a treaty rely first on a “permanent home test”, which provides that an individual is resident for purposes of the treaty, in the country in which the individual has a permanent home available. The home can be owned, rented or otherwise available for your permanent use. The permanence of the home is relevant, not the size or nature of ownership or tenancy. Note that a home you own, which you lease out to a third party with arm’s length terms and conditions is generally not considered a home available for your permanent use.

If you have a permanent home in only one country, you will be deemed to be a resident of that country and a non-

resident of the other country.

### Centre of vital interest test


If you have a permanent home available in both countries, the next test found in the treaty tie-breaker rules of most treaties is the “centre of vital interest” test. This test examines your personal and economic ties with each country. The ties examined are similar to those used in determining factual residency. You would be deemed to be resident in the country with which you have the most ties.

### Other tests

Other tests apply if the “centre of vital interest test” is inconclusive. For example, some treaties may look at where you have a habitual abode (i.e. where you spend the majority of your time). If this test is also inconclusive, the CRA will consider which country you are a national. If you are a national in both countries, the treaty may direct you to seek a resolution from the competent authorities in each country in determining your residency status.

### U.S. citizens and green-card holders

The treaty tie breaker rules generally override the domestic tax rules in each country. However, there is an exception with respect to the U.S. An individual’s liability for U.S. income tax is based on U.S. citizenship and residency status. Under U.S. tax laws, a U.S. citizen or green-card holder is subject to income tax on their worldwide income no matter where in the world they reside. For a U.S. citizen that is a dual resident of Canada and the U.S., the treaty tie-breaker rules in the Canada-U.S. tax treaty do not override U.S. income tax laws. However, a U.S. green-card holder that has a closer connection to Canada under the treaty tie-breaker rules may use them to reclassify their status as a non-resident of the U.S. Doing so may potentially jeopardize their green-card status, and there may be other U.S. tax issues to consider. A



Deemed residents are generally not resident in a particular province or territory (except in certain cases under Quebec tax laws) and thus their income (e.g. capital gain on sale of real estate) is subject to a federal income tax and a federal surtax.

detailed discussion of the U.S. income tax rules are beyond the scope of this article. Speak to your cross-border tax advisor for more information.

#### **Date you are a deemed non-resident of Canada**

The date you meet the treaty-tie breaker rules in a tax treaty and tie-break to another country is the date you cease residency in Canada under the Act (i.e. the date you will be considered to be a non-resident of Canada for all purposes of the Act). On this date the Canadian tax rules applicable to individuals ceasing to be resident in Canada will apply. More information is provided in an article discussing moving from Canada. Ask your RBC advisor for a copy.

#### **Provincial or territorial tax residency**

In general, you are considered a resident of a particular province or territory if you are resident in that province or territory on December 31 in the calendar year. Similar criterion discussed earlier in determining an individual's residency status for federal income tax purposes is also used to determine residential ties with a province or territory.

It is possible to be considered a resident in more than one province or territory for a particular tax year (i.e. you are physically residing in a province on December 31 but ordinarily resides in another province.) In this case, you are considered a resident of the province or territory with which you have the most significant residential ties.

#### **Federal, provincial or territorial Tax**

Factual and deemed residents of Canada are subject Canadian federal income tax on their worldwide income. If Canadian residency was established or severed part way through the year, worldwide taxation applies to the period of time in

the year that you were a Canadian resident. Factual residents of Canada are subject to provincial or territorial tax depending on their province or territory of residence.

Deemed residents are generally not resident in a particular province or territory (except in certain cases under Quebec tax laws) and thus their income (e.g. capital gain on sale of real estate) is subject to a federal income tax and a federal surtax. However, if you earn specific types of income (e.g. income from a business) that is sourced to a particular province or territory that you have a permanent establishment in, the income may be subject to tax in that province or territory. A discussion of the concept of permanent establishment is beyond the scope of this article. Speak with a qualified tax advisor for more information.

If you are not a resident of Canada, you are subject to Canadian income tax on certain types of Canadian source income. The income you earn may be subject to Canadian withholding tax at source (e.g. Canadian dividend income). You may also have to file a Canadian tax return in certain cases, such as when you sell real property located in Canada. Where a Canadian non-resident income tax return is required, unless the income is subject to tax in a province or territory, a non-resident will be subject to federal tax and the federal surtax. Generally, you will not have to file a Canadian tax return if you are simply earning passive investment income in Canada.

#### **Avoiding double taxation**

When the income you earn is subject to tax in Canada and in another country, it may be possible to claim foreign tax credits in Canada or the other country to minimize or avoid paying double tax.





If you plan to leave or have left Canada, either permanently or temporarily, or if you entered or sojournd in Canada, you should contact a professional tax advisor to discuss your residency status for Canadian income tax purposes.

For example, a foreign tax credit may be claimed on your Canadian income tax return for foreign taxes paid on rental income earned from property located in the other country or on dividends from corporations located in that country.

For U.S. citizens and residents that must file a U.S. income tax return, a foreign tax credit may be claimed on their U.S. income tax return for Canadian tax paid on income from Canadian sources such as rental income earned from a property located in Canada.

### Obtaining a determination of your residency status from the CRA

If you plan to leave or have left Canada, either permanently or temporarily, or if you entered or sojournd in Canada, you should contact a professional tax advisor to discuss your residency status for Canadian income tax purposes.

If your situation is complex and your professional tax advisor is uncertain of your status, they may advise you to complete Form NR73 – *Determination of Residency Status (Leaving Canada)* or Form NR74 – *Determination of Residency Status (Entering Canada)* and will assist you with completing the forms. You can voluntarily use these forms to request that the CRA provide you with an opinion on your residency status, based exclusively on the information provided by you on the forms. Sometimes the CRA may ask you to complete these forms. The CRA may request additional information and supporting documentation upon review of the forms.

If you require more certainty with respect to your residency status on a proposed departure or arrival to Canada, it may be possible to apply to the Income Tax Rulings Directorate for an advance income tax ruling with respect to your residency status instead of filing Forms NR73/NR74 or Form NR74. A ruling is generally binding to the CRA, whereas Form

NR73/NR74 is not. The CRA will not provide a ruling unless all the facts of the situation can be established prior to your departure or arrival in Canada. Ask your professional tax advisor for advice on whether you should apply for an income tax ruling.

The income tax laws in regards to residency status are complex and not always straight-forward. While the CRA can make a finding of residency status for a taxpayer, it is possible for the CRA to make an incorrect determination. The CRA's determinations are not always final and can be disputed. If you have been assessed by the CRA based on a residency finding that you feel may be incorrect, you should talk to your professional tax advisor regarding your options.

### Conclusion

Due to the complexity of this area of income tax law and case law in Canada, which requires a review of your particular facts and circumstances, the determination of your residency status in Canada can be difficult and may not be straight-forward. It is important that you obtain advice from a professional tax advisor with experience in this area.

The CRA published a folio, S5-F1-C1 – *Determining an Individual's Residency Status*, which is a helpful resource in understanding how the CRA will determine your residency status.

*This article may contain several strategies, not all of which will apply to your particular financial circumstances. The information in this article is not intended to provide legal, tax, or insurance advice. To ensure that your own circumstances have been properly considered and that action is taken based on the latest information available, you should obtain professional advice from a qualified tax, legal, and/or insurance advisor before acting on any of the information in this article.*

## Appendix: Residency status when leaving Canada

Here are some examples that demonstrate how the CRA may assess your residency status when you leave Canada:

- If you leave Canada and during your absence you have a home available for you to occupy (whether you own it or lease it), the home is considered a significant residential tie to Canada. However, if you lease the home to a third party on arm's length terms and conditions, the home may not be considered a significant residential tie except when taken together with other residential ties that you have.
- If your spouse or common-law partner (that you are not living separate or apart from) or your dependants remain in Canada while you are abroad, this will be considered a significant residential tie to Canada. Where your significant residential ties are maintained in Canada, you will continue to be a factual resident of Canada.
- In general, when you are physically absent from Canada for a considerable period of time (extending over several months or years) and you have not severed all of your significant residential ties to Canada, your absence, in and of itself, may not be sufficient to break your factual resident status. The CRA will consider evidence of your intention to permanently sever residential ties with Canada, the regularity and length of visits you make to Canada and residential ties established outside Canada. There is no particular length of stay abroad that would necessarily result in breaking factual residency.
- If it is your intention to maintain factual residency status in Canada, in the absence of having residential ties in Canada, your intention alone is generally not sufficient to lead to a determination that you have maintained factual residency in Canada while abroad.
- If you leave Canada and do not establish substantial residential ties in another country, the residential ties you have in Canada may be considered significant and you may be considered to have maintained factual residency in Canada. However, establishing residential ties in another country does not, on its own, mean that you are no longer a resident of Canada for income tax purposes.
- If you do not maintain significant residential ties to Canada and establish them in another country, then generally having secondary residential ties with Canada may not lead to a determination that you have maintained factual residency in Canada while abroad. For example, if you sold or rented out your home in Canada, purchased a home in another country and established other primary and secondary ties in that other country, you may no longer be considered a Canadian resident even if you maintain your investment accounts in Canada. In addition, if you have severed all your residential ties to Canada and are considered to have ceased Canadian residency, your residency status is generally not affected by occasional return visits to Canada, whether for personal or business reasons.
- If you are working temporarily outside Canada, vacationing or commuting back and forth to another country from Canada to your place of employment in that other country, teaching or attending school in another country, and you have maintained significant residential ties to Canada, you may continue to be a factual resident of Canada.

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