Some laws and information around immigration

1871 - According to the census, there are 1,115 Jews living in Canada, mainly in Montreal.

1885 - The government passes the Chinese Immigration Act. It limits the number of Chinese immigrants to 1 person every 50 tons of a ship’s tonnage. It also imposes a $50 head tax per Chinese immigrant.

1900 - The head tax on Chinese immigrants is increased from $50 to $100.

1901 - The census reveals that of the 5,371,315 people living in Canada, 12.7% were immigrants born outside Canada. 57% of these immigrants were born in the British Isles. 96% of the total population was of European origin. There are 6,861 Jews in Canada.

1903 - The head tax on Chinese immigrants is increased from $100 to $500 (most Chinese working in Canada at this time make $1 or less a day). From 1901 to 1918, $18 million was collected from Chinese immigrants.

1906 - The Immigration Act allows the government to deport undesirable immigrants on the ground of “becoming a public charge, insanity, infirmity, disease, handicap, becoming an inmate of a jail or hospital and committing crimes of “moral turpitude”.”

1908 - A “gentlemen’s agreement” (it is not a law, simply an understanding) is made with Japan, restricting the number of Japanese immigrants to 400 a year.

1908 - The Continuous journey rule is imposed by Order in Council. Immigrants have to arrive to Canada directly from the country they are leaving. It means that the boats immigrants are using cannot stop along the way before arriving in Canada. Also, in addition to the head tax, all Asian immigrants must have $200 with them to be accepted. The term “Asian” applies to anyone from Japan to Turkey and the Middle East. These restrictions particularly affect immigrants from India and from Japan.

1910 - The Immigration Act Section 38 allows the government to prohibit landing of immigrants “belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character”. This section is used to limit the immigration of Black and Asian immigrants who are deemed “unsuited to the climate”.

1911 - African American farmers have been moving since 1910 from Oklahoma to Saskatchewan and Alberta. The Canadian government strengthens its requirements to prevent many from entering. They also send immigration officers to Oklahoma to discourage immigration. In total, 1,000 to 1,500 African America farmers and their families will be accepted in Canada.

1914 - The Komagatu Maru arrives in Vancouver, having sailed from China with 376 Indians (from India) aboard. They are refused admittance to Canada under the Continuous journey rule. There are no passenger ships which travel directly from India to Canada. Between 1914 and 1920, only one Indian was admitted to Canada as an immigrant.
1914 - Under the new Naturalisation Act, immigrants who want to become Canadian citizens must have lived in the country for 5 years, have an adequate knowledge of English or French, and show “good moral character”. The secretary of state in charge of immigration has full powers to grant or revoke certificates of naturalisation. There is no appeal process.

1917 - The Wartime Elections Act takes away the right to vote from all people from “enemy” countries who have become Canadian citizens since 1902.

1919 - Immigration Act amendments are made, adding new grounds for denying entry and for deportation, such as being “disloyal” or “not in good character”, mental disabilities, chronic alcoholism and illiteracy. Section 38 allows the government to prohibit any race, nationality or class of immigrants because of their “peculiar habits, modes of life and methods of holding property”. Doukhobors, Mennonites and Hutterites (three religious groups) were prohibited entry under Section 38.

1922 - The Empire Settlement Act is an agreement between several commonwealth countries to facilitate immigration within the British Empire. It provides assistance with transportation costs and training for specific skills. Around 165,000 British immigrants to Canada will benefit.

1923 - Exclusion of any immigrant “of any Asiatic race” except farmers, domestic servants, and wife and children of someone who is legally in Canada. Armenians fleeing Turkey after the 1917 genocide fall under the term “Asiatic” and are denied entry. Between 1918 and 1939, only 1,300 Armenian refugees are admitted to Canada.

1923 - The Chinese Immigration Act prohibits all Chinese immigrants except diplomats, students, children of Canadians and investors. Between 1923 and 1946, it is estimated that only 15 Chinese immigrants gained entry into Canada.

1931 - The Communist Party is made illegal under the Criminal Code. Naturalized immigrants who were members of the Party can have their citizenship revoked and be deported.

1938 - A revised Dominion Elections Act confirms who can or cannot vote in Canada. Citizens who are disqualified from voting in a provincial election because of race cannot vote in federal elections either. Aboriginal peoples and people of African descent and of Asian descent are forbidden to vote in federal elections; unless they are military veterans who served in WWI (veterans receive the right to vote as a reward for fighting for Canada).

1939 - The St Louis sails from Germany with 930 Jewish refugees on board. The US and Canada both refuse them. The ship is forced to return to Europe where most of the refugees died at the hands of the Nazis. Between 1933 and, Canada admitted less than 5,000 refugees, one of the worst numbers in any democracies. In 1945, when asked how many Jews would be admitted after the war, a Canadian official replied “None is too many.” Eventually, 40,000 Jewish refugees would arrive in Canada after WWII.

1947 - The Chinese Immigration Act is repealed. Chinese fall under the jurisdiction of the regular Immigration Act.

1951 - The Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is adopted. Canada refuses to sign it because the RCMP fears it would prevent Canada from deporting refugees on security grounds, especially Communists.
1951 - The **Assisted Passage Loan Scheme** is implemented to help immigrants from the UK and Western Europe who cannot pay for transportation. Loans are to be repaid within two years following landing. These loans do not apply to Italians, who are described as “primitive villagers”.

1952 - A new **Immigration Act** is passed. It confirms Canada can refuse admission on the grounds of nationality, ethnic group, geographical area of origin, peculiar customs, habits and modes of life, unsuitability to the climate, probable inability to become readily assimilated, etc. Homosexuals, people with physical and/or mental disabilities, drug addicts and drug traffickers are added to the prohibited classes. The Act does create for immigration appeal boards, made up of department officials, to hear appeals from deportation.

1953 - The **Assisted Passage Loan Scheme** is integrated in the **Immigration Act** and becomes opened to all immigrants from Europe.

1955 - The **Canadian Domestic Workers Program** is established to deal with the constant shortage of Canadian domestic workers (cooks, maids, gardeners, etc.). Many women arrive from the Caribbean under this program. The **Assisted Passage Loan Scheme** is opened to people from the Caribbean.

1956 - In Hungary, a political uprising leads 200,000 Hungarians to flee the country, now communist. Under public pressure, the Canadian government creates a special program that gives free passage to Canada to Hungarian refugees. Over 200 chartered flights land in Canada and more than 37,000 Hungarians are admitted in less than a year.

1960 - The **Chinese Adjustment Statement Program** is introduced. It gives measures to prevent Chinese to illegally enter the country, and to formally accept Chinese who are already in Canada without legal status. In 10 years, 11,569 Chinese immigrants have normalised their status.

1960 - The United Nations adopts the **Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons**. The convention states that refugees are to have similar rights as regular immigrants to the country in terms of access to job, education, protection, services, mobility, etc. and that no “exceptional measures” can be taken against them because of the country they come from. Canada has yet to sign this convention.

1960 - Canada opens 27 immigration offices in the world: 24 are in Europe and 3 in Asia. The first office in Africa will open in Egypt in 1963 and the first office in the Caribbean in 1968.

1962 - An Order in Council removes colour, race and country of origin as selection factors to immigrate to Canada. Immigrants must have a job offer before arriving to Canada or have enough money to support themselves until a job is found, they cannot have a criminal record and they cannot endanger public health. Only Canadian immigrants from preferred nations (most European countries, the United States, and selected countries in the Middle East - mainly Israel) are allowed to sponsor their extended family.

1967 - The government starts charging interest on loans under the **Assisted Passage Loan Scheme**.
1967 - A point system is introduced to select immigrants. Under this system, there are no quotas on the number of people who can immigrate to Canada. Instead, prospective immigrants are required to pass a point based test to determine if they are good candidates. Points are given according to age, knowledge of French or English, employability, education, etc. Candidates still have to meet other immigration requirements.

1968 - People refusing conscription from foreign armies can claim refugee status and receive landed immigrant (permanent resident) status. American citizens refusing to participate in the Vietnam War (often called “draft dodgers”) are able to move to Canada. 20,000 to 30,000 American men move to Canada during the Vietnam War. In total, it is estimated that anywhere between 50,000 and 125,000 American citizens moved to Canada due to their opposition of the war. Draft dodgers were pardoned by the United States in 1977.

1969 - Canada signs the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. According to the convention, people can apply for refugee status if there is a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion and being a member of a particular social group.

1970 - The Assisted Passage Loan Scheme is opened to all, with an annual interest rate of 6%.

1973 - The Immigration Appeal Board Act is amended, abolishing the universal right to appeal a deportation order. From now on, refugees cannot always appeal their deportation order.

1976 - The new Immigration Act is passed, which gives refugees a special status as immigrants. The Act defines what a Convention refugee is, creates a Refugee Status Advisory Committee, provides for admission on humanitarian grounds of designated classes and enables the private sponsorship of refugees. The Act comes into force in 1978.

1977 - Canada removes its restriction on dual citizenship. Immigrants, if their home country allows it, can keep both citizenships.

1978 - Gays, lesbians and bisexuals are no longer denied entry to Canada based on their sexual orientation. However, same-sex partners are not recognised as “spouse” so a same-sex couple cannot immigrate as a family or sponsor each other. They both need to be accepted independently as immigrant.

1979-1981 - Conflicts and civil wars in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos lead nearly 1.5 million people to flee the region. Canada announced it would welcome 50,000 South-Eastern Asian refugees. Many Canadians rally to support the refugees; under popular pressure, Canada welcomes another 10,000 refugees from Vietnam. Between 1978 and 1981, 1 in 4 immigrants to Canada is a refugee.

1981 - According to the census, 16% of the total Canadian population of 24 million people were immigrants born outside of Canada. 92% of the population declares a single ethnic origin, including 86% of the population which declares a single European ethnic origin, including 40% British and 27% French.

1983 - A new class of immigrant is created: the business class. It is opened to entrepreneurs who want to invest in the Canadian economy by bringing their funds and businesses to Canada. As Hong Kong is scheduled to be given back to China by the U.K. (in 1999), many business
people move to Canada. Between 1983 ad 1996, it is estimated that 700,000 people emigrated from Hong Kong, bringing billions of dollars worth of investments with them.

1991 - HIV positive people and people with AIDS are no longer automatically denied entry to Canada, but only if they are refugees or sponsored relatives (spouses or children) of a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. For any other applicants, being HIV positive is grounds for refusal.

1993 - The Supreme Court of Canada rules that sexual orientation is a “social group” within the context of determining convention refugee status.

1995 - The government introduces a Right of Landing Fee, widely known as the head tax. In order to become permanent resident, all adults, including refugees, must pay $975. In 2000, the government maintained the head tax for immigrants but removed it for refugees.

2001 - The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act is introduced. Under this Act, immigration classes are kept (family, refugees, skilled immigrants, business immigrants). Immigration under the family class is opened to common-law relationships and same-sex relationships. Following the 9/11 attacks in the United States, the Act gives more power to the Canadian authorities to arrest, detain and deport landed immigrants on the suspicion they might be, or could become, a security threat.

2002 - The Canadian government introduces mandatory testing for HIV, syphilis and tuberculosis for anyone wishing to stay for more than 6 months. This applies to permanent resident but also students and foreign workers with contracts longer than 6 months. A positive result to the HIV test is grounds for refusal. If an applicant has active tuberculosis or untreated syphilis, they can also be denied entry to Canada.

2005 - The government changes its requirements for people living with HIV/AIDS: visitors to Canada who stay for less than 6 months do not have to disclose they have HIV/AIDS.

2007 - A Canadian provincial court accepts gender identity as grounds for refugee status claim, after a transgendered woman was denied her claim. The court recognised that she would face discrimination if she were deported back to her country.

2009 - Immigration and Citizenship minister Jason Kenney criticises American soldiers seeking refugee status in Canada because they are refusing to participate in the Iraq war. According to him, unlike in the Vietnam era, the current soldiers are not “draft dodgers” but “deserters”.

2010 - Several families in Canada are denied application for permanent residency and face deportation because one of their children is “a person whose health condition might reasonably be expected to cause excessive demand on health or social services in Canada”. In two cases, a child has been diagnosed with autism; in another, a child was born with cerebral palsy.

2010 - The Skilled Worker Immigration Program is modified. In order for their applications to be processed, applicants but either have an offer before arriving in Canada, or be qualified in 1 of 29 eligible occupations which have been selected out of the 520 occupations from the National Occupational Classification. A cap of 20,000 applications per year is introduced.
2011 - The government intends to revoke the citizenship of 1,800 people believed to have obtained their citizenship through fraudulent means. Since 1946, fewer than 70 citizenships have been revoked.

2012 - The Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act, known as Bill C-31 designs countries as being “safe country of origin”. Refugee claimants from these countries will be processed faster (which often leads to claimants not being able to prepare their files on time), will have no possibility to appeal the decision, and will be deported faster if their claim is denied. 42 countries are placed on that list; most of them are in Europe.

2012 - The Canadian government imposes new regulations on Canadians and permanent residents who sponsor their spouse. If the couple has been married for less than 2 years and have no children at the time of their application, they will have to live in a “legitimate relationship” for two years or the sponsored spouse could lose their permanent resident status.

2013 - 2.5 to 3 million Syrians have fled the civil war and are living in camps in neighbouring countries. The Canadian government promises to welcome 1,300 Syrian refugees before the end of 2014. By December 2014, only 457 refugees have arrived in Canada.