

MAPLE INSIGHT

Financial Clarity for your move to Canada

Estimation Methodology

How Maple Insight Models the True Cost of Settling in Canada

Version 1.0

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mapleinsight.ca/methodology

Methodology at a glance

The 60-second summary

Maple Insight combines official Canadian government data (CMHC rent, IRCC fees and proof-of-funds thresholds, CRA tax brackets, Statistics Canada living costs, Job Bank wages) with conservative financial modelling to estimate what it actually costs to land, settle, and live your first year in Canada. Every number on the site is traceable to a cited public source. When our model and IRCC's minimum disagree, the higher number wins — always in the user's favour.

This document is long by design. It is written so that immigration consultants, financial journalists, auditors, and the newcomers themselves can verify exactly how every figure on Maple Insight is produced, which data sources are used, what assumptions are baked in, and where the model's limits lie. If any section raises a question, we would rather you ask than guess. Contact details are at the end.

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 What this methodology covers

This document describes how Maple Insight produces its first-year settlement cost estimates, monthly budget projections, IRCC proof-of-funds comparisons, tax estimates, and runway calculations for people moving to Canada. It covers the Settlement Planner wizard, the standalone calculators (TFSA vs RRSP, newcomer budget, income tax estimator, FHSA, rent vs buy), and any cost figures published in Maple Insight guides and articles.

1.2 Who this is for

- **Newcomers to Canada** — prospective and recent arrivals across Express Entry, PNP, study permit, work permit, and family sponsorship pathways who need a realistic financial picture before they move.
- **Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultants (RCICs)** and other settlement professionals who use Maple Insight reports with clients.
- **Journalists, researchers, and auditors** who want to independently verify figures cited on the platform.

1.3 What it is designed to support

- Budgeting and savings-gap planning before arrival
- IRCC proof-of-funds compliance checks for study permits and Express Entry
- Destination city comparisons on a total cost-of-living basis
- Runway modelling (how many months savings will last at arrival)
- Tax impact estimates for the first full and partial residency years

1.4 What it explicitly does NOT do

Maple Insight is not a substitute for professional advice

Our estimates are a financial planning tool. They are not immigration advice, legal advice, tax advice, or investment advice. We do not assess eligibility for any immigration program, guarantee any outcome with IRCC, or recommend specific financial products. For program-specific guidance always consult a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC), an immigration lawyer, or a licensed tax and financial professional.

2. Data Sources

Every figure on Maple Insight is traceable to a specific, publicly available, authoritative source. We prioritise Canadian government data over aggregators, and official fee schedules over third-party compilations. The table below is the complete provenance list for our core model.

2.1 Housing and rent

Source	What we use	Update frequency	Coverage
CMHC Rental Market Survey	Average 1BR and 2BR private apartment rents by Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)	Semi-annual	All major Canadian cities
CMHC Rental Market Report	Vacancy rates, turnover premiums, purpose-built vs secondary market split	Annual + Fall update	National and CMA level
Statistics Canada Table 18-10-0245-01	Shelter component of the CPI — used to age CMHC data between releases	Monthly	Provincial
Provincial Residential Tenancies Acts	Standard security deposit rules, first-and-last-month norms	As amended	All provinces

Why CMHC over aggregators: CMHC surveys purpose-built rental units from landlords directly and publishes the microdata documentation. Crowdsourced sites (Numbeo, PadMapper, Rentals.ca listings) reflect asking prices on currently-vacant units in a specific week, which systematically overstates typical rent paid by someone already settled in a city. We use CMHC as the baseline and annotate with secondary-market premiums where relevant.

2.2 Immigration fees and proof of funds

Source	What we use	Update frequency	Coverage
Canada.ca — IRCC Fee List	Application, biometrics, RPRF, PR card, open work permit, study permit, sponsorship fees	As published (typically annual)	All IRCC programs
Canada.ca — Proof of Funds (Express Entry)	Minimum settlement funds table by family size (FSW and CEC where applicable)	Annual, aligned with LICO	Federal
Canada.ca — Cost of Living (Study Permits)	IRCC's mandated living-cost minimum for study permit applicants, effective Sept 1 each year	Annual	Federal (Quebec separate)

Source	What we use	Update frequency	Coverage
MIFI Quebec	CAQ thresholds and Quebec-specific living-cost requirements	Annual (Jan 1)	Quebec
Provincial PNP pages	Program-specific application fees	As amended	Each province

All IRCC figures are stored in our content management system with an effectiveDate field, so the number shown to a user is always tagged with the date IRCC published it. When IRCC updates (most commonly September 1 for study permits and around year-end for Express Entry), we refresh within 10 business days and bump the data version.

2.3 Cost of living (non-housing)

Source	What we use	Update frequency	Coverage
Statistics Canada — Survey of Household Spending	Baseline spending on food, household operations, clothing, recreation by household type	Biennial	National and provincial
Statistics Canada — Monthly Average Retail Prices	Grocery basket anchor prices (milk, bread, eggs, produce)	Monthly	National
Municipal transit authorities (TTC, STM, TransLink, Calgary Transit, OC Transpo)	Monthly pass and single-fare pricing	As published	City-level
CRTC Communications Monitoring Report	Average residential internet and wireless bill benchmarks	Annual	National and provincial
Provincial utility boards and major retailers (Hydro One, BC Hydro, Enmax, Hydro-Québec)	Typical residential electricity bills	As published	Provincial

2.4 Income, employment and wages

Source	What we use	Update frequency	Coverage
Job Bank Canada — Wage Report (by NOC)	Low / median / high hourly and annual wage by 5-digit NOC and economic region	Rolling, typically annual	All NOC occupations
Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey	Unemployment rate by province and demographic — used in job-search buffer logic	Monthly	Provincial

Source	What we use	Update frequency	Coverage
Provincial minimum wage schedules	Floor wages used in student and part-time income paths	As amended	All provinces

2.5 Taxation

Source	What we use	Update frequency	Coverage
Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) — Federal Tax Rates	Federal marginal brackets, basic personal amount, first-time resident credits	Annual	Federal
Each provincial tax authority (e.g. Ontario Ministry of Finance, Revenu Québec)	Provincial brackets, surtaxes, provincial personal amount, health premiums	Annual	All 13 provinces and territories
CRA — Newcomers to Canada (T4055)	Partial-year residency rules and first-year credit prorating	Annual	Federal

2.6 Health coverage

Source	What we use	Update frequency	Coverage
Each provincial health ministry	Waiting period rules, eligibility thresholds, premium amounts where applicable	As amended	All provinces
University UHIP and equivalent	Mandatory health insurance premiums for international students in Ontario	Annual	Ontario DLIs
Private bridge-insurance quotes (composite)	Coverage cost during provincial waiting periods in BC, AB, QC	Quarterly refresh	Applicable provinces

3. Data Processing and Normalization

Raw data from the sources above is not directly usable. Numbers arrive in different vintages, geographies, and units. This section describes the transformation rules we apply before any number reaches a user.

3.1 Geographic normalization

- All rent figures are expressed at the city (CMA) level, not the national level. National averages materially distort the picture — Toronto, Vancouver, and the rest of Canada are three different markets — and anchoring to a national median would understate the cost of landing in a major destination city.
- Where CMHC publishes zone-level data within a CMA (e.g. Toronto broken into 22 zones), we use the CMA-wide weighted average by default and surface the zone breakdown only when a user specifies a neighbourhood.
- Transit, utilities, and municipal fees are always city-specific, never provincial averages.

3.2 Time-series aging

CMHC publishes its primary Rental Market Survey twice a year. Between releases, we age rent figures forward using the shelter component of the provincial Consumer Price Index (Statistics Canada Table 18-10-0004-01). This prevents our numbers from becoming stale in months 3–6 of the CMHC release cycle.

Formula, applied per city:

Aged rent

$$\text{rent_current} = \text{rent_CMHC} \times (\text{CPI_shelter_latest} \div \text{CPI_shelter_CMHC_month})$$

3.3 Central tendency: why we use medians (mostly)

Canadian rental and income distributions are right-skewed. For rent we use the CMHC-published mean of 1BR and 2BR units by CMA, because CMHC does not publish medians at that granularity. For wages and incomes we use the Job Bank median, not the mean, because a handful of high earners in any NOC pull the mean upward and produce unrealistically optimistic projections. Where we use a mean, the page says so and explains the conservative adjustment applied.

3.4 Currency and rounding

- All internal figures are stored in Canadian dollars. We do not convert from other currencies in the model.
- User-facing totals are rounded to the nearest whole dollar. Sub-totals displayed in breakdown tables are rounded to the nearest \$5 to avoid false precision.
- Rounding is always applied at the display layer, never in intermediate calculations, so totals reconcile.

4. The Estimation Model

This is the core of the methodology. Maple Insight's settlement cost estimate has four components: upfront costs, a monthly burn rate, a safety buffer, and an IRCC proof-of-funds floor. The user's required funds is the higher of (upfront + buffer × monthly) and (IRCC minimum). The IRCC floor cannot be undercut, regardless of what our model produces.

4.1 Component A — Upfront costs

Upfront costs are one-time expenditures required to land and establish a household. The calculator includes:

- Immigration application fees (program-specific, sourced from the IRCC fee list above)
- Biometrics fee (individual or family rate)
- Medical examination (estimated range, flagged as estimate)
- Right of Permanent Residence Fee (RPRF) where applicable
- International and domestic flights (user input, with guidance benchmarks)
- Housing deposit — calculated as first-and-last-month rent using CMHC city average (or security deposit per provincial RTA where that is the rule)
- Basic furnishing tier (user selects Minimal / Moderate / Full)
- Winter clothing allowance (climate zone dependent, flagged as estimate)
- Credential recognition and language test fees where relevant to pathway

4.2 Component B — Monthly burn rate

Monthly burn rate is the sum of recurring costs the user will incur from their first full month in Canada:

- Rent (CMHC city average, sized to household from Step 1 of the wizard)
- Groceries (Statistics Canada SHS, indexed by household size, not a flat per-person number)
- Transit (monthly pass for the selected city)
- Utilities (electricity + heating estimate from provincial utility data)
- Internet and mobile (CRTC benchmarks)
- Health insurance (zero if in a no-waiting-period province, otherwise bridge insurance)
- Personal and household goods (SHS-derived)
- Transport beyond transit (only included if the user indicates a car-dependent city or lifestyle)

4.3 Component C — Safety buffer

The safety buffer is where Maple Insight differs most from a simple cost-calculator. We model a job-search buffer — the number of months of monthly burn a user should have accessible before their first Canadian paycheque. Our default is 6 months, based on the median Canadian white-collar job search duration reported by Statistics Canada for new permanent residents, and aligned with the conservative guidance most RCICs give clients.

The buffer is tuned in two ways:

- Reduced to 3 months if the user has a confirmed Canadian job offer documented in their Settlement Planner inputs.
- Extended to 9 months if the user's NOC has an unemployment rate in their destination economic region that exceeds the provincial average by more than 2 percentage points.

Required runway savings = monthly burn rate × buffer months.

4.4 Component D — The IRCC floor

The higher number always wins

For Express Entry and Study Permit pathways, IRCC publishes a minimum proof-of-funds threshold. We compare our (upfront + buffer) total against that threshold and show the user the higher of the two. We never show a number below the IRCC minimum, even if our model would allow it. This is the single most important rule in the engine: it is the difference between a planning tool and a refusal risk.

4.5 Worked example — Family of two, Toronto, Express Entry FSW

The following is a live illustration using the model. Numbers are illustrative and will differ slightly from the live calculator depending on data vintage.

Line item	Amount (CAD)	Source
Application fees (principal + spouse)	\$1,365	IRCC Fee List
RPRF × 2	\$1,030	IRCC Fee List
Biometrics (family)	\$170	IRCC Fee List
Medical exams × 2	\$500	Estimate
Flights (2 adults, mid-range)	\$2,600	User benchmark
Housing deposit (2BR Toronto × 2 months)	\$7,220	CMHC Oct 2025
Furnishing — Moderate	\$3,500	User selection
Winter clothing × 2	\$900	Estimate
Subtotal: Upfront costs	\$17,285	
Monthly burn rate (2BR Toronto household)	\$5,640	CMHC + StatCan
Buffer: 6 months × monthly	\$33,840	Model
Model total (upfront + buffer)	\$51,125	
IRCC FSW minimum, family of 2	\$17,127	Canada.ca
Recommended settlement funds	\$51,125	Model

Line item	Amount (CAD)	Source
(higher wins)		

In this case the model total exceeds the IRCC minimum by roughly \$34,000 — a realistic planning buffer that reflects actually settling in Toronto rather than merely meeting the letter of the Express Entry rule.

5. The Tax Model

The income-tax estimator on Maple Insight is a straight bracket calculator with newcomer-specific adjustments. It is not tax filing software and it is not a replacement for filing a T1.

5.1 What we compute

- Federal tax on taxable income using current-year CRA brackets
- Provincial tax using each province's current brackets, surtaxes, and health premiums where they apply
- Basic personal amount (federal and provincial) applied as a non-refundable credit
- CPP, QPP and EI contributions computed to published annual maxima
- First-year partial-residency proration: when a user indicates their landing month, federal and provincial personal amounts are prorated by days-resident over 365 (per CRA T4055 guidance)
- Effective and marginal rate displayed alongside after-tax income

5.2 What we explicitly do not compute

- RRSP deduction optimization (we use the user's stated contribution, we do not suggest one)
- Capital gains, eligible and non-eligible dividends, and foreign income integration
- Self-employment or business income nuances
- Tax-treaty relief for income earned abroad in the arrival year (flagged to the user with a link to the relevant treaty)
- Credits that require eligibility assessment (disability credit, caregiver amount, etc.)

The tax year used is always displayed on the calculator, with a citation linking to the CRA page for the current year's brackets.

6. Assumptions

Every model rests on assumptions. Listing them openly is the difference between a defensible tool and a black box. The following are the assumptions Maple Insight uses by default. Each is overridable in the Settlement Planner wizard.

6.1 Household assumptions

- Household composition is taken from Step 1 of the wizard (single, couple, couple + children, with children's ages).
- A single adult is assumed to rent a 1BR unit unless they explicitly select shared accommodation. A couple is assumed to rent a 1BR. A family is assumed to rent a 2BR unless they have more than two children.
- Children are assumed not to contribute income and are costed using provincial child-care benchmarks where applicable.

6.2 Employment assumptions

- Unless a confirmed job offer is entered, users are assumed to begin job searching on arrival and to remain without Canadian employment income for the full buffer window.
- Student pathway users are assumed to work up to 24 hours per week during term at the provincial minimum wage, per the IRCC policy effective November 2024, unless they specify otherwise.
- Part-time earnings offset monthly burn rate but never reduce the upfront requirement.

6.3 Inflation and indexing

- Costs are presented in today's dollars. We do not project inflation into future years of runway because first-year planning horizons are short enough (6–12 months) that adding an inflation assumption introduces more noise than it removes.
- For multi-year tools (FHSA, TFSA vs RRSP, Rent vs Buy), inflation and rate-of-return are user-editable with conservative defaults that we cite.

6.4 Tax residency

- Users are assumed to become Canadian tax residents on their landing date.
- Partial-year proration is applied automatically for the first tax year.
- We assume no tax-treaty relief for home-country income unless the user explicitly enters it.

6.5 Exchange rates

- Currency conversion is outside the tool's scope. All model inputs are entered in CAD.

7. Limitations and Disclaimers

Transparency about what the model cannot do is as important as transparency about what it can. The following are the known limitations of the Maple Insight methodology. We publish them here rather than burying them in footnotes.

7.1 Data lag

CMHC rent data is published twice a year and the Fall release typically reaches us in January. We age it forward using the provincial CPI shelter index, but in a fast-moving market (rent spikes, rapid vacancy shifts, sudden rule changes) the aged figure can lag reality by a quarter. The displayed data vintage always appears next to the rent figure so users can judge how fresh the underlying survey is.

7.2 Market volatility

Rental markets can move faster than any model. The 2022 rent shock in Toronto and Vancouver is the clearest recent example. Our model is mean-reverting by design and will understate costs in the early months of a shock and overstate them in the early months of a cooling. We annotate all CMA averages with the 12-month change from CMHC.

7.3 Individual variance

Two newcomers with identical wizard inputs can have wildly different real-world costs depending on lifestyle, neighbourhood, family support, and the specific rental they land. The model produces an expected value with a conservative buffer; it does not and cannot produce a point estimate for a specific individual.

7.4 Program scope

Our engine currently supports Express Entry (FSW, FST, CEC), PNP streams, Study Permits (incl. Quebec CAQ), Open Work Permits, Closed Work Permits, and Family Sponsorship. It does not currently model the Start-Up Visa, Self-Employed Persons Program, Agri-Food Pilot, or Atlantic Immigration Program. Users on those programs will see a generic newcomer estimate with an explicit caveat.

7.5 Not advice

Planning tool, not advice

Maple Insight is a financial planning tool and an educational resource. Nothing on the site is legal advice, immigration advice, tax advice, or investment advice. For a specific immigration application, always consult a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC) or an immigration lawyer. For tax filings, consult a licensed accountant or the CRA directly.

8. Update and Maintenance Policy

Maple Insight is a living system. The methodology document is versioned; so is every data source. The following cadence governs how numbers move from source to production.

Data class	Refresh cadence	Trigger
CMHC rent data	Semi-annual + inter-release CPI aging	CMHC publication
IRCC fees and proof-of-funds	Within 10 business days of change	Canada.ca update
Federal and provincial tax brackets	Annual (January)	CRA / provincial budgets
NOC wage data	Annual	Job Bank refresh
Provincial minimum wages	As announced	Provincial Labour announcements
Transit fares	Quarterly check, update on change	Transit authority announcements
Methodology document	At least quarterly	Any material engine change

Every page that displays a modelled figure shows two version stamps: an engine version (the calculation logic) and a data version (the snapshot of underlying inputs). These are the same stamps surfaced in the footer of every Settlement Plan report. If a user saved a plan in March and loads it in October, the version stamps tell them whether the numbers are still current.

9. Validation and Quality Checks

A published number only earns trust if it has been checked. Maple Insight runs four layers of validation before any figure reaches a user.

9.1 Automated unit tests

Every computation function in the engine has unit tests covering typical cases, edge cases, and IRCC-threshold boundary conditions. Examples: a test that proof-of-funds exactly at the IRCC minimum does not trigger the risk flag; a test that \$1 below triggers it. Tests run on every commit and block deployment on failure.

9.2 Regression against worked examples

We maintain a fixture library of fully-worked scenarios — single in Toronto, couple in Calgary, family of four in Halifax, study permit holder in Montreal — with expected outputs pinned to specific data

versions. Any engine change that alters a fixture's output must be explained in the change log and re-approved.

9.3 Manual review against real case data

We periodically sanity-check model output against anonymised newcomer case data contributed by partner consultants. Where the model diverges from observed reality by more than 15%, we investigate the assumption driving the gap and either revise it or document why the divergence is intended (e.g. the user lived in a much cheaper unit than CMHC mean).

9.4 Benchmark against IRCC minima

For every pathway that has an official IRCC proof-of-funds or financial threshold, we run an automated check that our displayed required-funds figure is never below the IRCC minimum. This test runs on every data refresh.

10. Expert Review

Maple Insight invites ongoing review from qualified Canadian professionals. The methodology and its outputs are reviewed periodically by:

- A Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC) in good standing with the CICC, who validates the immigration-pathway logic, fee accuracy, and proof-of-funds thresholds.
- A licensed Canadian accountant (CPA) who reviews the tax estimator brackets, partial-year residency logic, and first-year newcomer credits.
- A settlement-sector advisor who reviews the monthly burn-rate assumptions and the job-search buffer logic against on-the-ground experience with newcomers.

Reviewer names and credentials are published on the About page as each review completes, along with the specific sections each reviewer has signed off on and the data version to which their sign-off applies. A reviewer's sign-off is never retroactively extended to a new data or engine version.

11. Transparency and Independence

11.1 Affiliations

- Maple Insight is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or operated under contract to IRCC, the CRA, CMHC, or any provincial ministry.
- We are not a licensed immigration representative. We do not accept fees for immigration advice and we do not process immigration applications.

11.2 Commercial model

- The calculators and Settlement Planner are free to use.
- Consultant intelligence reports and the consultant-facing dashboard are a paid professional product for RCICs and other settlement professionals.
- Where we recommend a specific service (e.g. linking to Designated Learning Institutions for GIC purchase), it is because the product is materially relevant, not because of a commercial arrangement. If that ever changes, the relationship will be disclosed on the page where the recommendation appears.

11.3 No pay-to-rank

City rankings, program rankings, and any comparative figure on Maple Insight reflect the underlying data only. No city, institution, consultant, or product can pay to be ranked higher or featured more prominently. This rule is non-negotiable and applies equally to free and paid surfaces.

12. Version History

Version	Date	Notes
1.0	April 2026	Initial publication. Covers the full Settlement Planner engine, calculator suite, tax model, and study-permit enhancements (E11).

13. Contact and Corrections

If you are a journalist, researcher, consultant, or newcomer and you spot a figure on Maple Insight that you cannot reconcile against the source we cite — or if you have access to a better data source than the ones listed in Section 2 — we want to know. Corrections are handled openly and credited in the next version of this document.

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