

SCOR AGM 2012

Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada

Local Information for Travelers

First visit to Halifax or Canada

This is a quick reference for some of those little things it's nice to know when you visit a place for the first time. These are personal comments as a "local" resident – no official recommendations, endorsements or anything like that.

Money

You do not need to arrive with Canadian currency or travellers cheques. You can pay for just about anything with Visa or MasterCard; you will find other cards such as American Express also accepted but not as widely. However from time to time you will need some cash for small purchases, buses, ferries, etc.

The best way to get cash is at the Automated Teller Machines (ATMs); there is at least one ATM in the arrivals area at the airport. Please see the "Transportation" section below for its location. Canadians love ATMs so you find them just about everywhere in the city. However Canadian banks are different than most European banks and they are going to charge you for using their ATMs. The charge (from \$1.50-\$2.00) is "per transaction" so keep that in mind when deciding how much you want to withdraw. ATMs that are not directly associated with banks (as found in hotel lobbies and corner stores) will generally charge you higher service fees.

Canadian money looks somewhat like EU notes in that it is relatively colourful



however all notes are the same size. The most common denominations are \$5, \$10, and \$20. You will quite often see \$50 but only rarely \$100 notes. Like Europe we have a lot of coins – \$0.01, \$0.05, \$0.10, \$0.25, \$1, and \$2. You will hear the latter 2 referred to as a “loonie” and a “twoonie” respectively. Why? The \$1 coin has a picture of loon on the back and hence the term “loonie”; it came into circulation before the \$2 coin and we couldn’t do any better than name that the “twoonie.”

If you want to change foreign currency then you must do so at a bank. The hotel concierge can provide you with directions. In mid-August a Euro (€) would buy \$1.31. The American and Canadian dollars are about par but most retailers will charge you 5% or more if you want to use American dollars.

Your Arrival

Most likely you will travel by air and you will fly either directly or indirectly to the Robert Stanfield International Airport located about 35 km north of the city. There are scheduled daily flights direct from London by Air Canada, and indirectly through Montreal, Ottawa, or Toronto. In addition a number of charter airlines fly into Halifax from London, Frankfurt, Munich, etc. If Halifax is your first landing in Canada you will have to go through customs and immigration here. It usually is a speedy process provided you have your passport! The longest wait whether you have to go through customs or not will be for your baggage.

Transportation to Halifax

So how will you get to Halifax from the airport? Presuming that you are not renting a car¹ you will have to take either the bus or a taxi to your hotel. The airport shuttle bus, cost \$19.50 one way, stops at many of the

Time – Halifax is in the Atlantic Time Zone (AST). This means it is 3 hours earlier than London, and 1 hour later than New York.

¹ If your main destination is the Halifax area and the AGM you will not need a rental car.

major hotels. A taxi or limo (same price for both) into the centre of the city will cost \$53². There is also a public city bus (MetroX Transit #320) that goes to central downtown (via fall River) for \$3.25 (every 30 minutes from 05h45 to midnight).

The ground transportation area at the airport is directly ahead and to the right if you come through customs or if you have arrived on a domestic flight that area is straight ahead as you leave the baggage area.

Outside the international baggage area and around the domestic baggage area you will find people dressed in the Nova Scotia tartan that are there to provide you with assistance.

Nova Scotia



The ATM (Royal Bank of Canada – RBC) in the arrivals area is located down the hall to the left as you look towards the exit from the arrivals area. There are also a couple of third-party ATMs near the food court and by the retail area on the arrival level of the airport.

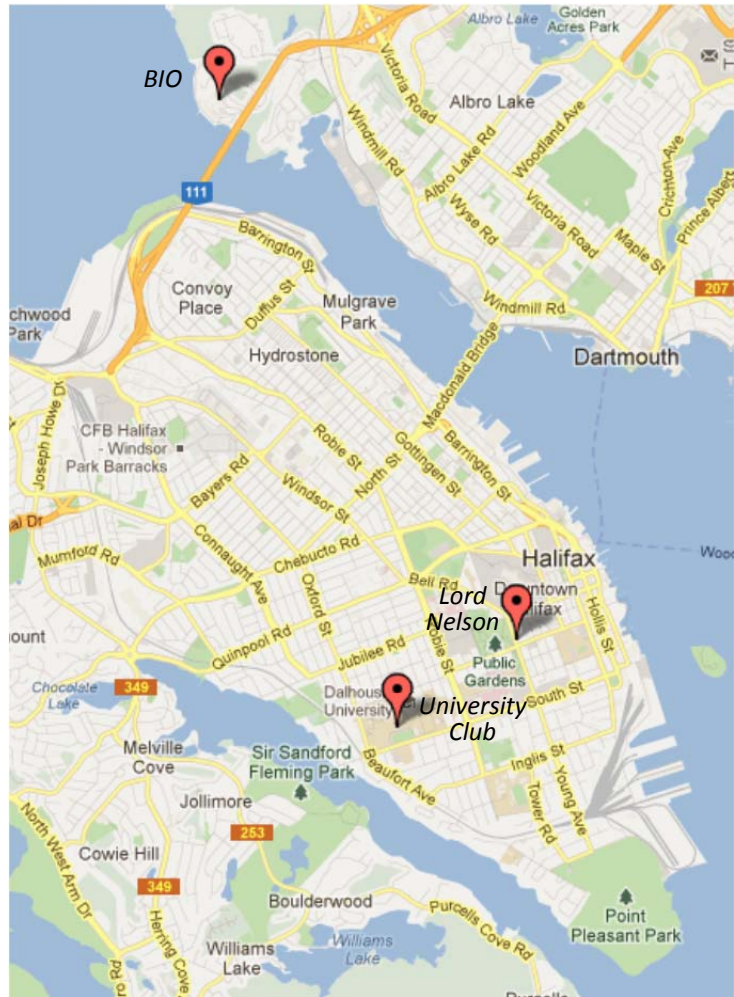
Tippling

If you take a taxi into the city this raises the question – do I tip the taxi driver? In general, in Canada it is expected that you will give a tip to people who provide a service; this includes waiters, taxi drivers, bell boys, etc. Most service workers in Canada are paid minimum wage which is not enough to live on so they are dependent upon tips. A tip of 15% is considered average; personally I will give more if the service is very good and likewise I will give less or nothing if the service is poor. A 10% tip for the taxi driver would be considered normal but if the taxi is poorly kept and the driver is not helpful I would not hesitate to just pay the fare. Note that the level of taxi service in most of North America is not comparable to that in Europe. The standards for the vehicles are lower and drivers are not consistently “professional.”

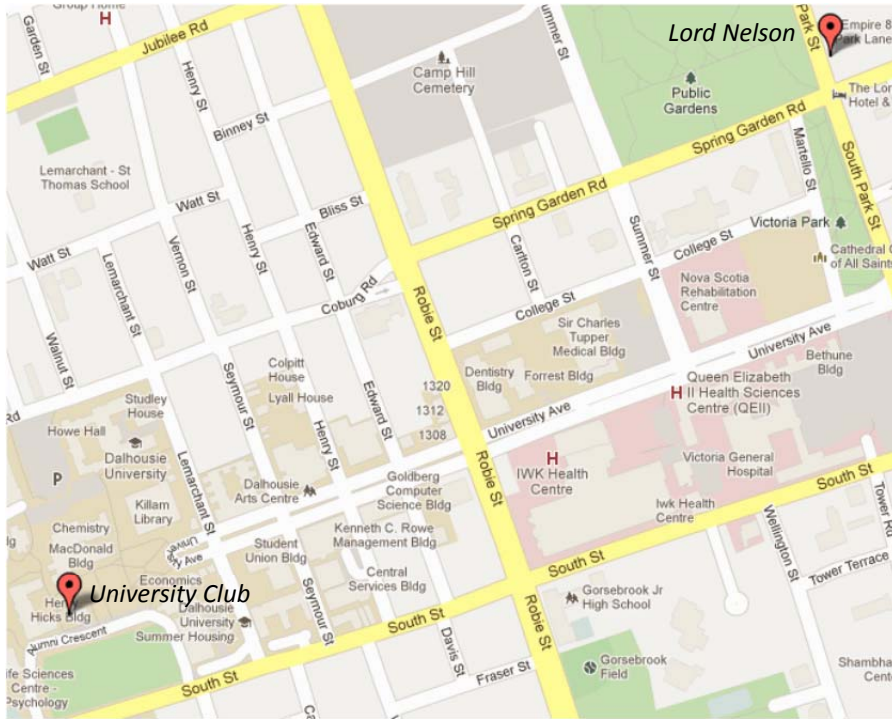
² As of mid-August but may increase due to rising gasoline prices.

Directions

The SCOR AGM venues are Dalhousie University and the Bedford Institute of Oceanography (BIO). The city centre is on a peninsula and has a population of about 100,000. Greater Halifax, and the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has a population of close to 400,000. The Harbour is oriented roughly North-South (actually closer to Northwest-Southeast) so directions are easily given using the major compass points, e.g. go North 3 blocks.



At Dalhousie, the meeting will be held in in the Great Hall of the University Club, which is about 1.8 km (a 20-25 minute walk) from the Lord Nelson. From the Lord Nelson, walk west on Spring Garden Rd., along the southern edge of the Public Gardens. Crossing Robie St., Spring Garden becomes Coburg Rd. Turn left onto LeMarchant St. and continue south until you reach University Ave. Take a right on University Ave. and then continue along the path across the “quad” (grassy area surrounded by university buildings). The University Club is at the southwest corner of the quad. An alternative to walking is to take the number 1 bus, which runs about every 1 minutes along Spring Garden Rd. Board the bus at the northeast corner of the intersection of Spring Garden Rd. and South Park and get off at LeMarchant St. Bus fare is \$2.25, and exact change is required. More information about local bus service can be found at <http://www.halifax.ca/metrotransit/Schedules/index.asp>.



BIO is located across the bridge in Dartmouth. Daily private bus transportation will be provided from the Lord Nelson Hotel to BIO and back to the hotel at the end of the day. The bus will depart from the Lord Nelson at 8:30 on Tuesday, October 23, and at 8:00 on

Wednesday, October 24.

Eating out

There are three differences that you should be aware of between restaurants in Canada and those in most of Europe. First of all, there is the tipping that I have already mentioned. If you are with a large group some restaurants will have a flat service fee that they will charge instead. Secondly, there are taxes added to just about everything in Canada – in Nova Scotia 15% will be added to the price you see on the menu in restaurants. And finally, often as soon as you have finished eating your meal the waiter will bring the bill. The waiter is not being rude this is just the custom.

Caution: *This is a busy time for tourists in Halifax. There will also be many cruise ships in port with about 10,000 visitors. Therefore major tourist attractions will be busy during the day and restaurants and bars will be busy during noon time, early evening, and then again later in the evening*

There are fine restaurants located throughout the city but if you are staying in the main hotel, you can walk to many restaurants ranging from coffee shops, to traditional pubs, to very expensive “white linen” establishments. Check out the restaurant guide in the hotel or ask the bell man for details or suggestions about any specific interest you have. If you want to buy some food for your own lunches or for a picnic in one of the parks there are three grocery stores within walking distance of the hotel. Atlantic Superstore and Sobeys are about a 15 minute walk. There is also Pete’s Frootique, a smaller store specializing in produce and prepared foods, just a few blocks from the Lord Nelson. Ask the staff at the reception desk at your hotel for directions.

Buying and drinking alcohol

There are many laws related to the buying and drinking of alcohol in Canada and they vary by province. In general you have to be in a private home or in a registered establishment to drink beer, wine or spirits. You cannot buy a beer in a restaurant and then walk out on the sidewalk with it! If you want some beer, wine or spirits for your hotel room or to take to someone’s home you will have to go to an NSLC (Nova Scotia Liquor Commission) Store; there are a couple in the downtown core so just ask for directions. There are a couple of specialty wine stores in this area as well.

If you want to sample some local fare, there are a number of good quality local vineyards see www.winesofnovascotia.ca/wineries for more information. Also



there are a couple of top-notch micro-breweries - Garrison and Propeller. You will find these on tap at many local pubs and restaurants. If you really want to try the local



fare on Saturday morning drop into the Farmers market or have a meal at the Wooden Monkey, Fid, or Chives, all restaurants that specialize in local food and drink.

Shopping

There are many local stores near the main hotel, particularly along Barrington St., Granville St., and Spring Garden Road and their side streets. In general, these stores are open from 0930 to 1800 h Monday to Wednesday and they remain open until 2100 h on Thursday and Friday. On Saturday the stores are open from 0930 to 1800 h. Across the harbour in Dartmouth most stores are open until 2100 h Monday through Saturday. There is a small shopping centre with a variety of “national” retailers at Scotia Square, a short distance from the hotel. There are 2 large shopping Centres – the Halifax Shopping Centre and MicMac Mall (in Dartmouth and therefore open in the evenings) both of which are accessible by bus.

Other Entertainment during the AGM

If you have a free evening there are a number of cultural and sporting activities during the AGM with tickets available for purchase. Check out the link www.destinationhalifax.com for the details.

In addition, if you like running, hiking, walking, cycling, etc. there are a variety of parks and trails accessible from the downtown area. Simply ask at the front desk.

Friday, October 26 is the first day of the general deer hunting season, and other hunts (youth deer hunt, bow, etc.) start prior to the SCOR AGM . Anyone who wants to go for a walk anywhere outside the city (fields, forests, etc.) is obligated by law to wear "hunter orange" on their chest and head to avoid becoming a statistic. Even though no hunting is permitted on Sunday, it is a good idea to wear orange just to be safe.

Waste Management

A strange topic for travel information! In your hotel, in cafeterias, and other eating places you will be faced with the problem of what to do with your waste.

Nova Scotia is a world leader in the recycling of domestic wastes. Basically there are 5 streams of “garbage.”

- *Drink containers of any type (you will be charged a “deposit” which is partially refundable)*
- *Plastic materials including containers and bags*
- *Paper products including newspapers, bond paper, in general any dry paper product*
- *Organic “compostable” material including leftover food and paper soiled with food, and*
- *Garbage, i.e. does not belong to any of the above – usually packing material like Styrofoam and most wax coated hot beverage containers.*

Other than in private homes there are just 3 containers; the separation is simply into garbage, compostable material, and recyclable material.

Language

Canada is a bilingual nation – English and French. While English is the dominant language spoken in the Halifax area you will also find that French is widely spoken and many restaurants and stores will have French language staff available to assist you.

ENJOY YOUR VISIT TO CANADA
