

Support for Brazilians in Winnipeg

By **Christian Pedersen, Toronto**
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Conselho de Winnipeg: Ricardo Goncalves, Marcia Monteggia, Lysandra Orsano, Vanice Stein and Maggie Demarchi. Bia Tielmann and Gustavo Zentner
Foto: CCBW

Por Ligia Braidotti Chiesorin

The Brazilian community in Winnipeg has grown significantly in the last 10 years.

It's estimated that there are more than 4,000 Brazilians living in the capital of the province of Manitoba. The reasons that attract Brazilians to Winnipeg and region are several.

Christiane Mignot Freitas explained that she had always wanted to do an exchange program. The ease of finding a job in the area where she and her husband were already working in Brazil was one of the factors that brought the family to Winnipeg.

“When our 16- and 15-year-old children started asking for the exchange, we thought ‘why not the family?’” she said. “Winnipeg has surfaced because here my husband’s profession is unregulated ... and he was able to work in his field since day one.”

With the growth of the Brazilian community in Winnipeg also came the demand for services that assisted the adaptation. A number of Brazilians gathered in 2015 and created the first group that would initiate the many supports for their compatriots: the Brazilian Citizenship Council of Winnipeg.

According to the Itamaraty, this informal and apolitical forum... aims to bring together nationals living abroad with the consular network.

“The city of Winnipeg is in the jurisdiction of the consular post in Toronto. It’s a big travel distance. It is quite costly to go there to solve matters relating to Brazilian documents, such as power of attorney, civil registries, military documents, etc.,” Vanice Stein, president of the Brazilian Citizenship Council of Winnipeg, said.

The Winnipeg Brazilian Citizenship Council facilitated the roving consulate in 2016 and 2017, created a website (<https://conselhocidadaniawinnipeg.com/>) and sent names to the consulate for the appointment of an honorary consul, as well as an honorary deputy consul. Gustavo Zentner and Ana Beatriz Monteiro Tielmann were selected for both positions, respectively.

The Brazilian Honorary Consulate in Winnipeg was established in September 2017 and its services began in July.

Zentner explained that the honorary consulate is accepted by the government of Canada and Manitoba, and is a formalized and stable post that works together with the Consulate General in Toronto and the Brazilian Embassy in Ottawa.

In addition to some consular services, the honorary consulate also aims to centralize Brazilian communication and representation before the Canadian government and police.

This representation is extremely important for the strengthening of international relations. The post of honorary consul is apolitical and independent of the Brazilian government and includes the cultural, tourist, commercial, and economic promotion of Brazil as a country, not as a government.

“At this time, Brazilians are not considered suspects for police services. That means there are no incidents that show that any Brazilian can be a threat or concern,” Zentner explained.

Recently another group of Brazilians created the BRASIW – Brazilian Association in Winnipeg Inc. incorporated in Manitoba on September 7.

Maggie Demarchi, president of BRASIW, said the main goal is to welcome Brazilian newcomers and promote their well-being through activities and programs that help them adapt to life in Canada, while promoting Brazilian culture and language.

“We have to show people what is good about Brazil, but always remembering that they are in Canada and assimilating,” Demarchi said.

The association is an organization that serves the whole community. They have an administrative board, raise money through members, have a statute in English, and raise money to support the activities of the Winnipeg Citizenship Council.

These three groups don't spare efforts to meet the needs of Brazilians living abroad. Dozens of people are working voluntarily for the good of their countrymen.

"I believe that all the structures we have created here in Winnipeg, we not only think of in terms of supporting the Brazilian who is here, but also in terms of supporting Brazil," Stein said. "Each of us represents our country and we must be agents of expansion of our country, of cultural expansion, economic expansion, exchange programs, and the exchange of ideas."

Interestingly, Zentner commented that Brazilian immigrants are the ones with the most support available to them compared to other countries from Latin America.

"A good, strong and healthy Brazilian Association means better services and integration for Brazilian visitors, students and immigrants in Manitoba. It is in everyone's interest to have a strong association that represents collective interests," he said.

<https://brazilianwave.org/en/digital-wave/a-criacao-de-suporte-a-brasileiros-em-winnipeg/>