

PSA Canada Travel Checklist & Instructions
International Judges, Decoys & Specialist Event Officials

Protection Sports Association (PSA)

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Purpose

These instructions are intended for Protection Sports Association judges, certified decoys, and other approved specialist event officials traveling to Canada to officiate sanctioned PSA amateur sporting competitions.

PSA officials should be truthful, concise, and consistent when explaining their purpose of travel.

Supporting documentation does not guarantee admission to Canada. The final determination regarding entry rests with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) officer at the port of entry.

Before Travel

1. Confirm the Canadian Event Has Been Registered With CBSA

The Canadian host club should register its sanctioned event through the CBSA International Events and Convention Services Program and request recognition.

When a club already has multiple PSA events scheduled at the same location during the year, CBSA has advised that the club may submit one registration request covering those events. The club should enter the first event date in the “Date of event” field and identify the additional known event dates in the “Information on the event/meeting” section.

Most PSA clubs host only one event per year. In those circumstances, the club should simply register that event.

Once CBSA issues a Letter of Recognition applicable to the event, obtain a copy from the Canadian host club before traveling.

The CBSA Letter of Recognition is not a public document for general distribution. CBSA has instructed that the letter should not be posted on the internet or provided to individuals who are not on the attendee list. Traveling officials who receive the letter should keep it with their travel documentation and should not redistribute or publicly post it..

2. Obtain Your Canadian Host-Club Invitation Letter

Each international official should receive an individualized invitation letter from the Canadian host club.

Verify that your letter accurately identifies:

- Your full name;
- Your PSA certification/official position;
- The Canadian host club;
- The sanctioned PSA event;
- Event location;
- Event dates;
- Expected arrival and departure dates;
- Your purpose for entering Canada;
- Your unpaid volunteer status;
- Any travel, lodging, meal, or other expenses being provided or reimbursed by the host;
- Your relationship to the Canadian host organization; and
- Canadian contact information for someone who can verify the event and your invitation.

Review the letter before traveling and immediately notify the host club if anything is incorrect.

3. Obtain Your PSA Appointment & Credential Verification Letter

Carry an official PSA letter confirming:

- Your current PSA certification;
- Your appointment to the specific Canadian event;
- Your role as a judge, certified decoy, or other specialist event official;
- The official functions you will perform;
- Your volunteer status;
- That you are not an employee of the Canadian host club; and
- PSA contact information for credential verification.

Documents to Carry

Keep your important documents with you and readily accessible when entering Canada rather than packed in checked luggage.

Your travel packet should contain:

- Passport and other required travel documents
- CBSA Letter of Recognition applicable to the event — for the traveler's use; do not publicly post or redistribute
- Canadian Host-Club Invitation Letter
- PSA Official Appointment & Credential Verification Letter
- Certified PSA Decoy / Specialist Event Official Role & Equipment Explanation, when applicable
- Event premium, schedule, or other documentation identifying the sanctioned PSA competition
- Return airline itinerary or other return-travel documentation
- Hotel/lodging information
- Canadian host contact information

- Documentation concerning expenses being paid or reimbursed by the host club, when appropriate

Officials should know where these documents are and be able to produce them promptly if requested.

Explaining Your Purpose of Travel

When asked why you are entering Canada, answer the officer's question truthfully and concisely.

For an unpaid PSA judge or certified decoy traveling solely to officiate the sanctioned event, an appropriate explanation may be:

“I am entering Canada to serve as an unpaid certified specialist event official at a sanctioned international amateur Protection Sports Association competition.”

If appropriate, follow with:

“The Canadian host has registered the event with CBSA. I have the event recognition letter, my invitation letter, and my PSA appointment and credential documents with me.”

Do not immediately launch into a lengthy explanation of Canadian immigration law. Answer the officer's questions and provide supporting documentation when requested.

If You Are a Certified PSA Decoy

If asked what a “decoy” is, do not assume the officer is familiar with protection sports.

A concise explanation is:

“A PSA decoy is a certified specialist event official. I perform the standardized protection exercises required by the competition under the direction of the presiding judge so the competing dogs and handlers can be evaluated consistently and safely.”

If asked whether you are coming to Canada to train dogs:

“No. My purpose on this trip is to perform my assigned official duties at the sanctioned competition. I am not providing private or general dog-training services.”

Only make this statement when it accurately describes your activities during the trip.

Bite Suits & Specialized Equipment

Certified decoys may need to transport specialized personal protective sporting equipment, including:

- Bite suits
- Protective sleeves
- Hidden/concealed sleeves
- Other equipment required for prescribed competition exercises

If asked why you have this equipment, a concise explanation is:

“This is my personally owned protective sporting equipment required for my duties as a certified specialist event official. It is being used at the sanctioned competition and will leave Canada with me when I return home.”

If appropriate:

“It is not merchandise and is not being brought into Canada for sale, rental, or distribution.”

Always accurately declare property or equipment when required by CBSA. Do not attempt to conceal the existence or purpose of specialized sporting equipment.

Compensation & Expense Reimbursement

Be precise when discussing payment.

If you are serving as an unpaid volunteer official:

“I am not receiving wages, an instructor fee, professional fee, or honorarium for officiating. The host club is [paying/reimbursing] my reasonable travel expenses.”

Do not describe legitimate expense reimbursement as wages or payment for services.

Likewise, do not state that you are unpaid if you are actually receiving compensation.

Your explanation must accurately reflect the arrangement for that particular event.

Important Terminology

When accurately describing your PSA assignment, useful terms include:

- Certified PSA Judge
- Certified PSA Decoy
- Senior PSA Decoy
- Specialist Event Official
- International Amateur Sporting Competition
- Sanctioned PSA Competition
- Unpaid Volunteer Official
- Personally Owned Protective Sporting Equipment

The term “specialist event official” is intended to help explain the specialized function of a certified PSA decoy. It does not replace the official PSA certification title or create a separate Canadian immigration classification.

Language to Use Carefully

Do not try to manipulate terminology or conceal the nature of your activities.

However, officials should avoid casually using inaccurate descriptions such as:

- “I’m coming up to work dogs.”
- “I’m working a trial.”
- “The club hired me for the weekend.”

- “They’re paying me to come up.”
- “I’m doing dog training.”
- “This is my work equipment.”

Those statements may inaccurately describe an unpaid competition-official assignment.

Instead, accurately explain what you are actually doing:

“I am an unpaid certified specialist event official assigned to officiate a sanctioned international amateur sporting competition.”

If an officer asks whether what you are doing constitutes “work” under Canadian immigration law, do not argue with the officer or simply insist that it is not work because you are unpaid.

Explain the facts and provide your supporting documentation.

R186(m)

IRCC publishes guidance concerning judges, referees and similar officials involved in international amateur sports competitions under R186(m) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations.

For amateur sports competitions, IRCC guidance provides that the event should be organized by an international amateur sporting association and hosted by a Canadian organization.

For a sanctioned Canadian PSA event:

- Protection Sports Association (PSA) is the international amateur sporting association;
- The Canadian PSA club is the Canadian host organization;
- The sanctioned PSA trial is the international amateur sporting competition; and
- The PSA judge, certified decoy, or qualifying specialist performs the assigned event-official function.

The traveler should carry the PSA and Canadian host documentation establishing these facts.

The examining CBSA officer retains responsibility for determining the application of Canadian immigration requirements and whether the traveler may enter Canada.

Paid Seminars, Training or Other Activities

Do not assume that this guidance applies to a different activity simply because you are a PSA official.

If your Canadian trip will include:

- A paid seminar
- Paid dog training
- Private instruction
- Professional services
- An honorarium or instructor fee
- Activities materially different from the official assignment described in your invitation and PSA appointment letters

Contact the Canadian host and determine the applicable Canadian immigration requirements before traveling.

The documentation prepared for an unpaid PSA competition official should not be used to characterize a paid instructional or commercial visit as an unpaid officiating assignment.

If Referred to Secondary Inspection

A referral to secondary inspection does not itself mean that entry has been denied.

Remain professional and answer questions truthfully.

Have your documentation available and, when appropriate, advise the officer that you have:

- The CBSA event Letter of Recognition
- Your Canadian host invitation
- Your PSA appointment and credential verification
- Information explaining your specialist official role
- Your event information
- Contact information for both the Canadian host and PSA

Do not argue about the interpretation of R186(m).

If the officer has questions about your PSA certification or appointment, offer the PSA verification contact information.

If the officer has questions about the event, offer the Canadian host's contact information.

Before Leaving Home – Final Check

- Passport/travel documents
- CBSA event Letter of Recognition
- Canadian Host-Club Invitation Letter
- PSA Appointment & Credential Verification Letter
- Decoy / Specialist Event Official Explanation, if applicable
- Event premium or schedule
- Hotel information
- Return itinerary
- Canadian host's telephone number and email
- PSA verification contact information
- Expense/reimbursement information, if applicable
- Specialized equipment identified and accounted for
- Understand how to accurately explain your purpose of travel

Three Things to Remember

1. Be Truthful

Never misrepresent your activities, compensation, equipment, or purpose for entering Canada.

2. Be Concise

Clearly identify yourself as the certified PSA official you actually are and answer the questions being asked.

3. Be Prepared

Carry documentation establishing the event, the Canadian host, your PSA appointment and credentials, your volunteer status, and the purpose of any specialized sporting equipment.

PSA Verification

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