

December 5, 2024

The Honourable Rosemary Moodie, Senator

Dear Senator Moodie,

I thank you and the rest of the Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology for listening to the testimony of witnesses on Bill C-71. I am one of the co-authors of a brief submitted to the Committee (along with witness Carol Sutherland-Brown and Majda Dabaghi) and you can find my family story in its appendix.

I am in favour of this Bill and agree that a connection test is a practical means to show strong ties to Canada. However, I am writing with concern about the suggested inclusion of a five-year window on the proposed 1095 day connection test. I understand that this is a requirement for permanent residents who wish to obtain citizenship. But for those who are already Canadian citizens by descent (like my children), this negates years of visits to Canada and longstanding bonds with grandparents, aunts/uncles, and cousins. How can we say that a person who comes to Canada for three years and then departs to settle elsewhere is any more tied to Canada than a child who has been identifying as Canadian for a lifetime? My children have been spending all their summers and Christmas holidays in Canada with family and fully identify as Canadian. They have even attended a Canadian International School where they learnt from a Canadian curriculum taught by Canadian teachers and sang "O Canada" at assemblies.

As for the witness who suggested this amendment, I found his testimony narrow and troubling. My immigrant parents did not come from OECD countries, and far from being 'a security risk', they devoted their working lives to the Canadian civil service, paid their taxes, voted, and brought up two proud Canadian daughters.

We should be open to what a Canadian can look like and think more broadly about how Canadians abroad contribute to Canada. I ask that the Committee ponder the connection test in that spirit.

Kind regards,

Christina Matula-Hakli

(born in Montreal, raised in Ottawa, currently living in Finland)