

## **Statement from The Honourable Senator Ratna Omidvar, Independent Senator for Ontario: Senate Passes Improved Citizenship Bill to Facilitate Citizenship and Restore Equality**

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Major changes to the Citizenship Act passed the final stages of law-making today, after the Senate and the House of Commons agreed to significant amendments made by Senators.

The Senate voted to send Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act, for Royal Assent. The bill, which reflects major campaign promises of the government, facilitates citizenship and protects Charter rights.

Newcomers to Canada can now qualify to become full participants sooner and with fewer barriers. They can become naturalized in the knowledge that their citizenship is a right, and not a privilege which can be taken away.

“Citizenship is one of the most powerful indicators of inclusion and belonging. When we facilitate citizenship for newcomers and protect the fundamental equality among all citizens by birth or naturalization, we are nation-building,” said Senator Ratna Omidvar, Independent Senator from Ontario and the Senate sponsor of Bill C-6. “This is a significant law for all Canadians and for Canadians-in-the-making.”

One of the Senate changes to Bill C-6, led by Senator Omidvar and Senator Elaine McCoy with colleagues across both houses, creates due process for citizens who face losing their Canadian citizenship because of allegations of fraud or misrepresentation. Before this change, Canadians faced an unjust administrative process and fewer safeguards than anyone wishing to challenge a parking ticket.

The second Senate change, championed by Senator Victor Oh, enables minors to independently apply for citizenship. This important change widens the circle of inclusion for those who qualify for Canadian citizenship. It reminds law makers that a broader examination of the rights of children and youth is needed across the citizenship portfolio.

“These are outstanding examples of the Red Chamber exercising its ability to improve legislation and uphold the Charter, in particular on behalf of minorities,” Senator Omidvar said.

Other major changes introduced by Bill C-6 include:

- Repealing the authority to revoke the citizenship of dual citizens on national interest grounds;
- Repealing the requirement for citizenship applicants to declare an intent to reside in Canada;
- Reinstating three out of five years of physical presence as a requirement to obtain citizenship;
- Reinstating residency credit for temporary residents wishing to obtain citizenship; and

- Reinstating reduced age requirements to meet language and knowledge criteria to obtain citizenship.

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