

PRESS RELEASE: New Citizenship Act Threatens Rights of All Canadians

May 6, 2014

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers (CARL), University of Toronto Law Professor Audrey Macklin, executive member of CARL, testified before the Citizenship and Immigration Committee of the House of Commons on May 5, 2014 on Bill C-24, the “Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act”. Professor Macklin testified that this new proposed law will weaken the citizenship rights of all Canadians.

“Bill C-24 represents a serious threat to the rights of all Canadians”, said Professor Macklin. “The bill does exactly the opposite of what its title proclaims. Instead of giving citizens a permanent and secure status in Canada, the bill weakens Canadian citizenship to another form of permanent resident status which is conditional on the Minister’s discretionary judgment about who deserves to get it and who deserves to keep it.”

“No one should be happy with this bill: immigrants, natural born citizens and even native born citizens. It will be more difficult and expensive to obtain citizenship and for some, particularly older permanent residents, it will be virtually impossible unless they invoke the discretion of the government, which is not easily forthcoming”.

During prior remarks, Professor Macklin challenged the Committee members to think about what they are doing. “Do Canadians know, even native born Canadians, that they will now be liable to lose their citizenship if they are dual citizens? And how many Canadians know whether they are dual citizens? Without knowing it, they may have potential citizenship in a foreign country based on their parents’ or even grandparents’ citizenship in another country.”

Professor Macklin noted that the government has targeted criminals in Bill C-24, but that the punishment, loss of citizenship, does not fit the crime. “We have laws in this country. If a citizen commits a crime, he or she is punished according to the law. They are not exiled to another country. Bill C-24 introduces an arbitrary system. If I commit a crime, and am solely a citizen of Canada, I am safe. If you commit the same crime and you are a potential citizen of, let’s say, the Ukraine, due your father’s citizenship, but you’ve never been there and don’t speak the language, the Canadian government can still deport you to the Ukraine. That is fundamentally wrong.”

Mitchell Goldberg, vice-president of CARL, will also testify before the Committee. “Citizenship is the bedrock of Canadian identity”, said Mr. Goldberg. “Especially for new Canadians, becoming a citizen means they have joined the Canadian family. Canada is their home. They and their families are full-fledged Canadians. Now there will be a question mark beside their citizenship status. A bureaucrat, not a judge but a bureaucrat, may now decide on very vague criteria that

they are not really a member of the family. They can now be kicked out of the family for imputed intention. That weakens Canadian citizenship. It does not strengthen it.”

To read CARL’s brief on the proposed citizenship act, please clic [here](#).

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