SOCI: Remarks on C-3

Andrew Griffith

Thank you, Madam Chair,

I am pleased to be back again to discuss C-71/C-3.

In my previous submission to the committee on C-71 in December 2024, I focused on the lack of a time limit under which a second-generation parent could meet the residency requirement of 1,095 days, which undermines the purpose of determining a valid connection to Canada.

Later, SOCI accepted the government's approach of not having a time limit.

While the House Citizenship and Immigration committee made a number of changes to C-3, the Government chose to revert to the original Bill.

This made sense with respect to removing house committee amendments that would require language and knowledge assessment as well as criminality and security checks. The second generation, like the first generation born abroad, are claiming a right, and are not permanent residents applying to become citizens.

However, two amendments made by the House immigration committee improved the Bill.

The first requires that the residency requirement of 1,095 days be cumulative within any five-year period prior to the birth of a child. This addressed my main concerns regarding the difficulty for both applicants and IRCC to administer, along with creating a stronger connection test.

Processing time for citizenship proofs has already increased from 5 to 9 months pre-C-3 implementation. It would be irresponsible to add the additional administrative burden of determining 1095 days of residence over a lifetime as opposed to 5 years on a department already struggling to meet its service standards.

The second amendment requires annual reporting on the number of persons becoming citizens as a result of the bill's provisions. This is needed in order to ensure accountability.

The November 3 Globe editorial convincingly argued for the reinstatement of both of these provisions.

Testimony by the Minister and officials on October 2demonstrated the general weakness of the data presented and apparent confusion over whether exit controls exist (they don't). The data provision is, therefore, particularly important.

Moreover, IRCC provided no analysis of the number of persons likely to apply for the simplified renunciation process nor of related costs.

IRCC has received about 4,200 applications from the second generation born abroad to date. With this large sample, IRCC can share applicant characteristics, such as gender, age, country of residence or origin. The analysis should also examine whether a five-year limit would have a material impact on eligibility.

I expect most people applying have a strong connection to Canada and are likely to easily meet a five-year time limit and be able to document it to the satisfaction of IRCC.

A related issue is the provision for a simplified process to renounce Canadian citizenship. For accountability, annual reporting should include the numbers and country of residence of applicants.

To conclude, I would offer the following recommendations:

Recommendations

1. IRCC conduct an analysis of the pending applications to inform the Senate regarding those most likely to apply under the proposed legislation;
2. Senators send back C-3 with the CIMM amendments for the five-year time limit for the residency requirement and annual data reporting; and,
3. Senators include a requirement for annual reporting that would also include the numbers and country of residence of applicants for the simplified renunciation process.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.