

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Dual Citizenship

WHAT TRAVELLERS SHOULD KNOW



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For more information

The "For more information" section (p. 7) includes information on publications, resources and programs available from Foreign Affairs Canada, as well as from other government departments and agencies mentioned throughout the text.

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

Ce document est aussi disponible en français sous le titre *La double citoyenneté*.

Note: The information contained in this booklet is subject to change. Please check with our Web site or the appropriate government departments and organizations mentioned inside to ensure you have the most current information.

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Dual Citizenship

WHAT TRAVELLERS SHOULD KNOW

Dual citizenship occurs when a person is the citizen of more than one country. Canadian law permits this: you can remain or become a citizen of another country and still be recognized as a Canadian.

But dual citizenship (also called dual nationality) is not legally recognized in all countries. This can lead to serious difficulties for Canadians when they are in the country of their second citizenship. It can also create problems in third countries if there is any confusion over what citizenship was used to obtain entry.

How is dual citizenship obtained?

In some cases, you may not be aware that you're a citizen of another country. A second citizenship may result from:

- ◆ an application for citizenship
- ◆ place of birth
- ◆ family connections, including place of birth of one of your parents or even grandparents
- ◆ marriage
- ◆ extended residency

Advantages

Many Canadians remain or become citizens of another country because of the advantages, including:

- ◆ employment opportunities
- ◆ entitlement to social programs, such as pensions
- ◆ property ownership
- ◆ unrestricted residency

Risks and problems

There are also risks and problems associated with having more than one citizenship.

Recognition of Canadian citizenship: The most important of these is that your Canadian citizenship may not be recognized in the country of your second citizenship. The authorities of that country may not recognize Canada's right to provide you with consular assistance.

There could also be problems in other countries, especially if you used the travel document of the country of your second citizenship to gain entry. In such circumstances, the local authorities could decide that Canada does not have the right to provide consular assistance.

Military service: Many countries still have compulsory military service. If you are a citizen, and you meet other conditions, you may be legally required to register for military service and to respond to call-up orders. This legal obligation may exist even if

A Canadian from Toronto went to Italy with his Italian-born parents. He was informed by the Italian authorities that he was considered an Italian citizen and would be required to perform military service. He had to have family members in Toronto obtain certain documents and then have them certified by the Italian consulate before he was allowed to leave Italy.

you do not reside in the country of your second citizenship. Your obligations could be enforced even if you're just visiting at some point in the future.

Some countries do not accept ignorance as an excuse for failure to comply. The consequences could be imprisonment or immediate induction into military service the next time you arrive in the country or

attempt to leave. Even dual citizens who have passed the age for military service may be considered defaulters for failing to report at the required time.

Taxation: Taxation arrangements between countries are complex. If you have dual citizenship, you may encounter obligations in both countries. These obligations should be discussed with your financial and/or legal advisers.

Travel: If you travel with two passports, you could be subject to increased scrutiny by immigration and security officials. You could be questioned about missing entry or exit stamps, as well as your reason for having two travel documents.

After graduation, a Canadian teenager travelled to Singapore for the first time to visit his relatives. What he didn't expect was to be arrested at the border and forced to join the military. Because of his dual citizenship, Canadian consular officers could not help him. In Singapore, he was considered a citizen of Singapore.

In some countries, possession of a second passport could result in its confiscation or a fine. You may even be prevented from leaving the country.

Many countries require their nationals to enter and leave the country on the passport of that country. A dual-national Polish/Canadian husband and wife without valid Polish passports were allowed to enter Poland on their Canadian passports to attend to a family emergency. To leave Poland, however, they were required to obtain Polish passports. The process took several weeks, and their delayed return almost cost them their jobs back in Canada.

Dual Citizenship & Child Abduction

Many international child abductions involve parents and children who have dual citizenship. If the abducting parent carries a second passport, Canadian authorities may encounter difficulties in preventing the abduction. The Government of Canada cannot prevent another country from providing passport services to Canadian parents or children who are also citizens of that country.

You or your lawyer can request that a foreign diplomatic or consular mission not provide passport services for your child. To do so, provide the mission with a written request, along with a certified copy of any court orders dealing with custody or foreign travel by your child. Inform the foreign diplomatic or consular mission that you have also sent a copy of your request to the Consular Affairs Bureau of Foreign Affairs Canada in Ottawa.

For more information, consult the publication *International Child Abductions: A Manual for Parents* at www.voyage.gc.ca.

Marriage, divorce and child custody: Canada recognizes the legality of marriages performed in other countries. However, marriages performed in Canada may not always be considered legal in other countries. Similarly, divorce and child custody documents issued by Canadian courts may not be recognized.

Education: If the country of your second citizenship provided

you with free education, especially at the secondary or professional level, you may be held liable for reimbursing the costs. This is particularly the case if you obtained the education outside the country of your second citizenship.

Inheritances: Some countries may not permit the transfer of inheritances to nationals with a second citizenship.

What you can do

Preparation and knowledge are the keys to avoiding problems associated with dual citizenship. If you have any questions or concerns, contact the country of your second citizenship before you travel. Formally establish whether you are subject to any outstanding obligations such as military service, taxation or education repayment. This information should be *confirmed in writing*. Carry this document with you when you travel—some dual citizens have received inaccurate or incomplete information from officials representing the country of their second citizenship.

A bilateral treaty between Canada and China establishes that China will recognize the Canadian citizenship of persons with Chinese ancestry if they enter China using a Canadian passport.

A Canadian citizen of Chinese origin travelled to China on his Chinese documents instead of his Canadian passport. He was arrested for problems associated with a business venture and jailed shortly after his arrival. Despite repeated requests for visitation rights by the Canadian government, access was denied for over four years.

If you do run into problems abroad because of your dual citizenship, contact the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate immediately. If you're unable to make contact and require immediate assistance, place a collect call to the Operations Centre, Consular Affairs Bureau, Foreign Affairs Canada, at **(613) 996-8885**. You can also contact us by e-mail, at sos@international.gc.ca.

Always use your Canadian passport

The Canadian government strongly encourages you to use your Canadian passport when travelling abroad, especially when entering the country of your second citizenship.

Using your Canadian passport may provide the basis under which

Canada can provide you with consular assistance if you run into difficulties. You should also obtain a visa, if that is required for entry by Canadian citizens, and always present yourself as a Canadian when dealing with local authorities.

Renunciation of foreign citizenship

All countries have procedures through which a person can formally renounce citizenship. These procedures can be complex and

lengthy. If you wish to formally renounce your second citizenship, contact the embassy of the country concerned in Canada.

Renunciation of Canadian citizenship

If you are a citizen of another country and are living outside Canada, you can renounce your Canadian citizenship by applying through any Canadian embassy or consulate abroad. The procedures can take many months to complete.

If you renounce your Canadian citizenship, you cannot travel on a

Canadian passport or seek Canadian consular assistance. Moreover, you will not be able to return to Canada without going through immigration procedures.

If you are overseas and have questions concerning your Canadian citizenship status, contact any Canadian embassy or

consulate. If you are in Canada and want to obtain information on your citizenship status in another country, contact the

embassy or consulate of that country.

For more information

Foreign Affairs Canada

www.fac-aec.gc.ca

Consular Affairs Bureau

www.voyage.gc.ca

E-mail:

voyage@international.gc.ca

More Brochures

The Consular Affairs Bureau publishes, in both official languages, a series of safe travel brochures. You can access them at

www.voyage.gc.ca or order them by calling **1 800 267-8376** (in Canada) or **(613) 944-4000**.

Country Travel Reports (free)

Country Travel Reports at www.voyage.gc.ca provide information on safety and security conditions, health issues and entry

requirements for over 200 travel destinations. This information is also available by telephone:

Tel.: **1 800 267-6788**

(in Canada and the U.S.)

or **(613) 944-6788**

For a list of *Canadian Government Offices Abroad* or a list of *Diplomatic, Consular and Other Representatives in Canada*, visit www.voyage.gc.ca and click on Abroad or In Canada.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)

www.cic.gc.ca

CIC Call Centre:

Tel.: **1 888 242-2100** (in Canada)

Publication (on-line only)

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