

# Immigrant Voting Rights: Time for 'Urban Citizenship'?

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# Should Non-Citizen Immigrants Have Municipal Voting Rights?

- ▶ An Issue You May Not Have Given Much, Or Any, Thought To.
- ▶ We Take as a Given/For Granted That Voting Rights are Only for Canadian Citizens.
- ▶ To Vote in Canada at Any Level of Government, You Must Be a Canadian Citizen.
- ▶ Re-Thinking the Link: Citizenship & Voting
- ▶ What About Residency as ‘Urban Citizenship’?
- ▶ What’s Best for Immigrant Integration & Canadian Democracy?


# Is Anyone Listening?

- ▶ This is NOT an ‘Academic’ Discussion.
- ▶ About 40 Countries Have Non-Citizen Voting Rights.
- ▶ “Democracies across the globe have questioned the practicality and the morality of limiting the franchise to those who are citizens.” David Earnest
- ▶ These Include the World’s Leading Immigrant-Receiving Countries
- ▶ Campaign Underway in Toronto (‘I Vote Toronto’) for Municipal Voting Rights for Non-Citizen Residents
- ▶ Toronto Mayor David Miller’s Biggest Regret to Date:
  - “I haven’t been able yet to persuade the province to give immigrants the right to vote. And I feel very strongly about this.”

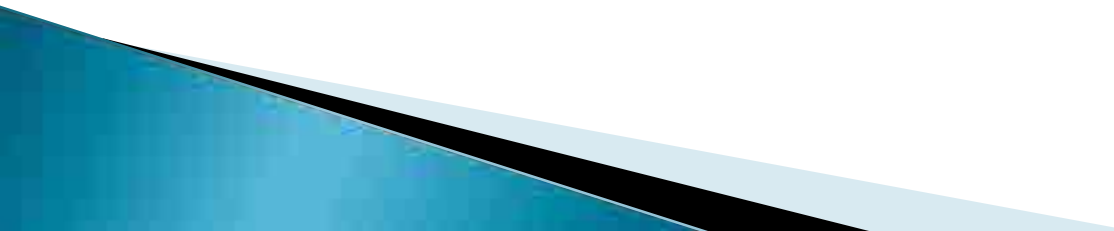
# Immigrant Integration as an Urban/Local Experience in Canada

- ▶ 94.4% of Newcomers to Canada From 2001–2006 settled in a CMA.
- ▶ “By its very nature, integration will always be first and foremost a local affair.” Demetrios Papademetriou
- ▶ Metropolis Project Priority Theme: ‘Welcoming Communities’
  - “The extent to which a society is able to integrate/include immigrants, refugees and minorities depends on a number of societal conditions, some of which can be effectively altered by government policy. This policy research priority will examine what public policy instruments can enhance the capacity of Canada, its cities and communities to receive and integrate immigrants, refugees, and minorities and will seek empirically determined best practices that can be adapted for use in other contexts.”

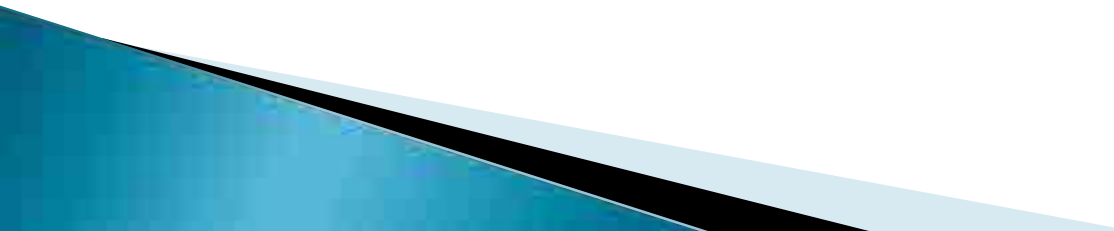
# The Importance of Integration Policies

- ▶ “The place of immigrants in a country is most importantly determined by what place the receiving state and society assigns to newcomers.” Myer Siemiatycki
  - ▶ Immigrant integration is especially influenced by “the degree of material and symbolic public support offered to newcomer communities.” Irene Bloemraad
  - ▶ Would Municipal Non-Citizen Voting Rights Strengthen Immigrant Integration in Canada?
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# Presentation Outline

- ▶ A. Defining Terms
  - ▶ B. Arguments in Favour
    - Evolving Voter Rights
    - Huge Number of Disenfranchized Immigrants
    - Strengthening Canadian Democracy & Citizenship
    - Other Countries Do It
    - Municipal Government is Different
    - Creating Cities of Belonging
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# Presentation Outline

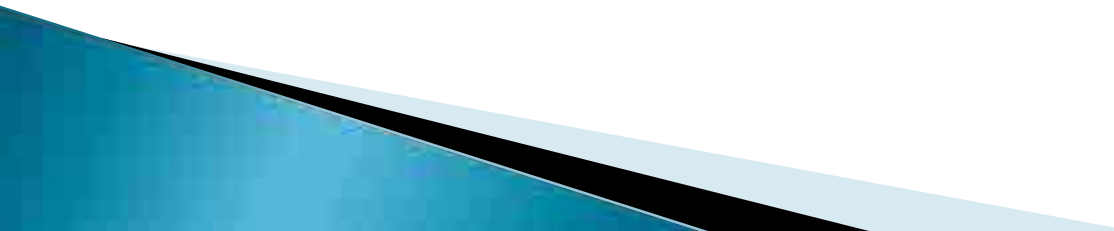
- ▶ C. Arguments Opposed:
    - It Devalues Canadian Citizenship
    - Enfranchises People Whose Loyalty is to Another Country
    - Produces a Less-Informed Electorate
    - Will Reduce the Overall Rate of Voter Turnout in Elections
  
  - ▶ D. Moving Forward?
- 

# A. Defining Terms I: Citizenship

- ▶ Citizenship: Formal & Active
  - ▶ Formal: Citizenship as Status
  - ▶ “Membership in a socio-political community.” Irene Bloemraad
  - ▶ Active: Citizenship as Engagement & Practice
  - ▶ “A dynamic relation between four complementary dimensions: rights and responsibilities; access and belonging.” Jane Jenson & Martin Papillon
  - ▶ Anyone Who Ever Joined a Fitness Club Knows There’s a Difference Between Formal & Active Membership/Citizenship
  - ▶ So Does Anyone Tracking Voter Turn-Out in Canada: Declining Voter Participation
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# A. Defining Terms II: Urban Citizenship

- ▶ Recognizing the City & the Local As a Site of Citizenship: Membership & Rights
  - ▶ “Recently there has been growing awareness of the importance of cities, large and small, as strategic spaces in the age of globalization” Neil Bradford
  - ▶ “Who belongs where, and with what citizenship rights in the emerging global cities?” Leonie Sandercock
  - ▶ Immigrant Voting Rights One Manifestation
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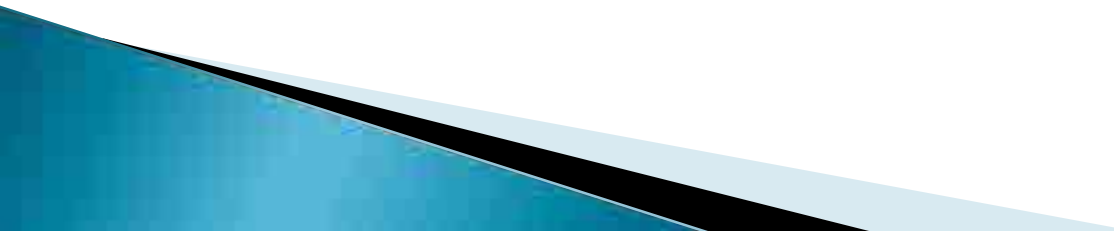
# A. Defining Terms III: Evolution of Citizenship

- ▶ Historically Citizenship Attached to a Variety of Territorial Scales:
  - City–State (Biblical ‘Cities of Refuge’; Ancient Athens, Renaissance Italy)
  - Empire (Roman, Ottoman, Austro–Hungarian)
  - Nation–State (200+ Countries in the World Today)
  - Supra–National (European Union)
- ▶ Citizenship Attachments & Identities Can Overlap
  - EU Citizen + Member State Citizen
  - Dual Citizenship

# A. Defining Terms IV: Voting Rights in Canada

- ▶ Nationally & Provincially:
  - Adult Canadian Citizen; 18 Years of Age+; Canadian-Born or Naturalized
- ▶ Municipally: Voter Eligibility Determined By the Province
- ▶ Some Variance Across Provinces
  - Everywhere: Canadian Citizen; 18 years of Age+; Resident
  - Five Provinces Permit Some Non-Resident Voting
  - Eg. Ontario: Non-Resident Property-Owners or Tenants Plus Spouse May Vote in Municipality They Don't Live In
  - Property + Tax Paying Confer Voting Rights

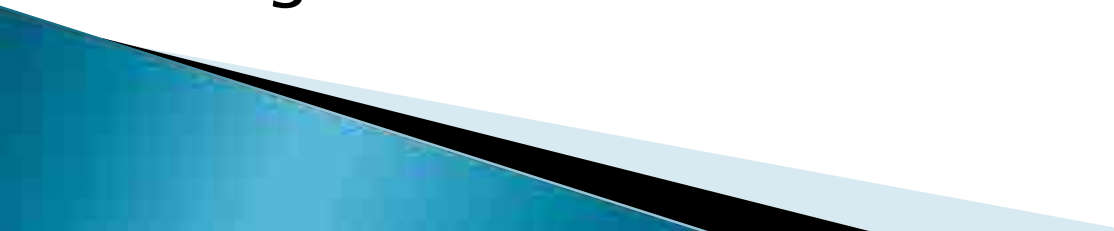
# B. Extending Municipal Voting Rights to Non-Citizen Immigrants: Arguments In Favour

- 1. Evolving Voter Rights
  - 2. Huge Number of Disenfranchized Immigrants
  - 3. Strengthening Canadian Democracy & Citizenship
  - 4. Other Countries Do It
  - 5. Municipal Government is Different
  - 6. Creating Cities of Belonging
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# B1. Evolving Voter Rights

- ▶ Voter Eligibility Rules Have Changed Over Time
- ▶ Reflect Changing Values of Democracy & Community
- ▶ The Evolution of Canadian Voting Rights:
  - First, Only Property–Owning Men
  - Then, All Men
  - Then Women
  - Then Asians
  - Then All Aboriginals
  - Then Adult Age Eligibility Dropped from 21 to 18
- ▶ Every Generation Must Ask: ‘Is Anyone Being Left Out?’

## B2. Huge Number of Disenfranchized Immigrants I

- ▶ In 2006, 1.76 million (5.6%) of Canada's 31.24 million population did not hold Canadian Citizenship.
  - ▶ Despite Canada having VERY high immigrant naturalization rate: 85.1% of All Eligible immigrants in 2006.
  - ▶ The proportion of Non-Citizens is Especially High in Canadian Cities.
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# B2. Huge Number of Disenfranchized Immigrants II

Municipality	Non-Citizen Pop	% Total Pop.
Montreal	179,595	11.3%
Ottawa	42,555	5.3%
Toronto	380,135	15.4%
Brampton	50,564	15%
Mississauga	94,305	14.2%
Hamilton	30,065	6%
Winnipeg	36,650	5.9%
Calgary	83,265	8.5%
Edmonton	48,120	6.7%
Vancouver	74,600	13.1%
Burnaby	29,120	14.4%
Surrey	45,890	11.7%

# B2. Disenfranchized Immigrants III: The Example of Toronto

- ▶ 246,924 Names Dropped from Municipal Voter List in 2006
- ▶ Almost as Many Voters as Total Eligible in Halifax
- ▶ 1 in 7 Names Dropped -- All are Immigrants
- ▶ Their Canadian Citizenship Not Verified, so Names Dropped
- ▶ Neighbourhood Effect Extreme: 140 in Toronto
  - 25% of Neighbourhoods have Over 20% of population who are Non-Citizens; Some have Over 30% Non-citizens
- ▶ Canada's 'Invisible City': Marginalized Immigrants
- ▶ Municipal Elections Every 4 Years, Immigrants Can Go Almost a Decade Without Voting Rights
- ▶ What is Gained By This Exclusion?



# B3. Strengthening Canadian Democracy & Citizenship

- ▶ What's Broken?/Wrong With Status Quo?
- ▶ Too Many Urban Immigrant Permanent Residents Denied An Election Voice
- ▶ No Vote in the City that is Home, Where They Pay Taxes & Rely on Local Services
- ▶ In Ontario 130,000 Students have Parents Who Can't Vote in School Board Elections
- ▶ Immigrant Perspectives/Issues Get Less Election Attention
- ▶ Contributes to Under-Representation of Immigrants in Elected Office: "Identity Representation Gap"
- ▶ Unnecessarily Delays Immigrant Political Participation & Active Citizenship
- ▶ Constructs Immigrants as 'Outsiders'
- ▶ 65 Organizations Support 'I Vote Toronto' Campaign

# B4. Other Countries Do It: Non-Citizen Voting Rights Abroad I

- ▶ Close to 40 Countries Provide Some Form of Non-Citizen Voting Rights
- ▶ Not Including EU Voting Rights
- ▶ 17 in Europe (eg. UK, Ireland, Spain, Denmark, Netherlands;
- ▶ 7 Caribbean (eg. Barbados, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago)
- ▶ 5 in South America (eg. Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia
- ▶ Others Include Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and in Limited Way United States

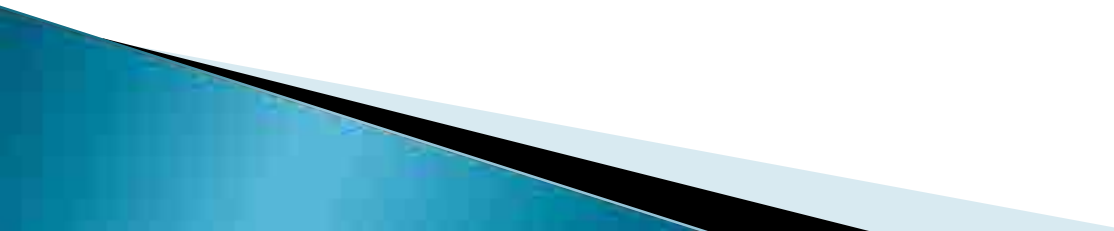
# B4. Other Countries Do It: Non-Citizen Voting Rights Abroad II

- ▶ Most Permissive is New Zealand
  - After 1 Year of Residency, All Immigrants Have Both National and Municipal Voting Rights
- ▶ Most Typically, Voting Rights are Restricted to Municipal Elections
  - Includes United States: Several Towns, Chicago & NYC School Boards
- ▶ Includes Right to Run for Municipal Office in Some Countries
- ▶ Canada a Leader in Immigrant Integration, Lagging on Non-Citizen Voting Rights
- ▶ Missing The Canadian 'Brand'? : Cities of the World

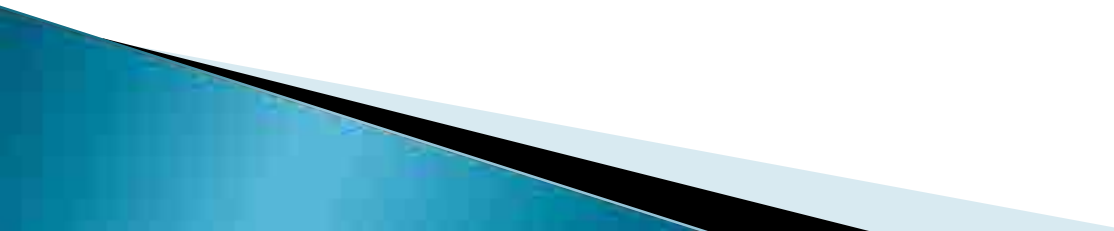
# B5. Municipal Government is Different I

- ▶ Municipal Voting Rights Long Based on Different Principles Than Federally or Provincially
- ▶ ‘Stakeholder’ Right of Taxpayers & Property Holders (Regardless of Residency) to Vote Municipally
- ▶ “No Taxation Without Representation”
- ▶ In Toronto Municipal Elections: Many Non-Resident Canadian Citizens Can Vote; More Resident Non-Citizens Cannot
- ▶ Same ‘Stakeholder’ Principle Should Apply to Immigrants Living in a Municipality, Regardless of Citizenship

# B5. Municipal Government is Different II

- ▶ The Principle of Residency as a Basis of Rights & Belonging Becoming More Widely Accepted Municipally
  - ▶ City of Toronto Act of 2005 Defines the City as a Corporation “that is composed of the inhabitants of its geographic area.”
  - ▶ “Legal residency alone should be sufficient to justify political inclusion.” Lisa Garcia Bedolla
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# B5. Municipal Government is Different III

- ▶ Pragmatically, Calling For Non-Citizen MUNICIPAL Voting Rights Less Contentious
  - ▶ Track Record of Many Other Countries Adopting It Without Discord
  - ▶ Avoids Nationality or 'Dual Loyalty' Concerns That Could Arise Federally
  - ▶ Municipal Issues Are Locally Service-Oriented
  - ▶ Strengthen Local Services Through A Voice For All Residents
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# B6. Creating Cities of Belonging

- ▶ Immigrants Will Continue to Settle in Cities & Towns
- ▶ “Immigrants don’t merely want to come to be cogs in our machine. They want to be fully engaged and valued members of the community.” Alan Broadbent
- ▶ “There’s more to folks coming and staying in communities than just jobs” Katherine Loflin
  - $L + P = \$$ : Competitive Advantage of Inclusive Cities
- ▶ Dublin Mayor Michael Conaghan on how City’s Non-Citizen Immigrants Regard Their Local Voting Rights:
  - They like the idea of being asked for their vote. They feel a part of the city. I suppose they feel they’re not being dismissed.”
- ▶ A Signal of Community Membership & Belonging
- ▶ Promotes Urban Dynamism & Competitiveness Through Immigrant Retention & Commitment

# C. Non-Citizen Immigrant Voting Rights

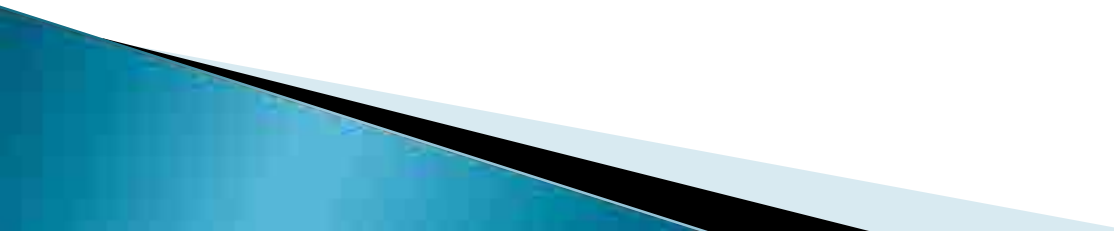
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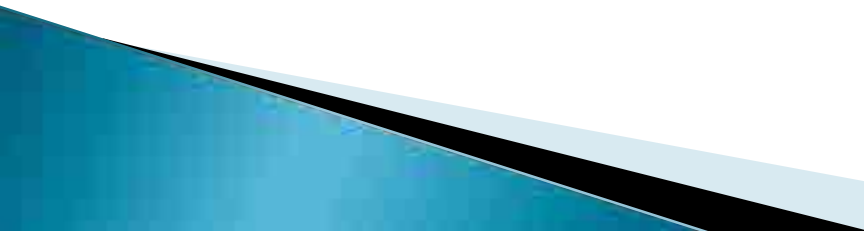
# C1. Does Non-Citizen Voting De-Value Canadian Citizenship

- ▶ What Do We Value More: Formal or Active Cit?
- ▶ Does Extending Political Rights Promote or de-Value Citizenship?
- ▶ Signal that Immigrant Participation is Valued.
- ▶ Voting as a ‘Learned Behaviour’: Start Early & Local
- ▶ The Canadian Way: Immigrants as ‘Citizens in the Making’
- ▶ “Local voting rights, apparently, are not a barrier, but rather function as an incentive to naturalize.”  
Kees Groenendijk on the European Experience

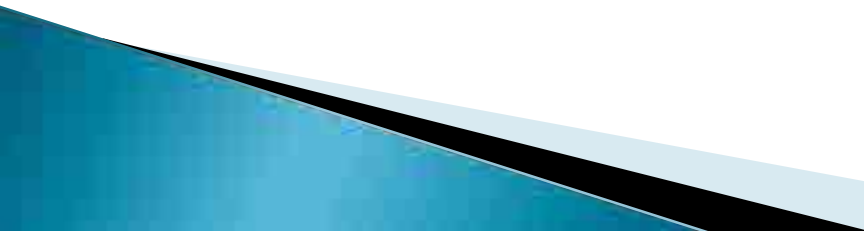
## C2. Does It Enfranchise People With Loyalty to Another Country?

- ▶ Yes
  - ▶ But, Will Municipal Non-Citizen Voting Rights Build or Diminish Attachment to Canada?
  - ▶ Loyalty to Another Country is Not a Bar to Canadian Voting Rights – Dual Citizenship Since 1977
  - ▶ 2006 Census Identified 863,000 Canadians as Dual Citizens With Full Federal, Provincial & Municipal Voting Rights.
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# C3. Does it Produce a Less Informed Electorate?

- ▶ Canada Has No Knowledge Test for Voter Eligibility
  - ▶ True That Civics and Government are Learned Knowledge
  - ▶ An Opportunity to Promote Voting & Civic Awareness Among All Urban Residents – Canadian Citizens & Non-Citizens
  - ▶ Role For Community-Based Organizations Which Support Extending Voting Rights
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# D. Moving Forward on Non-Citizen Municipal Voting Rights

- ▶ How to Operationalize?
  - ▶ Provinces Would Need to Amend Municipal Election Legislation:
    - Either To Confer Such Voting Rights
    - OR To Give Municipalities Right To Do So
  - ▶ Federal Leadership for the Territories?
  - ▶ Voting Rights For Which Non-Citizens?
  - ▶ How Long a Residency Requirement?
  - ▶ Accompanied By Civic Education Campaign?
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# D. Why Bother? I: Fairness

- ▶ “Essentially, the issue is about fairness. It is only fair that persons who are part of a local community and contribute to its tax base and economy should have a say in the formulation of laws and policies that will have a direct bearing on their well-being.” Ron Hayduk
- ▶ “We cannot treat the world as a global economic village but define it as a collection of remote islands for the purposes of political participation. Eventually, we may define a human right to democratic participation.” James Raskin

## D. Why Bother? II: Nation & City Building

- ▶ “Inviting Permanent resident non-citizens to vote in municipal elections will be a useful tool for attracting immigrants to participate in the great work of building Canada for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” Alan Broadbent
- ▶ “Who knows: Ramping up the message that all urban residents should vote in municipal elections might even raise the habitually low turnout rate among Canadian-born voters.” Myer Siemiatycki