

Bill to give citizenship to Lost Canadians passes

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[CBC News](#)

Thousands of so-called "Lost Canadians" are another step closer to gaining citizenship they lost or never had due to little-known quirks in the Citizenship Act.

Bill C-37, an amendment to the Citizenship Act, received Royal Assent on Thursday afternoon, the final stage of coming into law.

Citizenship and Immigration Minister Diane Finley said the bill will resolve over 95 per cent of the cases of Lost Canadians.

"We're very pleased to have been the government that was able to resolve this situation finally," she told CBC News.

The bill flowed out of a series of reports from CBC News in 2007 that highlighted that thousands of people were at risk of losing their citizenship due to outdated provisions in existing and former citizenship laws.

A CBC News investigation found there may be more than 200,000 living in Canada who could lose their citizenship for various reasons, including:

- Some Canadian-born children lost their citizenship because their fathers later became U.S. citizens.
- The law from 1947 to 1977 required people living outside the country on their 24th birthday to sign a form to keep their citizenship.
- People who were born in a hospital south of the border were not considered citizens unless they later registered as Canadians.
- Some were stripped of their citizenship because they or their ancestors were considered illegitimate.

In May of 2005, Parliament passed a law expediting citizenship for those in the first category.

Don Chapman, who has spent 40 years fighting on behalf of Lost Canadians, was among the more than 100,000 people affected in this category.

Under the law of the time, children of fathers who took out citizenship in another country automatically lost their Canadian citizenship as well, even if they weren't living with their fathers at the time.

Chapman's father moved to the U.S. when he was six years old. When Chapman tried to return to Canada at the age of 18 he was told he had lost his citizenship.

He says the law at the time was discriminatory, focusing only on the rights of the father.

"This ends today 140 years of discrimination against women and children on Canadian citizenship," he said.

The provisions of the act will come into force on a day decided by the Governor in Council.