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**Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney speaks on Canada AM from CTV's studios in Ottawa, Friday, April 17, 2009.**

### New amendments boost 'currency' of Cdn. citizenship

Updated Fri. Apr. 17 2009 8:54 AM ET

*CTV.ca News Staff*

Changes that take effect today will strengthen the "currency" of Canadian citizenship and make it harder for people who live abroad and have no connection to the country to hold a passport.

The amendments to the Citizenship Act were made last year, and become law as of today, said Citizenship Minister Jason Kenney.

The changes also open the door for

several thousand "lost Canadians" who were denied automatic citizenship, to become Canadians.

"Several decades ago, there were some changes to the law which basically meant a number of Canadians who should have been Canadian citizens lost their Canadian citizenship or never got it," Kenney told CTV's Canada AM.

"If they left the country without notifying us, for instance, as kids of Canadians born abroad, they didn't automatically become citizens."

The changes will ensure that an estimated 95 per cent of those people will now receive citizenship.

"This will give back citizenship to thousands of Canadians who lost it through no fault of their own," Kenney said.

"We'll make exceptional grants of citizenship for those, the balance who fall through the cracks, and are deserving."

But the changes also strengthen citizenship requirements for others through a so-called "two-generation rule" that also came into effect Friday.

"If both the mom and the dad were born outside of Canada, and they go outside of Canada to have kids, they don't automatically become citizens," Kenney explained.

He said the government has wanted to enact such laws for some time, but the issue didn't come to light until the 2006 war between Israel and

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**This image taken from video shows a scene from a new ad campaign promoting changes to Canada's Citizenship and Immigration Act.**

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**Nick Noorani, Canadian Immigrant Magazine, speaks on Canada AM from CTV's studios in Vancouver, Friday, April 17, 2009.**

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Lebanon. The conflict revealed that thousands of people holding Canadian citizenship were living in Lebanon permanently, many with little or no connection to Canada.

Ottawa spent \$90 million to evacuate many of them to safety in Canada.

Kenney said that wasn't necessarily the impetus for the change, but it raised awareness that many people live abroad permanently with no connection to Canada, but maintain citizenship.

"We believe citizenship has to have some real currency," Kenney said.

"You should have an ongoing connection and commitment to Canada. We don't want the great-grandchildren of people who are living permanently abroad, that have no connection to Canada, to maintain citizenship when they don't act have any connection to Canada."

Kenney made it clear that the children of Canadians born abroad, who are themselves born abroad, still have the option to become Canadian citizens should they choose to.

They would have to move to Canada and spend three years in the country, then write a citizenship test, in order to qualify.

"We don't want to debase the currency of citizenship. It's such a powerful symbol of belonging to this country, we want to make sure it stays special in that way."

Nick Noorani, of *Canadian Immigrant Magazine*, congratulated the government on a job well done, "albeit, a little late."

He said thousands of "lost Canadians" woke up Friday with the possibility of becoming Canadians, and said that is a good thing for the country.

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### Comments are now closed for this story

#### MF

And about time. I am one of those many who "lost" Canadian citizenship. My father was Canadian my mother British. I was born in England. I was Canadian several times - at least until I had to get a passport. Now, my citizenship says 1994.

Yet so many come from other countries, stay the mandatory 3 years, leave never to return unless of course they want our government to pay to bring them back.

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#### Gunnar

That's the way to do it. Correct the errors of the past, even if it is contrary to what the new law would propose, then bring in the new law for all future cases. Enough of the "Canadians of convenience" crap. My country is not a Stop 'n Shop.

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#### MD

Stop mass immigration from non-ally third world nations!!!

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#### Michael (Ottawa)

This is the right step in the right direction to eliminating "Citizens of convenience".

Immigrants to Canada MUST assimilate not just take advantage of our health care system, our passports, our good nature. The free ride for many is coming to an end.

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#### Mike in ON

Definitely applauding these changes. Prior to this legislation, it had been

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