

Canadian-born man fights for citizenship

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The man leading the charge for Canadians who lost their citizenship due to a provision in the 1947 Citizenship Act says he's confident the wrong will soon be set right.

Don Chapman was in Fredericton this weekend for the Silver Wave Film Festival.

The Vancouver-born man said he had his citizenship torn away from him because his father became a U.S. citizen in the 1960s.

The situation is a result of Canada's first Citizenship Act, which was proclaimed in 1947. Between that time and the time Canada's current citizenship laws came into effect in 1977, a Canadian effectively lost his or her citizenship if the father took the citizenship of another country.

It also affects Canadian children born in U.S. hospitals and children of war brides who failed to register their citizenship before their 24th birthday.

"They stripped me of my citizenship," said Chapman.

The great-great-grandson of William Henry, a Father of Confederation, Chapman said he's tried many times since his 18th birthday to have his citizenship by birth restored.

"I've never vouched citizenship in the United States," said Chapman, who says he'd "be stateless" were it not for his U.S. passport.

The 1977 act should have remedied the problem, Chapman said.

"Basically what they're saying is anyone we kicked out is kicked out, but anybody new can't get kicked out."

Chapman and his children have received landed-immigrant status, but the commercial airline pilot said he feels short-changed by that status because he was born in Canada.

The federal government pegs the number of people affected at 450, but Chapman said he thinks it could be hundreds of thousands more.

The issue was recently highlighted by a Federal Court of Appeal ruling that overturned an earlier judgment ordering Ottawa to grant citizenship to a British man whose father was a Canadian war veteran.

That judgment determined wives and children of veterans who were granted citizenship by special order in 1945 lost that citizenship if they left Canada after the 1947 Citizenship Act came into effect and didn't take steps to preserve their citizenship.

"Aren't we a little embarrassed to have the court say the war brides and their children aren't citizens?" Chapman said.

Between 1947-77, children who left Canada or were born overseas and out of wedlock to a Canadian father had to declare their citizenship within one year of their 21st birthday.

Chapman said he's been told a bill to rectify the loophole could be put before Parliament within the next month.

"I'm anxious for it to happen. If I get my citizenship, I don't mind paying my taxes here."

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