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For immediate distribution – January 16, 2014

NEWS RELEASE

Recent moves to make Canada’s citizenship rules more restrictive are sending the wrong message, says study

Montreal – A new IRPP study warns that recent changes to make Canada’s citizenship rules more restrictive may be counterproductive to the successful integration of immigrants and run counter to the ethos of multiculturalism.

In a new [study](#), Elke Winter of the University of Ottawa evaluates policy changes introduced by the federal government since 2006, against the backdrop of international debates on naturalization and citizenship. She finds that Canada’s naturalization process has become longer and more cumbersome over the past decade. The recent rule changes are particularly onerous for the less educated and those whose mother tongue is neither English nor French. Nevertheless, Canada remains a world leader with respect to the proportion of immigrants who become citizens.

At the level of public discourse, Winter observes a potentially troublesome shift in how access to Canadian citizenship is presented. “Depicting prospective citizens as fraudulent and mischievous can fan insecurity and distrust in the population. This also holds true for singling out specific religions and cultures as potentially less adaptable than others.”

The author also raises concerns about the increased emphasis – in the citizenship guide and elsewhere – on Canada’s military history, British traditions and the monarchy. In her view this “renationalization” trend, where nation-specific definitions of citizenship are dominant, “runs counter to the ethos of multiculturalism, which replaced the dominant ideology of conformity to Anglophone norms around 40 years ago.”

Winter concludes that we should keep an eye on these developments, because they convey messages that may be counterproductive to the successful integration of immigrants from diverse backgrounds.

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[Becoming Canadian: Making Sense of Recent Changes to Citizenship Rules](#), by Elke Winter, can be downloaded from the Institute’s website at irpp.org.

For more details or to schedule an interview, please contact Shirley Cardenas at 514-594-6877 or scardenas@irpp.org

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