

To be, or not to be Canadian?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Dual citizenship is a handy thing, on occasion. It expands opportunities for young adults to complete their education abroad, providing more choice by riding on the coattails of a parent and claiming dual citizenship. It might even be helpful at some border crossings, I wouldn't know. What I do know is this ? if you want to be the LEADER of one of the best places in the world to live, work and play ? the leader of a free and democratic country ? then you should be a CITIZEN of that country and ONLY that country. I'm not talking about creating a ?birther? type scandal right here north of the border, nor am I convinced you must be born here. I believe however, and strongly, that you must have a vested interest and a common set of shared experiences as a Canadian, meaning you must have been here for quite some time. As well, you must, absolutely and unequivocally, renounce all other citizenship and assume only the identity of CANADIAN if you wish to be the CANADIAN Prime Minister.

Perhaps my reaction is so visceral because in addition to believing the above, what I also don't appreciate is how flippant Mr. Scheer was in his response to the brouhaha brewing around his citizenship status. When asked why he had not revealed his dual citizenship prior to this election (or in fact, at any point in his political career) he simply replied, ?No one's ever asked me before.? I'm sorry ? what? No one has ever asked me whether I know the answer to 312×242 or what is the square root of 144. It's irrelevant to my work as a writer but pretty darn important if I want to be a math teacher! Likewise, I'm calling relevancy on this Mr. Scheer - your citizenship status IS relevant and we should not have known that we needed to ASK the question in order to KNOW the answer.

It's not the first time that he's deceived us. I guess we didn't ask the right questions about whether he was ever actually an insurance broker either. Did he receive accreditation but not a license to practice? Who knows? Unless we ask the question the ?right? way we may never know the answer. Mr. Scheer also seems to suffer from short-term memory loss in addition to his petulant replies to citizenship queries. He couldn't recall for certain whether he had registered for Selective Service (as required of US citizens.) Later, his campaign staff confirmed he had in fact registered, ?as required by law.? Now I don't know about you but I have to think if I had ever been required by law (U.S. law that is!) to register for potential military service, I darn well would have remembered that!

Perhaps you are familiar with the expression (or some variation of it) ?People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones?? Here again, Mr. Scheer doesn't disappoint. Several years ago he was quick to query the candidacy of others holding dual citizenship, notably Michealle Jean's suitability for the office of Governor General. Writing in a blog post at the time he asked: ?Does it bother you that she is a dual citizen (France and Canada)? Would it bother you if instead of French citizenship, she held U.S. citizenship?? Pretty clearly in my mind he's throwing stones that, in addition to implying dual citizenship makes one unfit for office, also imply that a U.S. dual citizenship would render them especially so. All the while failing to disclose his own dual citizenship status. Look up the dictionary definition of audacious. At least one definition refers to audacious as ?showing an impudent lack of respect.? If nothing else, I think we can all agree that Mr. Scheer is clearly showing a lack of respect for the Canadian citizens whom he is asking to vote for him. You know the ones ? those who must, for the record, actually BE a Canadian citizen in order to cast a vote. Perhaps his disregard is because he has dual citizenship and has never FULLY committed to being a Canadian citizen himself. Perhaps he's waiting for the outcome of the election?