

## Equal as Citizens: The tumultuous and troubled history of a great Canadian idea

*By Richard Starr*

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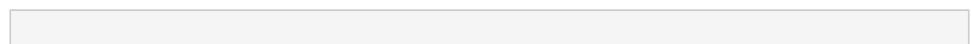
### **Equal as Citizens: The tumultuous and troubled history of a great Canadian idea** By Richard Starr

No matter where they live, Canadians expect and receive equal benefits from their government when it comes to old age pensions, consular services when travelling abroad, and airline safety. Canadians also expect the same quality of education, medical care, and social benefits anywhere in the country. But when government services come from provinces and not Ottawa, differences in the quality of services can be enormous. Canada's provinces have equal responsibilities but very unequal means to pay for those responsibilities.

Equal citizenship for all Canadians is an idea that has a long and distinguished pedigree in Canadian life. When differences between the provinces grew dramatically in the early twentieth century, politicians crafted a response that sought to equalize services across the country. They called these measures "equalization," and the idea was deemed so fundamental that it was embodied in the 1982 Canadian constitution.

But Canada has changed. The centre of wealth has been shifting from Ontario toward the resource-rich provinces. The wealth gap between provinces has grown -- and with it disparities in taxes and services available to citizens. Regionalism and neoconservative ideas have undermined support for equal citizenship.

In this compelling new book, Richard Starr traces the history of this idea. He tracks how it has been undermined and attacked, and proposes how it can be reframed in a twenty-first century context to attract the support of most Canadians.



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#### **Review**

"In this compelling new book, Ruichard Starr traces the history of...equalization. He tracks how it has been undermined and attacked, and proposes how it can be reframed to suit today's political context." (Jury comments, *Atlantic Book Award for Scholarly Writing*, 2015)

#### **About the Author**

RICHARD STARR has worked as a journalist, public servant, broadcaster, political staffer and policy adviser. He is author of numerous newspaper and magazine articles, and two works of non fiction. A lifelong student of Maritime history, Starr is married to playwright and former MP Wendy Lill. They live in Dartmouth.

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