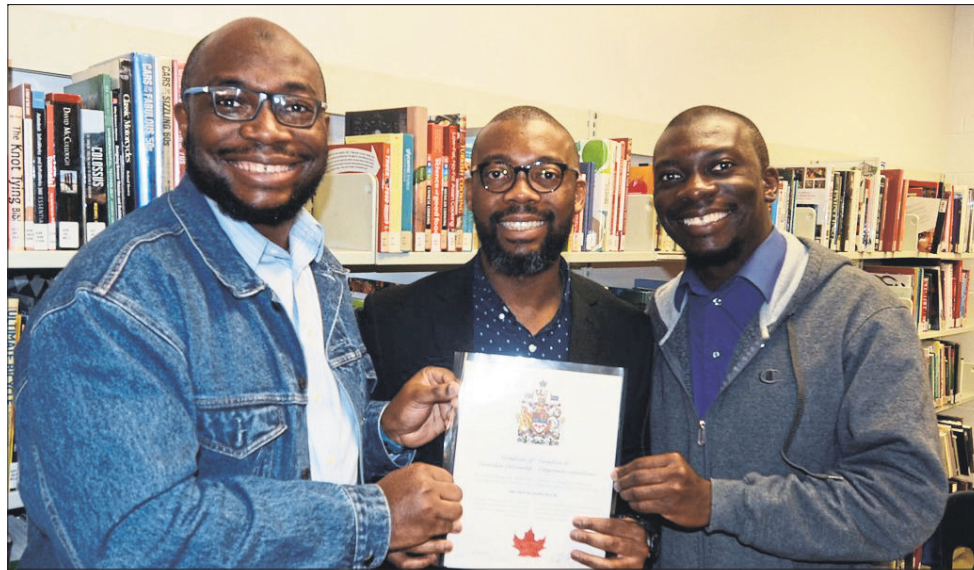


New citizens celebrate Canada at Georgetown ceremony

EAMONN MAHER
emaher@theifp.ca

Fifty people from 29 countries became new Canadian citizens last week at a ceremony held at Georgetown District High School for the first time. The event was one of 75 such ceremonies held across Canada each year in a partnership between the Institute for Canadian Citizenship and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. For this ceremony, the ICC's Oakville volunteer committee worked with Georgetown District High School (GDHS) to host the event. It was an at-times emotional proceeding, with congratulations being the correct greeting term since many of the new citizens have lived in Canada for several years. One by one the candidates took the oath of citizenship from presiding Judge Albert Wong and received a certificate of citizenship following the hour-long ceremony.

"A relief and an over-



Georgetown family doctor Ibrahim Malik (centre) celebrates his newly received Certificate of Canadian Citizenship with brothers Ismail (left) and Ishaq at a reception in the Georgetown District High School library Thursday afternoon.

Eamonn Maher photo

whelming sense of obligation, right? Because we all work hard to become a Canadian citizen," said Ibrahim Malik, a native of Nigeria who is a family doctor in Georgetown.

"It's a surreal feeling. I've

been here for five years, so it's just the culmination of everything you've always dreamt of as a child, to be part of a society that is free. The values of the people here - I hold them extremely dear."

Malik began his practice here in 2016, completing his training at the University of Toronto. One of the gifts that the new citizens received was a 50-per cent discount on a cross-Canada train excursion and Malik intends to

take advantage of that in the near future, setting aside two or three weeks for the adventure.

"I'd like to see the Prairies and Rocky Mountains and I think a train journey encapsulates all that," he added.

"The scenery I hope will be amazing."

Prior to Thursday's ceremony, roundtable sessions were held involving the citizen candidates, who shared their feelings about becoming Canadian citizens.

GDHS vice-principal Joanna Anderson sat in on one of the sessions and was particularly struck by a new citizen and recent arrival to Canada who said, "I finally feel like I'm protected."

For Achraf Rifi, being able to obtain a Canadian passport isn't a big priority. Instead, he'd prefer to visit all of this country's provinces and territories, with five already checked off on the self-admitted "road-trip guys" list.

"We're really happy to be here and be granted this

privilege to represent Canada and its values, so humbly, even the chance to experience all of what this country has to offer us, cherish it and live with each other," said Rifi, who was a volleyball and handball team coach in Morocco before becoming an insurance adjuster here.

"It's been a nice journey. You have to give before you take and in Canada we're so fortunate to share these things."

Three Grade 10 civics classes from GDHS attended the ceremony and the new citizens were presented with a metal red maple leaf magnet designed and produced by welding and art students.

Canadian-themed treats were also made by the school for the reception held afterwards in the library.

Wong, who immigrated to Canada in 1971 from Malaysia and joined the Armed Forces after graduating from high school, encouraged the new citizens to volunteer their time in their local community.

5 Day Canal Cruises

Trent-Severn Waterway & Rideau Canal
Captain Marc of the *Kawartha Voyageur* will describe these popular cruises in a complimentary 45 min. photo show.
(No reservations required, refreshments will be available 30 minutes prior to the presentation)

Friday March 23		
Guelph	Holiday Inn - 601 Scottsdale Drive	10:30 am
Orangeville	Best Western - 7 Buena Vista Drive	3:00 pm
Wednesday March 28		
Barrie	Holiday Inn - 20 Fairview Road	3:00 pm

(See other dates and places on website)
www.cruiseontario.ca
1-800-561-5767

Would your friends like to come?

ONE DAY ONLY!

SATURDAY MARCH 24 • 1PM TO 10PM

\$25,000

WIN YOUR SHARE OF \$25,000 IN FREE PLAY!

\$2,500 FREE PLAY DRAWS EVERY HOUR FOR 10 HOURS!

1PM • 2PM • 3PM • 4PM • 5PM
6PM • 7PM • 8PM • 9PM • 10PM

EARN ADDITIONAL BALLOT ENTRIES ON FRIDAY, MARCH 23RD STARTING 9AM!

DRAW DRUM OPENS AT NOON, MARCH 24TH. PRIZES MUST BE CLAIMED BEFORE 11PM. MUST BE IN ATTENDANCE TO WIN. MUST BE AN ELIGIBLE WINNER'S CIRCLE REWARDS MEMBER. VISIT THE REWARDS DESK FOR RULES & REGULATIONS. MUST BE 19 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.

OVER 2,900 SLOTS AND ELECTRONIC TABLES TO CHOOSE FROM INCLUDING BLAZING 7'S, BACCARAT, ROULETTE AND MORE!

OPEN 24 HOURS 7 DAYS A WEEK.

TORONTO'S HOME FOR GAMING & ENTERTAINMENT

555 REXDALE BOULEVARD, TORONTO, ON M9W 5L1
1-888-345-7568 | CasinoWoodbine.com

CASINO
WOODBINE

Play.Smart 19+