

The Honourable Ratna Omidvar, C.M., O.Ont.

Independent Senator for Ontario and leading voice on migration



Ratna Omidvar is an internationally recognized voice on migration, diversity, and inclusion. She came to Canada from Iran in 1981 and her own experiences of displacement, integration and citizen engagement have been the foundation of her work. In April 2016, Ms. Omidvar was appointed to the Senate of Canada as an independent senator representing Ontario. Senator Omidvar is the Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology and served as Deputy Chair of the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector. She previously served in leadership roles for the Independent Senators Group as Scroll Manager and Liaison. Senator Omidvar is currently the Vice- President of the Canada-Germany Interparliamentary Group.

Senator Omidvar is a Director at the Century Initiative, a Councillor on the World Refugee and Migration Council, a Founding Committee Member of Lifeline Afghanistan, and Chair Emerita for the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council. She is also a Juror for the Global Centre for Pluralism's annual Pluralism Award.

Previously at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), Senator Omidvar was a Distinguished Visiting Professor and founded the Global Diversity Exchange, a think-and-do tank on diversity, migration, and inclusion. Prior to her appointments at TMU, Senator Omidvar was the President of Maytree, where she played a lead role in local, national, and international efforts to promote the integration of immigrants.

Senator Omidvar was appointed to the Order of Ontario in 2005 and became a Member of the Order of Canada in 2011, with both honours recognizing her advocacy work on behalf of immigrants and devotion to reducing inequality in Canada. In 2014, she received the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in recognition of her contribution to the advancement of German-Canadian relations.

Senator Omidvar received an Honorary Degree, Doctor of Laws, from Toronto Metropolitan University in 2018 and from York University in 2012. In 2019 she received the Dr. Jean Mayer Global Citizenship Award from Tufts University.

Senator Omidvar was recognized by Canada's national newspaper, The Globe and Mail, by being named as its Nation Builder of the Decade for Citizenship in 2010. She was named to the inaugural Global Diversity List sponsored by The Economist magazine in 2015, as one of the Top 10 Diversity Champions worldwide. In 2016, she also received Lifetime Achievement Awards from CivicAction and the Canadian Urban Institute, honouring her strong commitment to civic leadership and city building.

Senator Omidvar is co-author of *Flight and Freedom: Stories of Escape to Canada* (2015), an Open Book Toronto best book of 2015 and one of the *Toronto Star's* top five good reads from Word on the Street. She is also a contributor to *The Harper Factor* (2016) and co-editor of *Five Good Ideas: Practical Strategies for Non-Profit Success* (2011). ratnaomidvar.ca