



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND DINNER, 23 OCTOBER 2025
DETAILS ON PAGE 3

ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE ANNUELLE ET SOUPER, LE 23 OCTOBRE 2025
DÉTAILS SUR LA PAGE 3

Hearts of Freedom: The Book is Now Published!

Michael J. Molloy

Between the fall of Saigon, in 1975, and 1997, more than 210,000 Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians fleeing oppression and genocide were resettled in Canada. While this was Canada's largest non-European resettlement effort, there have been relatively few academic studies, and until now, none have dealt with all three refugee communities across Canada. The new book, *Hearts of Freedom: Stories of South East Asian Refugees*, authored by Peter Duschinsky, Colleen Lundy, Michael J. Molloy, Allan Moscovitch, and Stephanie Phetsamy Stobbe begins to fill the gap.

The book was released by McGill-Queen's University Press in September 2025. It is based on 145 oral histories collected by young Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian Canadians who interviewed former refugees from coast to coast under Carleton University's Hearts of Freedom project. First-hand accounts of harsh oppression, concentration camps, genocide and hair-raising escapes by sea and land, as told by the survivors themselves, impart an authenticity, drama, and immediacy seldom found in conventional histories. Equally compelling are recollections of first encounters with snow, cold, and strange food; the unexpected kindness of sponsors and other Canadians; and encounters with racism. We gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses of Canada's resettlement programs (government-assisted and private sponsorship) from people who experienced them at their best and worst. We learn how the refugees' experience of multiculturalism strengthened their attachment to Canada.

Hearts of Freedom is a companion volume to *Running on Empty*, which told the story of the 1975–1980 resettlement operation from the Canadian perspective.

The Hearts of Freedom team plans a launch event specifically for members of the Canadian Immigration Historical Society, FORUM, and other immigration and foreign affairs veterans at the Beechwood National Memorial Centre on the morning of 13 November 2025. More information about this event will be available closer to the date.

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*Ed. note: CIHS board member Michael McCormick recently wrote a review of *Hearts of Freedom* on his [web blog](#). His review and accompanying photograph are reproduced below with his permission. We would add that another book mentioned in this piece, *Running on Empty: Canada and the Indochinese Refugees, 1975-1980* was co-authored by Michael J. Molloy, Peter Duschinsky, Kurt F. Jensen, and Robert Shalka.*

Book Review: From Flight to Belonging: Refugee Testimony and the Canadian Imagination

Michael McCormick

[*Hearts of Freedom: Stories of Southeast Asian Refugees*](#). Peter Duschinsky, Colleen Lundy, Michael J. Molloy, Allan Moscovitch, and Stephanie Phetsamay Stobbe. Foreword by Joe Clark. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2025. Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, no. 20.

Northrop Frye observed that Canadian sensibility is less perplexed by "Who am I?" than by "Where is here?" ([The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination](#)). *Hearts of Freedom* resonates with this insight, as the refugees' narratives reveal not only their own journeys but also who Canadians wanted to be, showing a nation aspiring to generosity, inclusion, and humanitarian engagement.

Hearts of Freedom is both a [book](#) and a wider [public history initiative](#) dedicated to preserving the voices of Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees who arrived in Canada between 1975 and 1997. Drawing on 173 oral history interviews, the final one conducted with former Prime Minister Joe Clark, the editors have created an invaluable archive of lived experience that complements existing institutional accounts of the Indochinese resettlement program. Whereas earlier works such as Michael Molloy and Peter Duschinsky's [Running on Empty](#) (2017) traced the diplomatic and bureaucratic machinery of resettlement, this volume turns deliberately to the refugees themselves; it foregrounds their voices and memories as the central historical evidence.

The book is organized thematically and by national origin, with chapters devoted to the experiences of Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees. Early sections recount the violence, persecution, and dislocation that prompted flight—civil war, invasions, genocide, and perilous journeys by land and sea. Many of the interviewees tell their stories of being refugees through temporary camps in Thailand, Malaysia, and Hong Kong, before tracing their arrival in Canada. The narratives detail first impressions of climate, language, and cultural difference, alongside encounters with both the generosity of sponsors and the challenges of prejudice. The editors preserve the cadence of testimony, allowing survivors' voices to remain central, while photographs, maps, and timelines situate these stories in their historical and geographic contexts.

The central contribution of *Hearts of Freedom* is to the social history of immigration and refugee settlement in Canada. The oral histories reveal not only personal trauma and resilience but also the crucial role of private citizens and community organizations in facilitating integration. Frequent mentions of "church ladies" highlight how ordinary Canadians, particularly women in faith communities, provided everyday care and advocacy that were essential to the refugees' resettlement and sense of welcome. Readers are reminded of the transformative significance of Canada's private sponsorship program, recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with the [1986 Nansen Medal](#). These accounts reveal the program's practical challenges and occasional failures; they also show its capacity to foster belonging and to reshape Canadian multiculturalism in the late twentieth century.

The volume's strength lies in its breadth of testimony and the affective immediacy of the narratives. The stories convey in intimate detail what was at stake for families who risked everything to flee; they also reveal how newcomers encountered both welcome and exclusion in their new country. If there is a limitation, it lies in the difficulty of sustaining analytical coherence across such a wide range of experiences; the oral history format necessarily fragments, and at times readers may wish for more interpretive synthesis. Yet this very openness is also a virtue; it resists the tendency to impose a single, homogenizing narrative on a diverse refugee population.

For historians, *Hearts of Freedom* is indispensable as both a research source and a teaching text; it exemplifies the methodological rigour and interpretive nuance that oral history can bring to the study of migration. By centring refugee memory, the book extends the historiography of Canadian immigration beyond policy and institution centred narratives; it shows how first-person testimony captures the lived experience of liminality, displacement, and adaptation, revealing social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of migration that conventional archival sources often overlook. For scholars of migration and liminal studies, the collection offers a model for integrating oral history with broader historical,



Michael McCormick picking up his copy of *Hearts of Freedom* in September 2025 at [Perfect Books](#) in Ottawa.

sociopolitical, and cultural analysis, demonstrating how voices at the margins convey both individual agency and structural forces. For policymakers and community practitioners, it provides hard earned lessons about the critical importance of listening to those most affected by refugee regimes; the book shows how human experiences can shape program design, foster empathetic engagement, and deepen understanding of the complex dynamics of resettlement.

Crucially, *Hearts of Freedom* also prompts reflection on Canada itself. The resettlement of people from Southeast Asia was never only about those who arrived; it was also about those who received them. The unprecedented scale of private sponsorship, the debates in Parliament, and the work of immigration officials who designed and implemented new programs were matched by the readiness of thousands of Canadians to open their homes. Together, these efforts marked a political moment in which the country tested its aspirations as a humanitarian actor on the world stage. As the book notes, “[i]n Canada, we can live with and celebrate fluid identities” (p. 75). The refugees’ narratives reveal not only their own journeys but also who Canadians wanted to be; they show a nation striving toward generosity, inclusion, and global responsibility. It is this dual legacy—of refugees remaking their lives and of Canadians aspiring to embody their highest ideals; that gives *Hearts of Freedom* its enduring political and historical resonance.

The Canadian Immigration Historical Society’s Annual General Meeting and Dinner

This is a reminder that our AGM is coming up quickly. Our guest speakers will be Mike Molloy, Peter Duschinsky and others who will talk about the Hearts of Freedom project, including the publication of the book which will be on sale at our venue.

When: Thursday, 23 October 2025 – Drinks at 5:30 pm, Dinner at 6:30 pm, Meeting at 7:30 pm

Where: Royal Canadian Legion, 330 Kent Street, Ottawa

Please purchase your tickets now. Payment and/or notification of your attendance must be made by 9 October 2025:

Tickets: \$55.00 per person (includes dinner – cash bar)

Payment to be made by 9 October 2025:

- Interac e-transfer: info@cihs-shic.ca
- If you are unable to use Interac e-transfer, we will accept a cheque at the door if you advise us beforehand that you will be attending by contacting us at info@cihs-shic.ca.

You may also attend via Zoom, which will open at 7:00 p.m. Joining instructions will be sent out closer to the date.

La Société historique de l’immigration canadienne tient notre Assemblée générale annuelle et souper

Ceci nous rappelle que notre assemblée générale annuelle approche rapidement. Nos conférenciers invités seront Mike Molloy, Peter Duschinsky et d’autres, qui parleront du projet Cœurs en Liberté, y compris la publication du livre qui sera en vente dans notre lieu.

Quand : Jeudi, le 23 octobre 2025 – Boissons à 17 h 30, souper à 18 h 30, et réunion à 19 h 30

Où : Légion royale canadienne, 330, rue Kent, Ottawa

Veuillez acheter vos billets dès maintenant. Le paiement et/ou la notification de votre présence doit être effectué par 9 octobre 2025 :

Billets : 55,00 \$ par personne (souper inclus – bar payant)

Paiement à effectuer d’ici le 9 octobre 2025 :

- Transfert électronique Interac : info@cihs-shic.ca
- Si vous ne pouvez pas utiliser le virement électronique Interac, nous accepterons un chèque à la porte si vous nous informez à l’avance de votre présence en nous contactant à info@cihs-shic.ca.

Vous pouvez aussi assister à la réunion via Zoom, qui ouvrira à 19 h. Les instructions d’adhésion seront envoyées plus près de la date.

Canada Immigration Centre Kitchener (Conclusion)

Doug Dunnington

Ed. Note: the first part of this article appeared in the May 2025 issue of the CIHS Bulletin (Issue 112)

Temporary Assignments in Ottawa

Though I had officially left the immigration foreign service when I transferred to the Canada Employment Centre and then the Canada Immigration Centre (CIC) in Kitchener, I kept in touch with my former colleagues. I welcomed opportunities to share my inland field experience with the national headquarters.

My first temporary assignment to NHQ while working at the CIC was to recommend ways to simplify some of the day-to-day processes leading to the issuance of student authorizations. The previous practice had been to monitor foreign students' compliance with immigration law by extending their stays by one year at a time even though their programs were usually three or four years. There was little evidence of them failing, running out of funds, or working illegally. As a result, we suggested that ports of entry and inland offices issue study permits (then called student authorizations) to match the length of the college or university programs.

Another program I was asked to help with was monitoring the compliance of immigrant entrepreneurs. Immigrants granted entry under this category were allowed conditional entry for two years until they could convince immigration officers that they had established a business of "significant economic benefit" and had "hired at least one Canadian". The criteria were not specified in the immigration manual, so some officers complained. Frankly, I had always felt that the broader guidelines gave me the latitude to determine what my client had to do to create a positive impact locally. I told the client that he or she should not rush into a business in the first year. Canadian businesses were different from those back home, so the immigrant should work with someone in his area of experience and not invest until he or she was confident of success.

I became part of the training group at NHQ and told my colleagues that they should welcome the chance to develop their tailored criteria for what constituted a "significant benefit" in their area. A Korean convenience store may not survive in Toronto but may be welcomed in a town in New Brunswick or Manitoba. There were already too many rules in the manual that were often incompatible with our local areas' business demands. Entrepreneur monitoring was one of the few programs that allowed us to use our own judgement, so my argument was that we should welcome this opportunity.

Presentations in my Catchment Area

The relationships I developed through the sponsorship unit made me interested in "spreading the word" about Canadian immigration, so I became CIC Kitchener's public relations representative. I spoke to service clubs, high school law and history classes, churches and ethnic groups, and anyone else wanting to learn about immigration.

One of my presentations to a Grade 13 law class included a detailed explanation of refugee determination and the challenge of separating economic claimants from those who met the definition of persecution. It turned out that one of the students was from Central America and was going through the process. I welcomed the opportunity to deal with an actual case and with his agreement went through the elements he would have to satisfy. The feedback from the class indicated that they understood the complications and we all wished him well.

Unbeknownst to me was that one of the students was his Canadian girlfriend. She took umbrage that I had not agreed that he merited refugee status and sent a bizarre letter to my manager going over in detail the grounds she felt warranted his being allowed to stay and my failure to support him. I drafted a reply dealing with the points she raised but mentioned the case to my manager. The manager's response was, "Doug, this case does not deserve a detailed reply. I will be writing to this lady to say that her claims are without merit and that your reputation and recognized service to the community speak for themselves and will not be sullied by such unfounded allegations."

A rural citizen posed another challenge. While winter visitors often bring back souvenirs from a Caribbean holiday, this lady brought what she claimed was an eight-year-old orphan boy. When told that he would not get permanent resident status until she obtained approval from the host government and Canadian child welfare authorities, she became most distressed. We supplied the necessary paperwork and process details, but no amount of sympathy could convince her that formal legal processes were necessary and we could not simply give the boy permanent status.

We expected that political and legal representations would follow within weeks. Instead, two weeks later the lady phoned and demanded that we immediately come to her farm and deport the boy. He had been caught stealing from her daughters, swore, and was most unpleasant. I explained that we did not have handcuffs small enough for this boy, that

the case was under the jurisdiction of the Children's Aid Society (CAS), and that she might well be financially responsible for any expenses they incurred.

The CAS officer was a great guy who said of course that they would not be part of any removal exercise: the case would be on the front of *The Toronto Sun* the next day. He recognized our dilemma but was more sympathetic with the plight of the little guy; CAS would take care of him and hoped eventually to resolve the immigration issues. I put away the file under the "No Win" category. I met the counsellor at a Tim Horton's several years later. He told me he had indeed taken the boy under his wing and the latter had achieved some success at school and entry-level jobs.

A speech deserves mention. I had spoken to most of the local Rotary clubs and usually asked ahead of time what sort of thoughts the members had about immigration. My purpose in tailoring my talks was simply to ensure that my audiences were aware of both aspects of Canada's immigration law. Our task was often difficult because enforcement and facilitation duties sometimes overlapped. By the questions and comments during and after my presentations I usually felt I was successful in giving the audience a better understanding of our department.

One day a Rotarian who had been at one of my talks called. "Doug, you must address a group of senior executives who think your department is way too easy on immigrants. They need the other side of the story". After a delicious meal at the Granite Club, I spoke to the "Probus Club" of Kitchener-Waterloo, mainly made up of retired Rotarian CEOs and professionals. I must say that it was one of my finer moments. I had plenty of questions and candid responses. The line to the Q and A microphone was lengthy, but I noted a well-known former Citizen of the Year waiting at the end of the line. When all were finished, John Pollock, the President and CEO of Electrohome, approached me. "Doug, I don't have any questions for you. I just want to tell you how fortunate our community is to have a solid man like you to administer such an important, complex, and confusing program that is so fundamental to our country. Thank you for your service."

I was most pleased to receive such a compliment from the president of one of our local storied companies and told Barbara. Her stoic Polish response was: "That's great, but did Mr. Pollock offer you a job for \$100,000?"

I also spoke to the local Caribbean Women's Association. It was clear from the outset that they were not happy with the immigration department and believed that visa officers discriminated by refusing visitor and immigrant visas. I was sympathetic to their concerns but explained that too many "visitor" applicants in the past had not gone home, had worked illegally, or claimed refugee status. I also explained Canada's immigration point system, which was designed to ensure that people wanting to stay in Canada had the age, education, and work experience useful to our workforce and could find a job and support their families. The selection system was universal and was not based on a quota system. Anyone in the world could apply, but to be successful, their qualifications must match Canadian labour market needs.

I tried to put them in my shoes as a visa officer who also did not want them to regret leaving their roots back home if they could not successfully establish in Canada. By their subsequent questions, comments, and slight smiles at my jokes, I could tell that I had convinced most of them that we were not all bad guys.

I was asked to return three or four years later. They were still mad at the immigration department, but for a different reason. We were not tough enough. They were upset when the police came into their communities looking for someone who had committed a crime, as they too often hassled their black men and boys who were just going to work or school or playing sports like everyone else. They knew there were bad people in their community and wanted us to deport them so the good guys could be left alone.

The Pope's Visit and the Canada-U.S. Border

The Pope's visit to Canada required Ontario Region's planning team to deal with the arrival of thousands of visitors coming through the Niagara Falls port of entry to celebrate mass with him. Inland immigration officers were therefore asked to volunteer to join border officers processing the expected throngs. I was paired with an experienced officer and soon greeted our first bus. Excited ladies from Our Perpetual Sacred Heart in Lackawanna smiled eagerly at our colleague as he headed down the aisle. He asked the ladies to show their birth, health, or driver's licence as he proceeded up and down the bus. Heading out the door, he said an unpleasant goodbye and headed to the next bus.

This second bus was from the Catholic Women's League of St Anne's of South Buffalo. After he similarly examined that busload, I challenged his approach as showing a lack of judgement. We had busloads of legitimate visitors to screen that day—all of whom were going to tour, spend money, and return to the U.S. without incident and with good memories. Our job as I understood it was to facilitate bona fide visitors while also being satisfied that they were admissible to Canada. To be fair, other entries required circumspection. My point was that judgment was required to determine whether enforcement or facilitation was appropriate.

Preparing Inadmissibility Reports

Part of the job of an inland officer was to submit “27(1) reports” (reports on inadmissibility under the 1976 *Immigration Act*) on non-citizens who were convicted of serious offences by a Canadian court. Each report required the completion of a lengthy form and a detailed description of the offence, activities since the individual had been in Canada, employment history, relatives’ details, references from employers, and any other supporting documents that would be relevant in determining whether a deportation order would be recommended.

One of my initial observations was that even the most serious criminal seldom looked the part. Quite frankly, they usually looked just like any other of our clients. I found that part of the job quite interesting and challenging, and enjoyed crafting a recommendation to the manager. He would refer the case to regional headquarters in Toronto for review before a decision was made to direct a formal inquiry. It was with some satisfaction that I was told that the regional office used my reports in their training exercises to instruct officers on how to write and submit these reports.

Decision to Leave CIC

I enjoyed my time at the Kitchener CIC as I was fortunate to be involved in such a variety of programs. However, times were changing. My manager told me that enforcement was becoming more important to the region. I might therefore have had to spend more of my day in that function. Even so, many full-time positions in my region were being eliminated, and so I could take early retirement.

Barb and I discussed my options and where my interests laid. Several companies and lawyers said there was a real demand for me in the region if not the province, and I would be a natural as an immigration consultant. I preferred the positive side of immigration that I had enjoyed overseas, so in 1999 we decided to open a consulting service. “Dunnington Immigration Service” was the result.

2025 Gunn Prize Announcement

Kurt Jensen

The Gunn Prize’s selection committee met this summer to evaluate submissions. All were well done, but one was a clear winner. This year’s award goes to Michelle Faux, a student at York University, for her essay “The Ugandan Expulsion of South Asians and Multicultural Policy: Exploring Factors which sparked the Migration of Goans to Canada in the 1970s”. More information about the winning essay will be presented in a future edition of the Bulletin.

Thanks go to all students who submitted essays. The selection committee received four entries to the contest this year, which was better than last year’s situation, when the committee did not award a prize.

This year, the selection committee consisted of Kurt Jensen, Rob Vineberg, and Roy Christensen for the CIHS; Laura Madokoro, the chairperson of the Gunn Prize Committee and representative of Carleton University, our partner on the prize; Kassandra Luciuk, herself a Gunn Prize winner and now teaching at Dalhousie University; and Jonathon Malek of the University of Manitoba.

More information about the Gunn Prize can be found online on the [CIHS](#) and [Carleton University](#) websites.

Immigration Halls in Western Canada

Diane Burrows

The topic of “immigration halls” caught our attention late this summer. CIHS board member Kurt Jensen was notified that the online publication *RETROactive* had recently published a well-researched, illustrated article about immigration halls in Alberta, entitled quite fittingly “Immigration Halls of Alberta”¹. The author, David Monteyne, a professor of architecture at the University of Calgary, had also written a book², published by McGill-Queen’s University Press, on the various types, locations, and ultimate demise of immigration halls in Canada.

CIHS member Robert Vineberg also wrote on the topic of immigration halls in Manitoba³, and on the immigration hall at the Louise Embankment at the Port of Québec⁴. My quick internet search revealed that Saskatchewan also maintained immigration halls in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Saskatchewan had 34 such buildings; the one remaining building, in Prince Albert, is now designated a provincial heritage property.

What is an “immigration hall”? Monteyne describes it as “a place where the federal immigration branch provided free accommodations as well as advice to new arrivals from Europe, the United States, and even eastern Canada.” It is interesting that the federal government assumed this costly responsibility across the country. In some smaller centres, both Monteyne and Vineberg note, the immigration hall became the main federal building in the community for various periods as immigration demand waxed then waned.

If a reader would be interested in reviewing Monteyne’s book—maybe obtaining it through inter-library loan—for publication in a future Bulletin edition, please contact the CIHS at info@cihs-shic.ca.

Notes

¹ Monteyne, David. “Immigration Halls of Alberta”. *RETROactive: Exploring Alberta’s Past*.

<https://albertahistoricplaces.com/2025/09/17/immigration-halls-of-alberta/>. 17 September 2025. Accessed 29 September 2025.

² Ibid. *For the Temporary Accommodation of Settlers: Architecture and Immigrant Reception in Canada, 1870–1930*. McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021.

³ Vineberg, Robert. “Welcoming Immigrants at the Gateway to Canada’s West: Immigration Halls in Winnipeg, 1872-1975”, Manitoba Historical Society Archives website. https://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/65/immigrationhalls.shtml. No. 65, Winter 2011. Accessed 29 September 2025.

⁴ Ibid. “Quebec City—Forgotten Port of Entry”, Canadian Immigration Historical Society Bulletin # 59, <https://cihs-shic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Bulletin-59-September-2010.pdf> September 2010, page 7.

Immigration Officer Dinner in Lisbon, circa 1972–1973

The following photograph of an evening out in Lisbon was provided to the Canadian Immigration Historical Society by Liz Broadbent, the daughter of Larry and Peggy Baillargeon. Peggy Baillargeon is in the forefront on the right side, and Larry is behind her, fifth person along. Thanks to Gerry Maffre, who coordinated the effort to figure out the diners’ names, and to Elsa Amadeo and Liz Broadbent for their identification of all the participants. Notice the cigarette packs, lighters and ashtrays on the tables. Different times.



Left side of the table, front to back: Sue Martin, the Honourable Mark McGuigan (then a member of parliament), Elsa Amadio* (who was the immigration program manager in Lisbon at that time), Dick Kryzan*

Right side of the table, front to back: Peggy Baillargeon, Dick Martin*, Marcia Barber*, Marina Kryzan, Lawrence Baillargeon*

*Immigration officers (Photo provided by Liz Broadbent.)

CIHS Garden Party and Film Premiere

Diane Burrows

CIHS held a garden party on 19 June 2025 for its members and some special guests. It was hosted by CIHS members Scott and Elizabeth Heatherington at their lovely home. A good time was had by all, notwithstanding a brief rain shower that brought the festivities indoors. Thank you to the Heatheringtons for creating this memorable occasion. The party preceded a film premiere that evening at Ottawa's Bytowne Cinema of Adobe Productions' and White Pines Pictures' documentary film "Shining Light: A Vietnamese-Canadian Legacy". This documentary explored one family's departure from Vietnam, their daughter Anh Vu's miraculous birth on board a sinking ship, the ensuing dramatic rescue at sea, and the family's eventual resettlement and life in Canada. A few photos taken by CIHS board members from the party, and one of the evening film panelists are below.



L-R: Pat Marshall, Holly Edwards, Germain Vézina (spouse of Pat Marshall), Merle Bolick, and host Elizabeth Heatherington. (Courtesy of Diane Burrows)



L-R: Robert Orr, Pat Marshall, Paul Bennett, Dawn Edlund. (Courtesy of Diane Burrows)



L-R: Joe Bissett, Raph Girard. (Courtesy of Dawn Edlund)



Dr. John Samuel, Margaret Tebbutt, Diane Burrows, host Scott Heatherington, Gregory Bell. (Courtesy of Dawn Edlund)



"Shining Light" post-screening panel, 19 June 2025.
L-R: moderator Gary Smith, Anh Vu-Lieberman, Margaret Tebbutt, director and co-producer Robbie Hart. (Courtesy of Dawn Edlund)

In Memoriam

Hesse, Stephan

Stephan Hesse passed away on his own terms on 2 June 2025 after a 15-year battle with cancer. He was a very articulate and principled visa officer and immigration program manager who worked in a wide variety of assignments across five continents, including some with very challenging living conditions. Canadian Representatives Abroad publications on the Global Affairs Canada website recorded most of his posting history: Delhi, Warsaw, Santiago, Bonn, Bucharest, and Lagos, and we added Dhaka, his mid-2000s posting.

Remembered by Holly Edwards

Once over lunch, Stephan told me his own immigration story. Rebellious and unhappy, he left southern Germany as soon as he was old enough to apply for his own passport. In Canada, he started as a furniture mover and worked his way up to driving the truck. After he overheard a conversation in which someone said that he would never be anything but a manual labourer, he returned to school and became a social worker.

I don't know why he decided to apply to the foreign service, but he was fond of saying that most people could not understand how he managed to get in. When I met Stephan in person, he was big, bald, and wearing a black leather motorcycle jacket. Had I not already known him to be smart, principled, assertive, and extremely witty, I would have wondered too. He was never a suit-and-tie kind of guy, wearing Bermudas and T-shirts in his last days at work, even in quite cool weather.

Stephan and I never worked together at a post, and he was, by design, rarely in Ottawa. I collaborated with him on some files, including the exotic dancer file. At the time, he was in Bucharest and did his utmost to shut down that program. Ultimately the department agreed with him.

Stephan loved the immigration foreign service and he loved most of the people in it. After he retired, he was a regular at the retired immigration officers' weekly coffee (sometimes beer) meetings. Since I live in Montreal, I did not attend regularly, but I corresponded with Stephan occasionally by email. I wish I had kept more of those emails. Stephan had a wonderful sense of wry humour.

Since he had successfully battled cancer for 15 years, I came to assume that Stephan would continue to beat the odds. His passing came as a shock. Stephan never fit the mould and lived life on his own terms. I will miss him.

Remembered by Tim Gorham

I met Stephan rather late in his career, when he did a temporary duty assignment at the visa office in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. We did some desert off-roading, ate at my favourite Bedouin eateries, and talked a lot. A few years later, as he was winding down his career, Stephan spent some time in my section at immigration headquarters. We all benefitted, personally and professionally, from his insights and advice.

A year after he retired, Stephan rode out to our semi-rural home on his vintage motorbike, all kitted out in period riding gear. We enjoyed a nice lunch, and my wife was enchanted by his stories. We bumped into him once or twice at social events in Ottawa after that but lost touch after I retired. I would really have liked to have been on postings with him.

Remembered by Carol Turner

Stephan was part of the foreign service officer entry class of 1982, and I think he held the record for the longest continuous overseas stint. He would go anywhere but HQ, and he stretched out his time on postings for 22 years or maybe closer to 23; something that only we immigration FS could get away with.

But all good things come to an end, and Stephan was my cubicle neighbour on the 16th floor of the Jean Edmunds South Tower for my last three years before I retired in 2012. Many conversations were carried on over the cubicle's baffle, and we would offer audible reactions when either he or I would make a "pithy" comment!

He was diagnosed around that time—living with cancer for as long as he did was an arduous battle. I last saw Stephan in September 2015 when I was in Ottawa for a few days. We lunched with Allan Martin and had a good catch-up.

Damn, I had an email from him last Christmas in which he gave me his phone number and expressed hope that I'd call. That message slipped down the inbox over the holiday season, so it was a call not made and now cannot be made. Rest in perfect, painless peace, my friend.

McCallum, The Honourable John, P.C., M.P.

John McCallum, former Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, died on 21 June 2025 from lung cancer. His death received much media coverage, which focused on a number of his careers—as an academic, chief economist and senior vice-president of the Royal Bank of Canada, Minister of Defence, and his controversial tenure as ambassador to the People's Republic of China. For persons interested in immigration, however, his main accomplishment was his successful leadership of his department to select and resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees in just over 100 days (Operation Syrian Refugees), a massive undertaking that was promised by the Liberal Party in its 2015 election campaign. This 2015–2016 effort required not only strong departmental leadership but also the participation of other federal departments and provincial services, as well as the coordinated efforts of a wide range of non-governmental and multilateral international and Canadian organizations.

Rankin, Ian

CIHS mourns the passing of Ian Rankin. His obituary is linked [here](#). Ian was part of a group of colleagues that developed the initial concept of a society focused on Canadian immigration history. In addition to Ian, the group consisted of Fenton Crossman, Bernard Brodie, Harry Cunliffe, and Dr. Gerry Van Kessel. At a first meeting of the Canadian Immigration Historical Society on 22 November 1986, the organizing group welcomed Kingsley Beattie, Bud Clark, Viggi Ring, and Dr. Ed Ziegler to pursue the planning and incorporation of the Society. Ian then became an interim vice-president until leaving Ottawa for a posting at our embassy in Washington, D.C. He later joined the board after several postings and served until his passing. He will be missed by board and members for his spirit, commitment to immigration and the Society, and friendship. Until Covid struck, Ian and his spouse, Pat, regularly hosted board meetings and lunches at their dining table.

We welcome written remembrances about Ian Rankin for the next edition of the Bulletin.

Vermette, Michel

Michel Vermette, a former immigration foreign service officer and immigration program manager, passed away in July 2025 in Costa Rica, where he had lived for many years. He had postings in Beirut, New Delhi, Cairo, Lima, and Guatemala.

Remembered by Holly Edwards

Michel was recruited to the immigration foreign service while studying for his doctorate in philosophy at the Sorbonne. In order to help finance his stay in Paris, Michel worked as a house cleaner for some Canadians who were posted to our mission in Paris. This may have been where he got the idea to apply to the foreign service.

Michel joined the immigration foreign service in September 1981. It was a small group. Michel's colleagues were: Marlene Jones, Margaret Gass, Claudette Deschenes, Caroline Melis, Helen Amundsen, Bill Hetherington, David Allin, and me. Michel was charming, witty, and fun to be around. He made us all laugh throughout our training and, indeed, every time we saw him afterwards.

After training, Michel was posted to Beirut, then a very difficult posting, but he was excited to go. Michel had joined the foreign service for adventure and seemed to be happiest at "hardship" postings. He was subsequently posted to Delhi, Cairo, Ottawa, Lima, and Guatemala City before taking a cash-out when Citizenship and Immigration Canada was affected by budget cuts in 1995. After leaving CIC, Michel came back several times on contracts, working for foreign affairs or international development.

After 1995, Michel and his partner, Greg, developed a property they had bought in Costa Rica, constructing a compound with gardens, a swimming pool, several cottages and rooms which they let out to tourists as the Guesthouse Playa Negra, as well as their own apartment with a view of the ocean. They designed it all, and it was gorgeous. After hosting guests for

five years—from 2008 to 2013—they thought it was time to move on. They sold the guesthouse and moved to a new home in Rio Grande near San Jose. Michel passed away there. Michel loved Costa Rica, though he and Greg travelled widely. I frequently received beautiful photographs of exotic places from “Miguelito”.

Michel was an example of someone who came to the foreign service with qualifications that did not seem to fit. I remember him saying that writing his philosophy thesis in Beirut while a war went on around him was an unreal experience. He was a diligent and good immigration officer and used to put me to shame with his meticulous preparation for area trips. He was talented enough to find work with other branches of the foreign service as well. He was much loved by the local staff and his colleagues in Cairo, and I am sure in all his other postings.

Michel was a lifelong friend, and I miss him. When I think of him, I automatically smile. I think that would please him.

In this picture of Cairo immigration staff taken in 1985 or early 1986, Michel is second from the left in the top row.



Whalen, Kelda

Kelda Whalen, an immigration foreign service officer who was hired in 1971, [passed away](#) in late August 2025 from complications following a fall. Known for her sharp mind and wide range of interests, Kelda had several postings (Dublin, London, and New Delhi), temporary duty assignments in Hong Kong, Beirut, and New Delhi, and high-profile headquarters assignments. She was a well-respected colleague during and beyond her working years. The Ottawa Hospital prepared a [profile of Kelda](#) a few years ago, which provides her full story and shows her courage in living with generalized dystonia (a neurological hyperkinetic movement disorder in which sustained or repetitive muscle contractions occur involuntarily, resulting in twisting and repetitive movements or abnormal fixed postures) and generosity in leaving a legacy.

Remembered by Anne Arnott

I first met Kelda Whalen in 1980 when I had newly moved to immigration headquarters and she was part of the assistant deputy minister's office. She was approachable and kind to someone new. A year or so later, I was on my first posting in New Delhi. Kelda had been sent to help our office prepare for the imposition of the visitor visa. This was quite a tricky task. As always, the visa imposition was a secret until it was actually implemented, to prevent a surge of potentially illicit arrivals in Canada; the locally engaged staff could not be told the purpose of her visit. She was a significant help, designing forms and helping the managers figure out how this would all work.

In the years following, Kelda was part of our gang of female visa officers who got together periodically in Ottawa for lunch and a chat. We watched over the years as she struggled with dystonia and the many, many medical interventions which never seemed to do the trick. She gamely carried on, never complaining. I remember watching her carry her lunch on a



tray from the food line to the tables in the External Affairs cafeteria, never spilling anything while her body continued to bob her upper torso up and down as she walked. She was always charming, intelligent, and thoughtful.

Remembered by Lynda Joyce

Kelda Whalen was one of the few female foreign service officers whom I met on my first posting to London in the early 1970s. As singles in our 20s, we were housed close to the high commission in Grosvenor Square. We witnessed the miners' strike and the IRA bombings. We worked long, hard hours, and socialized with colleagues in nearby restaurants.

We were able to enjoy London's delights. Kelda arranged theatre outings and a weekend trip to Istanbul. She loved her apartment in Bryanston Square and visited it during her retirement. Kelda was charming: her clients left her office smiling, even when they were refused. She was selected to staff Canada's Manpower Recruitment Office at the high commission, which facilitated the hiring of British tradesmen by Canadian employers.

After her posting to New Delhi, she returned to Ottawa, where she became the assistant to Assistant Deputy Minister Cal Best. She was at my wedding in 1981, just a few months before she developed [Generalized Dystonia](#) from a fall in a sauna. Her future completely changed.

Suddenly, the foreign service rotational life became impossible for her. She underwent many surgeries and other treatments, but none were effective. She was able to return part-time to work in Litigation Management. We both retired in 2002.

In her retirement, Kelda made many new friends, helped immigrants practise English, joined Toastmasters, read widely, and travelled extensively with her university friend, Barbara. She continued to try new strategies to remain independent. Kelda was an inspiration to all who met her. She provided an example of courage under extreme duress, which helped us to address our own challenges. She is deeply missed and loved.

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