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La société historique de l'immigration canadienne

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November 2026 marks the 50th anniversary of the tabling of the Immigration Act, 1976, in the House of Commons. The Act, which came into force two years later, was the first complete rewriting of Canada's immigration legislation since 1952.

In the next issue of the CIHS Bulletin, we will be publishing a retrospective look at the 1976 Act and its impact on immigration, immigration processing, and refugees.

The following article is intended to provide the social and legal context that led the introduction of this landmark piece of legislation, up to and including the tabling of the 1975 Green Paper on Immigration and Population.

Change isn't easy – the long road to the Immigration Green Paper of 1975

Don Cochrane

Don Cochrane was a foreign service officer in the immigration stream from 1992 to 2021, with postings in Budapest, Vienna, Ankara, London, Beijing, and Geneva.

Previous attempts at change - Regulations, not legislation

Fifty years ago this November, the Minister of Manpower and Immigration—Robert Andras—tabled a bill in the House of Commons which eventually became what we now know as the *Immigration Act, 1976*.

Although there had been monumental changes in Canada's immigration policy throughout the 1960s, they had all been put into effect by way of regulations (which do not require approval by Parliament) and not by changing the enabling legislation itself—which had been passed by Parliament in 1952 and reflected an outdated set of principles and ideas. There was broad agreement that it was badly in need of change—going back to the late 1950s[1].

While successive Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments had promised to introduce new immigration legislation, it was far easier—and more politically expedient—to effect changes through orders-in-council. Tackling a wholesale change in immigration legislation would require considerable political will and a certain degree of consensus—conditions that proved elusive, and which resulted in the project being punted down the road. Ellen Fairclough, a long-serving Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, learned the hard way that taking hard decisions on immigration had consequences—after implementing regulatory changes that reduced eligibility for sponsored immigrants[2], she paid a

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political price at the ballot box. Canadians of Italian background in her riding saw the move as an effort to stem the flow of immigration from their country of origin, which at that time was a major source of unskilled labour.[3]

The ability to make many changes by way of regulation also meant that the pressure to amend or replace the enabling legislation itself was not as great. Still, the 1952 Act had decidedly "gatekeeper" qualities about it, and its imprecise and outdated language put it at odds with the social changes which had occurred since its enactment. The Act's inadmissibility sections were not well-defined in most respects, nor were there any provisions expressly stating the criteria for immigration to Canada.

In 2005, Canada Post issued a postage stamp In honour of Ellen Fairclough

Fairclough, who held the immigration portfolio for four years (1958-1962), recognized the need for legislative change. However, after three years of sustained yet unsuccessful efforts to get support for a new immigration statute, she chose—by way of regulation— to bring about watershed changes in the way Canada selected its immigrants. In seeking to improve the skill content of the immigration flow that had for years consisted of large numbers of poorly educated, unskilled migrants from Europe, Ms. Fairclough opened skilled immigration to anyone in the world who could qualify. This constituted an important first step in ridding immigration practices of discrimination based on race or nationality.

These regulations had the effect of making Canada's immigration system somewhat less exclusive (by removing some of the barriers that stood in the way of a universal and non-discriminatory selection system), and which better defined the classes of persons who could immigrate to Canada[4]. Specifically, the de facto preference for white European immigrants was eliminated. A few years later, in 1966, the minority Liberal government of the day tabled a "white paper" that provoked significant discussion—but no new legislation. A year later, however, many of its concepts were incorporated into a new regulatory scheme—the *1967 Immigration Regulations*.

The 1967 regulatory changes – but still no new Act

While the introduction of a points-based selection system was the primary (and most evident) feature of the 1967 Regulations, a provision was also included which allowed prospective immigrants to apply from within Canada[5]. Although, in theory, anyone from any country could apply to immigrate to Canada, the overseas presence of the Department of Manpower and Immigration was still concentrated in Europe and the United States, with only a few other overseas points of service.

Those who applied from within Canada under this provision, and were refused, also had the right to appeal their subsequent deportation to the new Immigration Appeal Board (also created in 1967[6]), which was empowered to consider humanitarian and compassionate factors in reaching its decisions. Overseas applicants, on the other hand, had no such recourse—the decision of an immigration officer at an overseas office was final.

The implementation of a points-based selection system with universal access was a major step forward in Canadian immigration policy, but it was not long before an enormous backlog of appeals of the deportations resulting from unsuccessful in-Canada applications had accumulated. By some estimates, by 1972 it would have taken over eight years for an appeal to be heard. Enlarging the Board was not easily done, as the number of members was fixed by statute. In the meantime, the appellants could continue to reside in Canada. Of course, many also worked in the underground economy, and with the nationwide unemployment rate at 6.2% in 1972—up from 4.4% when the government was elected in 1968—this was an additional concern.

In the final year of the (Pierre) Trudeau government's first mandate, the immigration minister—Bryce Mackasey—promised new legislation for the fall of 1972, but also stated that there was no intention to remove the provision which allowed applicants to apply from within Canada's borders.[7] Attempts were made to address the backlog through various means, including the hiring of 66 new "special inquiry officers"[8] that would review refused cases and assess the applicants on humanitarian or compassionate grounds.

Then, on 5 June 1972, a rejected applicant—who had been in Canada since 1968—committed suicide when told that she would have to leave Canada by June 7,[9] bringing further unwelcome attention to the issue just as an expected fall election loomed. The minister insisted that the Immigration Appeal Board was doing "a hell of a good job"[10] but nonetheless pressed on with parallel efforts to reduce the backlog by picking out cases that could be reviewed and approved by the special inquiry officers.

On 22 June 1972, Mackasey announced “emergency measures” to cut down on the backlog, a move that the *Ottawa Citizen* termed a “soft broom”.[11] By the end of September, through the deployment of additional special inquiry officers and the bulk approval of applicants by orders-in-council, the backlog had been reduced by two-thirds.[12] Yet the root cause that created the backlog was not addressed. Additionally, rumours had spread to the effect that the ability for visitors to apply from within Canada was soon to be eliminated, leading to an additional rush of visitors whose intentions were to make such applications.

The country votes – October 1972

As the country headed into an election, “fears spread around the world that a new Canadian government would stop the increasing number of ‘back-door’ immigrants, would-be immigrants poured into Canada … at an unprecedented rate”.[13]

This flow of “visitors” took its toll on immigration personnel at Canada’s ports of entry. On 19 October 1972, officers engaged in a work-to-rule protest and pulled 121 visitors from Ecuador and Haiti off a flight that was transiting Toronto on its way to Montreal. A spokesman for the officers said that “immigration officials feel that their job has become a farce” and that they did not have the capacity to deal with hundreds of such applicants on a daily basis.[14]

Still—with just over a week to go before the 30 October election—Minister Mackasey and his staff insisted that the 1967 provisions permitting visitors in Canada to apply for permanent residence would remain in force, and that there were no plans to restrict or eliminate the practice.[15]

Immediately following the election—which resulted in the government being reduced to a minority—this “loophole” (as the Ottawa Citizen called it) was indeed closed.[16] Mackasey admitted that there “had been a backlash against immigrants during the election campaign”. The decision to admit several thousand Ugandan Asians to Canada by itself was also calculated to have cost the Liberals at least one seat. The impression that the government had lost control of immigration in general likely contributed to the loss of many other ridings.

Visitors barred from applying

Immigration laws tighter

By Guy Demarino
Southam News Services

An immigration loophole, which allowed visitors to apply for landed immigrant status from within Canada, was closed Friday.

Now no tourist or visitor will be allowed to apply, Immigration Minister Mackasey announced. If closing the loophole isn't enough to stem the tide of phoney tourists, "we might have to introduce a visa system," he added.

The Ottawa Citizen, 4 November 1972 (page 1)

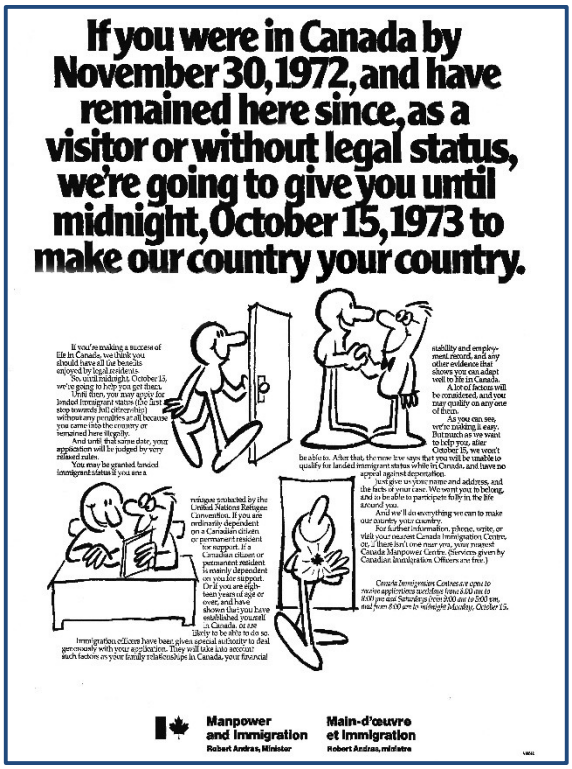
Working from this assumption that public satisfaction with the immigration system had, at least in part, contributed to the Liberals losing its majority in the House, Prime Minister Trudeau opted to remove the immigration minister in the post-election cabinet shuffle and to name Robert Andras in his place. Andras had built a reputation for himself as a “fixer” or “troubleshooter” during previous assignments in cabinet and demonstrated that he had the necessary gravitas to finally tackle the issues in a meaningful way.

Andras was very fortunate to be provided with a capable and intelligent deputy minister when Allan Gotlieb was appointed to the position in early 1973. Gotlieb, who had already distinguished himself as a diplomat and as a deputy minister in the Department of Communications, understood his minister’s vision perfectly and provided steady leadership in the department for the following four years.

The 1973 adjustment of status program – “not an amnesty”

In June of 1973, Andras tabled the *Immigration Appeal Board Amendment Act* in the House of Commons. As he explained on second reading, the objective of the Act was to eliminate the backlog of cases awaiting determination by the Board and to ensure that the Board had sufficient resources. This included the authority to designate additional ‘temporary’ board members and to allow additional members to be designated on an ad hoc basis.[17]

Crucially, the Act also provided for an “adjustment of status” program whereby those without status and who had arrived in Canada prior to 30 November 1972 could lodge an application and benefit from extremely relaxed criteria. Individuals had 60 days from the proclamation of the Act (15 August 1973) to register. The number of potential applicants was not known with certainty but was estimated to be between 50,000 and 200,000.



Public service advertisement for the Adjustment of Status Program (Globe and Mail, 15 August 1973, page 10)

The program promised landed immigrant status to applicants who were otherwise admissible to Canada, without regard to any of the factors (such as education or language ability) normally required. As an additional inducement, those who applied would also be granted work permits. Those who did not come forward and apply before the deadline would lose the right to apply from within the country and would be liable to be deported without appeal rights.[18] The government engaged Vickers & Benson, an advertising firm in Toronto, to produce print, radio and television advertising spots to inform the Canadian public (especially those who were undocumented) of the initiative.[19] The ethnic media was used extensively, with the program being publicized in over two dozen languages.[20] The *New York Times* noted that the campaign "also reflects Canada's gradual move toward heterogeneity and away from a society in which nearly everybody could trace his ancestry to either Britain of France."[21]

Despite arguments made in favour of extending the period during which applicants could come forward[22], the initiative ended as scheduled—with approximately 39,000 persons (from over 150 countries) benefitting from it.

Consultations begin – September 1973

While this regularization campaign was in full swing, Andras also announced that the government was launching consultations with the provinces and stakeholders—suggestions from individuals were also invited—on future changes to Canada's immigration laws.[23] The viewpoints expressed through this process would then be used to compile a "green paper on immigration", to be released in the spring of 1974. This was to be followed by a national conference and—within a year to a year and a half—by new immigration legislation.

Richard Tait, a career diplomat from the Department of External Affairs, was tapped to be the chairman of the "Canadian Immigration and Population Study".[24] Still hoping to publish the "Green Paper" by late spring or early summer of 1974, Tait remarked at the time, "[T]he decisions about who you let into Canada will decide the kind of country we have 100 years from now".

A majority government – 1974

In May 1974, the NDP withdrew their backing of the Liberals, and the government fell on the budget vote. The subsequent election returned the Liberals to Parliament with a majority government, but the interruption of the election had an impact on business in the House. Inflation (and the possibility of wage and price controls) had been one of the main issues during the campaign, and the debate about immigration was relegated to the back burner. The consultations were taking longer than originally anticipated, and a new target for the tabling of the Green Paper was set for the spring of 1975.

The Green Paper is (finally) tabled – February 1975

On 3 February 1975, the Green Paper was finally tabled in the House of Commons. Though it was referred to as a single document, it in fact consisted of four separate volumes, organized thematically.

Volume 1 was entitled "Immigration Policy Perspectives" and outlined the historical evolution of Canada's immigration policy and examined the social, economic, and demographic factors connected to future national objectives.

Volume 2, "The Immigration Program", described the operational framework and procedures used to manage and process immigration to Canada, including the 'points system' used to select independent immigrants.

Volume 3 was a comprehensive statistical overview of historical trends, demographic projections, and the ethnocultural origins of immigrants coming to Canada, and Volume 4 contained the first ever longitudinal report analyzing the economic and social adaptation of recent immigrants.[25]

As one commentator noted, “the Green Paper proved to be a disappointing, over-cautious and inadequate document which no one really liked”.[26] Valerie Knowles pointed out that the differing tones of the 1966 White Paper and the 1975 Green Paper were largely dictated by the markedly dissimilar economic circumstances of the mid-1970s as compared to the previous decade. The more recent document challenged some of the long-held assumptions concerning the benefits of immigration and suggested that a much more conservative course be taken.[27]

The Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada protests the Green Paper on Immigration, 1975

Proponents of more open immigration were firmly opposed to much of the Green Paper’s content and made their positions clear in the public consultations that followed. Resisting pressure from senior officials within his department to introduce new legislation as soon as possible, the minister insisted that there be a “dog and pony show” (in the form of a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons) to “take this across the country and talk it out”.[28]

And “talk it out” they did. Fifty public hearings were held in 21 cities across the country, with over 400 witnesses and 1,400 written briefs.[29] As the Committee noted in its final report, presented in the fall of 1975, it felt “confident that it has had ample opportunity to consider carefully the full range of national views on each aspect of immigration policy”.[30] As Knowles remarked, “Robert Andras could not have asked for a more forceful vindication of his insistence on public hearings”.[31]

The report was indeed a fine (if rare) example of consensus among parliamentarians from different parties. Though there were minority opinions in some cases, there were many well-articulated conclusions that gave solid direction to the government in its final push to introducing new immigration legislation.

Of the report’s 65 recommendations, all but five were accepted by the government. In broad terms, the committee emphasized that Canada should “continue to be a country of immigration, for demographic, economic, family, and humanitarian reasons”.[32] The extreme views of those who either rejected immigration altogether or who advocated for ‘open borders’ were soundly rejected.

Notably, the report drew a straight line between demographic and immigration policy, noting that immigration would be the main determinant of population growth in the not-so-distant future. In paragraph 14 of its report[33], the committee noted that “[A] country as large and thinly populated as Canada cannot afford a declining population … Canada must continue to welcome a minimum of 100,000 immigrants a year as long as present fertility rates prevail.”

Other important recommendations that would be incorporated into the new legislation included the importance of an annual target-setting exercise, in consultation with the provinces, and subject to scrutiny by Parliament.[34]

Getting to the point where the government could confidently introduce immigration legislation that reflected the views of a country as diverse as Canada was no small feat. As noted above, many governments had expressed the intention to do so but had decided that the easier course was to make tweaks by means of regulations and policy direction. Ultimately, the crisis that resulted from a well-meaning regulatory change provided the catalyst for urgent action, and a capable minister and his deputy were able to navigate the difficult process of building consensus and setting the stage for the tabling of the new legislation in the fall of 1976.

Notably, the public consultations that Andras insisted upon—and the report that followed—gave the government the much-needed confidence to implement change that reflected the collective views of Canadians.

Notes

[1] Hawkins, Freda. *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern (second edition)*. McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston, 1988, p. 373.
[2] This category no longer exists, but it was a means by which immigrants could be given preference if they were sponsored by relatives in Canada.
[3] Knowles, Valerie. *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-2006*. Dundurn Press, 2007, p. 182.
[4] Knowles, p. 187.
[5] Library and Archives Canada. "Immigration Act, Immigration Regulations, Part 1, Amended" RG2-A-1-a, volume 2380, PC1967-1616, August 16, 1967, s.34
[6] The Immigration Appeal Board was established by the Immigration Appeal Board Act, proclaimed on August 15, 1973. The Board was required to have at least seven and no more than nine members. This limitation exacerbated the backlog of cases seeking relief from the Board; in 1973, an amendment to the act was passed allowing for an additional seven members to be appointed.
[7] "Immigration Act revision set for fall". The Ottawa Citizen, May 5, 1972, p. 31
[8] "Officers to speed appeals". The Ottawa Citizen, May 31, 1972, p.64
[9] "Officials clarify status of woman who killed herself". The Ottawa Citizen, June 8, 1972, p.29. The woman was a citizen of Poland and had been refused as she did not have the required number of points under the selection system. Her application for leave to appeal of her deportation order was pending at the time of her death.
[10] "Immigration Appeal Board doing 'hell of a good job'". The Ottawa Citizen, June 10, 1972, p.17. The article containing this quote profiled the Immigration Appeal Board and the challenges it faced, including the fact that the number of its members was limited by statute.
[11] "Immigration rules eased to cut backlog". The Ottawa Citizen, June 22, 1972, p.1 and June 23, 1972, p.12.
[12] "Immigrant backlog clearing up". The Ottawa Citizen, September 27, 1972, p.19.
[13] "Immigration laws tighter: Visitors barred from applying". The Ottawa Citizen, November 4, 1972, p.1.
[14] "Protest grounds visitors". The Ottawa Citizen, October 19, 1972, p. 65.
[15] "Immigration laws inept: policeman". The Ottawa Citizen, October 19, 1972, p. 34.
[16] "Immigration laws tighter: Visitors barred from applying". The Ottawa Citizen, November 4, 1972, p.1.
[17] House of Commons Debates, 29th Parliament, 1st Session: Volume 5, June 20, 1973, starting at 4949.
[18] Ibid, 4950.
[19] "400 step forward daily, seek legal landed status", The Globe and Mail, September 7, 1973, p.1.
[20] "Canada is Offering Amnesty to Illegal Immigrants", The New York Times, September 9, 1973.
[21] Ibid.
[22] "Give illegal immigrants one last chance", *The Globe and Mail*, October 11, 1973, p.6.
[23] "Andras plans new legislation on immigration", *The Globe and Mail*, September 18, 1973, p.8.
[24] "'Times have certainly changed' – Rethinking immigration policies", *The Globe and Mail*, January 24, 1974, p.5.
[25] Canada. Department of Manpower and Immigration. (1974). *Canadian Immigration and Population Study (Green Paper).* Ottawa: Information Canada.
[26] Hawkins, p. 375.
[27] Knowles, p. 205.
[28] Knowles, p. 207.
[29] Hawkins, p. 375.
[30] Special Joint Committee on Immigration Policy. *Report to Parliament*. p. 3.
[31] Knowles, p. 207.
[32] Hawkins, p. 375.
[33] Canada. Parliament. Special Joint Committee on Immigration Policy. *Report to Parliament*. 1975. A copy of this report is posted on the Canadian Immigration Historical Society's website at https://cihs-shic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Report-Joint-Committee-Immigration.pdf.
[34] Canada. Parliament. Special Joint Committee on Immigration Policy. *Report to Parliament*. 1975.

The Unaccompanied Southeast Asian Minor Refugee Program – 1979/1980

Pat Bailey

Ms Bailey is a retired public servant with the Government of Canada. She was partner for 20 years to the late Ian Rankin, one of the founding members of the Canadian Immigration Historical Society. She and Ian welcomed the Society's board for regular lunch meetings at their home for several years prior to the pandemic.

In 1979, the Government of Canada introduced a program to admit unaccompanied refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, between the ages of 13 and 17, who were living in refugee camps in Southeast Asia. Canada's response was shaped by:

- The 1976 *Immigration Act,* which for the first time defined refugees as a distinct class and committed Canada to international obligations;
- The creation of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program in 1979, enabling churches, community groups and "groups of five" to sponsor refugees; and
- Strong civil society mobilization.

The intention was to resettle 400 of these minors in Canada before the end of 1980 through the Refugee Sponsorship Program of Employment and Immigration Canada.

As I was going through the papers of my late partner, Ian Rankin, who served as an Immigration Officer in the Philippines in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, I found an Employment and Immigration Canada document—Information For Sponsors and Families: The Unaccompanied Indo-Chinese Minor Refugee Program—dated September 1979, which has been donated to the Hearts of Freedom Archive at Carleton University on Ian's behalf.

This document specified the terms of the agreement between the federal government and Ontario for the resettlement of these unaccompanied minors; other provinces, including Quebec, Newfoundland, and British Columbia also accepted minor refugees under the program. A total of 388 young refugees came to Canada under its auspices—108 to Ontario, 264 to Quebec, 14 to Newfoundland, and 2 to British Columbia.

Under the program, there was a split in the roles of the federal and provincial governments, with the federal government responsible for the overall refugee policy, selection of the minors in the camps, and the income support framework. The provinces provided the framework for legal guardianship, foster care, social work supports, schooling, and language training. The two largest participating provinces had different approaches to providing for these minor refugees. Quebec had a family-based care model and made a political commitment to bring forward all minors for whom foster families could be found. Ontario's program provided both family-based foster care and group homes, especially for older teens.

This article describes the provisions made for the resettlement of these minor refugees in Ontario, as well as information of the movement's background and outcomes, as documented in existing sources.

Reports of orphans and minors under 18 in Southeast Asian refugee camps started to emerge in 1979 when UNHCR reported that there were 3,000 such individuals in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. UNHCR focussed on tracking minors in detention centres, protecting them from exploitation, and promoting durable solutions—including family reunification and resettlement in countries such as the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

David Ritchie, who was assigned to select candidates for the Refugee Sponsorship Program, wrote an article for the CIHS Bulletin (Issue # 73, April 2015) noting that, with very little documentation and recognizing the challenges that sponsoring groups would face helping such traumatized young people, the selection of suitable candidates was difficult. He noted that there were very few children in the camps who were alone but did find some adolescents either on their own or, in some cases, the oldest of a sibling group for whom they had assumed responsibility and who were considered good candidates for resettlement. Some were young men (who may or may not have been younger than sixteen) whose families had saved enough money to place them on escaping boats. All these teenagers had had difficult, traumatic experiences but had survived on their own and were assessed by immigration officers as being capable of adapting to Canadian life—with the help of sponsors.

Sponsorship of these refugees could be undertaken by two groups: by local groups of at least five Canadian citizens or permanent residents, and/or legally incorporated organizations; or by private sponsorship agreement holder organizations.

As a condition of sponsorship, the sponsoring group was required to designate a primary and back-up family prepared to assume responsibility for the minor. Both the sponsoring group, the designated family, and the back-up family had to demonstrate they had the financial and other resources required to care for and maintain the minor until age 18.

The requirement for both sponsor group and family involvement was deemed important. It is difficult to place teenagers under any circumstances, let alone those from another culture who have experienced trauma. There was also the substantial cost of supporting a teenager over several years—which meant that both the families and the adolescents themselves would benefit from as much assistance as possible from a larger support group.

The head of the primary family's household and another member of the sponsoring group would sign the sponsorship application and agreement with the Government of Canada. The designated family also had to be assessed through a home study by the Children's Services Division of the Ontario Ministry of Community and Family Services. The home study included an assessment on the most appropriate minor(s) for the designated family, which was communicated to Immigration's overseas office, the group responsible for locating suitable candidates for the program. The sponsoring group was also responsible for repaying the interest-free loan of $750 per minor to cover the transportation costs from the refugee camp to the final destination in Ontario, to financially support the child until the age of majority in co-operation with the designated family, and to provide whatever back-up assistance and support possible to the designated family to facilitate the integration of the child into the family and community.

Once the application from the sponsoring group and designated family was approved, a second application, "Notice of Intention to Sponsor" was submitted. When a suitable child was located, the family was provided information about the child and their concurrence for the match was sought (the document noted that while every effort would be made to locate the most suitable child, this would not always be possible—and families were encouraged to be flexible).

When the match was agreed to, an "Undertaking of Support" was signed by the sponsoring group and the head of the household for the designated family. At this time, the designated family was advised to contact the Official Guardian of Ontario to formalize its relationship with the refugee minor. This could be done either through a court order giving the family legal responsibilities and powers until the child reached the age of majority, or through a guardianship agreement. Adoption was not considered feasible for these children because of their ages and because most of them hoped to be reunited one day with their own families.

A period of between one to three months was expected to elapse between the time the sponsorship application was submitted and the arrival of the child in Canada. Approximately one week before the child was scheduled to leave the refugee camp, the sponsoring group and designated family were notified by the Canada Immigration Centre of the scheduled date of the child's arrival at the staging area—either in Montreal or Edmonton. At this time, the designated family was advised to contact the local school to arrange for the child's enrolment and for any additional services to help the child's integration into school. The family could either pick up the child from the staging area at their own cost or ask immigration staff to arrange for transportation from the staging area to the Canada Immigration Centre closest to their new home—where the family would be introduced to the child by a local immigration officer.

The children received landed immigrant status upon arrival at the staging area. After a three-year residence in Canada, they were eligible for Canadian Citizenship, which they could apply for on their own if over 18. If they were still under 18 at that time, the designated family could apply on their behalf.

The children were required to pass medical screening to be eligible for admission, but families were advised to apply for Ontario Health Insurance Plan coverage as soon as they arrived and to arrange an appointment with the family's doctor as soon as possible to request that the doctor contact the medical officer at the local health unit to obtain the Immigration Medical Report. It was also noted that these children may never have had dental care and that this should be a priority. The cost of dental care was the responsibility of the family and/or sponsoring group.

The families were also advised that, wherever possible, efforts should be made to allow the refugee minor to have contact with members of their own national group to assist with their integration into Canada, and to try to locate interpreters who speak the minor's language to ease their cultural transition when they first arrived.

Provisions were included for follow-up. The local Canada Immigration Centre would monitor the financial aspects of the sponsorship agreement and maintain an ongoing interest in how the sponsorship was progressing. Visits were to be conducted one, four and twelve months after the minor's arrival, and once a year after that, until the minor turned 18. The home finder assigned by the province monitored the social aspects of the sponsorship and provided counselling support to the minor and the family to assist with integration. At least two visits were to be made following placement, and the home finder was to be available for advice.

Further, if the designated family were to experience any problems, the expectation was that the back-up family and the sponsoring group would provide whatever assistance was possible to resolve the situation and that local community resources would be used. If the problems were more severe, the Canada Immigration Centre was to be contacted so that arrangement could be made for the back-up family to assume long-term responsibility.

It was foreseen that the families of some of the minors could eventually be found in Canada or elsewhere. If that were to occur, and if the natural family was able to take over care of the minor, the designated family would be required to apply to terminate the court order and to return the minor to the care of the natural family.

While preparing this paper, I was struck by the courage of these minors who had experienced unimaginable trauma, but who were able to embark on a new life in Canada— and of the families who gave them a home and nurtured them on their journey to that new life.

The program was bold and ambitious (including the timelines). It was a model of state-civil society partnership which responded rapidly to provide protection to unaccompanied youngsters living in terrible conditions and support their integration into Canada. It did not, however, provide for systematic follow-up—which would have provided an indication of how the minor refugees had fared over time, how many were ultimately reunited with their families, and would highlight areas for improvement for future programs.

Anecdotally, it is remembered as having been a successful program, although there were clearly some adjustment issues on the part of both the minors and the families who fostered them. Immigration officers and provincial home finders reported on their home visits to CIC's Regional Headquarters, where a Refugee Liaison Officer was assigned to review the reports and intervene as necessary. It seems that there was only one case where the minor had to be placed in another home.

It would be interesting to hear from any of the individuals who were beneficiaries of this program, or from those who were otherwise involved, to better understand the long-term impact of this very innovative initiative and to document their experiences. The CIHS would be delighted to receive any such information for inclusion in future Bulletin articles or to be published on our website.

SAVE THE DATE!

The CIHS Annual General Meeting and Dinner will be held on

Tuesday, October 20, 2026

Details to follow by e-mail and at cihs-shic.ca

The First 'Counterfoil' Visa
Robert Vineberg

Robert Vineberg served in the Immigration Foreign Service from 1973 to 1982. He retired from Citizenship and Immigration Canada in 2008 after 12 years as Director General of CIC's Prairies and Northern Territories Region. From 2017 to 2024, he was Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21.

In 1979, following two years in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, I returned to Employment and Immigration Canada headquarters in Ottawa. During my posting in Haiti, I had been immediately dismayed by the ease with which our rubber visa stamp could be easily counterfeited—at the same time, I was impressed by the visas issued by our American counterparts. At that time, their visa consisted of a steel visa stamp (the so-called "Burroughs stamp", named for the company that manufactured the technology) placed over a small (approx. 1 ½ " x 2 ½ ") adhesive label. The label was made of self-adhesive paper that would only come off in pieces if any attempt were made to remove it.

Shortly afterwards, I accepted a two-year assignment in the Intelligence Division at Employment and Immigration Canada, which was then located within the Enforcement Branch. I made it an objective of mine to persuade the department that a more secure non-immigrant visa was required. After initially considering simply emulating the American approach, and

after considerable reflection, the idea of a larger visa label—that would also be the visa itself—became increasingly attractive. Unbeknownst to me, Scott Heatherington had been advocating a similar proposal prior to heading off for Russian language training in the fall of 1978. We had both been inspired by the American example, but I had the time at headquarters to see the project through to its implementation.

I began to do some research, beginning with my American contacts, to find the source of the paper that they used for their small label. After making inquiries with the US manufacturer of the paper that they used, I learned that the sole Canadian licensee for this special self-adhesive/self-destructive paper was the Canadian Bank Note Company (CBNC). After explaining our needs to CBNC, they were willing to work with us on the development of a prototype.

I drafted a joint proposal from John Hucker, the director-general of the Enforcement Branch, and Joe Bissett, the director-general of the Foreign Branch, to the assistant deputy minister of immigration, Cal Best. Both Joe and John strongly endorsed the project and rapidly obtained the go-ahead from Cal. As I knew nothing about the logistics of procurement, Bud Muise, who was the Foreign Branch resident expect on logistics and procurement, was drawn into the project. The two of us made countless trips to Canadian Bank Note to review various design proposals. The one portrayed in the photo was the design that we finally accepted.

CBNC produced several prototype pages, each with four visas, so that the page of visas would be large enough to go through an IBM Selectric typewriter (we were moving to 'high tech' from handwriting on rubber stamps!). Each prototype page had visas numbered 0000001 through 0000004. This did not pose a security risk, as on the actual visas the first "0" would be replaced by a letter. At this stage, I arranged for framed copies of the sheets with the four prototype visas to be presented to the people most involved in the project. A file that I still have lists the recipients as being myself, Bud Muise, Joe Bissett, Bob Wales, David Hall, Cal Best, Bob Hudon, Evan Gill (the vice-president of Canadian Bank Note), George O`Leary, and Paul Harris.

You will notice in the photo that the prototype form has no form number on it. This is because Bud and I had cut several corners in moving the project along. By the time we got around to getting a form number and signing a contract, CBNC was ready to run the presses. Well, the CEIC "Forms Committee" (yes, there really was one!) was not impressed.

We were informed that we would have to make a submission to the committee and that they (and only they) would determine whether this project warranted a form number. With a view to hurrying things along, I produced Cal Best's signed approval for the project and informed the committee that Cal would not be pleased when I advised him of this roadblock. We got our form number! I then appeased the forms police by promising I would never, ever, try to elude their scrutiny in the future.

As for the contract, it obviously had to be 'sole source' as no other supplier than Canadian Bank Note had the paper stock and technology—so we were quite surprised when the procurement people told us we had no right to deal with a supplier prior to tendering. Again, we advised them that it was too late and if they wanted to hold up the project they would have to explain why to Cal. And once again, I had to promise never to avoid the tendering system for getting a form printed!

The first order, for some 300,000 visas (numbered A000001 to A 4000001, I believe), was delivered to CEIC in late 1981 and distributed to visa offices in 1982. There have been further iterations and improvements since then, but the rubber stamp visas—thankfully—are but a distant memory.

BOOK REVIEW: The Boat—Life: The Journey, by Bùi Đức Tinh, 50-Year Commemorative Edition, 1975-2025. KDP Hardcover, 2025.

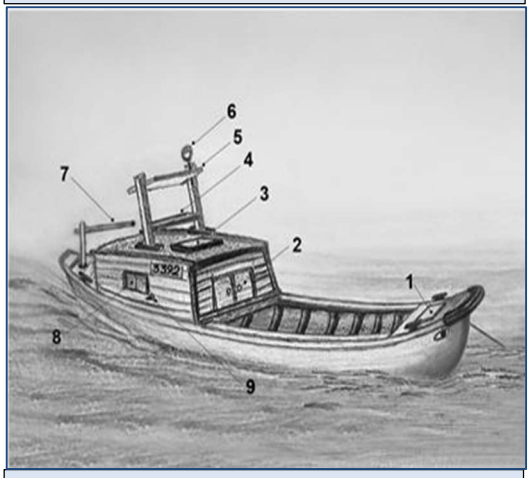
Diane Burrows

Diane Burrows is a former volunteer editor of the CIHS's Bulletin and a member of the CIHS board of directors.

The Boat is an autobiographical account of Bùi Đức Tinh's meticulously planned departure by boat from South Vietnam, the very harrowing crossing of the South China Sea and his subsequent rescue to Bidong Island, off the Malaysian coast. What makes this account special, apart from the compelling narrative, is Bùi's very expressive writing—which is punctuated with his own poetry, fitting quotations, maps, and his drawing and painting of the titular boat.

This book was first published in Vietnamese in 2022. The English edition, translated by the author, was published in 2025. In the first half of the story, Bùi narrates his personal history—from his return from a re-education camp following the end of the Vietnam War, to meeting his friend Vu and planning their escape by sea, and then organizing and surreptitiously strengthening a river-going boat to carry legitimate cargo up and down the Mekong River delta for two years so as to avoid suspicion or arrest. This segment focuses on the daily challenges of being on the river and transporting fresh shrimp one way and ice blocks on the return trip, and it sets the stage by explaining the varieties of boat design found along the Mekong River. Throughout, we learn about the "new" (and deplorable) way of doing things under the repressive communist regime, along with the ever-present policing of South Vietnamese speech and art.

'The Boat' - #3392
(from the book's appendix – page 245)



Sketched by: Tinh Duc Bui. Image and description below are reprinted with permission by the author.

1: LID OF BOW HOLD. (It is also the float for Thanh and me on the ocean.)
2: FRONT DOORS
3: CABIN ROOF COVER
4: DRIVING BENCH/ SLEEP AREA
5: BENCH ROOF
6: HEAD LIGHT (with manual control handle)
7: TILLER
8: SIDE WINDOWS

Bùi describes well the tension between the authorities who want to show that everything is fine, on one hand, and on the other, the evident hemorrhaging of the country's human capital, as the Vietnamese took to boats to flee their country. The book's title, *The Boat*, is really apt, as the vessel, which was registered with the Vietnamese authorities as 'boat #3392', is a full partner in this story—initially, as a means to earn money during the time in service up and down the Mekong River, and later, as a symbol of hope for the author, his friends and the many passengers who were planning their escape from Vietnam. Finally, the vessel was the instrument in which all involved had placed their trust as they eventually made their irreversible departure into international waters.

The second half picks up the pace significantly, and I moved through this part much faster and with rapt attention—as so much happened very quickly. If it had been fiction, it would have been a fascinating drama; instead, as it was the author's lived experience, I could only feel sympathy, anger and relief in turn. Bùi convincingly brought me along in his boat, with an over-full passenger complement, as they made their run to freedom from Vietnam's communist rule. Their attempt to avoid police detection at the mouth of the delta initially failed. After a harrowing time with the police boat on their tail, they eventually managed to outrun it. They then experienced a very powerful rainstorm, which nearly capsized their boat— which Bùi admitted was ill-equipped for the strong ocean waves. Boat #3392 had the rounded bow and low sides that suited river transport, instead of a sharply-pointed bow that could cut through the waves. It also lacked the higher sides that might have prevented the South China Sea's destructive waves from slapping down on them.

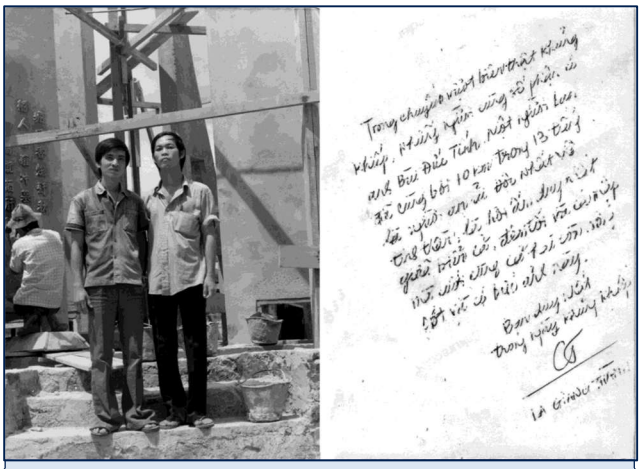
The perils continued with protracted battles—first with a single and then with two coordinated Thai pirate ships, who chased them and eventually capsized their boat and threw the author and others— including La Giang Thanh (see photo of Thanh and the author), into the sea. Bùi did not know the fate of the other passengers for some time, but he learned later that some were otherwise picked up at sea and taken to Malaysia, captured and killed by the pirates, or were immediately drowned as the boat was destroyed.

Bùi's voyage continued alone with Thanh, the two afloat and clinging to a large hatch cover that the author had managed to wrest from the vessel.

> The infinite sea stretches into the sky. All is black. Waves roll endlessly. We remind each other to hold onto the float and kick our legs. We need to move our legs and arms to keep our bodies warm and to avoid falling asleep, lest we let go of the board and the waves sweep it away. As we float, I frequently feel the slippery brush of some creature against my bare chest and stomach. It reminds me of the constant threat of sharks. Thanh and I become more experienced at turning our faces to avoid being hit directly by the waves. However, we both feel colder, thirstier and weaker. We look out into the dark night, not knowing where we're drifting or what might happen. We just pray we'll survive until morning. Only then can we hope those on passing vessels will see us. (Bùi 2025, 184)

After several days of trying to propel themselves towards any shore and being completly exhausted and injured, they were eventually rescued by Malaysian fishers who took them onto land and into the care of the Malaysian authorities. They received care for their weak conditions and the authorities took them to the Pulau Bidong refugee camp. Bùi then wraps up the narrative by recounting the Malaysian police's efforts to document the piracy, and being taken back to that site, where their capsized boat could still be seen in the water. He notes that of the 73 people who originally left Vietnam on boat #3392, 56 were missing because of the pirate attacks.Bùi's narrative ends with an account of his trip to Thailand in May 2006, where he reflected on the many painful memories of many family members and friends who attempted to flee Vietnam but were unsuccessful in their efforts and are considered now to be missing or dead.

> …the painful psychological wounds of the Vietnamese boat people have not healed. Our losses are irreplaceable, and time can never move our sorrow to the past.…The Vietnamese only left their homeland because they were cornered with no way out….If it wasn't for the communist tragedy, the Vietnamese people would not have had to traverse jungles and seas to escape, leaving their beloved country. (Bùi 2025, 217-218)



Bùi Đức Tinh and La Giang Thanh. This photo and the following description from the book's appendix are reprinted with permission of the author.

"Front image:
La Giang Thanh, rightmost in the photo, shared the hatch cover of boat number 3392 with me. In the background is the Sails of Freedom monument, under construction, on the Pulau Bidong refugee island, Malaysia. (Gifted from La Giang Thanh, 1980)"
"Back inscription:
"During the terrifying escape. Those who shared the same fate included Bui Duc Tinh, a friend who swam 10 km with me for 13 hours. He was the only source of spiritual comfort and warmth amid the sea, darkness, and sharks, and ultimately, we both survived and had this photo.
The only friend on a terrible day." (Signed)"

As an aid to the reader, the close-to-last segment of this book includes maps, photographs and illustrations. They show the route taken, some of the equipment used to make boat #3392 more seaworthy, and paintings by the author of that boat. Bùi also includes "The Closing Chapter", an essay by Professor Phan Dam. Phan Dam lives in the Toronto area and taught at Centennial College. The essay covers his first meeting with Bùi, his own family's departure from North to South Vietnam in 1954 and then includes his own thoughts after reading Bui's book.

The Boat touches on key developments of Vietnamese history, but as an autobiography, it naturally cannot encompass its entire scope. Instead, it is a contemplative and poetic reflection of Bùi's personal spiritual and physical voyage—from a post-war re-education camp survivor to a refugee in camp at Pulau Bidong Malaysia. It contributes to a growing collection of memoirs that testify to this historic movement of refugees. Bùi eloquently explains the extent of careful and lengthy preparation—both material and psychological—needed to undertake the perilous sea journey from communist Vietnam. Even with such meticulous planning, he also carefully shows us how they handled unanticipated events that compromised their plans. This book piqued my interest in other accounts of Vietnam's "boat people", many of whom now call Canada home. Overall, I would recommend this book to readers interested in the human aspect of a refugee movement from Vietnam that impacted so many within our lifetime.

Resources:
This book is available in English on Amazon.ca in hardcover, paperback or e-reader versions. The author advised that readers may still be able to find the original 2022 version in Vietnamese, *Thuyền Đời*, by searching for either *Thuyền Đời* or *Thuyen Doi* in public library catalogues. Copies are available through the Toronto Public Library and the Vancouver Public Library. The Surrey Public Library also has copies of the Vietnamese edition, although they are not currently listed in the online catalogue and must be accessed in person at the City Centre or Guildford branches.

You can watch the author's interview for the Hearts of Freedom project on YouTube at: https://heartsoffreedom.org/hof167-tinh-duc-bui/ where, in addition to covering many of the points raised in his book, he narrates how he came to Canada, his initial settlement in Port Alberni BC, and then how his life in Vancouver developed afterwards.

Lasting Friendships

Craig Goodes

Craig Goodes joined Canada Immigration at Niagara Falls in October 1972. He occupied various positions within the Ontario Region and National Headquarters and joined the Canada Border Services Agency upon its creation in December 2003. He retired in March 2008.

In the summer of 1987, I was the Acting Chief, Enforcement Procedures, in the Operations Branch of Employment and Immigration Canada. Canada was a member of the Four Country Conference, along with the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia (later to become the Five-Country Conference, with the addition of New Zealand). The focus of the group was, at that time, primarily border control and enforcement. Meetings were held annually, with the Chair rotating among the members.

The United States held the Chair in 1987 and decided that—rather than spending a week confined to a conference room in Washington, D.C.—it would be interesting to take conference participants on a tour of sites of specific relevance to the American immigration program.

The conference organizers no doubt saw potential benefits—but also significant expense (and some risk) in asking senior foreign delegations to travel to various air and land border sites across the U.S. over the course of one week. I shall be forever grateful to the unknown American colleague who suggested that it might be wise to invite member countries to send junior colleagues on a 'test run' of various sites and then report back on those which would likely hold most value for later visit by the senior delegations.

And so it was that I found myself in Washington on the first weekend of July which was, coincidentally, "Welcome Home Weekend". I had the opportunity to listen to Vietnam War veterans and Fourth of July parade-watchers exchange emotional messages of reconciliation. It was quite a moving sight to witness.

I had company as a spectator at the parade—by this time, I had met my travelling companions. Barry Smith was the Director of International Movement Control for Australia's Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, responsible for all airports and seaports. Malcolm Paul had worked for the UK Immigration Service at airports and seaports, as well as a lengthy stint in Kingston, Jamaica, and at the time of this story was an Inspector at Heathrow Airport.

Left to right: Barry Smith, Malcolm Paul, and Craig Goodes in Washington, D.C., 1987

Our itinerary began with a series of meetings in Washington. Eventually, we visited immigration operations in Swanton, Vermont; the pre-inspection facilities at Montreal-Dorval International Airport (as it was then known); JFK International Airport; the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centre in Glynco, Georgia; El Paso, Texas; San Ysidro, California; and San Francisco.

I don't recall the initial steps of getting to know each other, but it was a fairly easy process. We were of similar age, with young families, and with similar backgrounds within our respective governments. We all recognized that we were extremely fortunate to be chosen for this assignment and that we'd been given a serious job to do. At the same time, we seemed to recognize in each other a similar sense of humour.

While we took the assignment seriously and had the utmost respect for our American hosts and all the hard work they had devoted to the tour, every once in a while, an irreverent note would be struck by one, and appreciated by, the other two.

Our tour lasted for three weeks and flew by quickly. We were fortunate that at each stop we were assigned a handler by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. These officers were excellent hosts, very knowledgeable and, in some cases, very funny. Some long-lasting friendships developed from these assignments.

I returned home in late July and conducted a mad scramble to submit my report and clear my desk before heading off on annual leave. With the passage of time, I must admit I can't recall what, if any, impact our three reports had on planning for the conference that fall.

The following September, it was Canada's turn to host the annual Four Country Conference. Meetings were held in Ottawa, Montebello, and Montreal. It was very successful conference, chaired by Joe Bissett. I was pleased to see that Barry Smith was a member of the Australian delegation and that he arrived slightly ahead of his colleagues so I could invite him to spend time with my family. He came bearing gifts—boomerangs for each of my three sons—who stared wide-eyed at this man who talked with a very strange accent. Barry also used the occasion to give me my first—and last—boomerang lesson. It did not go well. Nobody got seriously hurt, but it was a close call.

Over the years, each of us was fortunate enough to conduct a bit of business travel, and we always took the opportunity to visit one another for great meals, long evenings of pleasant conversation, and occasional overnight stays. Through it all, we maintained a steady stream of correspondence, heavily weighted towards family news (and with a generous helping of political opinion thrown in). I made sure that my friends stayed current on winter weather trends in Canada, photos included. Strangely enough, neither of them ever expressed an interest in visiting Canada in winter.

In December 1996, Barry accepted an assignment at the Australian High Commission in London as the immigration counsellor. The assignment lasted for three years and it gave Barry, and his wife June, an excellent opportunity to deepen their relationship with Malcolm, his wife Janet, and their two children. Just as Barry's assignment was ending, on the eve of Y2K, I found myself in London for a series of meetings and spent a great day with the two families.

Barry resigned his full-time position in 2000, happily stayed on part-time, and finally retired in 2009. After spending most of my career with CIC and its predecessor organizations, I joined the Canada Border Services Agency upon its creation in 2003 and retired in 2008. Malcolm undertook various management responsibilities within the U.K. immigration network and retired in 2011.

Left to right: Barry Smith (Australia), Craig Goodes (Canada), and Malcolm Paul (UK) at the US-Mexico border (San Ysidro)

In 2013, 26 years after our first meeting, we finally got together in the same place at the same time, along with our spouses. Carole and I were visiting our son, Daniel, who was spending that year in Prague. When we discovered that Barry and June were visiting Europe that summer, we coordinated our timing and transited London. We all spent a beautiful sunny day at Windsor Castle. Our son has since moved to Australia where he works as a golf coach in Sydney—and has played the occasional round with Barry. Small world.

On that hot July afternoon in San Francisco back in 1987, at the conclusion of our U.S. tour, the three of us could have simply boarded our flights, headed home to our young families and our busy lives and chalked up the previous three weeks to a nice memory of a couple of pleasant traveling companions. Instead, we chose a different path which led to friendships which have lasted for nearly forty years. We've celebrated the arrival of grandchildren, we've supported each other through life's more difficult moments, and we've never lost an opportunity to enjoy each other's company.

And all thanks to an anonymous American colleague's bright idea.

Western Canada Hearts of Freedom Book Launches: Spring 2026

Mike Molloy

In early 2026, we learned that the Vietnamese communities in Edmonton and Calgary wanted to host launches of our book *Hearts of Freedom: Stories of Southeast Asian Refugees*. As the Hearts of Freedom travel budget was pretty much exhausted, my wife Jo and I decided that we would drive across the country—visiting friends and relatives that we seldom had a chance to see—and link up with co-author Stephanie Stobbe along the way.

We departed Ottawa on April 10 and made it easily to North Bay where we spent the night. The following day we were up early and decided to see how far we could go. With just a couple of short stops we drove past Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie all the way to Wawa, home of the big goose. We were concerned about getting over Lake Superior as there had been serious snow storms the week before and towns, gas stations, and even radio stations are few and far between. Somewhere between Wawa and Thunder Bay a passing vehicle threw up a rock and put a small chip in the edge of windshield on the driver's side, too close to the edge to be patched**.** Happily, I happen to have a nephew in the car business in Lethbridge who later replaced the windshield.

It was not the prettiest time of the year to do the Lake Superior route, but the array of coloured granite along the route is nonetheless impressive. Having positioned ourselves in Wawa, we handily made it to Thunder Bay. There were stretches where the snow piles on either side of the highway were over two metres high.

We had met Dennis and Penny Pella of Thunder Bay during our posting in Minneapolis when Dennis was the junior officer at CIC Thunder Bay. Decades later, during my time in Ontario Region, Dennis had risen to the manager position. We spent a very pleasant evening going over old times.

The following day, we had to contend with heavy fog for much of the day—but, happily, traffic was light and we made it to Winnipeg. That allowed us to spend time with Stephanie Stobbe and to sort out how we would handle the Edmonton and Calgary book launches. I was anxious to show Jo the beautiful Manitoba Museum—but, thoughtlessly, they close it on Mondays.

Regina was our next stop—my younger brother, Patrick, had taken the following day off to spend time with us. Unfortunately, Regina was hit with a terrific blizzard and Patrick spent the day shoveling snow while we hunkered down in our hotel. He and his family were finally able to join us for a delightful Korean meal that evening. The following day it took three hotel employees to dig our car out of the snow.

At Government House, Edmonton. Left to right: Dr. Zaheer Lakhani, Margaret Olson, Lieutenant Governor Salma Lakhani, Mike Molloy, Jo Molloy

We were dreading the drive from Regina to Saskatoon, but as it turned out the roads were mostly clear and we made it without incident. We spent a part of our free afternoon driving around the campus of the University of Saskatchewan, arguably the prettiest in the country. It so happened that the head of the Saskatoon Vietnamese Association is, for the next two years, president of the Canadian Vietnamese Federation (CFF), so it made good sense to do a launch there. We partnered with the VCF President Dong Van Tran, Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan Migration and Resettlement Coordinator, Mark Bigland-Pritchard and Benjamin Johnson of McNally Robinson bookstores. 40-50 people attended the event, and a total of 18 books were sold.

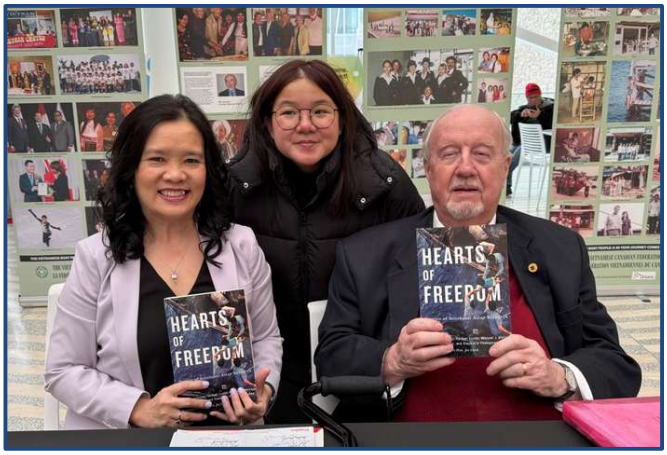
The following day we headed for Edmonton where we stayed with our good friends Tri and Vi Hoang.

The last time I was in Edmonton, I was contacted by His Honour Dr. Zaheer Lakhani—husband of Alberta's Lieutenant Governor Salma Lakhani—and we had agreed that the next time I was there I would give a talk about the Ugandan refugee movement. Both Zaheer and Her Honour were victims of the 1972 Ugandan Asian expulsion.

As agreed, the lieutenant governor hosted a talk on a dark and stormy night at Government House, where I gave a presentation on the Ugandan Asian movement of 1972 and the Canadian response. Both the lieutenant governor and her husband had been studying in England at the time of the expulsion, and came to Canada several years later, when Zaheer was awarded a surgical residency at the University of Alberta. Their initial attempt to acquire permanent residence was rejected on the grounds that Alberta had too many doctors! The event was well attended, with an audience of 60 people notable for its diversity. Among the guests was Margaret Olson, wife of the late Norman Olson (Manpower and Immigration foreign service, Class of 1968).

The Edmonton book launch was held at Edmonton's spectacular City Hall and included a screening of *Passage to Freedom*. Remarks were delivered by Linda Hoang, Jessica Truong, Huu Tran (president of the Edmonton Vietnamese Association), Edmonton city councillor Thu Parmar, and Edmonton mayor Andrew Knack. I provided the context for the book and Stephanie gave some selected readings, after which a panel discussion was held.

Over 100 people attended this launch and 45 books were sold. Again, we saw evidence of the handing of authority and responsibility to the next generation. The event was organized and hosted by the dynamic duo of Linda Hoang and Jessica Truong, founders of *Chung To Cung Nhan* or "We are together." They reminded me of, and are in contact with, the "Super Boat People" of Montreal.



Edmonton book launch: Stephanie Stobbe, graduate student Tiffany Chan, and Mike Molloy

Calgary: In negotiating the Uganda Asian event held earlier in Edmonton, I passed on an invitation for Lieutenant Governor Lakhani to pay a visit the Boat People Monument in Calgary and to attend the Hearts of Freedom book launch in Calgary on April 26. The monument is perched on the edge of a hill overlooking downtown Calgary, the foothills and the Rocky Mountains. The central sculpture can only be described as sublime. The freezing wind for the visit was vicious, but Her Honour comported herself as if it was a sunny day in May.

We then proceeded to the offices of the Calgary Vietnamese Association, where 40 people had gathered—including the lieutenant governor and her party. The 84 books that I had purchased for the event were already on display. I was somewhat concerned, because the rule of thumb is that you divide the number of people in attendance by two to predict the number of books that will sell—I had visions of dragging 60 books along with us for the rest of our trip.

The presentations went very well, and the lieutenant governor was exceedingly eloquent in speaking about the importance of diversity and inclusivity. The organizers had devised a particularly interesting set of questions for the panel—which included three older men (Peter Phuong Phan, Thoi Nguyen and Hieu Tran) whose stories appear in the book.

I had hoped to have some time to organize the team to manage the orderly sale of the books, but that was not to be. The lieutenant governor concluded her final remarks by urging people to buy the books—and did they ever! The moment that the formal event was over, the stage was rushed by the crowd—with Stephanie at one side and me at the other—being handed piles upon piles of books for signature.

Meanwhile, Jo (in the middle) was practically smothered under the flow of cash as she tried to affix signature stickers to books coming at her from multiple directions. I was concerned about losing control of either the books or the money when the president of the association walked by and said, "oh, by the way, we're going to buy the whole lot". After that, of course, we relaxed and enjoyed the chaos. All 84 books were indeed sold.

It is worth noting that co-author Stephanie Phetsamy Stobbe also presided over a Hearts of Freedom book launch coinciding with the Surrey Vancouver Vietnamese Tet celebration on February 7th and at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok on February 19.

The final event of the series, a screening of Passage to Freedom and a Hearts of Freedom book launch event, took place in Surrey, British Columbia on June 6, 2026. Overall coordination was provided by Margaret Tebbutt, supported by Jas

Jawanda, Stan de Mello, Claudia Nguyen, Andrea Dcruz, Que-Tran Hoang and, Ethan Than, Lucy Sun, and Andy Pham—and by the Pacific Canada Heritage Centre Museum of Migration.

An Indigenous blessing was delivered by Taanggunaay Grinder with words of welcome from Senator Yuen Paul Woo. I provided context and background for the book and Stephanie Stobbe read excerpts illustrating the experiences of refugees from the three communities. We then screened “Passage to Freedom”.

Margaret Tebbutt chaired a panel consisting of the two authors, along with Pastor Tien Tran (Vietnamese), Mr. Viengsamay Phanvongkham (Laotian), and Mr. Phanno Toeum (Cambodian).

Following the book signing, the audience enjoyed a series of Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian folk dances and a reception provided by the Laotian and Cambodian communities. Approximately 125 people attended and 45 books were sold by Black Bond Books.

Ed.: Congratulations to Mike and Stephanie for a successful series of events in western Canada! We are pleased to report that Mike and Jo returned safely to Ottawa in late June.

In memoriam

Elizabeth Marshall (1943-2025)

Former colleagues and friends of Elizabeth Marshall will be saddened to hear of her death in Calgary on October 13, 2025.

Elizabeth was born in Alberta in 1943 and attended both the University of Calgary and Université Laval, graduating from the latter with an M.A. in French. She joined the immigration foreign service in 1968 and served in Brussels, Marseilles, Port au Prince, and Edmonton (where she worked as the Foreign Service Liaison Officer for the Alberta/NWT region).

Elizabeth left the foreign service but continued to work for the Canadian government in Calgary for many years. She was very active in the voluntary sector, undertaking such activities as tutoring, working with Canadian Parents for French, and work on a refugee committee.

Some years ago, Elizabeth founded a charitable foundation through which she gave back to the community and the causes that were close to her heart.

She was also a strong supporter of the Canadian Immigration Historical Society, making several very generous gifts to the Society over the past few years.

We invite members of the CIHS who remember Elizabeth to offer their own memories to be published in a later issue.

Her obituary can be read here.

Remembered by Ron Vineberg

Elizabeth was my officer-in-charge at the two-officer immigration section in Port-au-Prince for about a year, in 1977-1978, before she was attracted back to her home province of Alberta to work for the Commissioner of Official Languages—a perfect fit for her as an Albertan who spoke exquisite French, due to an M.A. from Laval and postings to Brussels and Marseille.

Elizabeth was dismayed by the poverty in Haiti and the disdainful attitude of the well-to-do towards the ordinary Haitian trying to make ends meet, which was, and still is, a never-ending challenge in that country. She had a wonderful, wry sense of humour and that helped us both through the heavy workload and the fraud-filled applications we dealt with in Port-au-Prince. But, like me, she also appreciated that if we were in their place, we would also try anything to get out of Haiti.

We also quickly learned that crooked lawyers and notaries often found it quicker and more profitable to produce false birth, marriage, and death certificates than going to the trouble of obtaining the real documents, available at the National

Archives. She quickly agreed with my suggestion that we give applicants with false documents a second chance to come up with the real documents. This helped the honest applicants who had been duped by their notary, but we did not hear back from those who had dishonestly obtained false documents.

Elizabeth's tenure was a busy time for me because she was the senior FSO after the ambassador, at Port-au-Prince, and spent a large part of her time in Haiti acting as chargée d'affaires for him as he considered his assignment to Port-au-Prince as a demotion and spent as much time as possible elsewhere. This was so evident to the diplomatic community in Port-au-Prince that they called Elizabeth "Madame l'Ambassadrice"!

I cannot say that Elizabeth was sad to leave her posting in Port-au-Prince; in fact, she was ecstatic to be able to move back to Alberta and to be closer to family and property she owned there. As she said to me, "Now I can continue to travel the world, but I will be the one choosing where I will go."

Later Elizabeth also worked for the provincial government and was amused that the kind of things a director could approve in the Federal Government often required an order-in-council in the Alberta Government. I visited her often while I was the regional director-general for the Prairies and Northern Territories Region and can attest that she lived happily and never lost her sense of humour that helped her so much in Port-au-Prince.

Remembered by Nadia Stachowsky Gray

I was sad to learn of Elizabeth's passing. She was a friend from our foreign service training group. Her humour and sparkling eyes were full of fun. An accomplished lovely person and friend. In that long ago time, I remember on a break from our training schedule we went to the Island of St Lucia together. It was a memorable trip that included the two of us in an open jeep driving over the sugar loaf mountain.

For some years we kept in touch. I have fond memories of Elizabeth and celebrating her life well lived with panache.

Gary Smith (1944-2026)

Diplomat - Storyteller

Gary was born in Toronto and was raised in Penetanguishene. After graduation, he joined the foreign service and served at Canadian missions in New York, Moscow, Brussels, Tel Aviv, New Delhi, Germany and Jakarta (as Ambassador). During his posting in Moscow, Gary played an instrumental role in organizing the historic 1972 Summit Series between The Canadian and Soviet hockey teams.

In 2022, Gary published *Ice War Diplomat*, a behind-the-scenes account of the Summit Series from his unique perspective as a young Canadian diplomat who accompanied the Soviet team in Canada and served as liaison to Team Canada in Moscow. Shortly afterward, the bilingual feature-length documentary *IceBreaker: The Legacy of the '72 Summit Series*, featuring Gary and inspired in part by his book of the same title, premiered during the 50th anniversary celebrations of the famed series.

With the fiftieth anniversary of the fall of Saigon looming in 2025, Gary and his associates decided to make a documentary about Canada's relationship with Vietnam—going back to the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC), created in August 1954, that many Canadian diplomats served on in the 50's and 60's. However, upon discovering some amazing footage of the rescue of a woman and her newborn daughter, Shining Light, they wisely turned their focus on their story and created the brilliant, touching, and highly recommended documentary *Shining Light: A Vietnamese-Canadian Legacy*. The film tells the story of a woman and her infant daughter escaping Vietnam during the fall of Saigon in 1975 and rebuilding a life in Canada. The film was screened at several festivals, including the Stratford Film Festival on May 8, 2026—an event Gary was delighted to attend just days before his passing.

A more complete obituary can be viewed on the funeral director's website.

Melvin (Mel) Joseph White (1943-2026)

CIHS is saddened to learn of the passing of another well-known and respected colleague of days long past. Mel carried out several sensitive functions at immigration national headquarters discreetly and with a fearlessness in his assessments. Colleagues describe his work with serious matters as a positive attribute of his character. He was seen as a loyal colleague who could speak truth to power. Mel is also remembered as both a fine person who never sought the limelight and a good soldier in the trenches. Although Mel was serious about his work, he was equally revered for the levity that he brought to the office environment. Mel's strong Cape Breton roots shone through!

His obituary was published in the Eganville (Nova Scotia) Leader on 9 May 2026.

CIHS would welcome others' reflections on Mel to be included in our next Bulletin.

As remembered by Raph Girard

Mel White was what the Immigration Canada headquarters staff affectionately called a “lifer”. He was always there but never drew attention to himself. He worked through the good times and the tough times with the same energy and commitment of a model public servant. Mel was friendly and engaging, always willing to lend a hand and generous support, especially to new members of the team in the case management area. Mel saw in his work, an opportunity to ensure the laws of our country were applied fairly—but with the sympathy and compassion for the less fortunate that reflect Canadian values. Mel's family has a right to be proud of the contribution he made to immigration law and practice in Canada.

Lionel Rosenblatt (1943-2026)

We also mark the passing of the former American diplomat Lionel Rosenblatt, a lifelong advocate for refugee rights and a great friend of Canada, who died in April at the age of 83.

In 1975, when posted to Saigon, South Vietnam, Rosenblatt realized that the American government had no plans to help his country’s Vietnamese allies and their families escape the encroaching communist army—and decided to do it himself. He became known for defying orders to organize an unauthorized rescue mission, saving the lives of hundreds of Vietnamese citizens.

“That was Lionel’s nature”, Craig Johnstone, Rosenblatt’s colleague and co-conspirator in the mission, told the CBC’s *As It Happens* host Nil Köksal. “He believed in just jumping into the problems, sorting your way through them on the fly, and he was extraordinarily effective in doing that.”

That mission became the defining moment of Rosenblatt’s career, setting him on the path to a life devoted to helping refugees—first, as a member of the U.S. Department of State, and later as the president of the non-profit Refugees International. Johnstone says he clearly remembers the moment more than five decades ago that he and Rosenblatt decided to go rogue.

“We thought they would be killed. In fact, we had no doubt about it”, Johnstone said.

Graham Martin, then the American ambassador to South Vietnam, suggested that Vietnamese refugees should head to the nearest coastal ports where American ships would attempt to pick them up.

"We considered that to be totally inadequate in terms of the evacuation planning," Johnstone said. "I think at that moment, Lionel was ready to pack his bags."

On March 28, 1975, South Vietnamese refugees at the port city of Da Nang watch hopefully as a boat loaded with refugees approaches the dock. (The Associated Press) So the pair took personal leave and travelled privately to Saigon, where they arranged flights out of the country for 200 to 400 at-risk Vietnamese.

Johnstone says they operated out of a safe house to avoid the local police, and met with people on street corners, restaurants and hotels to make arrangements. Staff at the U.S. embassy, he says, were mostly co-operative with their

efforts, even though "they were under orders to apprehend us and send us back to the United States." They got hundreds out of the country, but some refused to leave.

"Knowing Lionel, he would always regret that we hadn't been able to do more," he said.

"Lionel worked very hard to convince people that the situation … was more dire than it was being felt in Saigon at that moment. They were late to come to the realization that the end was just around the corner."

Upon their return to Washington, then-secretary of state Henry Kissinger called Rosenblatt in for a meeting. "But instead of being scolded as he had expected, he was rewarded," wrote Refugee International in a statement on Rosenblatt's passing. "Offered his pick of posts at State, he opted to continue working on refugee issues. "Rosenblatt went on to work on a U.S. government task force to re-settle the first wave of post-war refugees from Vietnam to the U.S."

Rosenblatt and Canada: Following the initial wave of refugees resettled by Canada in 1975, a challenge that the Canadian immigration department faced was to keep the program alive in the wake of the negative publicity generated by

the arrival in Canada of the notorious General Quang. In November 1977, Minister Bud Cullen agreed to the admission of 50 refugee families a month under what was called the "metered approach". Modest as it was, the new Canadian program was noticed by Rosenblatt—who wrote to immigration assistant deputy minister Richard Tait on 10 February 1978, expressing appreciation for the new Canadian program—which American officials pointed to in hearings before the House of Representatives subcommittee. According to Rosenblatt "When we finally hammer out a long-range program you can be assured that the continuing Canadian role will have been a key precursor. In a sense the Canadian program can be said to have a multiplier potential beyond its own magnitude" (Running on Empty: Canada and the Indochinese Refugees 1975-1980. Pages 83-85)

Rosenblatt coordinated the American resettlement program out of the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok from 1976 to 1981 and was the founder and president of Refugees International from 1990 to 2001. In that capacity, he played significant roles in American efforts on behalf of refugees in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

He was also posted to Canada while with the U.S. State Department, as Consul General in Quebec City, from 1981 until he left government service in 1988.

CIHS thanks its corporate members – IRCC and Pier 21 – for their significant support, as well as the Society's life and annual members. All contributions allow us to pursue our objectives and activities.

The Canadian Immigration Historical Society (CIHS-SHIC.ca) is a non-profit corporation registered as a charitable organization under the Income Tax Act.

The society's goals are:

- to support, encourage and promote research into the history of Canadian immigration and to foster the collection and dissemination of that history, and

- to stimulate interest in and further the appreciation and understanding of the influence of immigration on Canada's development and position in the world.