



Closing Remarks: Stewart Goodings, Retiring Board Member

First of all, I want to thank the Board for giving me this opportunity to say a few things at this, my last meeting as a MOSAIC Board member.

It's been an amazing five years, being part of such a dedicated group of Directors, as well as being associated with this dynamic and worthwhile organization. Particular thanks to Eyob Naizghi, his team of senior managers, and the entire staff of MOSAIC—they are the true heroes and heroines of the remarkable agency.



I also want to express my gratitude to Ellen Clague and Kanya Adam, who chaired the Board so capably during my time on the Board. And in expressing this appreciation to the staff of MOSAIC and the two leaders who have been President in the last few years, I am confident I am reflecting the sentiments of the other four Board members who are retiring this evening

Secondly, I would like to share a few personal thoughts based on my own experience with immigration and multiculturalism. I came to Canada as an 11 year old, and settled with my family in Thunder Bay, Ontario. From the relative homogeneity of southern England, I was immediately immersed in the diversity that was, and has always been Canada. Two Swedish guys taught me to curl, Finnish friends introduced me to the exotic delights of the sauna, I played cricket with Barbadians and Jamaicans, and soccer with Poles, Italians and Ukrainians. Aboriginal people also lived in and around my new hometown.

In a few years, soon after leaving university, I landed a great job as a junior analyst with a Royal Commission that the federal government had set up. The subject was Bilingualism and Biculturalism, and its aim was to strengthen what was accepted then as the “basic cultural dualism” of Canada. Where is multiculturalism, you might well ask? Well, what happened is that during the life of this Royal Commission, from 1963 to 1971, the country “discovered” multiculturalism, and it was Western Canada which delivered the message. At public hearings in Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Edmonton, scores of ordinary citizens came to the microphones and basically said “What about us—we Germans, Poles, Ukrainians, Metis, we who settled the west, do you recognize us, too?” For most of the Royal Commissioners, this was a revelation, and led to a special report in 1969 called “The Cultural Contributions of the Other Ethnic Groups”—such dated language, eh?—which in turn led to the announcement in 1971 of Canada’s first official multiculturalism policy, and then later to the inclusion of multiculturalism in the Constitution of the country.

We’ve come a long way since then, haven’t we? When I came to Canada, most immigrants were from Europe. Today, and for several recent years, most newcomers are from Asia, as well as the Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. Some of the challenges are different from when I arrived in 1953—for example, the vastly increased need for ESL in many school districts, the collision of some incoming cultural values with Canadian legal traditions of gender equality, the problem of finding better ways for skilled professionals from overseas to use their talents more quickly in Canada. And so on.

These are the issues MOSAIC works on daily, and as our immigration and refugee system evolves, I am confident this organization will adapt and respond in creative ways to these and other newer challenges. We know for sure that the successful integration of newcomers depends not only on the newcomers themselves, but also on Canadian society as a whole. Newcomers have always shown hard work, determination and fresh thinking when they come to this country.

But they also need a welcoming and open attitude by Canadians already here. I will never forget, as a scared 11 year old starting school in a new city among strangers, being stopped in the school yard one day by two much older guys, who assured me that if anyone gave me any trouble or teased me about my funny English accent, they would beat 'em up! I'd call that a pretty welcoming attitude....

And we have a more recent example of these two immigrant integration success factors: Carol Huynh, from Hazelton, who won Canada's first gold medal at the Beijing Olympics. Carol's parents were part of the Vietnamese boat people influx of the late 70s, and she is a first generation Canadian who worked incredibly hard to prepare for international competition in wrestling. She deserves our admiration for winning gold. But so do many of the people in Hazelton who welcomed her family with open arms, and helped them to adapt to life in their new country. This was a true Team Canada effort.

Our overall success as a country in welcoming newcomers is illustrated in another way—the fact that immigrants and refugees become Canadian citizens at a higher rate than any other immigrant-receiving country in the world. Our rate is 85%. Australia is next at 75%, while the USA, the UK and Germany lag far behind.

To me this is the magic of Canada: that we are all immigrants, but we are also all Canadians. How can we remember our roots, take an interest in the fates of our former countries, and still be patriotic Canadians? Well, that is our secret, our enigma, our national recipe for creating a unique society. Others may not understand it, and we ourselves may not always be able to fully explain it, but it works, doesn't it, and no setback or obstacle will deter us from continuing this wonderful experiment that is Canada.

Let me finish with a story from the Middle Ages. It seems a King was visiting a construction site. He asked one of the workers what they were doing. One said, "My job is putting one stone on top of another". A second one said, "I'm making sure no water gets in". The third person he asked replied, "I'm checking for cracks in the walls". The fourth one looked up at the emerging building and said, "Well, I am building a cathedral". They were all correct in describing what they were responsible for, but the last one, well, he had vision.

My hope for MOSAIC is that it will not only continue to do all the vital settlement, employment, translation, interpretation and other activities in which it is so skilled, but that it will also have the vision to realize that what it is building is a caring, compassionate and civilized society in Canada, a society in which all newcomers and all citizens can enjoy productive and meaningful lives in this great country.

Thank you, MOSAIC, and best of luck in the future.