

WHAT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES WERE CREATED BY IMMIGRATION?

VOICES

I think a stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half-dozen children, is [a] good quality [immigrant].

— Clifford Sifton, former minister in charge of immigration, in an interview, 1922

CHECKBACK

You read about the classification of immigrants as enemy aliens in Chapter 5.

Before World War I, the Canadian government had actively recruited immigrants. About three-quarters of the more than 2.5 million immigrants to Canada between 1896 and 1914 had come from Britain and the United States. Most of the rest had come from European countries, including about 150 000 from Ukraine.

Immigration is affected by **push and pull factors**. Push factors are conditions, such as poverty, lack of political or religious freedom, and famine, that persuade people to leave their homeland. Pull factors are possibilities that exist in the place people are going to and may include the chance of a better life, as well as political and religious freedom.

In some European countries, for example, nationalism had led to persecution of some ethnic groups, such as Jews and Armenians. Meanwhile, advertising campaigns promised loans for passage and farmland for those who wanted to immigrate to Canada. Groups fleeing religious persecution, such as the Doukhobors and Mennonites of Russia, were attracted by the relative religious freedom in Canada.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Many of the restrictive government policies that had led to the internment of “enemy aliens” during World War I continued afterwards. As Canadian soldiers returned home and unemployment increased, new immigration policies denied entry to more people. Among those barred were people from countries that had sided with the Central Powers, those who were illiterate or who held socialist or communist beliefs, and people who had “peculiar customs, habits, modes of life, and methods of holding property.”

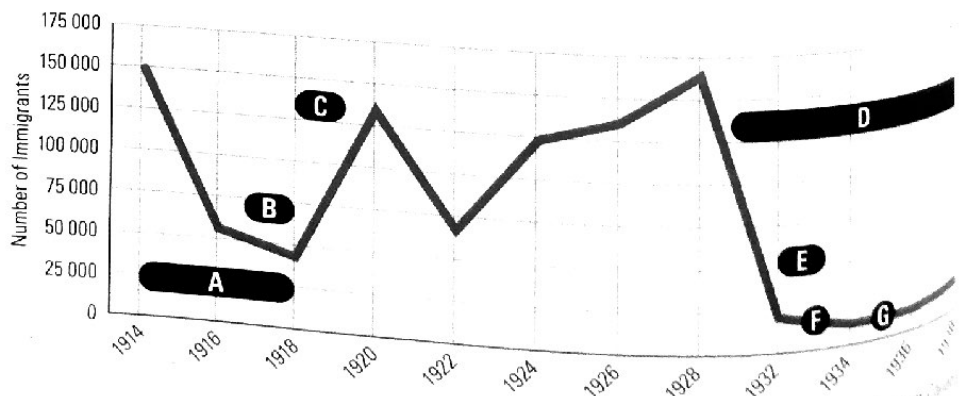
But as the economic situation improved in the 1920s, railway and steamship companies persuaded the government to loosen restrictions on immigrants from Europe. This changed again as the Depression worsened in the 1930s. The government cancelled railway company recruitment of immigrants, and those who had arrived during the 1920s were threatened with deportation if they applied for government relief.

At the time, no separate category existed for refugees. People seeking refuge from persecution were treated the same way as other immigrants.

CHC Examine Figure 7-7. At each point identified on the graph, decide whether push factors, pull factors, or other factors were at work and explain your reasoning.

Figure 7-7 Immigration to Canada, 1914-1938

- A** 1914-1918 — World War I
- B** 1917-1918 — Russian Revolution
- C** 1918-1919 — Spanish influenza pandemic
- D** 1919 — Mussolini founds Fascist Party in Italy
- E** 1929-1939 — The Great Depression
- F** 1932-1933 — Famine in Ukraine
- F** 1933 — Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany
- G** 1935 — Passage of anti-Semitic Nuremberg Laws in Germany



IMMIGRANTS WHO WERE WELCOMED

After World War I, the federal government created the Department of Immigration and Colonization and set out to attract British immigrants, especially farmers who had the skill and temperament to be successful on the Prairies. White Americans were also welcomed.

At the time, much of the available Prairie farmland was owned by the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National railways. Both companies launched advertising campaigns in Britain, often using materials that showed well-established communities with schools, churches, railway stations, and roads. British immigrants could borrow money from the railways to pay for their passage and to buy land. They could even buy houses and barns from the railway companies.

In 1923, the British and Canadian governments co-operated in the 1923 British Settlement Act, which promoted the immigration of British workers to Canada. The British government hoped that the scheme would relieve some of the social stresses that were affecting postwar Britain.

But things changed during the Depression. With many Canadians out of work, the government limited immigration, even from countries where immigrants had been actively recruited during the 1920s. Only white American and British immigrants who had enough money to support themselves were allowed into the country. In addition, unemployed immigrants and “troublemakers” — those who tried to organize workers into unions — were deported to their country of origin.

Compare the percentages in Figure 7-8 with statistics from recent Canadian censuses (p. 28). How do these statistics reflect changes in Canadian immigration policies?

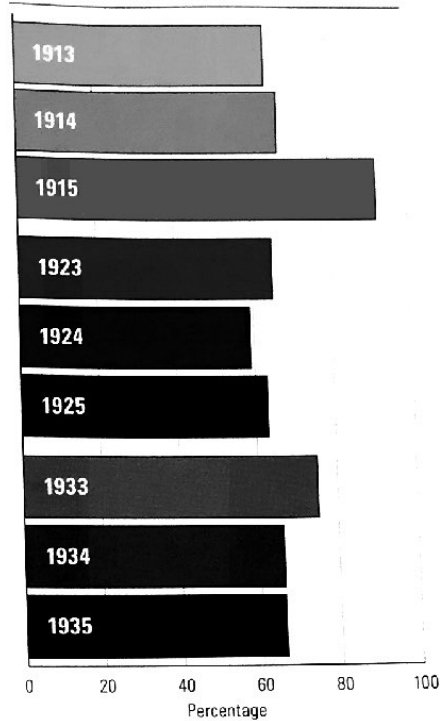
SEEKING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

For decades before World War I, Hutterites, Mennonites, and Doukhobors had immigrated to Canada to escape religious persecution. These communities, which trace their beginnings to 16th-century German-speaking countries and Russia, believed in **pacifism** — settling disputes by peaceful, rather than violent, means. They also believed in communal ownership of property.

Through the centuries, these communities had been forced to move from country to country in search of a home where they could live and practise their religion in peace. Many Hutterites, Mennonites, and Doukhobors were prosperous farmers who had money to buy farmland in Canada, and the Canadian government welcomed them to settle in Ontario and on the Prairies.

Figure 7-9 In 1924–1925, Canadian Pacific Railway used the Canadian pavilion at London’s British Empire Exhibition to campaign for immigrants. This poster was part of that campaign. What pull factors were designed to persuade British families to immigrate to Canada?

Figure 7-8 Percentage of Immigrant Arrivals in Canada from Britain and the United States



Source: Statistics Canada, *Canada Year Book*, 1937

CANADIAN PACIFIC

THE BEST WAY TO

YOUR OWN FARM IN CANADA

**PASSAGE
MONEY
ADVANCED.**

**LOANS
FOR FARM
PURCHASE.**

BRITISH
SETTLERS
ON THEIR
CANADIAN
FARMS.

THREE THOUSAND BRITISH FAMILIES WANTED FOR CANADA.

A SPLENDID OPPORTUNITY:

FOR the family farming a holding too small to adequately provide support or for the future of their children:

FOR farm workers and married sons and daughters of farmers having no occupation other than farming and unable to secure land at home:

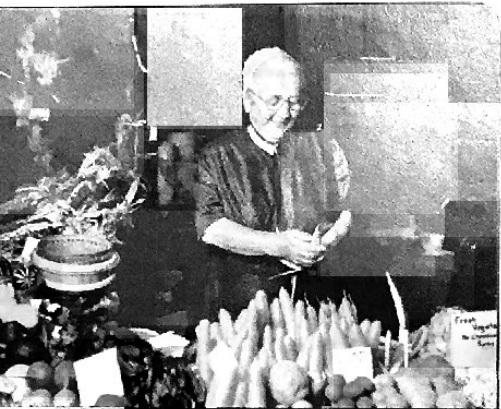
FOR any family in which either the husband or wife has had farm experience, and one or more of whose children are of working age.

FARMS READY FOR OCCUPATION IN SETTLED DISTRICTS near RAILWAYS, MARKETS & SCHOOLS

FREE PASSAGES FOR CHILDREN.

For Further Particulars **APPLY WITHIN.**

Figure 7-10 Rebecca Frey, shown here at the Kitchener Farmers' Market in 1994, is a member of the Mennonite community that continues many traditions. How might maintaining traditions help — and hurt — people's attempts to deal with change in society?



FLEEING PERSECUTION

During World War I, about 4000 Hutterites, originally from Russia, immigrated to Alberta from South Dakota. In the United States, they had been persecuted because they spoke German and their pacifist beliefs had led them to refuse military service. When they asked American officials to direct their taxes to the Red Cross rather than to pay for the war, public opinion turned against them even more.

By 1919, public opinion in Canada was also turning against Hutterites, Mennonites, and Doukhobors. They were often viewed as “foreign” and unpatriotic because of their pacifist beliefs. And some people were jealous of their success as farmers.

When the Conservative government restricted immigration after World War I, fewer members of these three groups were allowed into Canada. But in 1922, the Liberals returned to power and immigration became more open. Between 1923 and 1929, for example, more than 22 000 Mennonites fled the Soviet Union and settled on farms in Ontario and on the Prairies.

MAKING HISTORY

A British Home Child

In the late 19th century and the first part of the 20th, as many as 100 000 British orphans and children of families who were poor were sent to Canada as part of a special immigration program. Called “home children,” they were sent to work, usually on farms, until they were adults. The following is part of Percy Brown's story of his experience as a home child.

I was fourteen, in 1927, when the opportunity arrived . . .
I was asked if I would like to go to Canada . . .

In March 1927, I boarded the *Montrose*. I don't remember a lot of details about the journey . . .

After landing . . . I took a three-day train journey to Hamilton. There I stayed with Mr. Hill until he found me a place to stay . . .

The first place was a farm in Caledonia. There the owners viewed me and another young boy as workers only. I worked outside from about 5 a.m. to sometimes 10 p.m. I was allowed to stop only for a few minutes to eat my meals . . .

After six weeks of very hard work for which I was paid five dollars a month, I was returned to Mr. Hill . . .

My second place of work was in Drumbo. The farmer and his wife treated me as if I were their own child . . . I spent a wonderful six-year period with them.

Am I glad that I came to Canada? Indeed, yes! Canada has allowed me to follow many pathways; it has granted me a successful living and an opportunity to have a wonderful family. I have been very blessed.

EXPLORATIONS

1. Why do you think that both the British and Canadian governments supported the program for home children? List two criteria government officials might have used to justify their support.
2. What circumstances today, if any, might justify a program that involved sending orphans or children from families who are poor to another country?

NOT WELCOME IN CANADA

While the Canadian government was trying to attract certain immigrants to Canada, it was also discouraging others. Blacks from the United States, for example, and Asians — from India, China, and Japan — were unwelcome.

Canadian government statements said that black people were "unsuited to the climate of Canada." And blacks who already lived in Canada faced open discrimination. In Nova Scotia, for example, separate schools for black students were set up in 1918, and in 1921, the Quebec Superior Court ruled that racial segregation was acceptable in the province's theatres.

Chinese immigrants had been required to pay a head tax since 1885, and once in Canada, neither Chinese nor Japanese people were allowed to vote. Then, in 1923, Parliament passed the Chinese Immigration Act, which barred nearly all Chinese immigrants.

This law meant that Chinese workers already in Canada could not bring their wives or children to this country. As a result, the Chinese community developed as a largely bachelor society in which fathers and husbands were separated from their families. Their wives in China were left to raise their children on their own, often in poverty. Fewer than 50 Chinese immigrants were allowed into Canada between 1923 and 1947.

In British Columbia, people from India had been barred from voting in 1907. They were not allowed to run for public office or become lawyers, accountants, or pharmacists. In a further effort to discourage immigration from India, Parliament had passed the Continuous Passage Act in 1908. This act said that a ship carrying Indians could not stop in any port along the way — an impossibility on a two-month voyage.

THE KOMAGATA MARU INCIDENT

In 1914, a ship called the *Komagata Maru* was hired to carry Indian passengers to Vancouver from Asia. The ship took on passengers in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Yokohama. But when it entered Vancouver harbour on May 23, Canadian officials refused to allow the passengers to disembark. The ship had violated the Continuous Passage Act.

For two months, the *Komagata Maru* sat in the harbour while the Indian community in Vancouver supplied the passengers with food and appealed to the courts for help. But public opinion was overwhelmingly against allowing entry, and on July 23, the ship was escorted out of the harbour and sent back to India.

When the ship arrived in Kolkata, it was met by British police, who treated the passengers as criminals. Some were killed and others were arrested and jailed.

VOICES

There are continual attempts by undesirables of alien and impoverished nationalities to enter Canada, but these attempts will be checked as much as possible at their source.

— Supervisor of European continental immigration for Canada, 1923

VOICES

I have no ill-feeling against people coming from Asia personally, but I reaffirm that the national life of Canada will not permit any large degree of immigration from Asia . . . I intend to stand up absolutely on all occasions on this one great principle — of a white country and a white British Columbia.

— H.H. Stevens, Conservative member of Parliament for Vancouver City Centre, June 1914

Figure 7-11 When the *Komagata Maru* entered Vancouver harbour, it carried 376 passengers, mostly Sikhs. This photograph shows the crowding the passengers endured on the voyage and while waiting to hear whether they would be allowed to disembark.



VOICES

We must nevertheless seek to keep this part of the continent free from unrest and from too great an intermixture of foreign strains of blood, as much the same thing lies at the basis of the oriental problem . . . I fear that we would have riots if we agreed to a policy that admitted numbers of Jews. Also we would add to the difficulties between the Provinces and the Dominion.

— William Lyon Mackenzie King, prime minister, in a diary entry, March 1938

Figure 7-12 The *St. Louis* in the harbour of Havana, Cuba, and two passengers at a porthole. With land in sight and fleeing Nazi anti-Semitism in their homeland, the passengers were told they would not be allowed to stay. How might the outcome have been different if today's communication tools had been available to the passengers?



JEWISH REFUGEES FROM NAZI GERMANY

During the 1920s, an organization called Jewish Immigrant Aid Services of Canada lobbied the government to allow Jews to immigrate. With the help of JIAS, several thousand Jews were admitted. But during the Depression, all immigration dropped dramatically. In 1936, for example, fewer than 12 000 immigrants arrived.

Anti-Semitism — prejudice against Jews — was widespread, and Jews were often excluded from clubs and other social organizations and discouraged from buying homes in certain neighbourhoods.

CHC In Canada, hate groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, sprang up. Encouraged by anti-Semitic activities in Germany, where the Nazis were persecuting Jews and other minorities, these groups targeted visible minorities, Jews, and Catholics. What strategies might governments use to deal with the rise of hate groups?

Canada had no refugee policy that allowed immigrants to be accepted on the basis of need. Jews who faced persecution in Germany were required to follow the same immigration procedures as other applicants. And because few immigrants were being accepted, German Jews had little hope of escaping to Canada.

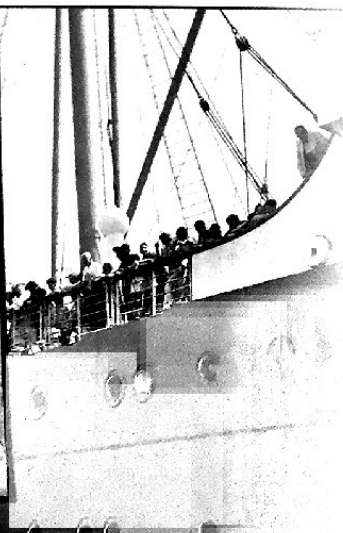
From 1933 to 1945, Canada admitted fewer than 5000 Jewish immigrants. During the same years, the United States accepted more than 200 000, Britain accepted about 70 000, and the city of Shanghai, China, received tens of thousands of Jewish refugees.

THE SAINT LOUIS

Though Liberal prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King was sympathetic to the problems of German Jews, he was also convinced that allowing Jewish refugees into Canada would threaten national unity and his party's political support in Quebec. There, the provincial government opposed all immigration.

The *St. Louis* tragedy showed the depth of anti-Semitism in Canada. In the spring of 1939, the passenger liner *St. Louis* left Hamburg, Germany, with more than 900 Jews on board. Trying to escape Nazi persecution, they were bound for Cuba. They carried tourist visas but hoped to be accepted as refugees. But when they arrived, they were not allowed to disembark.

So they appealed for help to both Canada and the United States, but both countries refused to accept them. The *St. Louis* was forced to sail back across the Atlantic. Some of the refugees were eventually allowed into European countries that were taken over by Germany during World War II — and more than half the passengers were eventually killed by the Nazis.



DISCRIMINATION IN CANADA

During the 1920s and 1930s, few people complained about Canada's restrictive immigration policies or about the deportation of immigrants. Many people actively supported these policies or chose to remain silent. Immigrants were often viewed as alien and a threat to jobs. Some people believed that many immigrants were communists who wanted to overthrow the government.

No law prevented employers from using hiring practices that discriminated against groups such as Jews and Ukrainians, and some immigrants resorted to hiding their origins by changing their names to sound more British. Black Canadians were restricted to a small number of occupations. They could, for example, work as porters on trains — and many did.

How important is your name to you? How might changing your name to fit into a dominant culture affect your sense of personal identity?

Universities and training programs routinely discriminated by setting higher standards for people whose names did not sound British.

Some groups were also denied social benefits. In Alberta during the Depression, for example, relief payments for people of Chinese heritage were 50 per cent lower than those of other Canadians. Relief payments for Aboriginal people were also lower because officials believed that they could live off the land. And some immigrants were deported if they even applied for relief.

Many Canadians strongly believed that immigrants should try to assimilate as quickly as possible by abandoning their own culture, traditions, and language. The public education system was viewed as a tool that should be used to ensure that the children of immigrants assimilated into mainstream Canadian society.

VOICES

None of [Winnipeg's] chartered banks, trust companies, or insurance companies would knowingly hire a Jew, and anyone with a Ukrainian or Polish name had almost no chance of employment except rough manual labour . . . For the young Ukrainians and Poles, there was a possible solution if they could beat the accent handicap. They could change their names. So they changed their names . . . Caroline Czarnecki overnight became Connie Kingston, Mike Drazenovick became Martin Drake, and Steve Dziatkewich became Edward Dawson. But for the Jews, a name change was not enough.

— James H. Gray, journalist and historian, in *The Winter Years*, a memoir, 1966

RECALL... REFLECT... RESPOND

1. When talking about immigration, people often use the analogy of a door: it can open to admit more immigrants, or it can close to keep them out. Identify periods between 1919 and 1938 when the immigration door opened and closed and explain the circumstances that caused these changes.
2. Discrimination against ethnic groups was open and widespread in the 1920s and 1930s. Today, this is illegal, and most Canadians would find it unacceptable. Should Canadians of earlier periods be criticized for their attitudes toward minority groups? Explain your response.

3. Create a chart like the one shown to summarize the challenges and opportunities that faced many non-British immigrants to Canada during the 1920s and 1930s. Conclude by placing yourself in the shoes of a potential immigrant and explain why you would — or would not — choose to immigrate to Canada.

Immigration to Canada	
Challenge or Opportunity?	
Challenges	Opportunities