

Preface

I can scarcely imagine any obligation which it is more incumbent on Government to fulfill, than that of ... securing to ... persons disposed to emigrate every possible facility and assistance, from the moment of their intending to leave ... to that of their comfortable establishment...

*... when the State leads great numbers of people into a situation in which it is impossible that they should do well without assistance, then the obligation to assist them begins; and it never ends, in my humble opinion, until those who have relied on the truth and paternal care of the Government, are placed in a situation to take care of themselves.*¹

John George Lambton, Earl of Durham, 1839

The concept of immigrant settlement in Canada is not new, as can be attested by the excerpt, above, from Lord Durham's famous *Report on the Affairs of British North America*. Nor have efforts to assist immigrants to Canada been only of recent date. However, interest in the welfare of immigrants has waxed and waned over the decades and centuries and it was only in 1974 that the Government of Canada finally saw fit to group its various activities in support of immigrants into an identifiable "programme for providing services to immigrants."²

The purpose of this history is to tell the story of immigrant settlement activities in Canada, from colonial times to the present day and to draw lessons from the past that are relevant to today. This story has its origins in the French régime and the history of the British North American colonial provinces. The concept of immigrant settlement is not new but it has evolved enormously over time.

This history is of the government response to the settlement needs of immigrants to the northern part of North America that is now Canada. It is not intended to be a history of Canadian settlement movements, nor of Canadian settlement serving organizations. Those stories, well worth telling, are for other times and other places.

Responding to Immigrants' Settlement Needs: The
Canadian Experience

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2012, XIV, 91 p. 15 illus., Softcover

ISBN: 978-94-007-2687-1