

Honourable Stanley Haidasz

(1923-2009)

Physician, senator, minister of state



POLISH SPIRIT



Stanley Haidasz's professional career included service as a general medical practitioner at St. Joseph's Health Centre in Toronto, however, he will be best remembered as Canada's first Minister of State for Multiculturalism, first Polish Canadian senator, and one of Canada's longest serving parliamentarians.

Dr. Haidasz was born in Toronto, to parents who belonged to the first wave of Polish immigrants to Canada after the First World War. He attended St. Michael's College, earned his M.D. degree from the University of Toronto in 1951, interned at St. Joseph's hospital and studied cardiology at the University of Chicago.

Dr. Haidasz entered politics in 1957. He was elected a Liberal member of parliament seven times (1957-78) and served as parliamentary secretary to six ministers, including Health & Welfare, Foreign Affairs, Consumer & Corporate Affairs, and Indian Affairs. He was head delegate to the United Nations General Assembly (1963-66), and in 1972 under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau gained his own portfolio as Canada's first Minister of State for Multiculturalism. In that role, he was fundamental in shaping Canada's multicultural policy. He became the first Polish Canadian senator in 1978, retiring in 1998.

An outspoken advocate for immigrant communities, he also remained a tireless supporter of Polish causes. As senator, he appealed to the government to speak out against martial law in Poland, in support of the Solidarity movement. He continued to be active in the Polish community, serving as vice-president and president of the Canadian Polish Congress. He was engaged in indemnification issues, and as a doctor had a particular interest in public health and health-care issues. In 1975, he founded the Poland-Canada Medical Exchange Program.

Dr. Haidasz was a true public ambassador for the Catholic Church. He was appointed head delegate to the funeral of Pope Paul VI and delegate to the inauguration of Pope John Paul II, he served as well as co-chair for the Pope John Paul II Collegium at the Catholic University of Lublin.

He has received many orders, awards and distinctions, including that of Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great with Silver Star, Hospitaller General and Chancellor of the Grand Order of the Knights of Malta, and Commander of the Order Polonia Restituta, awarded by the Polish government to civilians of outstanding merit.

Photos from top left clockwise:

• Honourable Stanley Haidasz • Sen. Haidasz, delegate to the United Nations General Assembly, 1964 • Sen. Haidasz, Minister of Multiculturalism, with Prime Minister of Canada - Pierre Elliott Trudeau • Conversation with Mother Teresa during her visit in Toronto

All photos - family archives