

# **COSTI** A History In Progress

**Adriana Suppa**  
**Author**

## 15,000 letters to aid immigrants

Fifteen thousand letters are being sent out by the Italian Immigrant Aid Society in an effort to raise funds needed for relief among Italian newcomers.

Money raised will be used to help meet the society's \$12,000 a year ex-

penses in providing jobs, food, clothing and shelter to needy immigrants.

Contributions from Italian-Canadian organizations, individuals and service clubs provide much of the society's financing along with fund-raising social events.

Patrons of the society include Most. Rev. Francis A. Marocco, Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto, and Count Francesco de Rege, Consul General of Italy.

Donations should be sent to the society, 136 Beverley St., Toronto.

*Established as a non-profit organization, the Italian Immigrant Aid Society worked exclusively towards 'fitting Italian immigrants into Canadian life.' The IIAS' primary goal was to assist clients in all branches of Social Welfare, including job placements, interpreting, legal assistance, and defense against discrimination.*



Italian Immigrant Aid Society Ladies Auxiliary – 1962.





Mary Di Rocco –  
fourth from the  
right, with  
members of the  
IIAS Ladies  
Auxiliary.

*The women of the IIAS Ladies Auxiliary were appropriately referred to as 'trouble shooters', making regular home visits to immigrant families & providing invaluable solace in times of tragedy, such as a death in the family.*

*By the early 1950s, 'Pasquetta' (an Easter Monday Dance) was eventually taken over by the IIAS, which transformed it into one of the major cultural and fundraising events within the Italian community.*

*This once simple dinner evolved into a much more formal festivity, as organizers traded Church surroundings for the lavishness of the Royal York Hotel.*





*Casa Italia was purchased in 1936 by the Italian Government as a recreational centre for Toronto's Italians. Confiscated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police during World War II, the building was returned to the Italian community after the war, and later rented to the IIAS and COSTI at a cost of \$1 per year.*



*Diane Tattoni remembers an emotional story, where the women worked together to raise enough funds to purchase a wheelchair for a young disabled boy. “The boy’s mother was so happy, and I remember everyone being in tears. It was a very moving thing to know you were helping someone. It gave my mother a great deal of personal satisfaction.”*



Diane Tattoni's mother, Mary Di Rocco – left, with Ladies Auxiliary Member.

## *1952 to 1969*

*Volunteers distributed over 700 food parcels, 24,000 quarts of milk, and 15,000 pieces of used clothing.*

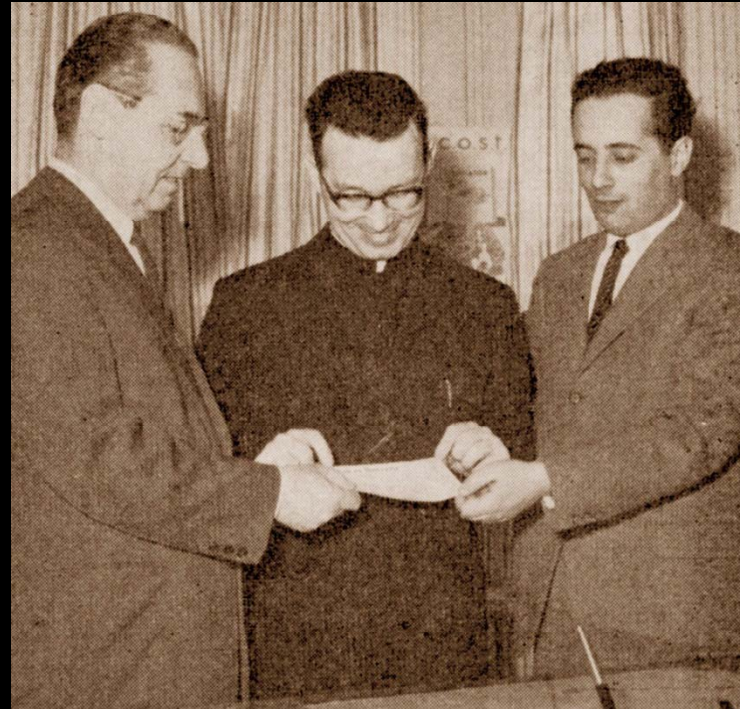
## *1960*

*Over 2,100 immigrants were met at Union Station. Funds were donated to the relatives of the victims of the Hoggs Hollow tragedy, where five Italian immigrants lost their lives in a tragic accident.*

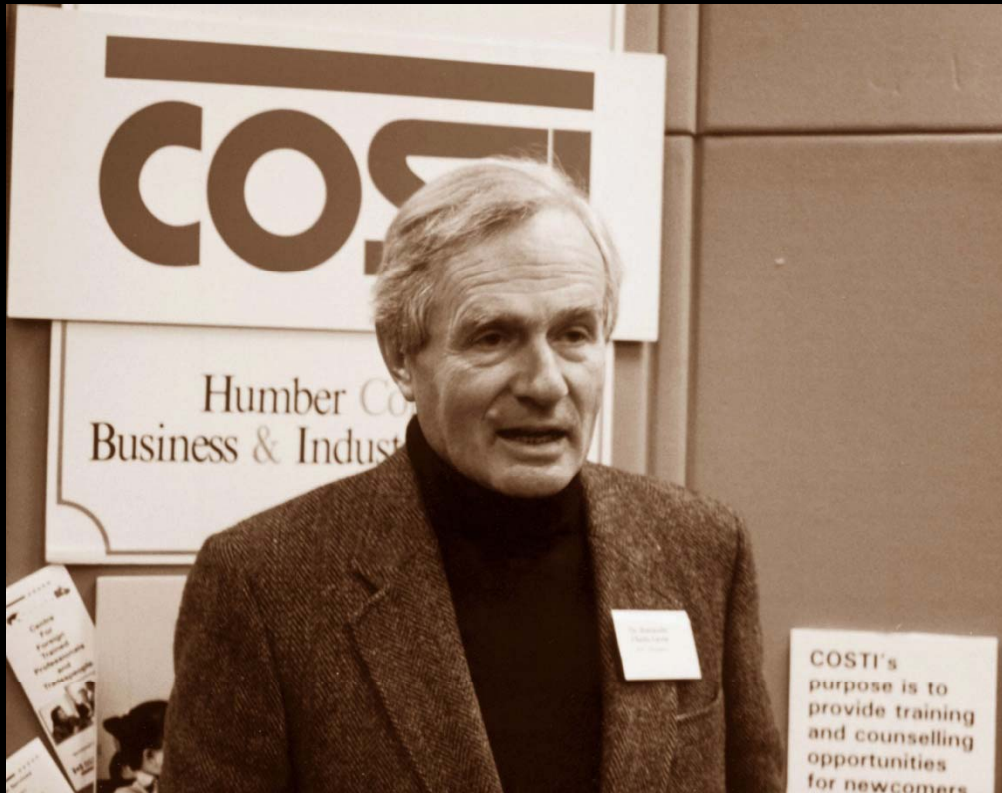


*“The idea for COSTI came to me when I met someone who didn’t speak English and who didn’t have the right qualifications to be an electrician here...”*

*Joseph Carraro  
co-founder of COSTI*



Consul General Mario Carosi – on the left, and Consul Mario Cappetta – to the right, present Father Carraro – centre, with a cheque on behalf of the government of Italy, for general and industrial trades training.



The Honourable Charles Caccia, Member of Parliament for Davenport for 36 years, and co-founder of COSTI.

*Charles Caccia had helped to raise funds for the IIAS in the past, and would do the same for COSTI. By approaching the Provincial government for support, he was ultimately instrumental in giving the agency the initial financial base it needed.*

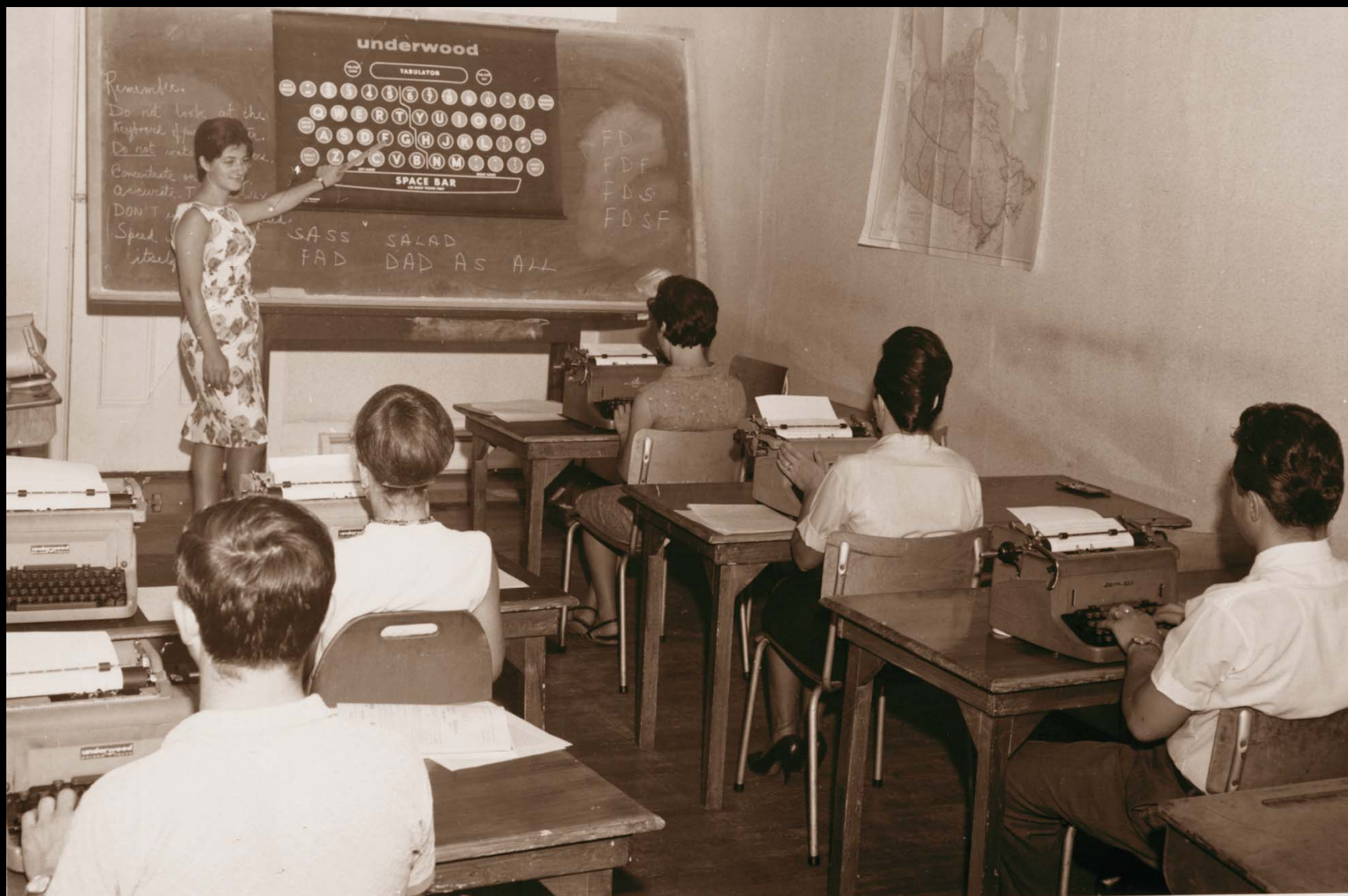


Linda Rinaldi, IIAS and COSTI employee.

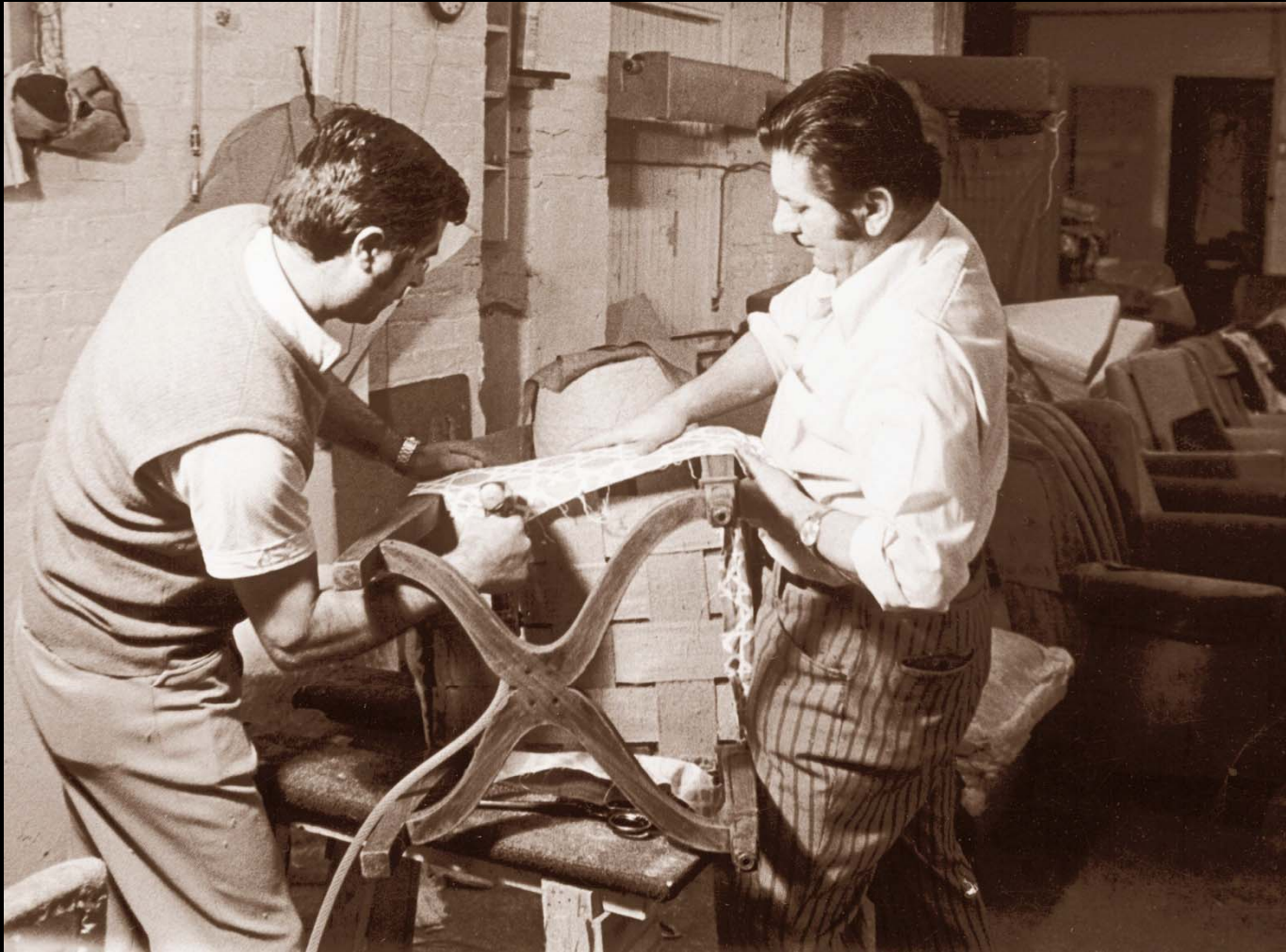
*1966...the federal government passed the Canada Pension Plan into law.*

*“The federal government had set up a huge public relations campaign and distributed booklets in French and English. Many immigrants couldn’t understand or read the booklets, so I became very involved with federal policy.”*





Instructor Connie Vacca instructs students attending typing courses in Hamilton.



Cabinet making  
and furniture  
refinishing  
training.

*By 1964, the then-called Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) had asked COSTI to set up courses in basic upgrading for their clients.*





From the left, President Lino Magagna, P. Falcitelli, Board Member Alex Marchetti, Instructor Giannino De Santis, COSTI Executive Director Bruna Smith, The Hon. M. Scrivener, Provincial Secretary and Minister of Citizenship, and S. Falcitelli. The Falcitelli brothers are two former clients of COSTI and now own Northwest Precision Limited.



*“For so many, we gave a new life. The majority of clients had back problems, leg or arm injuries, so their disability made it impossible for them to do construction. The training they received in woodworking allowed them to start a new life.”*

*Rino Gregoris  
Instructor*



Rino Gregoris, Instructor – right,  
with woodworking trainees.



President Lino Magagna – right, observes Rehabilitation Centre's work with the Honourable John Roberts, Minister, Secretary of State.

Vic Marafioti, Director of Rehabilitation – left, and distinguished guests inspect the new equipment.

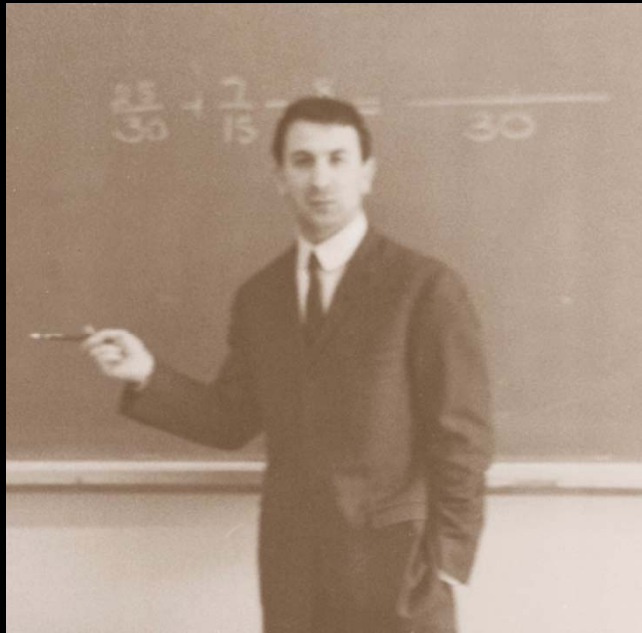






On January 24, 1976, COSTI celebrated the opening of its new Rehabilitation Centre located on 76 Orfus Road.





The young Panfilo Corvetti.

*From dedicated 'student',  
Panfilo Corvetti evolved  
into a 'teacher', and  
later, after a career  
that spanned over 35 years,  
the Director of  
COSTI's Education Division.*





Panfilo Corvetti, Director of Education Services.

*“His role at COSTI was more a vocation than a job,” Maria Corvetti explained. “He genuinely wanted to make people feel comfortable, and had an acceptance of all people from all different walks of life.”*

*Kay Oxford, Manager of George Brown College's Assessment Centre, witnessed an historical moment in the agency's history, one that included a visit from Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. "We drew straws to see who would get to stay for the Prime Minister's visit, and I won," she stated.*



From the left, COSTI President Lino Magagna, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau – centre, and the Honourable Charles Caccia, MP Davenport.





English as a Second Language Class at the COSTI North York Centre.



Many refugees from Vietnam take English classes at COSTI.



COSTI Executive Director  
Al Sauro – back centre,  
attends English as a  
Second Language  
graduation at Spenvally  
Drive location –  
February 1, 1990.





The COSTI Education Centre at 70 D'Arcy St.  
on the third floor of St. Patrick's School.



COSTI's Beverley Street location.



Angela Polsinelli – right, and  
Felix Rocca, a lawyer, taping one  
of the legal education programs  
in the studio at Channel 79  
Multilingual Television.

*In partnership with Multilingual Television Ltd. (now OMNI.1 and OMNI.2), Corriere Canadese, and the Ontario Legal Aid Plan, twelve programs in Italian were produced, dramatizing legal scenarios such as the creation of a will, and the purchase and sale of a home. The objective was to equip immigrants with the means to solve their own problems.*

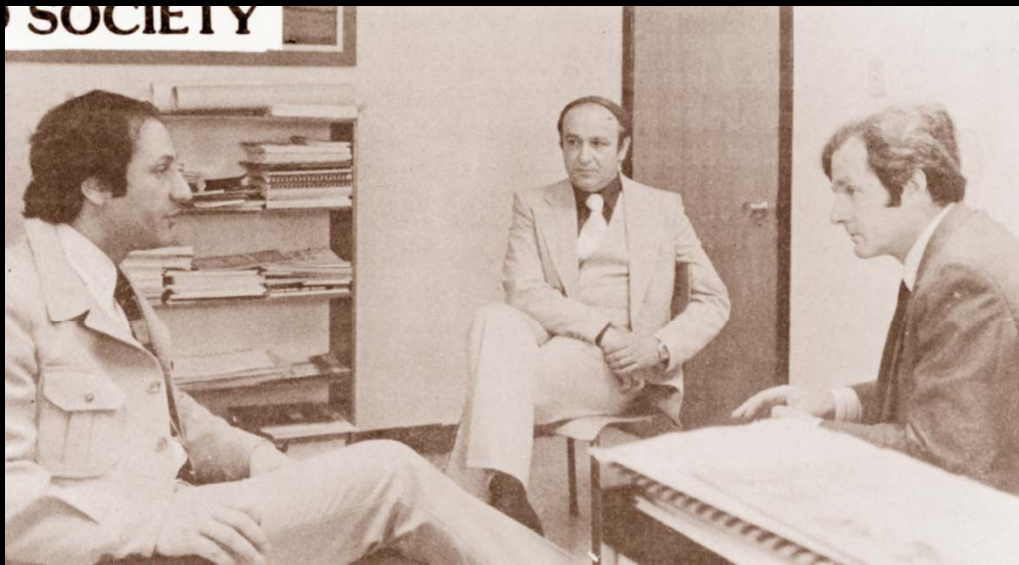




*The current Corvetii Education Centre, located at 760 College Street is an impressive change in terms of size and services in comparison to COSTI's beginnings.*

Corvetti Education Centre on College Street – 2005.

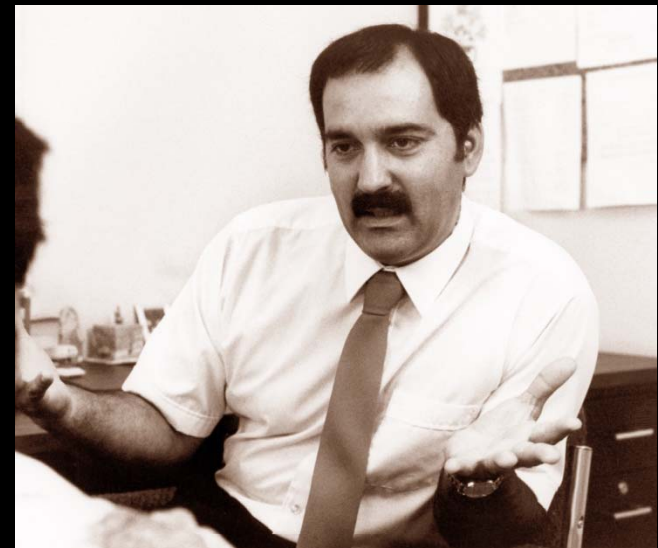




Angelo Delfino, left – President of the Italian Immigrant Aid Society, Antonio Sarzotti – past Executive Director of the Society, Charles Caccia – MP Davenport, and former President of COSTI.

*“We set up one of the first Family Counselling services and hired a professional counsellor to service those in the community.”*

*Angelo Delfino*



Dominic D'Urzo, COSTI Family and Mental Health Services.



From the left Dr. Michael Yealland, Bruno M. Suppa, and Lino Magagna.

*Lino Magagna joined COSTI in 1965 as a Board member and became its President in 1970. He is very much credited with being the driving force that gave the agency a strong administrative foundation.*



20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of COSTI. From the left, Francesco Paolo Fulci – Ambassador of Italy, Governor General Schreyer, Anthony Barone – President of COSTI, Mrs. Schreyer, and Lincoln Alexander – Chair WCB.

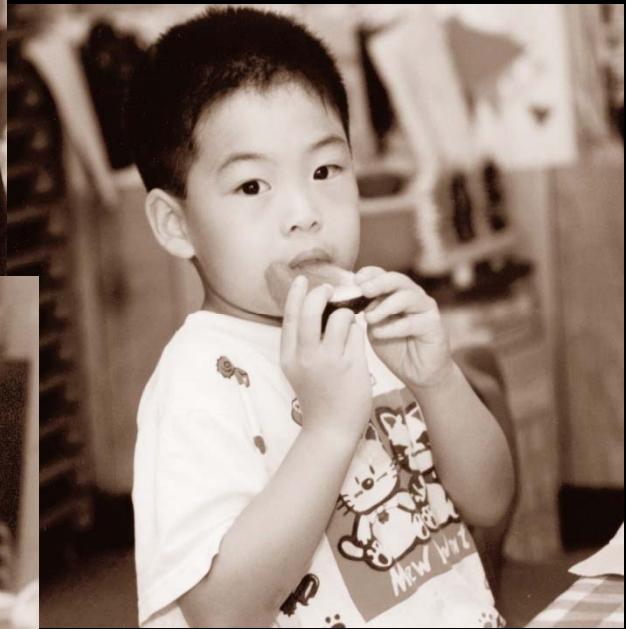




Amalgamation of COSTI and IIAS – two agencies join forces. From the left, Bruno Suppa, Antonio Signoroni, Anthony Barone, Saverio Pagliuso and Lino Magagna.



Children attend pre-school  
while parents learn English  
at COSTI.



*“We were assisting women  
in the Jane/Finch area and  
across Downsview. So many  
were suffering from  
isolation and depression.”*

*Maria Minna, MP  
Former President, COSTI*

*The Women’s Centre  
operated out of the North  
York Centre and encouraged  
a strong, self-help attitude  
among its clients.*



The Hon. Maria Minna, MP for Beaches-East York. and former President of COSTI.



*The Women's  
Services Fund has  
provided thousands  
of women with the  
opportunity to  
access innovative  
and unique services  
geared specifically  
to women.*





Vittoria Adhami – Vice President and Chair of COSTI's Women's Services, with Bruno Suppa.

*“...we offer a variety of services that women can freely access – services such as the Immigrant Women's Life Skills program, the Home Childcare Training program, Housing Drop-in services, a Women's Depression Group, and lastly, our Violence Against Women program, funded by the Province.”*

From the right, Panfilo  
Corvetti, Dr. Anne Golden  
– President of  
the United Way of  
Greater Toronto,  
guest, and  
Mario J. Calla.



*COSTI became a member of the Metropolitan Toronto  
United Appeal (as it was then called), and  
received its first grant in 1970. The initial partnership  
between the two helped solidify COSTI's reputation as a  
credible and viable institution.*





*A significant portion of COSTI's success can be attributed to the agency's partnership with the United Way.*

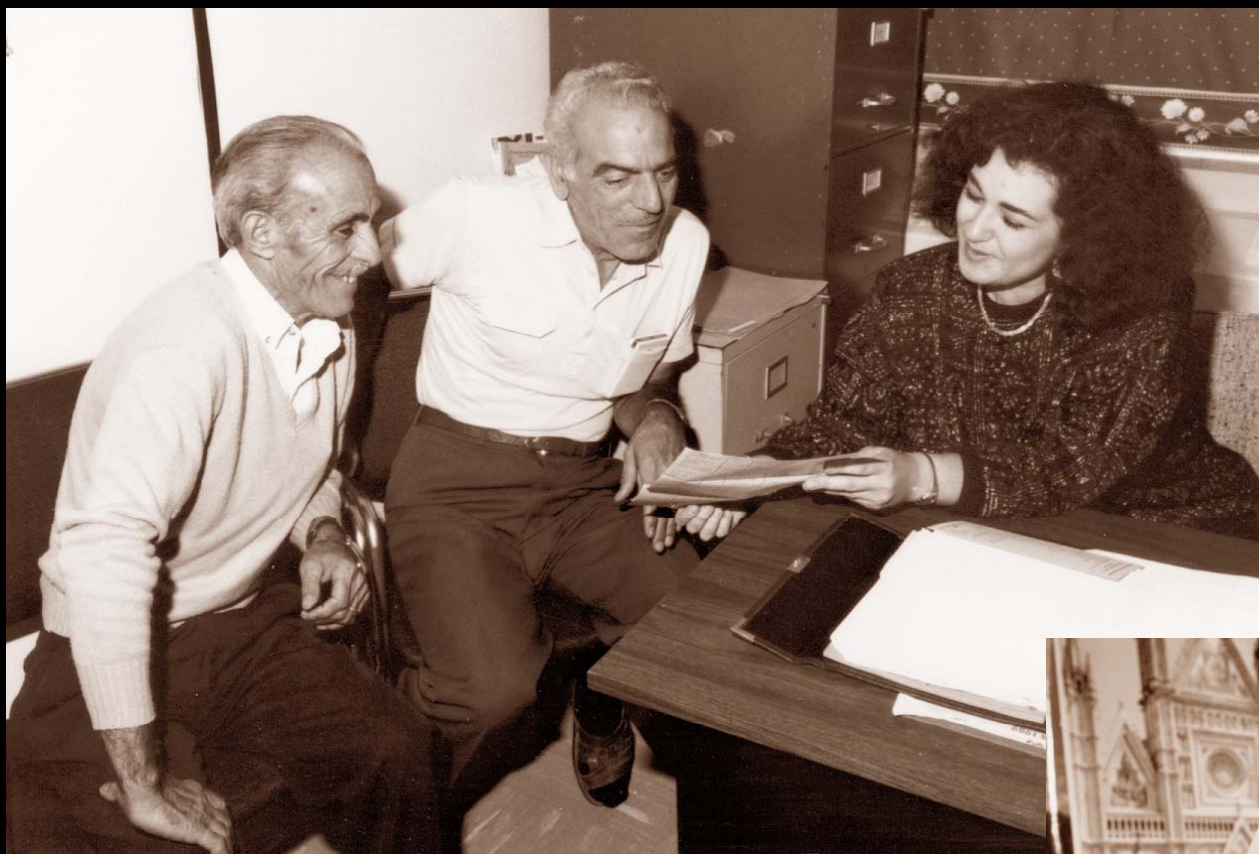
Board and staff prepare for the United Way Panel visit. From the left, Bruno M. Suppa – Vice President, Mario J. Calla – Executive Director, Maria Minna – President, and fellow members of the Board Celestino De Iuliis and Joseph Baldanza.

*“My view was that the United Way should serve the different communities, and COSTI was, and remains an important agency. While the criteria for funding changes, an organization must always be well-managed and be run by strong boards.”*

*Gordon Cressy  
President, United Way  
1971 to 1987*



Gregory and Maria of the COSTI Pre-Schooler and Parent Program at the North York Centre, present a mahogany table made in the Rehabilitation Centre to entertainer Tony Bennett during the 1977 United Community Fund Campaign.



United Way funds help reduce isolation  
experienced by seniors.







Dr. Shiu Loon Kong, President of the Toronto Chinese Community Services Association and Bruno M. Suppa, Vice President of COSTI and Citizenship Judge, during a citizenship ceremony for a group of New Canadians at the D'Arcy St. location. The group had taken citizenship classes arranged by TCCSA.



Shiu King Kong, Vice President of TCCSA, and COSTI Counsellor.

*Because of an obvious need for help within the Chinese community, Shiu King Kong, along with his brother Dr. Shiu Loon Kong, decided to establish the Toronto Chinese Community Services Association. COSTI offered whatever help it could, and supported TCCSA's development.*





COSTI Reception Centre.





*Arriving at the Reception Centre, refugee families, many of whom have experienced great suffering at the hands of war and political persecution, are provided with a setting in which they can recover and begin the process of re-building their lives.*



*COSTI's  
Reception  
Centre is the  
only one of its  
kind in  
Toronto, and  
throughout its  
15 year history  
has assisted  
refugees from  
every corner of  
the globe.*





*COSTI's Centre for  
Internationally Trained  
Professionals &  
Tradespeople opened in  
1997 in partnership with  
Humber College.*







Debbie Douglas – Executive Director of OCASI, second from left, and Aman Melles – far right, attend African Community Conference held in March 2001.

*“Education is still an important part of what we do, and we offer various forms of counselling – from employment to health counselling. However, a key difference is that we are much more diverse. Initially, COSTI was an Italian organization, and quickly evolved into one that has become very inclusive to everyone. In fact, our clients speak over 90 different languages, and our staff speaks over 60.*



Mario J. Calla – Executive Director, COSTI.



Frank Mendicino,  
Secretary of the Board.



Michael Yealland, Treasurer.

*“Many of our long-standing Board members, individuals such as Treasurer Michael Yealland, and Secretary Frank Mendicino, have maintained a strong passion and eye on COSTI’s mission. They are people who really understand strategic policy and governance.”*

*Mario J. Calla  
Executive Director, COSTI*



*Bruno Suppa first became involved with COSTI while working as a special counsel to the Provincial Industrial Training Branch, where he was involved in retraining immigrants.*

*“As an immigrant myself, and remembering the difficulties I and so many faced, I always felt I had a duty to help others.”*

*Bruno M. Suppa  
President, COSTI*



Bruno M. Suppa,  
President.



COSTI's Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), English as a Second Language (ESL), and ESL Computer-assisted programs continue to be three of COSTI's most popular services. For many of the students, these classes represent an important stage in their settlement process, and a stepping stone to higher education, meaningful employment, and successful careers.



*Today, COSTI offers an holistic approach to services for newcomers, providing housing help, family and mental health services, art therapy for refugee children, seniors' services, citizenship preparation, computer and skills training, and a variety of other supports.*





Artist Laurie Swim – left, with Grace Fusillo-Lombardi, former COSTI Board Member and niece of Giovanni Fusillo, one of the five immigrant workers killed in the Hoggs Hollow watermain tunnel tragedy.

*Breaking Ground – The Hoggs Hollow Memorial project, is one that has particular significance to COSTI, as it was the Italian Immigrant Aid Society that provided support and helped raise funds for the families of the victims in 1960.*



COSTI BOARD OF DIRECTORS – 2006

*COSTI Immigrant Services acknowledges with thanks, the outstanding contributions, support, and inspiration received from our funders, donors, partners, clients, volunteers, and staff, for over five decades.*

*It is COSTI's philosophy,  
that productive membership in  
our society and good citizenship are  
enabled when individuals  
are given the means to full participate.*