

**JOHN PISANI**

# Whitby is home to Maltese diplomat

By Brian Winter  
Staff Writer

Ottawa and Toronto are noted centres in Canada for diplomatic relations, but it is not generally known that much of Canada's diplomatic dealings with the islands of Malta are carried out from a home in Whitby.

The home at 60 Elizabeth Crescent belongs to John Pisani, Maltese Trade Commissioner and Honorary Consul for Canada since May 1, 1972.

Mr. Pisani describes himself as an envoy and a go-between for the governments of Canada and Malta. His job includes promotion of Canadian industry in Malta, issuing of passports and tourist information, payment of pensions to Maltese residents in Canada, and social service work and counselling for Maltese immigrants.

He has an office at 3323 Dundas St. W. in Toronto operated by an assistant, which he visits twice a week, but most of his business is carried on from his home in Whitby, connected with the office by a direct telephone line.

Prior to 1972, Malta, a group of islands in the Mediterranean Sea, 60 miles south of Sicily, had no representative in Canada. The company was represented by Joseph Attard Kingswell, a roving ambassador who operated from Brussels in Belgium.

When Dom Mintoff became Prime Minister of Malta in 1971 he established diplomatic relations with countries throughout the world and his initiative led to the establishment of a trade commission in Canada.

Several eligible people from various Maltese clubs in Canada applied for the job and Mr. Pisani received the position because of his work in the Maltese community in the Toronto-Whitby area.

Mr. Pisani's job is a many-sided one, covering everything high-level from business negotiations to pre-

paring Maltese immigrants for Canadian citizenship.

Twice a year he visits Malta, and on a trip last year he took a couple of Canadian industrialists from the oil and banking field with him to see the country. "The negotiations are still going on and the prospects look good", he says.

Recently Mr. Pisani took a representative of an American company to Malta, which resulted in the company paying \$3 million for oil drilling rights in the country.

On another occasion he was the negotiator for Malta when the country purchased a half million dollars of telephone cables from the Phillips Cable Co. in Brockville.

Mr. Pisani has assisted a Canadian banking concern which wants to open a branch in Malta, and is making arrangements for a Maltese representative to come to Canada to discuss tourism, a growing industry in that country.

Besides assisting Canadian business interests in their dealings with Malta, Mr. Pisani has taken part in a number of international conferences as the country's representative.

In 1973 he took part in conferences in Ottawa and Malta which resulted in the Canadian government granting \$1 million to Malta to settle a dispute over Nato military bases.

The same year he was a delegate at the Commonwealth heads of government conference in Ottawa.

In 1974 Mr. Pisani represented Malta at the World Crafts Council held at York University in Toronto, and delivered an address on his country's craft industry.

Later the same year he was a delegate at the Commonwealth finance ministers' conference in Ottawa, and in 1975 he joined his ambassador as delegate to the Third-World Session of the United Nations at New York. Although he is called upon to participate in

these conferences from time to time, much of his work is of a more routine nature, dealing with day-to-day matters involving Maltese Canadians across the country.

On a typical working day he will go to his Toronto office to sign passports, and dictate correspondence, meet with Maltese immigrants to solve personal problems, have lunch conferences with industrialists who are interested in Malta, and follow up leads in the areas of industry and travel.

On one occasion he was asked to shop for machinery for a new dock yard in Malta, and on another he had to locate some dry plasma for Maltese hospitals.

He has weekly telephone conversations with embassies in Washington, Malta and New York, and takes on a status similar to a foreign diplomat.

Mr. Pisani was born in Zebbug, Malta, and worked as a shipwright in a Maltese dockyard before emigrating to Canada in 1951. While in Malta he was a union steward, secretary of the labor party in his home town and campaign manager for his future ambassador, Mr. Kingswell.

When he came to Canada, Mr. Pisani settled down in the Toronto area and worked as a carpenter for various contractors including Saracini Construction, one of the largest building companies in the city. In 1953 he started his own contracting company.

In 1960, Mr. Pisani moved to Whitby and worked for six years as manager of the building department of Mill Work and Building Supplies in Oshawa.

He went on to construct custom built homes in the Whitby-Oshawa area and do renovations to buildings, and in 1970 he purchased the franchise for Hallmark fibre-glass pools.

Since becoming Maltese Trade Commissioner for Canada, his work has become a family affair, with his wife Barbara acting as his secretary and preparing 200 pension cheques a month. His children, Mary, Philip and Josephine do typing and other work connected with his job.

Following the general elections in Malta in 1976, Mr. Pisani says he might make the foreign service a full-time career.

"I feel it has been very rewarding to me", he says. "I've met many people from all walks of life. I feel it is gratifying, the experience I have received in international politics".

Mr. Pisani estimates there are well over 50,000 adult Maltese in Canada and the figure would reach 100,000 with children included. Many emigrated to Canada after the Second World War when there was a shortage of work in Malta and industrial growth had come to a stand still. The largest number of Maltese in one area is 25,000 in Toronto, and about 8,000 are concentrated around the Dundas area. About 500 reside in the Whitby-Oshawa area.

There are also a number of Maltese Canadians in London, Hamilton, St. Thomas, Windsor, Winnipeg and Vancouver, he says.

Mr. Pisani was one of the

founders and treasurer of the Malta Social Club in Whitby, and holds the office of honorary president. The club was founded in 1969 and has about 85 members.

Last Saturday was a very special day for the Maltese community in Canada, for it marked the first anniversary of Malta's becoming a republic.

"This means it is a totally independent nation free to run its own affairs without outside intervention", says Mr. Pisani. For many years Malta, with a population of 300,000, was a British Colony before it received independence in 1964.

The first anniversary of the republic was celebrated with a flag-raising ceremony in Toronto, and Mr. Pisani appeared on a cable television program to talk about Malta and read messages from Prime Minister Mintoff, Ontario Premier William Davis and Toronto Mayor David Crombie in honor of Maltese National Day.

Mr. Pisani says he is pleased to be of service to his native country in Canada, and devotes a considerable amount of time to his work in helping Maltese Canadians with personal difficulties.

A close friend describes

him as "an excellent citizen of this community and a sort of a pillar to the whole Maltese community in Canada".

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John Pisani, Maltese Trade Commissioner and Honorary Consul for Canada, represents about 100,000 Maltese Canadians from his home in Whitby, and carries on diplomatic negotiations with Canadian industrialists interested in Malta. His work covers everything from representing Malta at government conferences in Canada and the United States, to acting as a social worker and counsellor for Maltese immigrants who need assistance. He has been trade commissioner since 1972 and is thinking of seeking a full-time career in the foreign service.

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