John Karkoulis came to Kingston in 1953 to join his older brother George and his younger brother Peter who were already living in the small Canadian city. He arrived in March and was shocked by the snow blanketing the city - when he left Greece, it was sunny and 25 degrees. His first impression upon arriving in Canada was, "where am I going?"

Initially, John intended to study medicine in Greece but was encouraged by his brothers to come to Kingston and enrol at Queen's University. However, upon arriving in Canada, John decided to work with his brothers and the three young men opened a coffee shop on September 1,1953 called the "Lunch Bar" - also known as the GJP (George, John, Peter). Located at 398 Princess Street, the restaurant became a popular and successful business, catering to the Kingston community as well as many Queen's students - many of whom have still have fond memories of the restaurant more than 60 years later.

Overall, John felt that Canadians were very welcoming of the Greeks. While there were no overtly negative expressions, John did feel that some Canadians believed they were superior to the immigrant communities. For example, on one occasion when John was speaking Greek behind the counter of his restaurant, a customer told him he needed to speak English in this country.

Over time, John's English improved and he came to believe that Canada is a great country. Eventually, John brought his parents to his adopted country and, along with his brothers, became a successful entrepreneur. In 1969, the three brothers purchased the La Salle Motel - now known as the Travelodge Hotel - home to the acclaimed Cavelier Dining Room.

In 1963, John travelled back to Greece where he met and married his wife, Maria. They have three children, all of whom completed university - including graduate and post-graduate studies, and two grandchildren. They spend several months each year in Greece enjoying their ocean-front home and visiting with friends and family and still visit the small villages in which they were each raised.

John arrived in Kingston along with many other Greeks during a second wave of migration. There were already 15 to 20 "old families" in Kingston from before the Second World War but there was no official Greek community. As more Greeks arrived in Kingston and sought to become a part of a community, half would attend services run by a Greek priest from Watertown, NY and the other half would go to services held by an Ottawa priest. The community was split with each side at odds with the other. Clearly, something needed to change.

With the assistance of the Archbishop Athenagoras, John was involved with establishing the official Greek community in Kingston in the early 1960s. Along with other members of the new community, John worked to purchase and renovate the Greek Orthodox Church at 121 Johnson Street, importing sacred ceremonial objects from Athens to ensure authenticity.

More than six decades later, John is proud of his adopted city and the Greek community he helped found. Although he left Greece 66 years ago, he participated in creating a community that honours and celebrates his beloved homeland.