

For Immediate Release

Drake International Mourns the Passing of Founder Bill Pollock

The Winnipeg-born entrepreneur who pioneered an industry, championed opportunity and spent 75 years making the world a better place

Toronto, Canada, July 9, 2026 —

Bill Pollock, founder of Drake International, passed away July 7, 2026 in Monaco at the age of 97. A humble and private person, Bill's insatiable curiosity and global mindset was a recipe for success. Over 75 years, he co-founded an industry, created tens of millions of jobs, championed women in the workforce from the very beginning, and built a global enterprise now operating in 14 countries with partner relationships across 128 more — all starting with a conviction that meaningful work changes lives.

Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1928, the youngest of nine children of Austrian and Polish immigrants, Bill embodied the belief that opportunity, when given, multiplies. A scholarship to the University of Manitoba changed the course of his life. Decades later, he established the Drake Centre at the Asper School of Business to ensure countless others would be given that same chance. Through Drake International, he created jobs, expanded industries and generated economic progress across generations.

He didn't only build a company — he built for what comes next.

A Pioneer in Industry, Technology and Inclusion

Together with Drake International co-founder Jim Shore, Bill identified a gap in how businesses managed fluctuating workloads and launched Office Overload in Winnipeg — pioneering what would become the modern staffing industry. Drake International was born from that insight in 1951 and has since grown into a worldwide provider of staffing and recruitment, certification and assessment, health and wellbeing, and business-process outsourcing services.

Long before “digital transformation” entered everyday business language, Bill was investing in technologies that connected people across borders, among them PictureTalk, a pre-Zoom video platform, and The Coordinator, one of the first global business email systems. In the 1960s, he personally delivered a speech to Pope Paul VI introducing the theme “One Planet, One People, One Purpose,” a belief that guided him throughout his life. As an early member of the Young Presidents' Organization, he helped expand its reach from North America to Europe, the United Kingdom, Australia, Asia and beyond.

And decades before diversity became a business imperative, Bill actively championed women for leadership roles. Today, nearly 80 per cent of Drake International's global leadership team is comprised of women — a lasting reflection of his conviction that leadership should always be earned through talent, character and capability.

Quotes

“Bill saw potential in people before they saw it in themselves — and then he devoted himself to making sure they had every reason to prove him right. He led with high expectations and lifted people to achieve outcomes they didn’t even know were possible. I feel privileged and grateful to have spent 33 years being influenced, taught and led by him.”

— Karen Meredith, Global CEO and Trustee, Drake International

“He built Drake International to outlast any one person — including himself. It was the plan, pursued with the same clarity and discipline he brought to everything he created. The strength of this organization today is Bill’s greatest achievement.”

— Glenn Agro, Chair, Drake International Board of Trustees

A Thoughtful Succession

In July 2024, Bill transitioned to the role of Chairman Emeritus, with Karen Meredith assuming leadership of Drake International reporting to an independent Board of Trustees. In 2023, he wrote personally to all Drake International employees reaffirming his commitment to their future, on his own terms, in his own time: “I am working with my team to advance my legacy while ensuring your and Drake International’s well-being and continued success for years to come.”

When asked how he wished to be remembered, his answer was simple: “For making it a better world.”

His friends, colleagues and the tens of millions of lives touched through Drake International remain his enduring legacy.

About Drake International

Drake International is a global talent management and workforce advisory partner with operations in 14 countries with a partner network spanning 128 more. Founded in Winnipeg in 1951, Drake supports organizations across the full talent lifecycle through Workforce Solutions (flexible staffing, permanent recruitment, on-site services), Certification, Assessment and Training, Health and Wellbeing, HR Advisory, and Drake Ventures. www.drakeinternational.com

Media Contacts: Louanne Buckley | louanne.buckley@drakeintl.com and Elizabeth Ortega | eco@ecostrats.com