

Reflections on the Ugandan Asian refugee experience: How local communities responded and the resulting policy impact

Pathways to Prosperity

December 1&2 2016

Mike Molloy, CIHS

Canadian Immigration Policy Context 1972

- ❑ **1952 Act: no mention of refugees**
- ❑ **1962: Most racial barriers dropped**
- ❑ **1967: Point System**
- ❑ **Universality**
- ❑ **Network- Area Offices – 100countries**



Canadian Refugee Policy Context 1972

- **1969 ratified UN Refugee Convention + 1967 Protocol**

 - **Sep. 1970 Cabinet sets refugee selection rules**
 - **Convention Definition**
 - **Point system and + discretion**
 - **Oppressed Minority Policy**
-

Asian Community in Uganda

60,000-80,000

- Gujarati Hindus 50%
- Ismaili Muslims 30%
- Sikhs, Goans, Punjabi Hindus, Ithnasharis, Bohras, Parsis
- Businesses 80%
- Industry 50%
- Professionals 50%

Resentment & Pressure

African Perception

- ❑ **Wealthy**
- ❑ **Aloof**
- ❑ **Exploitative**

Consequences

- ❑ **Kenya 1968:
15,000**
- ❑ **Tanzania
1970s:
20,000**

Idi Amin Dada Takes Power

**His Excellency
President for Life, Field
Marshal Al Hadji Doctor
Idi Amin, VC, DSO, MC,
Lord of All the Beasts of
the Earth and Fishes of
the Sea, and Conqueror
of the British Empire in
Africa in General and
Uganda in Particular**



Expulsion Order

August 4, 1972

- **“I want the economy to be in the hands of Ugandan citizens, especially black Ugandans. I want you troops to help me protect the country from saboteurs.”**

-The Times 4 Aug 72

**Uganda says no room
for 40,000 Asians
with British passports**

**ALL SHOPS
OWNED BY
ALIENS TO
BE SOLD**

CABINET

UNITED KINGDOM PASSPORT HOLDERS IN UGANDA

Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Chancellor of the Exchequer

British Reaction

1. After discussion with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer I have had the attached memorandum prepared in order to focus for my colleagues the principal aspects of the situation which confronts us and the main decisions which we have to take. It falls into the following broad sections:-

a. Accept legal obligations but...

b. The steps which we have taken, and are taking, to make it more manageable, both by concerted international action (including an effort to arrange for the resettlement of many of the Asians in other countries) and by direct pressure on President Amin himself.

c. Racial tensions

c. The possibility of domestic, which will confront us if our efforts under b. have only limited success and we are compelled to accept a large number of Ugandan Asians in this country.

d. The implications of such a decision in the longer term, which may require us to rethink the whole of our immigration policy.

2. Seek assistance from other countries

2. The memorandum also indicates the points at which we should liaise at the appropriate points. I would ask my colleagues, in considering them, to bear in mind that we are dealing with a man, in the person of President Amin, who is fundamentally irrational and unreliable. We cannot tell how he will react if he thinks that we are provoking him too far; and here it is relevant to remember that we have substantial interests in Uganda and that some 7,000 British subjects ("belongers") are at present in that country. But considerations of this kind, which might

Canadian Cabinet Decision

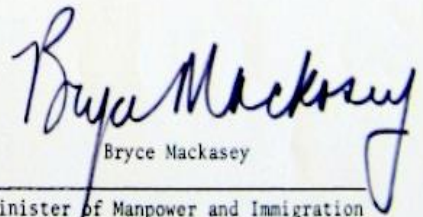
24 Aug 72

Context

- Election
- High unemployment
- Immigration scandals

Decision

- Team sent to quickly process up to 3000 applicants who meet normal requirements
- Invoke Oppressed Minority Policy if needed



Bryce Mackasey
Minister of Manpower and Immigration

PM Sets the Tone

“...we are prepared to offer an honourable place in Canadian life to those Ugandan Asians who come to Canada...I am sure that [they] will, by their abilities and industry, make an... important contribution to Canadian society.”



**Pierre Elliot
Trudeau**

Media Reaction

Ottawa says no limit to be set on Asians

From Associated Press, Reuters and The New York Times

OTTAWA — The first plane-load of about 145 expelled Ugandan Asians is expected to Montreal on or about Sept. 24 and an Immigration Department spokesman said yesterday there will not be a limit to the number Canada will accept.

An emergency Canadian im-

if they are not out of the country by Nov. 8.

Every morning, thousands of Asians are lined up outside the Canadian office in Kampala waiting to be processed, the spokesman said.

Although travel arrangements have not been completed, the Asians are expected to fly to Canada on commercial jets chartered by

Number not certain

Canada will admit Asians being ousted by Uganda

By TERRANCE WILLS
Globe and Mail Reporter

holding British passports have been ordered to leave Uganda

processing of applications from those Asians who apply to come to Canada.

mind, the Minister of Manpower and Immigration has been authorized to initiate a

Citizen Cartoon

Sep. 1972

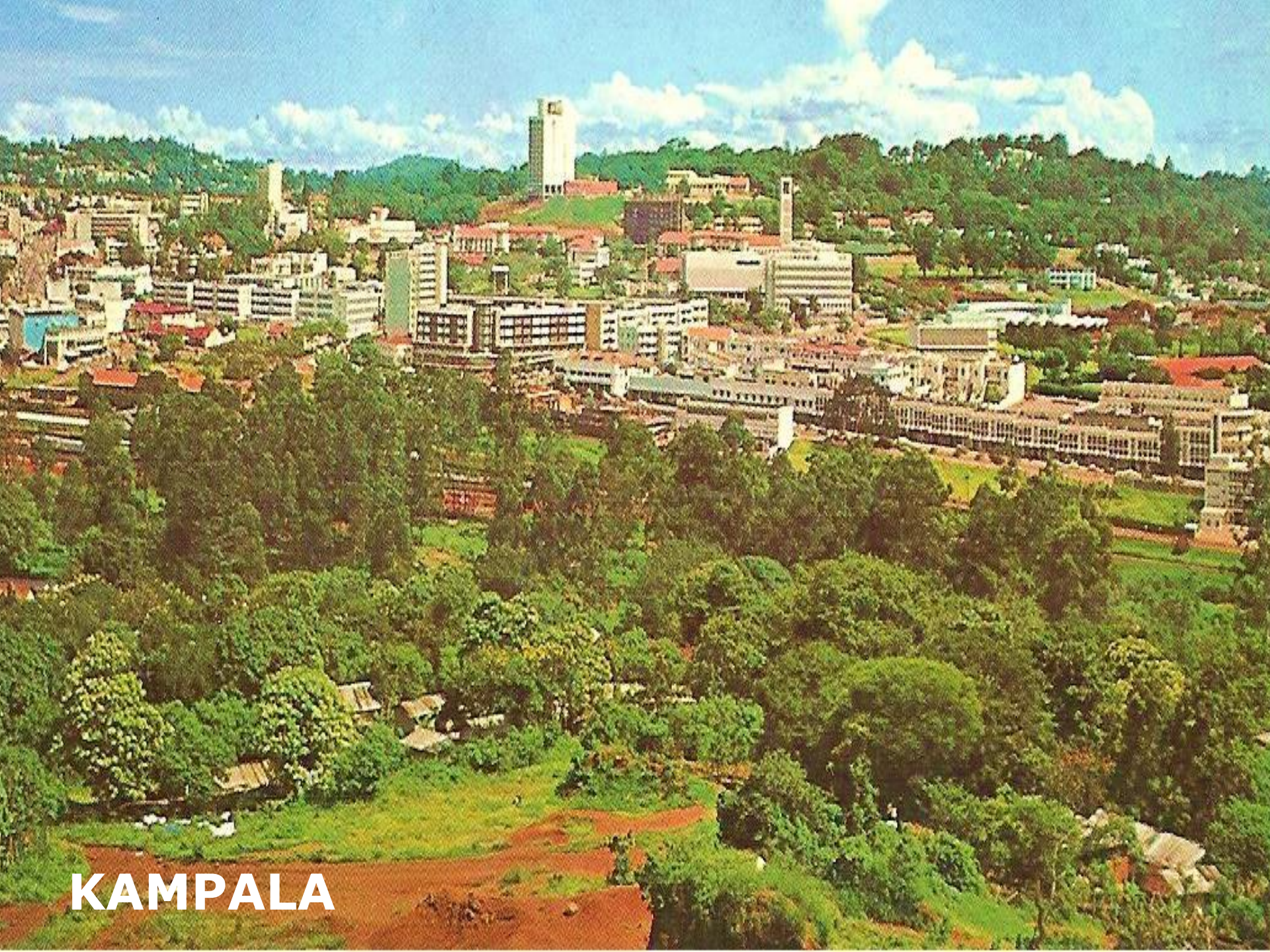
**You won't
find any job
discrimination
in Canada
because of
racism, colour
or religion.
Mind you, you
won't find any
job either.**



Beirut Marching Orders

to Roger Saint-Vincent:

Your mission: proceed to Kampala... process without numerical limitations... Asians who meet the Immigration selection criteria, bearing in mind their particular plight and facilitate their departure for Canada.



KAMPALA

Beirut to Kampala



- **Saint-Vincent arrives 31 August**
- **No office or equipment**
- **Start 6 Sep.**

Opening Day: 6 Sept



- ❑ 10 block line
- ❑ Zavie loses shirt
- ❑ "Smiling girls"
- ❑ 2588/7764, 57 interviews

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGE

60 day limit

No time for mail

McMaster's numbering machine

Uganda Argus Advert.

CANADA

CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION
IMMIGRATION SERVICE

INTERVIEWS

I.P.S. BUILDING, KAMPALA

Holder of the following reference numbers are invited to appear for Interview Wednesday,

Sept. 13, 8:30 to 12:00 and 2:00 to 4:00.

8.30 to 10.30	10.30 to 12.00	2.00 to 3.00	3.00 to 4.00
174			
248	398	530	622
290	409	531	623
295	410	539	624
304	411	544	625
		550	627
305	412	551	631
306	413	567	635
307	426	568	641
324	428	577	642
329	430	579	646
337	450	580	649
339	458	586	669
341	462	587	670
343	468	601	676
350	505	610	689
364	506	615	693
367	507		694
368	510		
378	511		
382	517		
397	523		

Only those heads of family or single persons whose REFERENCE NUMBERS appear above will be interviewed. All other holders of reference numbers will be invited through subsequent newspaper notices or contacted by mail. If you hold a reference number please refrain from contacting this office unless invited to do so.



MEDICAL DELAYS

- ❑ **DND Med Techs
7 days late**
- ❑ **Technical
problems**
- ❑ **No medical
exams w/o test
results**

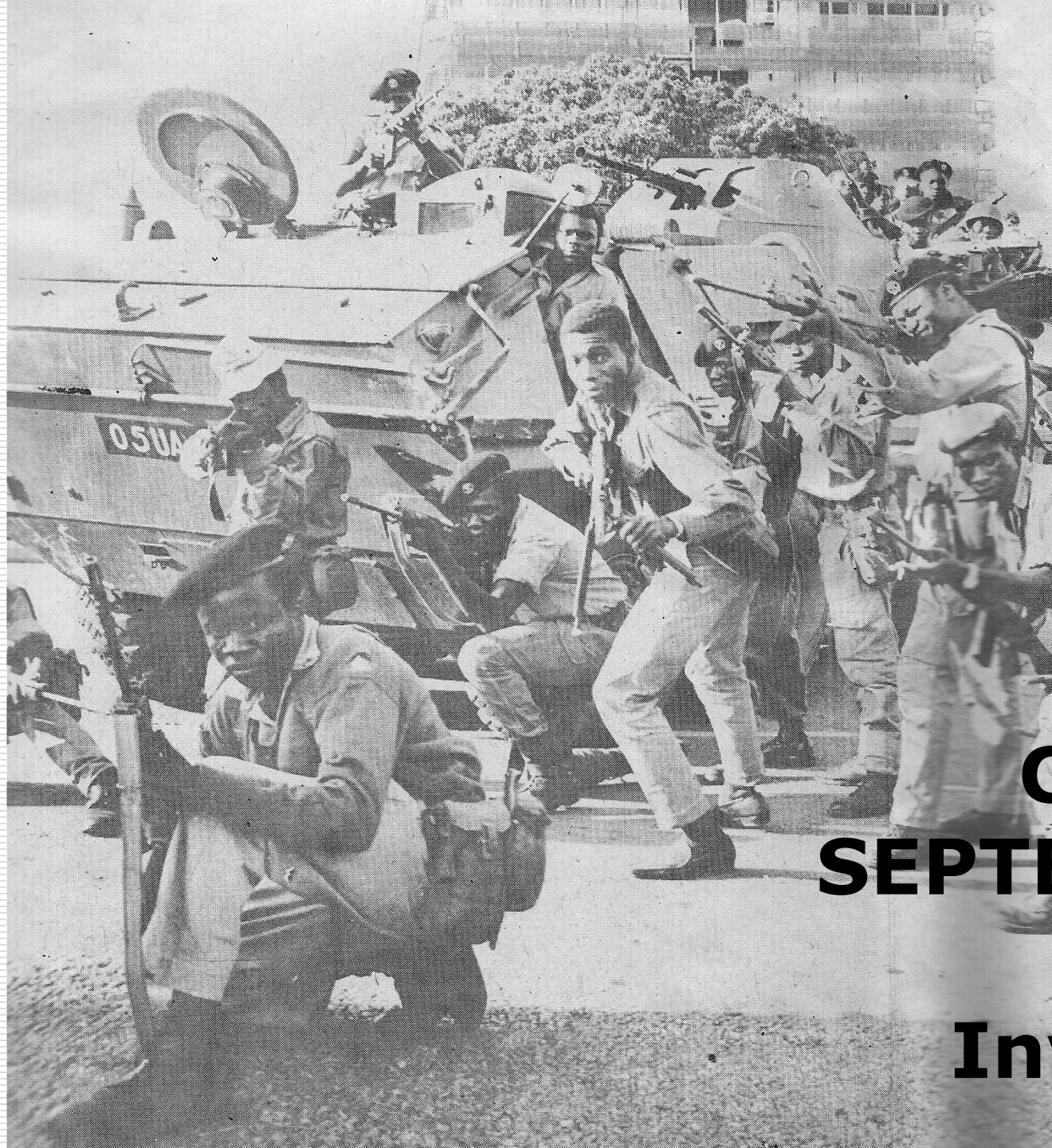


13 September 1972 Cabinet

Mackasey's Big Decision

**Humanitarian,
Process all
you can**





CRISIS
SEPTEMBER
18th
Invasion

Turning the Corner: first weekend October

Sami Marodali
1st visa



- ❑ **Medical team catches up**
- ❑ **Reinforcements**
- ❑ **Weekend blitz**
- ❑ **Visa - Travel Unit**



The Airlift

- **27 Sep**
 - **Safe departure**
 - **30 hours**
-

CFB Longue Pointe: Operation UGX



CURRY



COTS



COPS

Mackasey's

Presents

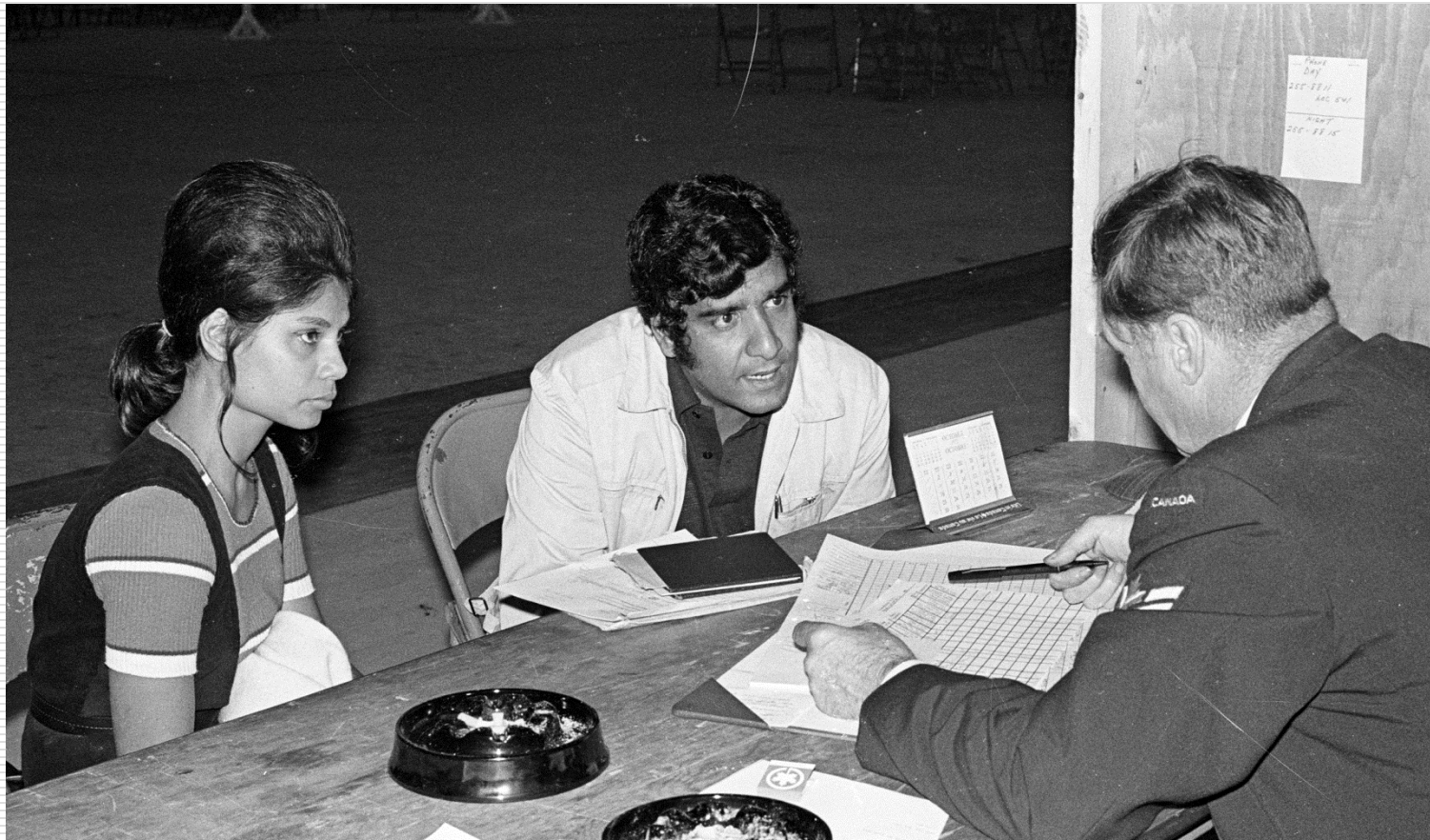


COATS



The Popat Family of
Halifax

and COUNSELLING



Community Involvement

□ **Gov. calls for Welcoming Committees**

- Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor, Winnipeg Regina, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver
- Plus eg. London, Kitchener, Guelph, Cambridge and Sarnia
{jelly salads, yogurt, rice pudding, rice and baked beans}

□ **Sec. of State – core funding**

□ **Examples**

Hamilton Ugandan Asian Committee

Society for Hamilton Area International Response (SHAIR)

Quebec Committee for the Adaptation and Integration of Ugandans,

Uganda Assistance Committee of London

Canada Manpower Centre and Welcoming Committees

CMCs

- reception
- settlement allowances,
- counselling,
- temp.
- accommodation,
- job placement

Committees

recruit volunteers, welcome; permanent accommodation; extra clothing, furniture; local transport, appointments, familiarization, house hunting) babysitting

Orientation/counselling: local geography, job search, resumes, labour laws, UEI, pension and health care insurance systems, finance(credit), income tax.

Publicity

UGX – The Final Tally

8 November

- ❑ **31 flights**
- ❑ **4351 pax / 69 babies**
- ❑ **6,175 visas**
- ❑ **2000 more in 1973**



The Policy Legacy

- ❑ **Refugees -1976 Immigration Act**
- ❑ **Oppressed Minority >Designated Classes**
- ❑ **Flexible selection criteria for refugees**
- ❑ **Private sponsorship**
- ❑ **WUSC Refugee Student Program**
- ❑ **Lessons for Indochina**

Rapid Integration

-  **Fluent English**
-  **Education/Skills/Entrepreneurial**
-  **Less trauma than many refugees**
-  **Strong leadership**
-  **Strong families**
-  **Transplanted institutions**
-  **Cohesive communities**
-  **Committees & CMCs Indian Community**

THE CANADIAN
IMMIGRATION
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY



cihs-shic.ca

LA SOCIÉTÉ
HISTORIQUE DE
L'IMMIGRATION
CANADIENNE

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