

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

INTERCEDE for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers

April 2006

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



CAMPAIGN CALLS ON MINISTER TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS OF NON-STATUS

By Amy Casipullai

Toronto, March 21, 2006 - The STATUS Campaign calls on the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to immediately address the problem facing non-status immigrants in Canada.

"The presence of non-status immigrants in Canada is a problem that we have created through our unfair, elitist and inequitable immigration laws. We want this government to give it a high priority by looking at a regularization program" said Debbie Douglas, Executive Director of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI).

Monte Solberg, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, said in Toronto yesterday that the situation of undocumented workers has low priority in his government. The comment has drawn outrage among community organizations and groups that assist non-status immigrants with trying to obtain immigration status and deal with day-to-day issues such as fair wages and safe working conditions.

"If Minister Solberg is serious about his commitment to Canada's humanitarian tradition in its treatment of immigrants and refugees, the least he can do is look for ways to allow the non-status immigrants to stay in Canada. It is hypocritical that Canada benefits from the labour of these immigrants while denying them the basic rights afforded to every resident," said Avvy Go, Clinic Director of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic.

Immigrant and refugee advocates are also outraged that immigration authorities have placed a priority on deporting non-status immigrants, rather than processing the thousands of family class immigration applications that are backlogged and the large number of privately sponsored refugee applications that are delayed.

The Status Campaign calls on Minister Solberg to uphold the promise made by the Conservative Party while it was still in opposition to implement the Refugee Appeals Division as provided in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA). STATUS also calls on the Minister to give serious consideration to the proposal for regularization that STATUS has submitted, among others, in order to end the inhumane conditions that non-status immigrants are living under.

(Contact: Amy Casipullai, Tel: 416-322-4950 x 239)

8th INTERCEDE Domestic Workers and Caregivers Conference

FROM VICTIMIZATION TO EMPOWERMENT

Friday - Sunday, May 5 to May 7, 2006

Inviting workers in the Live-in Caregiver Program employed in Ontario and other Cities

Call now 416-483-4554 ext 21

*All Domestic/Caregiver workers,
Newcomers and those on Temporary Work Permit
are welcome to attend*

**INTERCEDE MEETING
Every First Sunday of the Month**

(if holiday, meeting is on the second Sunday)

Apply for/renew your membership - \$10.

**INTERCEDE
FREE Income Tax Clinic**

Sunday, April 2, 2006, 1 - 5 p.m.
at INTERCEDE' Office, 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Ste 405
(East of Yonge, West of Mt. Pleasant)

Coco's Corner**REFLECTIONS ON YEAR 22**

March is a very memorable month for me because it marks 22 years of INTERCEDE services to caregivers, domestic workers, newcomers and their families. Sometimes I find it hard to believe that it's been that long and that I have been part of it.

My own day-to-day activities during those years involve counseling and encouraging hundreds of caregivers/domestic workers to be assertive of their rights and to access the resources which will help improve their life situations as migrant workers in Canada.

I feel satisfied when I reminisce over the hardship and sacrifices caregivers have gone through as they faced complicated problems in their relationship with employers, how they learned to assert their employment rights, or how they overcame feelings of isolation and loneliness while living far from their families.

In their dealings with Immigration as LCP participants, caregivers have always faced a problem of delays: delay in the Confirmation of Offer of Employment of a prospective employer; delay in obtaining an Employment Authorization (work permit); delay in processing and approving Permanent Residence or landed status; delay in waylaid or even lost communication due to address-change etc. These delays, whether unintentional or "beyond one's control" or because of inefficiency or indifference – always cause undue suffering, anxiety and stress and have a huge impact not only on the LCP workers but also on their families.

INTERCEDE clients remain so for years, returning regularly to share good news such as obtaining permanent residence or citizenship, successfully reunifying with family members, passing licensure exams, even getting married!. Much later on, INTERCEDE staff are happy enough to counsel and give advice related to issues other than immigration or labour protection. They include new business ventures, referencing for a new employer, credit advice, etc. Some come back just to share their vacation travel stories and some even come back for assistance in applying for Canada Pension because they are already about to retire!

INTERCEDE is considered by many women as "rescuer" and "refuge of last resort" and as a constant supporter in the journey towards a secure life many of them now enjoy.. In return, however, INTERCEDE would not have been able to accomplish its tasks without the constancy and support of members and Board directors, clients, friends, government funders, and the huge network of community-based organizations in the city and elsewhere.

**INTERCEDE*****Get-Together with Lesbians and Friends***

Date: April 21, 2006, Friday

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Place: INTERCEDE office

234 Eglinton Ave. E., Ste. 405

For information, please call Coco at 416-483-4554 ext. 23 or Genie at ext. 21

LETTERS FROM FRIENDS**From Patricia of St. Catherine's:**

I still remember when I first came to INTERCEDE's office when you were on College Street and couldn't find the elevator so I climbed the stairs and had to catch my breath when I got there. It was the Monday of the last week of March 1984!

I entered a very small cubicle with only one telephone and some mismatch chairs. It was a relief though when I was greeted by one of the counselors who spoke in Pilipino. Without bothering to engage in any more pleasantries, I immediately showed the refusal letter that I received from Immigration.. My application for Permanent Residence under the then FDM (Foreign Domestic Worker's Program) had been denied. The reasons? When I was interviewed after doing two years of live-in work, I could show a saving of only over two hundred dollars in my bank account; I was not able to show any certification of volunteer work; and I had not "upgraded" any "skills" which in my case would be accounting. At the time (and until the establishment of the LCP in 1992), these were among the "evidences" Immigration used to look for before we would be approved for permanent residence under the FDM.

My counselor took all the information I gave then drafted a letter addressed to the Immigration Office at Bloor Street, requesting for a re-consideration of my application. It listed the reasons why I was not able to comply with the requirements of and described some of my professional credentials (I still have the copy of the letter). It was May 1984 when I was called back for another personal interview by CIC officer named Walter Bye. This time the officer was more friendly - maybe because Ms. Coco Tarape-Diaz was with me, I was given a reconsideration and my permanent residence processed and later approved.

I am very thankful to INTERCEDE. My husband and children are looking forward to visiting your office again soon. In addition, almost all of my friends and relatives who arrived in Canada under the FDM or later the Live-In Caregiver Program or under Family Class have availed of INTERCEDE counseling and assistance.

22 years of service is very remarkable, keep up the good work and more power!

From Beatrice

INTERCEDE not exclusively for caregivers and domestic workers.

My sister and her two children were newcomers in Canada three years ago . She came as an independent immigrant but after couple of months she got sick and needed the assistance and comfort of one of her siblings. Among our family members, I was the one who volunteered to come to Canada to take care of her and her children.

I was given a visitor's visa to Canada that needed to be renewed before the end of six months. It was my sister who contacted your office to assist me in extending my visa. Unfortunately, my sister was not able to recover and she passed away leaving her two children in my care and custody. They had to depend on me but did not want to leave Canada and go back to the Philippines with me. I came back to INTERCEDE's office to discuss what my options were and to help me decide what to do.

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The counselor who met with me was very sympathetic and understanding. She shared ideas and offered some suggestions. Using her knowledge and experience she assisted me in filing an application for Permanent Residence under Humanitarian and Compassionate Consideration.. Friends and relatives discouraged me saying my chances were very slim. While I agreed with them, I still went ahead with my application – anyway I was getting free advice and not losing any money.

Yes, I obtained approval for Permanent Residence and this without having to go to other places where I would have paid several thousands of dollars for the same service that INTERCEDE gave for free with a big smiles and plenty of congratulations.

On behalf of my late sister and her two young children who now fondly call their “second mother” - Thank you very much for all your help!

From Fernand

I was recovering from a long lingering sickness and depression because I could not find work when one day at a church service I heard that a staff member of INTERCEDE would be the resource speaker in a meeting that afternoon . During her talk she gave information about Immigration processes including family sponsorships.

The following week I called for an appointment hoping to get assistance to bring my wife and son to Canada. After assessing my situation I received guidance in prioritizing the steps I should take. Part of this was to get well physically and mentally. After a couple of months I was advised to participate in a Job Search Workshop where I learned to polish my resume-writing and to strategize where and how to get employment.

For several visits my counselor patiently followed my progress until I finally found a job. After being informed that I had met the requirements for sponsorship, my INTERCEDE counselor again helped me in filling application forms and ensuring this was done properly with all the necessary supporting documents.

Four months ago my wife and son arrived to join me in Canada. I am often approached by friends who ask me where I got help and how much I spent to get it. I tell everyone I got the help I needed for FREE . I did not spend a single cent, I just called INTERCEDE. Thank you so much.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

There are 27 members and friends joined INTERCEDE breakfast to celebrate International Women’s Day on March 11, 2006. The women enjoyed their breakfast while catching-up with friends who had been very busy with their lives and followed by walking down Bloor St. West with personally last minute made banners in hand to OISE Bldg. and listened to the speakers in the rally which was followed by march from OISE Bldg. to Ryerson University .

It was a very beautiful day that made the march more fun while joining the chant down the street and unexpectedly meet long lost friends. Friends and members are looking forward for next year’s International Women’s Day. We would like to thank everyone in the march and we hope to see you all again next year to celebrate ourselves. Hurray! More Equity to Us Women!

TRIP TO CASINO RAMA

When : Saturday, April 15, 2006
 Assembly time: 8:30 am
 Departure Time: 9:00 am
 Meeting Place : York Mills Subway Station
 (at Shell Gas Stn., Southeast of Yonge)
 Toronto Arrival Time : 6:00 p.m.

**FREE Buffet Meal Voucher from Casino Rama
 FOR ONLY \$10**

To register, please call Genie at 416-483-4554 ext. 21

NOTE:

For those who don't have the Casino Rama Players card bring your passport or driving license to be able to claim the Buffet Meal vouchers at the Casino. Under 19 years old not allowed.

If you are a Caregiver or a domestic worker and are interested in attending a **Caribbean Connection Meeting** please call Bernice Small at (416) 483-4554 ext 22.

**Next Meeting: Saturday, April 22, 2006, 2— 4 p.m.
 at INTERCEDE’s office, 234 Eglinton Ave. E. Ste. 405,**

FREE Income Tax Clinic

Sunday, April 2, 2006, 1:00—5:00 p.m.
 INTERCEDE’s Office, 234 Eglinton Ave. E, Ste. 405

*This is a volunteer offering of the
 Association of Filipino – Canadian Accountants (AFCA)*

Please bring these supporting documents:

1. Income Tax Return Form
2. T-4 Slips from employer
3. All T-Slips received from other sources:
 - ◆ T2202/A – Tuition and Education Amount
 - ◆ T5 – Investment Income
4. Receipts
 - ◆ RRSP
 - ◆ Rent
 - ◆ Donations
 - ◆ Medical Expenses
 - ◆ Tuition Fees
 - ◆ Union Dues /Interest Expense on Student Loan
5. Information required:
 - ◆ Marital Status
 - ◆ SIN of taxpayer (and spouse, if here)
 - ◆ Date of birth
 - ◆ Name of dependents, including parents living with tax payer
 - ◆ Income of spouse
6. 2004 Notice of Assessment from Revenue Canada, or taxpayer 2004 Income Tax Return.

For more information, call Genie At 416-483-4554 ext. 21



A JSW success story

I HAVE LEARNED TO LIKE SNOW

By Bernadette Gapuz

My experience in Canada started with a sad impression. When I arrived under the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) in 2001, during the first few days of exploring the city of Toronto, I was disappointed to notice that the trees were gnarled and dried and bare of leaves. The sidewalks were filthy with mud as snow was melting away and there was scattered garbage on the sidewalks on what turned out to be garbage-collection day. Friends told me that it was almost the end of winter and the spring season was about to begin. Winter snow was disappearing and occasional showers and rain was replacing it. Well, these days I am much better accustomed to the change of seasons and I have also learned to like snow!

I worked as a Guidance Counselor and instructor in my country before I went to Hongkong and made my way to Canada. My long years of experience, knowledge and skills in teaching made me confident about my prospects here. I had so many plans and high expectations but the "greener pastures" I sought were not easy to find it turned out. My first job working for a family with five kids proved to be very challenging. Every day was a different adventure. While I managed to finish my contract with this family, I still had to file a labour claim against my employer, which I actually won.

While still under the Program working as a live-in caregiver, I managed to join the Job Search Workshop (JSW) training conducted by INTERCEDE. I learned a lot about how to write a proper resume and cover letter, how to prepare for an interview, how to do networking, and many more. I also attended INTERCEDE's Advocacy and Leadership Training series where I began to understand more about my rights as a live-in caregiver under the Ontario Employment Standard Act, about racism and women abuse and other issues. I later took part-time courses in school and volunteered at the Children's Aid Society.

All these activities were to prepare myself for life outside the LCP. Although I have not landed a job as a Guidance Counselor yet, I have been practicing my counseling skills at the Toronto Rape Crisis Center where I do on-line crisis counselling. During the day I work as a community support worker and during weeknights and weekends, I am a Personal Support Work instructor.

Perseverance and focus are my keywords and I invite everyone to share them. I am proud of my accomplishments so far and of having gone through the LCP and succeeding in obtaining the permanent resident status that I now enjoy.

FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP FOR CAREGIVERS & NEWCOMERS

WHEN: SUNDAY

April 2, 9, 23 & 30, 2006

May 13, 14, 27 & 28, 2006

June 4, 11, 18 & 25, 2006

TIME : 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

WHERE: KAPISANAN PHILIPPINE CENTRE

167 Augusta Ave.,

(West of Spadina, North of Dundas St. W.)

Please call (416)483-4554 ext. 30 or 21 to sign up.

Seating is limited.

Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada

INTERCEDE

INTERCEDE STAFF:

**Address: 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 405J
Toronto Ontario
M4P 1K5**

Regular Hours: Mon-Friday 9 am - 5 p.m.

Telephone: (416) 483-4554

Fax: (416) 483-9781

Toll-Free: 1-877-483-4554

E-mail: info@intercedetoronto.org

INTERCEDE STAFF:

Fely Villasin - Part - Time Executive Director

Jo Alcampo - Administrative Consultant

Columbia Diaz - Settlement Counsellor & Program Manager

Anita Fortunato - Settlement Counsellor

Bernice Small - Settlement Counsellor

Vicky Policarpio - JSW Facilitator

Genie Policarpio - Intake & Administrative Assistant

We wish to thank: Citizenship and Immigration Canada - ISAP and Job Search Program; the Municipality of Toronto CSP, and The Ontario Solicitor General's Office for their financial support.

 **Citizenship and Immigration Canada**  **Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada**



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