

# **DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS**

*monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights*

August 1991

## **Domestics Ask Human Rights Commission's Position On Live-in**

Catherine Frazee, Ontario's Chief Commissioner for Human Rights, told members of INTERCEDE at their July 7 meeting that she would look into the possibility of making a submission about the FDM live-in requirement to the federal government.

It was a promise that elicited applause from the more than 350 women present.

Domestic workers in the Foreign Domestic Movement program prefer to have a choice about their living arrangement rather than being required to live in the place of their work. INTERCEDE included this among its recommendations to Immigration's review of the FDM, citing abuses and difficulties domestics experience as a result of the live-in requirement.

In the meeting, Frazee heard domestic workers cite examples of these difficulties: one was prohibited from hanging a cross and displaying religious images in her room; some others complained of not being able to cook and eat their ethnic dishes.

Some INTERCEDE clients have shared their experiences of being sexually harassed by their male employers but did not want to lodge any formal complaints. There have been cases of rape reported to INTERCEDE but none so far have been brought to court because the workers prefer to just leave rather than undergo the hassle of investigations and court proceedings. (cont'd on p.2)

## **MOBILE HEALTH CLINIC To Accompany Monthly Meetings**

During the Aug 11 meeting-picnic, Women's Health in Women's Hands, a community-based health care centre for women, INTERCEDE and the Immigrant Women's Health Centre will launch a joint program offering health care services to domestic workers in Metro Toronto.

Health care services, including those of a physician and counsellors, will be provided through the Mobile Health Unit of Immigrant Women's Health Centre during INTERCEDE's monthly meetings.

The monthly mobile health clinic is a joint programme initiated and funded by Women's Health in Women's Hands in response to domestic workers' need for health services as reported in "The Bare Essentials", a needs assessment of domestic workers recently completed by INTERCEDE.

Through this program, domestic workers will be able to receive well-woman physical exams, counselling on many issues including stress, birth control, sexual harassment and assault. They will also receive health-related information and referrals.

In the July meeting, members queued up to take a look at the mobile clinic van parked outside Cecil Community Centre after an orientation led by Simone Hammond and Anda Wong of Immigrant Women's Health Centre.

(cont'd on p.2)

***Come to INTERCEDE's monthly meeting-PICNIC on Sunday, August 11, 1991 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at HIGH PARK (get off at High Park Subway then look for INTERCEDE's banner near corner of Bloor and Parkside). Bring your lunch and your friends.***

***The Mobile Health Unit will be open for service. CLASP Legal Clinic will be available 1-3 pm. New members may apply from 1:00 to 2:30 pm.***

**DOMESTICS ASK** (cont'd from p 1)

Most domestic workers admit they would prefer to live-in their workplace because they can't afford the high cost of rent and transportation, but only if they are comfortable and their hours are not abused. But even workers who now like their live-in arrangement would still insist on their right of choice, as adult women, to live in or out.

Frazeo assured her audience that the Human Rights Commission would welcome human rights-related complaints. "It is important to be able to say 'No'", she said, if a female worker is being harassed. Collect your evidence, write what happened and how you felt, tell someone, tell INTERCEDE, file a complaint with the Commission - these were steps Frazeo suggested to those who experience sexual harassment.

**MOBILE HEALTH CLINIC** (cont'd from p 1)

The mobile health clinic will be in operation except during the coldest months of winter. The health programme is a one-year commitment of Women's Health in Women's Hands and Immigrant Women's Health Centre. INTERCEDE hopes to make it a permanent feature of its monthly meetings just as the CLASP legal clinic is now. This will depend on future financial support.

**ANNOUNCEMENT:**  
**HEALTH ORIENTATION IN CHINESE**  
**Sunday, August 11, 1991**  
**at High Park (nr Bloor & Parkside)**  
**1:00 - 2:00 pm with Anda Wong of**  
**Immigrant Women's Health Centre**

**ANNOUNCEMENT TO ALL MEMBERS AND FRIENDS**  
**THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING &**  
**ELECTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
*will be held on*  
**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1991**  
**2 pm to 5 pm, Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St., Toronto**

<b>2 - 3 pm</b>	<b>Business Meeting and Election</b>
<b>3 - 4 pm</b>	<b>Program</b>
<b>4 - 5 pm</b>	<b>Refreshments</b>

**ALL WHO HAVE VALID INTERCEDE MEMBERSHIP AT JUNE 1991**  
**ARE QUALIFIED TO VOTE.**

We wish to thank the Employment and Immigration Canada (Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program); Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Women's Program); Ontario Ministry of Citizenship; Ontario Women's Directorate; the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Community and Social Services); and the City of Toronto Grants Review Board for their continuing support.

**RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION:**

**NEW SUBSCRIPTION:**  **CHANGE OF ADDRESS:**

**MAIL TO:** INTERCEDE, 489 College St., Suite 402, Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A5

Please send DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS to:

MEMBER ID NUMBER: .....NAME: .....

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**YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES:**

Intercede Members:	FREE	Non-member Domestic	\$ 5.00
Non-Profit Organizations	FREE	Others	\$10.00

## Domestic Worker Refused UI Because Of FDM Condition

A domestic worker who was refused entitlement to benefits is now appealing for her right to unemployment insurance that she has paid into since she first worked under the FDM in 1988.

An agent of Canada Employment Centre (CEC) stated that since the domestic's employment authorization restricts her employment to only one employer, her "availability for work is considered to be too restricted", and, therefore, payment of unemployment benefits can't be made.

According to the CEC agent, under paragraph 14(a) and Section 23 of the UI Act, a claimant of unemployment benefits "must prove he or she is capable of and available for work and unable to obtain suitable employment for every working day he or she claims benefit".

Under the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program, domestics are restricted to working only with the employer specified in their employment authorization or work permit. If they change employers, they must get a new employment authorization that specifies the name of the new employer.

The reason given for refusing unemployment benefits to this domestic worker would therefore apply to all domestic workers under the FDM. It seems that while all domestic workers are deducted for UIC, they have no right to the unemployment benefits they pay for.

The domestic worker has written back appealing for reconsideration of her request for benefits saying that the reason for the refusal is "unfair and inconsiderate".

She had left her employer because the latter wanted her to work for an additional employer which would have been a violation of the FDM. She had also already applied for and received an open employment authorization. While she is actively searching for a new job, she wants to get unemployment benefits. After 12 weeks of waiting she was refused.

"I was tempted to go on welfare but I told myself no, because it's going to create a bad impression on my status", she wrote adding "I have ambition and I believe in being self-sufficient...everyday I'm out looking for jobs or on the phone..making appointment for interviews."

"After 12 weeks of long waiting and suffering...I've suffered too long, used up every penny in the bank, borrowed money from people, squatted in people's homes", she lamented. "The UI money is not 100 per cent what I earned but at least it would have done some good to help me fill a few gaps until I find a job. All my bills are in delay, drugs are costing me"... "what am I going to do now after I've waited so long?"

INTERCEDE has written in support of the worker's plea for reconsideration and is now waiting for CEC's response.

### Needs Expressed Are "BARE ESSENTIALS"

After a series of meetings and workshops, domestic workers who participated in INTERCEDE's needs assessment project will now see in print what they expressed in their own words.

"The Bare Essentials" reflect the most basic wants of domestic workers in matters of work, housing, health and social life. This project was prepared by Karen Serwonka with the help of advisers from the INTERCEDE board and community volunteers.

Participants in the assessment felt positive about the process of expressing what they need and how their needs can be met.

"I learned a lot, that I'm not alone and at least I can voice out what's on my mind," said one participant.

Another felt "good because those who are concerned...will understand my situation". They all hope their recommendations will be followed.

"The Bare Essentials" will serve as a guide for INTERCEDE policies and programs in future.

The monthly Health Mobile Unit, for example, is an outcome of this project.

# Important for Domestic Workers who have completed two years

If you have completed your two years under the Foreign Domestic Movement program, send your application for permanent residence even if you don't have your police clearances yet.

This is an advice from Wilma Jenkins, Acting Manager of CIC at 4900 Yonge, to avoid longer delays in processing your application.

You should try to obtain your police clearances in the course of the processing period which should normally take one year. You are required to supply police clearances from countries where you resided during the past ten years.

INTERCEDE advises that you conduct your inquiries by letter instead of spending unreasonable amounts of money on long distance calls. Send your letter about police clearance to the consulates (in Canada) of the countries concerned. When you get any written response to your request, send a copy to CIC at 4900 Yonge (where you sent your application for permanent residence), making sure you also write your Immigration file number or your birthdate.

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Canada Immigration Centre	973-4444
Educ & Skills Training Ctr, Labour Council	971-5893
Employment Standards Enforcement	326-7160
Immigrant Women's Health Centre	367-1388
Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre	656-8933
OHIP	Toronto 482-1111
	Scarborough 1-800-263-3814
	Mississauga 275-2730
Ontario Human Rights Commission	326-9511
Revenue Canada (Taxation)	869-1500
Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (24-hour line)	597-8808
Unemployment Insurance	730-1211
EMERGENCY HOUSING	
Nellie's Hostel	461-1084
Evangeline's	762-9636

## LEGAL SERVICES

Parkdale Community Legal Services	531-2411
CLASP (Osgoode Law School) Legal Clinic	736-5029
Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Serv.	363-0304
Metro Tor. Chinese & SE Asian Legal Clinic	971-9674
Toronto Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic	971-8832

## INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place:	489 College St., Suite 402, Toronto, Ont
Time:	Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Telephone:	(416) 324-8751

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