

# DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

December 1994



(INTERCEDE)

## Sceptical about Immigration Plan 1995-2000

### **WILL MINISTER MARCHI ASSURE THAT DOMESTIC WORKERS WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE RIGHT TO BE IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA?**

Domestic workers are sceptical about the Immigration Plan announced by Minister Sergio Marchi and they are afraid that, eventually, domestic workers will be excluded from immigrating to Canada.

They are hoping, therefore, that the Minister will make it clear and assure them that there will be no discrimination against domestic workers in the Immigration Plan, and that they will have as much right to become immigrants in Canada as any other worker.

Domestic workers' fear of being excluded stems from the Immigration Plan's stated preference for skilled workers and businessmen.

According to the Immigration Plan, supposedly "A Broader Vision..." of immigration and citizenship for the next five years, immigrants will be "selected on the basis of their ability to contribute to Canada's economic and social development". As well, emphasis is made on choosing immigrants for their ability to "adjust to changing world market needs".

#### **Broader vision is blind to domestic workers**

The conditions for selecting potential immigrants in the Immigration Plan are what convinces domestic workers that it will become extremely difficult and even impossible for them to qualify to immigrate to Canada under the new Immigration Plan.

Why? Because the prevailing impression, which is very incorrect and very unfair, is that domestic

workers do not contribute to the economy, or worse, that they are a financial burden to Canada.

Domestic workers recall a report quoted in the Toronto Star that Immigration officials had recommended that Minister Marchi abolish the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) because "those admitted under this program do not adjust well. In addition, the cost benefit of the program does not favour its continuance."

Domestic workers believe that since the Immigration Plan puts a lot of weight on the potential of skilled workers and businessmen to adjust quickly in Canada "without resorting to welfare or making use of publicly-funded settlement programs", than domestic workers who are not considered "skilled workers", will not be able to become immigrants.

#### **Silence on the LCP**

Their suspicion grows when they look at the Immigration projection of the number of entrants expected in 1995. In the category of Live-in Caregivers, 4,000 to 5,000 principal applicants and 1000 to 2000 dependents will be landed.

However, these figures refer to those domestic workers who are already in Canada under the LCP and who have already completed 24 months of domestic labour.

There is no projection of how many new entrants will be admitted under the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP).

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### **POT LUCK CHRISTMAS PARTY**

Sunday, December 4, 1994 3-5 pm  
Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street  
(South of College & Spadina)

2-3 pm New member application and renewals  
3-5 pm Program and refreshments  
EXCHANGE GIFTS (not less than \$10 worth please)

Judith Elizabeth Pilowsky

# A Population at Risk

*Many Immigrant Women live in situations of continuous emotional distress. The few available studies conducted on this issue show that immigrant, refugee and visible minority women are indeed a population at risk in the field of mental health.*



Barbara Passiermak

Many explanations are given to account for the vulnerability that we, as immigrant women, face in developing psychosocial difficulties. Among these, stress is considered to be one of the leading causes.

Stress, in our case, often arises from the sudden changes in women's roles after moving to Canada. To my mind, the following are some of the factors that constitute stress in our lives and so make us vulnerable to psychosomatic problems.

- As immigrant women, we often find ourselves in situations where ensuring family cohesiveness becomes solely our responsibility. We help husbands and children to cope with the process of

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adaptation, while our own well-being is inevitably neglected. Appropriate support systems to make our responsibilities bearable are mostly lacking.

Immigrant families often resettle in surroundings which initially have little to offer in terms of employment, social network and support. Immigrant women, like many other women, are forced to perform the double task of working both outside and inside the home. With immigration comes the loss of relationships, familiar environment and support from the extended family. These losses affect women more negatively than men.

- Poverty is frequently linked both to the development of psychosocial problems and to a higher incidence of illness and mortality. A total of 1.5 million Canadian women live in poverty. As a group, poor women have less power than other women to make decisions regarding their health.

Many immigrant women work in poorly paid jobs where they are exposed to safety hazards. Such conditions add further stress to their lives. It is not surprising then that many economically disadvantaged women become emotionally distraught and seek help at mental health agencies and hospitals.

Even though most immigrant women work outside the home, the average income of immigrant women is much lower than their Canadian counterparts, despite the fact that a large proportion of working immigrant women have a university education (*Women and Mental Health in Canada*, 1987).

Immigrant women, as a group, rank among the lowest paid groups in the work force. When compared to other groups, we earn considerably less than Canadian-born men, Canadian-born women and immigrant men (Pilowsky & Mor, 1990).

- Violence against women in the form of wife battering, intra- and extra-familial sexual abuse, physical abuse and rape are key issues that have been used to explain emotional distress in women in general. Additionally, traumatic experiences like rape, torture, camp internment and incarceration, suffered in our countries of origin, affect our well-being,

## Areas of Need

Despite the fact that we remain in high risk situations, there are limited mental health support programs for us. The following areas of need were identified from a community consultation report prepared by myself through in-depth interviews with 36 organizations serving immigrant women. The

pable of returning to regular lifestyles otherwise.

**Depression:** Depression, in part, is a result of the relationship between social conditions and women's mental health difficulties. Immigration increases depression by adding extra stress factors, such as changing family roles, and language barriers.

At the time of migration, we leave behind traditional support



interviews were conducted for the Multicultural Mental Health Women's Clinic at Doctors Hospital.

**Sexual assault:** Emotional reactions of trauma experienced by victims of sexual assault includes, among others, symptoms of anxiety, insomnia and flashbacks. The need for counseling and follow-up is essential since such emotionally disabling experiences often render survivors of sexual assault inca-

systems crucial to the maintenance of our emotional well-being during transition periods and stress. In most cases, new support systems are not in place yet. Immigrant and refugee women often find ourselves isolated and deprived of social support, a situation which can cause emotional breakdowns and depressions. Immigrant women are more affected by this situation than immigrant men.

Barbara Pasternak

TO BE CONTINUED ...

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Instead "greater care" is being taken to "enforce the requirement that the employer have children or elderly in need of care" - a requirement that is being interpreted in the most narrow way. This has had the result of denying, frustrating or discouraging many potential employers from offering prearranged employment to domestic workers from outside Canada.

This makes domestic workers conclude that LCP participants who are already in Canada may still get landed if they qualify under other requirements, but the government does not intend to bring any more new domestic workers under the LCP!

### Is the Government "killing" the LCP slowly?

"Unless Minister Marchi clarifies exactly what will happen to domestic workers under the Immigration Plan and unless he assures us that Immigration will not discriminate against us, we can only make one conclusion: that domestic workers will not be able to immigrate to Canada in the future", said a member of INTERCEDE.

"Saying nothing about domestic workers in the Immigration Plan while dismantling the LCP by decreasing dramatically the number of domestic workers admitted each year, can be a deceptive way of muting our protest and lulling us into

#### VANCOUVER CDWCR

Committee for Domestic Workers' &  
Caregivers' Rights  
(an INTERCEDE Affiliate)  
Contact Julie or Lorina (604) 739-1894

We wish to thank the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program); Canadian Heritage; Multiculturalism and Citizenship; Ontario Ministry of Citizenship; Ontario Ministry of Health; Ontario Ministry of the Environment; 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.

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c/o INTERCEDE

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**FIRST CLASS**

complacency," another member said sadly, "we could wage up tomorrow and find that no domestic worker can be allowed in anymore."

INTERCEDE, together with other organizations, will sustain a campaign which began two months ago to pressure the Minister of Immigration to give equal treatment to domestic workers and admit them as independent immigrants.

### Domestic work, Caregiving are skills - Women's skills

As Canadians in a country built by immigrants, we cannot allow discrimination against domestic workers in our immigration system. Write a postcard to Minister Sergio Marchi along the following lines:

Hon. Sergio Marchi, PC, MP  
Minister of Immigration and Citizenship  
Ottawa Ontario K1A 0A6

*Domestic workers contribute to Canada's economy and their skills at taking care of our children and our homes must be recognized.*

*Please end discrimination against domestic workers by allowing them to enter Canada as independent landed immigrants under the Immigration Point system.*

Yours truly,

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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