

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL AT RISK

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers Rights

January 1990

CEDE)

CHILD CARE IN ONTARIO: A CONTINUING CRISIS

The state of child care in Ontario can be put simply: there isn't enough! What exists is extremely expensive; isn't tailored to the varied working hours and needs of many parents; has underpaid and overworked staff; and very often the quality of child care is reduced because of continued government underfunding.

Fundamental to this crisis is the continued assumption by governments that the care of children is, and should remain, a private responsibility of families - in reality, women. And that if a woman chooses to work, it is her responsibility to find and privately pay for the care of her children.

The continued problems of child care access, cost, quality and flexibility has led to increased demand for domestic workers as a solution to this crisis.

Government policies that increase the supply of underpaid and vulnerable workers such as domestic workers, in order to fill the void in child care services, reduce the pressure to find social solutions to the child care crisis.

Inaccessible and Unaffordable

The so-called system of child care in Ontario can be described as a combined user pay/welfare model - which divides families into those who can pay for child care and those who cannot. Those who can't afford can receive subsidized child care as a welfare service. Middle and upper income families buy child care

the way they do any other commodity in the market.

The government, through tax initiatives, encourages families to make their own arrangements and their own choice for child care. But such "choice" is today only illusory because market forces have not responded to meet the needs of families.

The number of spaces for child care have not increased to meet the demand for it, while the cost has grown beyond the reach of most families. In Ontario, this demand has grown: while more women have entered the workforce, only 11 per cent of their children are being accommodated by the licenced child care system.

Today, pre-school care costs \$5000 per year while care for infants costs up to \$10,000 in the cities. Because of the high cost of child care, employing a nanny is fast becoming the cheapest alternative and many women are turning to "nanny-sharing" to reduce their expenses.

Parents "in need or likely to be in need" are given full subsidy for child care costs by the government. However, there is a snag - staggering waiting lists for child care spaces, which can last up to 18 months or more.

Lack of government funding has meant that only 9 per cent of families eligible for subsidized child care space get it.

Come to INTERCEDE's monthly meeting on Sunday, January 7, 1990 from 3 to 5 p.m at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street.

***We will discuss the Foreign Domestic Movement program.
All members are asked to come on time.***

CLASP legal clinic will be open.

No care for the care-givers

Child care in the licensed sector remains essentially women's work. As a sector, excluding domestic workers, they are the poorest paid workers in Canada. The average wage for childcare workers is \$13,000 per year (in Ontario it is somewhat better, \$17,000), significantly below the average industrial wage in Ontario of \$23,000 per year.

These workers are also predominantly unorganized, out of 22,000, only 2,000 or less than 10 per cent belong to unions.

They work in small workplaces, for long hours, with minimal benefits and vacations, and with little recognition for their work.

The inexorable relationship between wages and fees must be broken if child care workers' wages are to increase without correspondingly increasing fees and therefore making the service beyond the financial reach of most families.

The Coalition (for Better Child Care) has lobbied since 1981 for direct government grant that would subsidize the operating costs of a centre thus allow salaries to rise while keeping fees stable. In 1988 the Ontario government introduced a grant which resulted in wage increases of about \$3,000 per year for most workers. We consider this one of our important victories and is a first step to transforming the user-pay system of child care.

Solutions

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care believes that all children have the right to high-quality, publicly funded, non-profit child care services. We are reviewing existing policies and articulating what solutions are possible to remedy the child care crisis. We are examining a position that child care should be moved out of the welfare context and into the

jurisdiction of education. Neighbourhood resource centres, drop-in services, half-day programs, shift work and seasonal care should all be options available in a comprehensive system of child care.

But Government continues to search for cheaper alternatives to existing services. Public policy that keeps child care in the domestic domain, undervalues the work of those who care for children - both in the home and in the child care sector-, maintains a permanent pool of cheap foreign domestic labour, and continues the exploitation of all women and children.

Child care can no longer be considered the individual burden of women and their families. Nor can child care be provided at the expense of subordinate and oppressed groups of women.

Society as a whole must bear the cost of care collectively, and it must clearly place child care in the public domain, and most importantly, now, on the public agenda.

*(by Janet Davis, Vice-President,
Ontario Coalition for Better Child
Care. Ms. Davis was INTERCEDE's
guest speaker during its December 3,
1989 meeting and Christmas Party)*

We wish to thank the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), Ministry of Immigration (Canada) the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) and Secretary of State (Women's Program) for providing our core funding.

We also wish to thank The Ministry of Citizenship (Ont), the City of Toronto, and the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto for their continuing support.

NEW SUBSCRIPTION:

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

MAIL TO:

INTERCEDE, 489 College St., Suite 402, Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A5

Please send DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS to:

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

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

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

How often should my salary be raised?

Answer: Unless your contract specifies any time period for increasing your salary, your employer has the discretion to determine when and by how much to raise your salary. Try to negotiate with your employer for a raise if you desire one. Remember, however, that by law, you should receive the minimum wage of \$5 per hour even if your contract specifies a lower rate.

I was separated from my husband so I applied to the FDM under my single name and did not reveal my marriage. But I have a son that I want to sponsor later and he carries the name of his father. Will it be difficult for me to sponsor my son because he has a different name from mine?

Answer: If you have not yet revealed this misrepresentation of your family status, you can go ahead and write to Immigration stating that you are married but have been separated from your spouse for a number of years, and that you have a son who bears the name of your ex-spouse. Do send a copy of a document proving your relationship to your son such as a birth certificate that shows you as his mother, etc. Do not forget to put your Immigration file number or date of birth in your letter.

COCO'S CALENDAR

A well-deserved vacation...

Coco Diaz, INTERCEDE counsellor, is taking a long-awaited rest and spending the holidays with daughter Karen in the Philippines. This column is contributed by the other counsellor, Teresa Mak, and consistent volunteer, Chit Bautista.

Looking for volunteer work...

that suits your interests? Call Volunteer service, Tel. 961-6888. They will evaluate your skills and assign you where your training and your interest coincide.

Enrolment tips...

If interested in enrolling for Winter courses, you can get information from the Toronto Board of Education Information desk - 155 College Street.

They have flyers for different credit courses that cost as low as \$10. Books and other reading materials don't usually exceed \$50. Note: Enrolment starts January 17th.

From us to you...HAPPY NEW YEAR!

SOMETHING NEW AT CECIL...

***Cecil Community Centre asked us to announce their
Parent-Child Drop-In***

Monday mornings from 10 a.m. to noon.

This is FREE but the adults do take turns on cookie duty and clean-up.

The children's toy library is open.

There is additional play area for the children.

For further info call 592-2403.

WHAT IS INTERCEDE?

INTERCEDE, an advocacy and counselling organization for domestic workers' rights, was formed in 1979 as a coalition of community, women's and immigrant organizations. Today, it has a membership of over 1,000, most of whom are foreign domestic workers coming from different parts of the world.

MONTHLY EDUCATIONAL MEETINGS

On the first Sunday of every month (except holidays), **INTERCEDE** holds an educational meeting that is open to all domestic workers. This meeting is usually held at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street (south of College, east of Spadina), from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. During these hours, a legal clinic and **INTERCEDE** counselling are available.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to domestic workers and community advocates who agree with **INTERCEDE'S** goals and objectives. Application for membership may be made at the monthly meeting by completing an application form and paying a processing fee of \$5.00. This fee covers the cost of the membership card and subscription to the monthly newsletter.

INTERCEDE ACTIVITIES

- * Organizing recreational, cultural and other social events
- * Outreach meetings in different parts of Metro Toronto, outlying areas and other provinces
- * Participating in conferences and community events

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Canada Immigration Centre	973-4444
Employment Standards Enforcement	326-7160
Revenue Canada (Taxation)	869-1500
Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre	656-8933
Educ & Skills Training Ctr, Labour Council	971-5893
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
Emergency Housing	
Nellie's Hostel	461-1084
Evangeline's	762-9636

Unemployment Insurance	730-1211
Ontario Human Rights Commission	326-9511
OHIP	965-1000
Immigrant Women's Health Centre	367-1388

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

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