

# DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

INTERCEDE for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers, and Newcomers

June 2003

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



## SARS INFORMATION AND UPDATES

SARS stands for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, and is a severe form of pneumonia, accompanied by high fever. Symptoms usually begin within ten days after direct contact with a SARS patient. They include a fever of more than 38°C or 100.4 °F or any or all of the following:

- Muscle aches and pains
- Severe fatigue
- Severe headache
- Dry cough
- Shortness of breath

It is believed that this illness is spread through direct face to face contact with a person who has SARS, which is why most health care workers who attended to these patients were infected. Race or ethnic background are not risk factors in the development or spread of SARS. If you have not been in close contact (face to face ) with person who has SARS you don't have to worry about being infected.

However, people who had direct contact with a person known to have SARS, are required to be isolated or quarantined at home. Staying at home and limiting your exposure to others is the best way to control the spread of SARS to family, friends and co-workers. Quarantine starts from the first day after a person is exposed to SARS and ends after ten days. Take the following precautions:

- Do not leave your house and do not have anyone visit you at home. Family or household members do not have to be isolated at home, unless a member of the household is diagnosed with SARS.
- Wear a mask when you are in the same room with another member of your household.
- Change your mask as directed. Family or household members do not have to wear mask.
- Do not share personal items, such as towels, drinking cups or cutlery.

- Wash your hands frequently.
- Sleep in separate rooms.
- Measure your temperature with your own thermometer twice a day over the ten-day period. Do not share thermometer with other members of your household.
- If anyone in the household develops above-mentioned symptoms or is feeling unwell, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000, TTY: 1-866-797-0007 or Toronto Public Health at (416) 338-7600 for information and assistance.

Health employees will call you everyday within these ten days of isolation to be sure that you are inside the house and did not break your isolation requirement. Should they call you and you did not answer the phone, police authorities will be knocking on your door just to check that you are inside your home.

Persons in immediate financial crisis as a result of quarantine and do not have access to other resources such as employment insurance, may be able to get short term emergency assistance from the Ontario Works office. For information call Ontario Works intake-screening units in your area or call 1-888-789-4199. Other intake screening units are as follows:

Areas	Phone Number
City of Toronto	1-888-465-4478/1-800-263-8364 416-952-4473
East and Southeast:	1-888-644-3444
Hastings county, Kingston, Lanark County, Leeds & Grenville United Counties, Lennox & Addington County, Cornwall, Ottawa-Carleton Region Prescott & Russell United Counties, Renfrew County	
Hamilton and Niagara:	1-877-869-8452
Brantford, Haldimand-Norfolk Region, Hamilton-Wentworth Region, Niagara Region	

*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 or renew your membership - \$10.*

Sunday, June 1, 2003, 3-5 p.m.  
At Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.  
(one block south of College cor. Spadina)

### TENANT'S RIGHTS

*Guest Speaker, Mr. Luis Mayorga  
Community Legal Officer, East Toronto Community Legal Service*

Central East: 1-877-272-8610/1-877-272-8613  
 Durham Region, Northumberland County  
 Peterborough, Simcoe County, Victoria County  
 York Region

Central West 1-866-229-5742  
 Dufferin County, Halton Region, Peel Region  
 Waterloo Region, Wellington County

Community Health Centres are offering services to immigrants, refugees, and newcomers without status who do not have a health card or other health insurance. Safe and sensitive services will be provided without cost to those who meet the criteria.

They may call any of the following Community Health Centres below for access to education, health promotion and other health services.

Community Health Centre	Phone Number
Access Alliance Multicultural CHC	416-324-8677
The Four Villages CHC	416-604-3361
LAMP	416-252-6471
Lawrence Heights CHC	416-787-1661
Parkdale CHC	416-537-2455
Queen West CHC	416-703-8482
Rexdale CHC	416-621-2515
South Riverdale CHC	416-580-3248
West Hill Community Services	416-284-5931
York Community Services	416-653-5400

For further information call INTERCEDE office at 416-483-4554 and ask for one of the counsellors.



## HIGHLIGHTS OF 7<sup>th</sup> INTERCEDE DOMESTIC WORKERS' CONFERENCE (con't.)

### ESA Research by Vancouver CDWCR

Janet Shaw, an active and longtime member and supporter of Committee for Domestic Workers' and Caregivers Rights (CDWCR), has been asked to research the effects of British Columbia's revised Employment Standards on domestic workers. Shaw reiterated CDWCR's demand that a strong and effective employment standards legislation is central to the struggle to improve the lives of domestic workers. More than any other type of worker, the domestic worker is the most dependent on an employer for her future and well-being; her immigration status, place to live, safety and security on and off the job - something that ought to be recognized by the Ministry of Labour and its Standards branch.

In her report, Shaw highlighted the following experiences of caregivers in B.C.:

- A wage rollback has meant a lower minimum wage category, allowing employers to pay new workers \$6.00 per hour for the first 500 hours of employment instead of the regular \$8.00 per hour minimum wage.
- B.C. now requires a written employment contract for domestic workers that allows for "variances and averaging". This means that employers can legally opt to ignore overtime rules and the 40-hour work week if the worker voluntarily agrees to work arrangements that fall below minimum standards. The reality is that an employer can very well pressure, intimidate or threaten a domestic worker to "voluntarily agree" to such sub-standard work arrangements.

- Domestic workers no longer can rely on the government to enforce the Act. If they have a complaint, they must now try on their own, with the aid of a Self-help Kit, to solve problems they have with their employer before they can seek help from the Employment Standards Branch. Unscrupulous employers are taking advantage of the Liberal government's cutbacks which have reduced the number of Employment Standards Officers. Employers are violating the Act knowing they can get away with it.
- In addition to lessening legal protections and giving up on enforcing employment standards, staff at the Employment Standards Branch has been reduced by at least one-third. This means that hard-won rights of domestic workers have been lost and domestic workers will be entirely dependent on the good will of the employer. This is indeed bad news for these workers.
- The time period for making a complaint has now been reduced to only six months instead of the two years in the old law. This change is especially negative for domestic workers and caregivers who normally would not be comfortable remaining in the household of an employer against whom they have filed a complaint. Caregivers often wait until they have left the employer or have obtained permanent resident status before filing a complaint and this often takes much longer than just six months.

With the Liberal provincial government's new law, domestic workers will find themselves without legal protection nor help in the workplace. The government needs to enforce workers' legal rights by monitoring employers, but this government is abandoning its duty to educate, monitor and enforce minimum employment standards. The gutting of employment standards in B.C. is really a painful step backward for domestic workers.

While in B.C. we had succeeded in getting the government to establish a central registry of employers of domestic workers, this has not been effectively implemented and has not benefitted domestic workers because there was no system of monitoring the employers' compliance. The registry simply served to provide numbers and statistics.

The CDWCR has advanced the following recommendations to correct the situation in B.C.:

- The government must provide the resources and authority to the Employment Standards Branch to allow it to do outreach to migrant domestic workers and caregivers;
- The Act should include a definition of work, which should clearly state that a domestic worker is "working" for as long as she is expected to exercise a task or responsibility;
- Domestic workers and their employers must not be allowed to "voluntarily" agree to a work arrangement that falls short of the minimum standards;
- Employment Standards Officers must be mandated and given the resources to carry out regular spot checks of domestic workers' employment conditions and occupational health and safety;
- A Tripartite Committee made up of employer, domestic worker and Employment Standards Branch representatives should be established for the domestic service sector with responsibility for setting minimum employment standards, for investigating and for prosecuting violations.

An important discussion following the Ontario and B.C. ESA presentations highlighted the anomalous situation resulting from the fact that while it is Federal Immigration and HRDC which require and approve the employment contracts and employment

permits of domestic workers, it is left to the provincial Labour ministry to enforce such contracts and compliance with labour laws. Thus it is important that these two levels of government ministries coordinate their information, monitoring and jurisdictional practices in order to effectively decrease violation of contracts and other ESA provisions by employers.

Deena Ladd, who was resource person for the panel, introduced the work of her organization, the Toronto Organizing for Fair Employment (TOFFE), on behalf of temporary, contract, contingent, part-time, agency and casual workers. She described the current campaign to increase Ontario's minimum wage to \$10 per hour, which is justifiable at a time when there are 1.9 M people living below the poverty line. She also called attention to the plight of contract workers at Rogers Cables who have been challenging the company's exploitative practices including unpaid wages and sub-contracting. Ladd asked the conference participants to help put pressure on Rogers, especially through its CEO, John Tory, who is potential candidate for Toronto mayor, by emailing him at Tory-jhtory@rci.rogers.com, or by calling him at (416) 935-2500 to ask him to take responsibility for fair treatment of all Rogers Cable workers. She also asked those who have sold Rogers Cables products or are owed wages by them to contact the Workers Information Centre.

### INTERCEDE'S BLACK WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

On Saturday May 10<sup>th</sup>, the first meeting for INTERCEDE's Black Support Group took place at the INTERCEDE office. The group was facilitated by INTERCEDE staff Salma Saadi and INTERCEDE volunteer Bernice Small. The purpose of the group is to establish a safe space for Black domestic workers and caregivers to let them share their concerns and barriers that are specific to the Black community. The group will give opportunities for women from the same community to discuss experiences and create relationships of support.

Five participants came to the first meeting and topics included: why is the group important to have issues and concerns regarding Black domestic workers and caregivers, and how do we make sure the group is relaxed and fun with some recreational activities.

This is an open group, therefore new participants can join any time. The group will be held on a monthly basis. If you are a Black domestic worker or caregiver please come out to our next meeting on:

**Sat. June 14, 2003, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.**  
**234 Eglinton Ave East, Suite 205**

Please contact **Salma Saadi** at **(416) 483-4554 x 22** to register

### CHERRY PICKING/CASINO NIAGARA TRIP FOR ONLY \$25

Sunday, June 28, 2003

Assembly Time: 9:00 a.m.

Departure Time: 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Place: York Mills Subway Stn. (at Shell Gas Stn., Southeast of Yonge)

**FREE \$10 Voucher for Casino Niagara**

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

We would like to invite our members to see

## Miss Orient(ed)

A beauty pageant is the setting for this hilarious (de) construction of the Filipina (-Canadian) ideal as contestants vie for the title of Miss Pearl of the Orient. Our Co-ordinator, Ms. Fely Villasin, is a member of the cast.

**When:** May 22 to June 8, 2003

Tuesday to Saturday at 8:00 p.m.

Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

**Where:** Factory Studio Theatre

125 Bathurst St. (at Adelaide)

Box Office: 416-506-9971 or log on to: [www.missoriented.com](http://www.missoriented.com)

**Tickets: \$15-\$20 Sunday - Pay What You Can**

### IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR PERMANENT RESIDENTS

- Permanent Resident (PR) Card will soon be mandatory. Obtain your Permanent Resident Card before you travel.
- Permanent residents (landed immigrants) returning to Canada either by airplane, train, bus must have a PR card.
- As of December 31, 2003 it is mandatory to show PR card to carrier personnel when boarding to prove permanent resident status in Canada.
- The PR card replaces the IMM 1000 Record of Landing form, which will no longer be valid for travel purposes.
- Application kits are available through Citizenship and Immigration Canada's web site ([www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)) or by calling (1-800-255-4541)
- Applications are being processed based on your year of landing. Check the chart below to see in which month should you apply:

Year of Landing	When to Submit Your Application
2000 - 2002	January to April 2003
1996 - 1999	May 2003
1992 - 1995	June 2003
1988 - 1991	July 2003
1980 - 1987	August 2003
1973 - 1979	September 2003

### Coco's Corner:

**Q-** My application for Permanent Residence under the LCP was returned due to a missing Record of Employment (ROE). I was a live-in caregiver for three children ages 2, 7, and 11. Part of my responsibilities were to bring them to school, drive them to and from school activities, etc. Only my T4 slip and reference letter was given to me prior to their job deployment to another country. I do not have any source of contact on how to secure my ROE which is needed for the processing of my application. Any suggestion on how I could convince Immigration that I worked legally and was a bonafide caregiver to the said family?

- A-** You can get certification from any of the following who were aware of your employment to the family through:
- ◆ The school where your employer's children attended can attest to your regular involvement to their activities, facilitator from a group play, some parents of children who attended the same

class.

- ◆ Neighbour of your previous employer
- ◆ Their family doctor –is likely informed about your being employed in their household as live-in caregiver for their children.

**Q** *Can I refuse my employer's request to go with them on their holiday to the Caribbean? In my job description I have to take care of their elderly mother only in Canada and travelling with her is not included. I have severe fear of flying since September 2001. Due to my fear I did not even want to go home for the funeral of my mother. Can my refusal to travel result in my job termination?*

**A-** Sorry to hear about your fear of flying and not being able to attend your mother's funeral. Inform your employer that due to your fear of flying you do not want to accompany them to the Caribbean. If your employment is terminated you must be compensated or must be given proper notice under the Employment Standards Act. In addition, it would be wise for you to consider seeing your family doctor who could refer you to a phobia specialist who could possibly help you overcome your fear.

### Accessing the Hidden Job Market Works

After doing his full time work search being a newcomer from Iran, Kambiz Harirchi has just found his first job here in Canada. A job which is related to his interest and education. He now works as a Pharmacy Technician at a popular pharmacy in Toronto.

By telling everyone that he's looking for work while doing his volunteer work, Kambiz happily shares his musings as a persistent job hunter.

"I walked-in the pharmacy and handed in my resume to the pharmacy manager. He then willingly agreed to spare a few minutes as I politely requested for an information interview, which I learned from INTECEDE's Job Search Workshop," he recounts.

One morning, Kambiz came to INTERCEDE and handed in a filled-up Job Search Success Story form, sharing his message to other newcomers ----

**"Don't give up. One can do networking, information interview and volunteering at the same time. Your employer might just be around your neighbourhood when you do these tried and tested work search strategies."**

### FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP

#### FOR NEWCOMERS AND CAREGIVERS

**When:** June 8, 15, 22 and 29, 2003  
 July 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2003  
 August 10, 17, 24 and 31, 2003

**Time :** 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**Where:** George Brown College  
 200 King St. East,  
 St. James Campus (Rm 325-A)

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

[jsw@intercedetoronto.org](mailto:jsw@intercedetoronto.org)

Seating is limited.

Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada & sponsored by COSTI & OCASI

*We wish to thank: Citizenship and Immigration Canada - ISAP Program and Job Search Program with COSTI-OCASI; Ontario Status of Women; the City of Toronto CSGP, grant programs, for their financial support.*



### INTERCEDE

**Address:** 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 205  
 Toronto Ontario  
 M4P 1K5

**Regular Hours:** Mon-Fri 9 am - 4 p.m.  
**Telephone:** (416) 483-4554  
**Fax:** (416) 483-9781  
**Toll-Free:** 1-877-483-4554  
**E-mail:** [info@intercedetoronto.org](mailto:info@intercedetoronto.org)

#### INTERCEDE STAFF:

- Fely Villasin - Coordinator
- Des Balce - JSW Facilitator
- Columbia Diaz - Settlement Counsellor
- Salma Saadi - Settlement Counsellor
- Anita Fortuno - Settlement Counsellor
- Genie Policarpio - Intake & Administrative Assistant

#### PLEASE NOTE: INTERCEDE

Summer Hours

From June 23 to August 29, 2003  
 Monday to Thursday (closed on Friday)  
 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

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