

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

INTERCEDE for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers

June 2006

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



LOWER FEE FOR PERMANENT RESIDENCE Are you eligible for a refund?

The Government of Canada has announced the lowering of the Right of Permanent Residence or Right of Landing fee by 50 percent from \$975 to \$485.

This refund took effect May 3, 2006. A refund of up to \$485 applies to every person who paid the fee but has not received permanent residence at this same date. Due to fluctuations in exchange rates, there may be differences in refund amounts for refunds issued in local currencies outside of Canada.

You are eligible for a refund if:

- You paid the \$975 Right of Permanent Residence Fee; and
- You have not become a permanent resident of Canada as of 12:00 a.m. EDT on May 3, 2006

If you are eligible and you or your sponsor paid the fee in Canada you will obtain your refund as follows:

- If you or your sponsor paid the \$975 fee in Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) will issue a refund to you. You do not have to request it, you will receive it by mail.
- If you applied under the family class, the permit holder class or the live-in caregiver class, or if you applied for permanent residence in Canada on humanitarian or compassionate grounds, you or your sponsor are eligible for a refund.
- If you moved since you paid the Right of Permanent Residence Fee, you can use CIC on-line services or contact them at 1-888-242-2100 to notify them of your new address.

To obtain a refund if you (or your sponsor) paid the fee in another country:

- If you paid the Right of Permanent Residence Fee in another country before 12:00 a.m. EDT on May 3, 2006, and you have not received a visa, you can request a refund from the CIC mission where you paid the fee. If you do not request a refund, you will receive a refund when your visa is issued.
- If you paid the Right of Permanent Residence Fee in another country, and you have received your visa but have not yet become a permanent resident of Canada by 12:00 a.m. EDT on May 3, 2006 you can request a refund after you become a permanent resident of Canada.
- If you have not received a refund before you become permanent resident, you will be given information on how to request one when you arrive in Canada.

While news of the reduction of landing fee is welcome, it still does not respond to the original demand to eliminate it and the steep processing fee of \$550 altogether. INTERCEDE has always opposed the landing fee as unfair to refugees and new immigrants, particularly to those, like caregivers, who have few resources and come to Canada to fill a labour need. They should not be "penalized" with such a burdensome fee which is reminiscent of the "head tax" against Chinese immigrants of earlier times.

*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.

Sunday, June 4, 2006, 3-5 p.m.
At Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.
(one block south of College cor. Spadina)

?QUESTIONS ABOUT THE Live-in Caregiver Program?

Coco Diaz and Bernice Small

INTERCEDE Counsellors

See you there!

SEX FOR MOONLIGHTERS

(Excerpts from a report by
Trixia Enriquez Carungcong, Singapore)

With more Filipinos going overseas to travel and work, more women are also getting involved in the flesh trade. Twenty-five-year-old Tina Cruz (not her real name) first came to Singapore in October last year, not quite prepared for the job that was waiting for her. "My best friend's cousin works here, too, so she helped me when I was back in Manila looking for another job," she says.

Tina used to work as a saleslady at a Shoemart mall in Manila, earning about P9,000 a month (approx. Cdn. \$196). Her husband had the same job, but they found it hard to make ends meet, with their 7-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter. "It's so hard to earn a living back home. How can you support a family with that salary? How can you provide for your children's future?"

Without telling her husband, Tina spent about P15,000 (Cdn \$326) for a ticket to Singapore on budget airline Jestar. She also brought US\$500 as "show money" at the Singapore airport. Then, with a two-week "social visit" pass and some help from her best friend's cousin, she learned the ins and outs of the island's night life—where to find clients, how much to ask for, how to avoid getting caught by the police.

She decided to base herself at one of the bars in Lucky Plaza, a shopping mall in central Orchard road. Lucky Plaza is popular with Filipinos. On Sundays, domestic workers would gather here to meet friends or send money back to the Philippines through the remittance centers.

Practical Reasons

Tina says she earned 5 Singapore dollars or about P156 for every drink that cost S\$15. Every time she went home with a client, she got paid S\$150.

"After three and a half months, I was able to bring home P200,000 (Cdn \$4,300). In my family I'm the breadwinner and I pay for everything. When I went home I gave my aunts one thousand pesos each...and I treated my family. There was one day I spent P10,000."

In the beginning, Tina says, her husband found it difficult to accept her kind of work. But he later agreed with her view that this was best for their family. She says they have to be practical. She is even helping her sister to join her in Singapore. "I think I have a heart of stone. But I explained the job to her. Babuyan talaga." (It's really dirty).

Tina's story is echoed in a growing number of Filipino women who enter Singapore to work in the sex trade. Many say they found out about the opportunity to earn thousands of pesos for a few hours' work, through relatives, friends, or neighbors who had also come to Singapore to work in the world's oldest profession.

Lucrative Sideline

There is a fairly large community of Filipinos in the island, which has a population of 4.5 million. The Philippine Embassy in Singapore estimates there are about 115,000 Overseas Filipino Workers or OFWs (as of December 2005). Some 80,000 are domestic helpers while 35,000 others are professionals.

Domestic helpers have often been under scrutiny in the Singapore media for working illegally during their off days. There is a

common perception that many moonlight as sex workers. An article in the Straits Times in September last year quoted a shopkeeper as saying that as many as two out of 10 may be doing it.

But John Gee, vice president of Transient Workers Count Too, a non-government organization that looks after the welfare of foreign domestic workers, thinks the issue has been blown out of proportion. "If they want to do it, why not do it full time? I'm sure there are those who do it, but I've always felt that the reports and rumors tend to exaggerate."

Indeed, if 20 percent of the 80,000 Filipino maids in Singapore offer sex for sale on their off days, that would mean about 16,000 women.

Favorite Haunts

Filipino women who are involved in the sex trade can be commonly found in several areas. At the main shopping area of Orchard Road, there's Orchard Towers, which some describe as "Four Floors of Whores." It has several pubs that cater to Filipinos. Orchard towers is right next door to Palais Renaissance, which has some high-end boutiques.

At one pub, the women said they were brought in as tourists by their employer, a Filipina married to a Singaporean. Each of them paid P30,000 (Cdn \$650) which covered their airfare and agent's fee.

They have to sell at least seven drinks each night so they can get an "allowance" of S\$40 of about P1,200. If they don't meet the quota, they can only get S\$20.

To extend their stay in Singapore, they usually go to neighboring Malaysia or Indonesia for a few days. When they come back, they can get another social visit pass for two weeks.

The women say they have to pay for their food and accommodation, and they're not sure if they will be able to recoup their investment.

Responding to a request for information, the Philippine Embassy said report of Filipinos who enter as tourists and engage in prostitution during their stay "have not been validated and no definite information as to their exact number is currently available."

An official from the embassy said, "we know it is happening, and with the budget airlines it is easier for them to come here. From the point of view of social order and public image, it is a problem. But the issue is of a sensitive nature."

He also cited policy aspects that make it difficult to keep track of sex workers: "There's a gray area. Filipino officials, for example, have no mandate to subject to questioning those who are leaving [the Philippines] as tourists."

While many women who leave the Philippines to become sex workers in Singapore know what they are getting into, there are those who are victims of trafficking.

Bridget Lew of HOME says she has encountered only a few such cases: "In my experience only two in 2003 and another two in 2004. They came to the shelter for assistance. They ran away from the pubs, where they had to sell beer to get their salary. [Some women in such a situation] may end up having to offer sex services. The four of them stayed with me, we helped to repatriate them. [To those like them who need assistance] we provide shelter and a safe place to stay till cases are resolved by the Ministry of Manpower."

Many other cases, however, go unreported.

(Courtesy of Centre for Migrant Advocacy in Q.C. Philippines)

**INTERCEDE CONFERENCE
INSPIRES PARTICIPANTS**

More than 60 domestic and caregiver workers left INTERCEDE's eighth conference inspired with a sense of renewed confidence that through strong organizing and determination they would be able to achieve their goal. This is the long-cherished goal of achieving equality under immigration rules governing their admission to Canada.

Sharing their experiences of victimization because of discrimination based on race, gender or government policy, caregivers strove to understand the social barriers that they face every day and to find individual and collective solutions to bring these barriers down.

A summary Report of the conference proceedings which is being compiled will give a capsulized view of three days of intensive reflections and exchange of ideas on understanding racism and learning the nature of violence against women. Victimization was examined in the context of these systemic barriers which influence government policies such as the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP).

While delegates had some pretty heavy issues to tackle, they nevertheless managed to blend serious enthusiasm with generous humour and lighthearted camaraderie.

Most importantly the conference objective in its title: From Victimization to Empowerment was affirmed with conviction as one after another delegates expressed the feeling that the conference had indeed empowered them and given them the tools with which to deconstruct oppression.

Held from May 5 to 7 at the newly-inaugurated Kapisanan Philippine Centre in the Kensington area, the conference brought together caregivers from many parts of Greater Toronto and Ontario. Advocates from two caregivers' organization in Vancouver, the Committee for Caregivers' and Domestic Workers' Rights and the West Coast Domestic Workers' Association, not only graced the conference but also reinforced its strong complement of presenters and facilitators.

One participant summed up the meeting thus: "For the first time I began to understand that I can do something to liberate myself from being a victim."

PLEASE NOTE:

**INTERCEDE
SUMMER HOURS**

**From June 22 to August 31, 2006
Monday to Thursday : 9:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m.**

Friday: Closed

REMINDERS

Make an appointment first

Please call for an appointment before you decide to visit INTERCEDE and have your appointment confirmed by a counselor you want to see. Otherwise, counselors will not be able to talk to you as they may already be booked for other appointments and they will just give you an appointment for another day. To avoid being sent home and wasting your day, do confirm your appointment before coming to INTERCEDE.

INTERCEDE

Invites everyone to join us at our

Fundraising BBQ

Place: Earl Bales Park (South of Sheppard)

When: July 15, 2006, Saturday

Time: 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 pm

BBQ Choices: Pork Beef Chicken

Ticket Price:

Adult - \$10

Child: under 8 - \$5

Coco's corner:

Stomach pain, muscle pain, sore shoulders, backache, headache...these are common complaints of caregivers caring for children or the elderly.

Reasons abound: a monthly period; long exposure to the sun while watching children in the park; too much housework; heavy lifting including of an elderly person they're looking after.

Often the remedy is pain relief pills. Once the pain is gone they're back to work. No time or chance to go to a doctor because they have no sick leave or no one will take care of the children or stay with the elderly in their care. Or they cannot go out except on their off-days.

The aches and pains may keep coming back but until the pain becomes severe or unbearable, that is the only time a caregiver decides on going to see a doctor.

Sometimes the caregiver is too shocked to face reality but what was just an ordinary pain becomes serious and life threatening. She is diagnosed with cancer or an appendix has burst or a sciatic nerve is pinched or she suffers a stroke!

Caregiving is hard work - one of the hardest one can do and one must know the limits. Learn to take care of yourself while taking care of others. Yes, you are paid to do the work but you are not superhuman. Even machines need to rest. Relax, eat right, exercise and enjoy some leisure. Go watch a movie, laugh, pray, sleep well...

Are you a Caregiver or a Private Companion for the Elderly? Get \$25 for a One-hour Interview!

A university professor in Tokyo is looking for research participants who have work experience in elderly care as a caregiver or private companion. She will be in Toronto to interview the participants from August 4 to 23. The honorarium will be \$25 per hour. If you are interested, please email Prof. Nana Oishi at Oishi@icu.ac.jp to make an appointment.

CARIBBEAN CONNECTION

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, June 17, 2006, 2— 4 p.m.
at INTERCEDE's office, 234 Eglinton Ave. E. Ste. 405**

SUCCESS STORY

By Amelia Manalo

I always believe that every person should have a goal in life. Knowing what you want is one great starting point towards the path of success. That's what I had, a goal.

My father died when I was a young girl of 12. He left behind a wife and six children. At that time my primary goal was to help my family weather the storm of his passing and see every one make it safely to shore. Being the second of six children, I learned to set aside my needs to give way to those younger than me.

At an age when kids should be running and playing around, I was busy becoming an adult and helping in the responsibility of supporting a family. I remember I used to get up at three in the morning to tend to our small business, learning the art of transaction and negotiation in the buy-and-sell trade. While my mother traveled to Divisoria in Manila to look for merchandise for our wholesale/retail store in Cabanatuan Market, it was I who was in charge of the business at home.

It wasn't an easy life for me and the entire family but we managed, and my brothers and sisters were able to finish school. I did not! Not that it was anybody's fault. It was because after three years in college, I decided to go to Hong Kong to work as a domestic worker. This was a step towards my goal. After working for several years in Hong Kong, I came to Canada for what I thought were greener pastures.

I felt so lucky to find work as a live-in caregiver with a very supportive and good-hearted couple who helped me through my highs and lows. With their help and my family's moral support I learned to become more resourceful, more resilient and more persistent to succeed in life.

I always treat time as gold, and I spent my time accordingly. I worked as a caregiver by day and as a bank cleaner after office hours. But I never forgot my need for self-development. I knew that in order for me to advance and achieve my goal, I needed to equip myself with more education before I could enter the workforce outside of caregiving. I chose my friends well and refused to be way-laid from my goal. I attended trainings and workshops to educate myself about the labour market and how to best prepare myself for it. I took school courses to improve my educational training.

While it was not an easy life, it was the kind of life that helped me become what I am today. I am very grateful for everything and happy at the outcome. I have achieved my goal. I am now working as a paralegal secretary, but guess what, I won't stop here. I am now thinking of another goal in life.

FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP FOR CAREGIVERS & NEWCOMERS

WHEN: SUNDAY

June 4, 11, 18 & 25, 2006

July 9, 16, 23 & 30, 2006

August 6, 13, 20 & 27, 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:

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Anita Fortuno - 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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