

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

October 1994



(INTERCEDE)

INTERCEDE PROTESTS RECOMMENDATION TO ABOLISH LCP AND CLOSE CANADA'S DOORS TO DOMESTIC WORKERS

An Immigration Ministry report has recommended that the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) be abolished because "those admitted under this program do not adjust well. In addition, the cost benefit of the program does not favour its continuance."

INTERCEDE protests this recommendation to abolish the LCP and stop admission of domestic workers to Canada and denounces the insulting and misleading reasons being given to justify it.

We ask Mr. Sergio Marchi, Minister of Immigration to reject this recommendation, we ask the Minister to make a commitment to allow domestic workers to enter Canada as immigrants with no discriminatory conditions.

We ask the minister to reject the proposal because it systemically discriminates against women who do women's work in the home, against poor women who do this work, and against women of colour who have made up the majority of those who apply for admission as domestic and caregiver workers to Canada.

This recommendation discriminates against women on the basis of their class, gender and race and it is unacceptable for a country such as Canada that prides itself in promoting equality for women, for workers and for all races.

Immigrants help the economy

The proposal to abolish the LCP is one of the more offensive recommendations in the above report that spread hostile attitudes towards immigrants of colour because they reinforce incorrect ideas that recent immigrants are to blame for the economic and social problems in this country.

We ask Minister Marchi to stop this injustice and to end decades of discrimination in immigration policy against foreign domestic workers by allowing them to enter Canada as independent immigrants. Then he can justify ending the LCP in order

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STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT

The proposals for changes to Canada's immigration policies that have been forwarded to the Minister of Immigration, Sergio Marchi, confirm the worst fears of community activists, advocates and other Canadians concerned with equality rights; that there is at present a soaring anti-immigrant sentiment, especially against immigrants and migrant workers of colour.

The proposals through their intent and impact are discriminatory. Singling out and abolishing the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) is a clear example. The government has already drastically reduced the number of women who are accepted in this Program. Let us not forget that nearly all of these women are women of colour from "developing countries". They are not seen as "desirable immigrants" and, therefore, the proposals seek to stop admitting them to this country.

To say that LCP workers do not adjust well financially, emotionally or otherwise is erroneous and not based on any fact. For generations, Black and Asian women in Canada have not "adjusted" financially for the same reason as LCP workers who become landed immigrants. They are subject to societal factors such as discrimination based on their race, culture, sex, ability,...etc, that keep them from higher paid work.

The government of Canada should be ashamed of misusing its power to support and feed anti-immigrant feelings in this country. Instead it should take up the challenge of promoting and ensuring a Canada free from oppression and discrimination in its many forms. The Government cannot continue to say immigrants contribute effectively to building Canada, on the one hand, and practise discrimination against immigrants and potential immigrants on the other.

*Joan Grant-Cummings
President, INTERCEDE*

September 15, 1994

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to institute better terms of immigration for domestic workers - not so that he can close Canada's doors to them.

Equality for domestic workers, not more barriers

Indeed, if domestic workers were to be treated like other workers and admitted as independent immigrants because their labour is in demand, because their labour is valued, and their skill and experience as women doing women's work is recognized, then there should be no need for a "special program" like the LCP and abolition of the program would be justified.

INTERCEDE has consistently opposed the LCP because it perpetuates a system of indenture labour for domestic workers entering the country. The LCP admits women under a temporary work permit system that ties them to a specific employer and requires them to live-in their place of work as a condition of their status in Canada.

This double bind combined with provincial labour laws that don't adequately protect them make foreign domestic workers and caregivers vulnerable to gross violations of their human rights.

While the LCP allows them to become landed immigrants, throughout an average five years of temporary status, domestic workers live a life of isolation and insecurity, fearful of asserting even their basic human rights and often hostage to the power of their employers.

Even if they were better protected under labour laws, foreign domestic workers are helpless to enforce the rights that they already have because of their insecure status as temporary workers in Canada and the indentured nature of their rela-

tionship to their employers.

Just as Canada welcomes business entrepreneurs and recognizes the economic contribution they make, it should welcome and recognize the enormous economic contribution that domestic and caregiver workers have made to this country instead of closing the doors of immigration to them.

Swift reaction from domestic workers, immigrant and women's groups

The immediate reaction of a Jamaican domestic worker to the Immigration recommendation typifies that of many domestic workers who have entered the country under the LCP:

"I am shocked and disgusted! We don't adjust well - to what? To abuses and violations of our rights as workers?...and "costly" for whom? Not for foreign domestic workers?"

"The proposals through their intent and impact are discriminatory" and singling out the LCP for abolition is a clear example, according to Joan Grant-Cummings, President of INTERCEDE, in a statement released to the media during a press conference held September 15th.

The suggestion to scrap the LCP is one of several abhorrent recommendations contained in the

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

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report that seeks to cut down the number of immigrants by 50,000 from 250,000 this year, and to "better select" immigrants. It wants to limit immigrant sponsorship to spouse and dependents only, and to exclude parents; to refuse citizenship to refugee claimants' children who are born in Canada; and to exclude new immigrants from public health insurance coverage.

These recommendations reinforce the incorrect notion that immigrants make Canada poorer when the opposite has been the truth: that immigrants boost the economy and support social programs and services because they work and pay taxes.

According to Sunera Thobani, president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), the recommendations "pander to right wing, anti-immigrant sentiments. Immigrants and refugees should not be blamed for the economic woes of this country. We urge Minister Marchi not to adopt the recommendations..."

The Chinese Canadian National Council called "simply outrageous" the suggestion that parents and grandparents be taken out of the family class category; instead the "principle of family reunification should remain an integral part of any future changes in our immigration system."

Wrong reasons to abolish LCP

The Committee for Domestic Workers' and Caregivers' Rights (CDWCR) in Vancouver, an affiliate of INTERCEDE, criticized the immigration proposals' bias in favour of more immigrants from Europe, of business entrepreneurs and of admitting people who have "long-term potential for adjustment" rather than just because their labour is in demand.

Demand for the labour of domestic workers and caregivers has consistently increased yet now it is recommended that even if their labour is in demand, domestic workers should not be admitted because they "do not adjust well".

"There is no basis for the justification given to scrap the LCP", said Cenen Bagon of CDWCR, "and to say that domestic workers "do not adjust well" says more about the continuing inequality of women in the workforce and racism in this country than about domestic workers's ability to cope with these forms of discrimination."

It is no secret that women are still located in the lowest paid occupations, and that economic poli-

cies such as Free Trade and NAFTA have driven women to the most insecure jobs if not unemployment. Why should domestic workers be expected to do better than the rest of Canadian women and why should they be singled out to be insulted and penalized?

Since 1981, about 80,000 women have entered Canada under immigration's program for domestic workers. INTERCEDE challenges the government to prove that these women "do not adjust well" to Canadian society!

As for the other justification for abolishing the LCP, that it is not cost beneficial: it is not "cost beneficial" because the LCP as a temporary work permit program incurs costs to administer, monitor and enforce.

If domestic workers were admitted as landed immigrants, then not only would they cost Immigration as much as any other immigrants to process, it would also cost less for domestic workers who have to pay costly fees to Immigration.

In 1994, each foreign domestic worker under the LCP would have to pay an average of up to \$2000 in immigration fees up to the time she gets permanent resident status. If there are 6000 women under the program just from 1992, they would pay a total of \$12 million in immigration fees by the time they become permanent residents.

In one year, a domestic worker would contribute at least \$2978 in taxes, CPP and UIC. For 1994 alone, 6000 of them would contribute \$17,868,000 in tax revenues.

We must value women's work!

The recommendations made by Immigration "experts" for blatantly racist, classist and sexist immigration policies contradict Canada's reputation as a progressive force on immigration and women's issues in the International Population and Development Conference held this year in Cairo.

The worldwide outcry of women to have women's work recognized and valued, out of and in the home, paid and unpaid, must be heard. Domestic workers and caregivers, paid or unpaid, constitute an invaluable yet unvalued labour force that makes Canada's economy run.

If Canada is committed to equality for women and to women's human rights, then it must not close its doors to the immigration of domestic workers, it must stop discrimination against women of colour, it must begin to value women's work.

ACTION ACTION ACTION

Minister Marchi has said he has not yet decided to accept the recommendations made in the cited report, including abolishing the LCP.

He has to hear from you and your friends and many other people. We have to do something!

Send a letter telling the Minister that he should only abolish the LCP in order to allow foreign domestic workers to enter Canada as landed immigrants without discriminatory conditions.

Complete and mail the enclosed postcard or send a postcard along the following lines to

Hon. Sergio Marchi
Minister of Immigration
Ottawa, Ontario

Remember, **NO POSTAGE STAMP IS NECESSARY.**

Date _____

Minister Marchi,

We reject the reasons given for the recommendation to abolish the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP) and to stop admission of domestic workers to Canada.

We recommend instead that you stop discrimination against domestic workers and caregivers by admitting them as landed immigrants with no discriminatory conditions.

Yours truly,

(Signature)

Name (Please print) _____

Address _____

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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