

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

September 1991

(INTERCEDE)

Announcement to all Members And Friends

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND ELECTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS will be held on

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1991

2 - 3 p.m., Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street, Toronto

2 - 3 p.m.

Business Meeting

3 - 4 p.m.

Program

4 - 5 p.m.

Refreshments & Socials

All who have valid membership at June 1991 are qualified to vote.

Application for membership from 1:30 - 2 p.m. and 5 - 5:30 p.m. only.

HEALTH MOBILE UNIT and CLASP Legal Clinic will be open.

Non-Members, please confirm by calling 324-8751

No Right To Be Sick

Although Ontario labour law does not include paid sick leave, most workers ordinarily get a number of days for paid sick leave annually. But not domestic workers.

INTERCEDE members, who completed a three-part Facilitators' Workshop Series on August 18, 1991 with a discussion of labour protection, said that domestic workers who get sick are at the mercy of individual employers' generosity whether they will get paid or not.

"It's tantamount to not having the right to be sick," said Zeny Reyes.

The worst hit are domestic workers who fall seriously or terminally ill while still on temporary status, according to Coco Tarape Diaz, long-time INTERCEDE counsellor. "In the end, the only recourse for them is to go back to their own country since they can't hope to work, therefore

they can not renew their employment authorization; and they can run out of UI and welfare benefits, if they do qualify for them; apart from the fact that they have no immediate family to care for them."

One domestic worker outside of Toronto who had to have surgery told a tale of woe that highlights the situation for many domestics. She tearfully recounted how her employer would not believe until she showed a letter from her doctor that she needed surgery. She was given a day off but when she came back to the house of her employer the day after her surgery, the locks had been changed and she could not get in. Feeling very weak and not knowing anywhere else to go, she went to Immigration where a kind-hearted officer brought her to his own home to recuperate. "Often, we domestic workers don't bother with ordinary ailments. As long as we can still

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stand up, we work," said a volunteer at INTERCEDE's office. "We're lucky if we have a good employer who can do without our work for a few days to allow us to rest when we're sick."

In a recently concluded study about their needs done by INTERCEDE entitled "The Bare Essentials", participants tended "to ignore mental and emotional health-related problems such as mental depression, anxiety and stress". Yet, these are commonly accepted as ordinary afflictions of women who stay or work at home.

The Health Mobile Unit being provided by Women's Health in Women's Hands and the Immigrant Women's Health Centre, is intended to make health examinations and services available to domestic workers during INTERCEDE's monthly meetings.

The Facilitators' Workshop participants also discussed other inadequate protection in Ontario's labour legislation: that they are exempted from protection in the Occupational Health and Safety Act; that they ordinarily work in excess of 44 hours a week; that they can only claim up to \$4000 of unpaid wages; that they have no power to demand payment instead of lieu time for overtime work; that they have no right to form a union.

These issues will be the subject of a stage skit that they will present in the coming Annual General Meeting on September 8.

ORIENTATION FOR NEWLY-ARRIVED DOMESTIC WORKERS

Sunday, September 29, 1991

10 am - 5 pm

George Brown College

Room 541

200 King St. E., Toronto (King Subway)

Participation is free including lunch. Certificates will be given to participants.

REGISTER by calling Eva, 324-8751

DOMESTIC WORKERS from the CARIBBEAN MEETING ON IMMIGRATION & LABOUR ISSUES

With ELAINE PRESCOD, Vice President & COCO DIAZ, Counsellor

When? Sunday, September 15, 1991

What Time? 3 - 5 pm

Where? INTERCEDE OFFICE
489 College Street, Room 402
(Bathurst Subway, then take Bus 511 to College St.)

For confirmation, call 324-8751

We wish to thank the Employment and Immigration Canada (Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program); Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Women's Program); Ontario Ministry of Citizenship; 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.

RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION: (only until Dec. 91)

NEW SUBSCRIPTION:

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

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

Please send DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS to:

MEMBER ID NUMBER: NAME:

ADDRESS:

CITY/PROVINCE:

POSTAL CODE: TELEPHONE:

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

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

INTERCEDE Advice on Upgrading

INTERCEDE advises all foreign domestic workers needing to do upgrading, to enroll in courses that are free or at low cost.

While the Immigration requirement for domestic workers to upgrade their education or skills by taking courses is not mandatory, workers are usually advised to do so by Immigration counsellors.

However, workers make the mistake of spending huge amounts of money for course registration thinking that these amounts somehow affect how their upgrading will be assessed.

INTERCEDE clarifies that what is important is that the courses taken are in line with their past education or past and current work. Or if there is a change in career path, that courses taken are relevant.

For example, if someone was working as a clerk in her home country, her upgrading may be courses in bookkeeping; if someone intends to continue to work as a domestic for some more years, general interest courses in diet and nutrition, breadmaking, or cake decoration should be acceptable as upgrading; if someone intends to work in a medical-related occupation, a general interest course for medical secretary, or First Aid and CPR would be relevant.

Expensive courses complicate the financial situation of domestic workers who are generally paid minimum wage and ordinarily support families in their countries of origin.

In addition, most live-in domestic workers have difficulty leaving their jobs to study, therefore, they use up their off days going to school and meeting other FDM requirements such as volunteer work.

For the above reasons, INTERCEDE advises domestic workers to take general interest courses that take shorter periods, are free or low priced, and for which they don't need to get a student authorization.

There is no Immigration requirement that domestic workers must take credit courses. With general interest courses, domestics don't have to get student permits and pay \$75 each time.

The best places to enquire about free or low cost courses would be at the Board of Education nearest your residence, at ethnic community and information centres and non-profit career counselling centres, or at INTERCEDE.

List of courses can be obtained from the following Boards of Education (ask for Continuing Education Department):

Toronto 591-8238; Metro Separate School Board 222-8282; East York 396-2100; North York (Willowdale, Downsview, Weston) 229-5507; Etobicoke 394-7361; Peel Region (Mississauga, Brampton, Malton) 568-1080; Scarborough 396-7663; York Region (Thornhill, Richmond Hill, Aurora, Newmarket, Markham, Concord, Sutton) 731-9556. Also, Metro Labour Council Education and Skills Training 971-5893.

Warning Against Working on a "Trial Basis"

INTERCEDE is warning domestic workers under the Foreign Domestic Movement program (FDM) not to work on "a trial basis" even if they are advised to do so by prospective employers or by their employment agencies.

Working without proper employment authorization specifying the employer's name is a violation of the FDM and will get FDM workers in trouble with Immigration.

Some clients have complained to INTERCEDE that they have been asked to work on a "trial basis" for up to three months without being paid. At the end of the trial period, they were let go for one reason or another and these domestic workers

could not recover unpaid wages since they had no authorization to work with the "trial basis" employers in the first place.

INTERCEDE is encouraging domestic workers to report employment agencies or employers who ask them to work on a trial basis as a condition for employment.

Domestic workers feel forced to work on a trial basis on the promise that the employer would "process" their contracts with Canada Employment. In their anxiety to have a "satisfactory employment record" which is one of the criteria for landed status, foreign domestic workers feel helpless to refuse working on a trial

basis when they are assured of a job by employers or employment agencies.

Thus, domestic workers tend to conspire along with employer or agency without realizing that they are jeopardizing their own future by putting their visitor status at risk.

STAFF NOTES

She Got it!...

The domestic worker who had been refused and had insisted to Canada Employment that she had a right to get Unemployment Insurance (Story in last August newsletter) was reconsidered for UI benefits. Lesson: we should not just know our rights, we must assert them!

Individual career counselling...

at Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre, tel. 656-8933. They will inform and assist: about the job market, the requirements for various occupations, with resumes and personal

interviews; also about available upgrading or training. Call INTERCEDE or call them directly for an appointment. Open Monday to Friday, 9-4:30, their address is: 546A St. Clair Ave. West.

Thank you and Good-bye...

to Karen Serwonka who has completed her projects with INTERCEDE.

Congratulations...

to former Board member Celia Tababan and new spouse Anthony Kitts. May your life together be blessed with happiness.

to successful First Aid and CPR "graduates" of St. John's Ambulance.

to Carlos Bulosan Cultural Workshop for its successful presentation including the first act of "If My Mother Could See Me Now", a play about Filipino domestic workers, during the WOMAD festival at Harbourfront last August 10.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Canada Immigration Centre	973-4444
Educ & Skills Training Ctr, Labour Council	971-5893
Employment Standards Enforcement	326-7160
Immigrant Women's Health Centre	367-1388
Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre	656-8933
OHIP	482-1111
Toronto	
Scarborough	1-800-263-3814
Mississauga	275-2730
Ontario Human Rights Commission	326-9511
Revenue Canada (Taxation)	869-1500
Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (24-hour line)	597-8808
Unemployment Insurance	730-1211
Worker's Compensation	927-9555
EMERGENCY HOUSING	
Nellie's Hostel	461-1084
Evangeline's	762-9636

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
Toronto Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic	971-8832

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place:	489 College St., Suite 402, Toronto, Ont
Time:	Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Telephone:	(416) 324-8751

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FIRST CLASS