

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

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

SEPTEMBER 1999



Action-filled agenda at 5th INTERCEDE Domestic Workers Conference

by Melinda Gustierrez

Thirty-five delegates, representing 11 organizations from Vancouver, Winnipeg, Saskatchewan, Montreal and Toronto, took part in a three-day conference held at Ramada Hotel in Toronto from July 9 to 11.

The 5th Intercede Domestic Workers Conference achieved its goal of identifying the different forms of violence experienced by domestic workers and succeeded in coming up with a comprehensive action plan that included coordinated campaigns for Canada to grant landed immigrant status to domestic workers and for the government to sign the UN Convention on the Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and their families.

Coordinating a march of domestic workers in June 2000, and participation in the World March of Women 2000 were major actions planned to create awareness of the plight of domestic workers. These marches will call for the elimination of poverty and violence against women throughout the globe.

Conference guest speaker was Beaches-East York MP Maria Minna (recently appointed Minister for International Co-operation), who spoke on behalf of the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism – Status of Women, Hedy Fry. She applauded the holding of the conference and recognized the valuable contributions of organizations such as INTERCEDE in assisting domestic workers, caregivers and newcomers to

integrate into Canadian life. Regarding immigration policy changes, she agreed that domestic workers should be able to enter Canada as landed immigrants and that they should have the option to live-in or out.

Among the highlights of the conference, which was funded by Status of Women Canada, were workshops on violence and gender issues, reports and discussions on the FDI recruitment scam, globalization, government funding cuts and the recent consultation and research workshop held in Ottawa on abuse and violence experienced by live-in caregivers.

A documentary on migrant workers, "Mula Pabrik Hanggang Fukuoka," traced the vicious pattern of migration that starts from relentless poverty and joblessness and ends in dehumanizing conditions in foreign lands. The Gender Sensitivity Workshop proved extremely valuable in dislodging unexamined beliefs and in illuminating limiting ideas that hamper women in the struggle for equal rights and freedom of reproductive choice.

Participants rated the conference a success and attributed this to the comprehensive coverage of important issues, excellent organization, great facilitation, and the energizing, non-judgmental atmosphere of the conference. Target date for the next conference is November 2000.

You are all invited to

INTERCEDE Caregivers Co-operative's Annual General Meeting

Sunday, September 12, 1999 3-6 p.m.

Cecil Community Center, 58 Cecil Street

Bring a Friend! Be a Member!

Notice to All Members

INTERCEDE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND ELECTIONS

will take place on

Sunday, October 3, 1999 3 – 6 pm

Cecil Community Center, 58 Cecil St

Domestic Workers Must Be Admitted As Landed Immigrants

On behalf of the participants of the INTERCEDE Conference held in July, Allen Fabro, Chairperson of INTERCEDE's Board of Directors wrote an impassioned letter to Hon. Lucienne Robillard, former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration requesting that domestic workers be admitted as landed immigrants. The following is an excerpt from this letter.

"We are aware that there is a high, and probably even increasing, demand for live-in caregiver and domestic workers. This demand can be met by allowing these mostly women workers to enter the country in the same manner that other immigrant workers do, through passing a point system. But this point system must recognize, and allot the maximum points for caregiving and domestic work; it must add up points for related training and experience; and it should remove barriers in the language and other requirements".

"The fear that allowing these workers to come to Canada as landed immigrants will fail to meet the demand for live-in caregivers should not justify the conditions of indenture labour that are present in the current LCP. We would argue that the living and working conditions of live-in caregivers may improve better if they had more options and had the right to choose to live-in their employer's house or not".

"Only if domestic workers and caregivers are admitted as landed immigrants should we no longer need a "special program" such as the LCP. Otherwise, for as long as these workers are not recognized for the domestic and caregiving skills they bring, and for as long as their work is not allotted any points in recognition of the high demand for it, then only through a so-called "special program" such as the LCP can they enter Canada. If the LCP is the only way through which women can enter Canada as caregiver and domestic workers, this program must eliminate the provisions that promote indenture such as tying the worker to one specific employer for a specified period of time or such as tying the woman to her workplace that is also designated as her home so that when she loses her job she automatically loses her home. If the LCP must remain, all its provisions that lead to abuse and violence against live-in caregiver and domestic workers must be removed."

In conclusion, the Minister was asked to give her utmost consideration to our appeal for justice and human rights.

Illegal Recruiter Promotes Pyramid Scam

It's a scam nobody wants to touch. The Philippine government claims inability to prosecute because the

Enroll Now for a

FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP

at George Brown College

Next schedule starts on

Sept. 19, 26, Oct. 3, 17

or Oct. 24, 31, Nov. 7, 14, 1999

(classes are on Sundays from 10:00 to 5:00 p.m)

For further information and to register

call INTERCEDE 483-4554/483-1142

company is Canada-based. The Canadian government, on the other hand, requires victims to file a complaint in Canada. Victims, however are often afraid to come forward.

The scheme goes as follows: Filipina Domestic workers wishing to work in Canada are asked to pay \$300 for jobs that do not exist. They are also asked to supply 20 new contacts who are then each lured to pay the \$300 fee.

Foreign Domestic International (FDI), a Canada-based company, operates the scheme with only a postal box number and no physical office. Philippine migrant ngo's Kanlungan and Kakampipi sought the help of INTERCEDE, which then solicited the aid of the police fraud squad and Canada Post, to put a stop to the FDI operation.

The lucrative scam goes on—under different names in different countries, while governments hide behind lame excuses.

The subject of the FDI scam was tackled at the 5th Intercede Domestic Workers Conference where delegates vowed to apply pressure on governments to find methods, resources and determination would be utilized to go after companies such as FDI.

Job Search Workshop

by Melinda Gutierrez

There is a myriad of job-search training programs available to newcomers in Canada. Only one, however, is specially designed for the unique requirements of caregivers and domestic workers whose employment and training needs have been largely ignored until now.

Such customized and free Job Search Workshop program is currently being offered by INTERCEDE in affiliation with George Brown College. Classes are

being conducted at the St. James campus, located at 200 King St. East, Room 544E. Each workshop is scheduled for four consecutive Saturdays or Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At the end of the four-day workshop, participants receive a certificate of completion from George Brown College.

The workshop is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and sponsored by COSTI and OCASI. It equips participants with networking and self-marketing skills. It teaches effective ways to prepare resumes and cover letters and strategies to employ for a successful job interview. An overview of the Canadian labour market, workers' rights and employment standards are also covered. The workshop aims to promote self-confidence by providing positive reinforcements and experiential learning.

Four well-attended workshops have already been completed, all garnering positive feedback from participants. "We learned a lot and it will sure help us in the near future in finding new job opportunities," writes Socorro Chica. For Anita Oandasan, "I'm sure it was God's will that I attend the workshop. Now I'm ready to find new employment." Anita actually did find a new job and is now happily settled in B.C.

The workshops provide the opportunity not just to learn essential job-search skills and techniques but to network, develop friendships and camaraderie among participants and to break the sense of isolation and loneliness that commonly afflict caregivers and domestic workers.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

by *Coco Diaz*

Q. I am finally re-united with my family and have two primary school age children who want to go to Catholic School. I do not remember if I reported in my tax declaration that it is the Catholic School Board that I support. Can I still enroll my children?

A. Yes, but make sure to get in touch with the Catholic School Board that covers your area to get the necessary information. Be prepared to provide them with school reports, immigration documents, a copy of birth and baptismal certificates.

Q. In my application for permanent residence under the Live-In Caregiver Program, I stated that only my 12 year old son's papers are to be processed concurrently. My husband will follow us in Canada after he retires from his government position. Why is the Canadian Embassy in the Philippines requiring my husband to complete the medical and security clearances? Can I still get landed status myself and my son?

A. You and your son's application for permanent residence will be processed for approval as long as

your husband will comply with all the requirements asked by the Canadian Embassy in the Philippines. He will have to pass medical and security examinations, give consent for your minor son to secure his Philippine Passport and give certification to the DSWD (Dept. of Social Welfare and Devel.) to allow him to be re-united with you in Canada. Please contact INTERCEDE at 483-4554 for further assistance and information.

Q. I have been diagnosed with an incurable sickness and fully understand what will happen to me. I do not have any relatives here but would like to have a family member come to Canada to visit me. Can I make this request to Immigration?

A. Yes, advise your family member to contact the Canadian Embassy in your country and request for an Application for a Visitor's Visa. Supporting documents such as your Doctor's certification stating the prognosis of your sickness, proof of availability of funds for travel expenses, round trip ticket and your letter of invitation will be needed. INTERCEDE counsellors are available to assist you.

Q. I am a Canadian citizen and the beneficiary of my Life Insurance, RRSP and other investments is my mother who is in my country of origin. If something was to happen to me and my mother was unable to come to Canada, how will she get the money?

A. Contact your financial adviser or the representative of the financial institution where you have invested your money. They will advise you on what to do. Your mother may have to authorize somebody to act on her behalf by having a Power Of Attorney. You may also want to get in touch with a lawyer who could help you prepare a Power of Attorney and/or draw up a Will. For referral, contact INTERCEDE at 483-4554.

Q. After two years of live-in work with the same employer, I gave 4 weeks notice of my termination in writing. I wrote that I was not happy with having to clean her parent's house and babysitting her sister's child in addition to my hectic work schedule. My employer immediately terminated my services and asked me to leave her house. Can you confirm the necessary papers and benefits I am entitled to?

VANCOUVER CDWCR

*Committee for Domestic Workers'
& Caregivers' Rights*

(an INTERCEDE Affiliate)

Contact Julie or Lorina

(604) 874-0649

A. You should receive from your employer a Record of Employment obtained at the Canada Employment Centre (HRDC), two weeks termination pay and vacation pay if you were unable to take all your holiday's during the period you were employed.

Q. I arrived in Canada through an Employment Agency with an agreement to pay \$ 2,500 US. I paid 50% when I was overseas and the remaining amount when I arrived in Canada. I am confident that I have settled my obligation to this Employment Agency with receipts as my proof. My agency is now charging me an additional \$ 500 US as a placement fee. Is this legal?

A. You have paid an excessive amount already, but I would need to see all your documents like your Agreement, receipts and any other written transactions between you and the Employment Agency before I could advise you on the legalities. You do have the right to verify from your agency why there is an additional fee and why you were not informed previously. I would check to see if this Agency is registered to operate and what type of license they have.

WHAT A PICNIC!

by Melinda Gutierrez

INTERCEDE's annual picnic at Earl Bales Park on Sunday, July 25th was delicious.

Abundance reigned that day. On one side of the long table was an immense *lechon* in all its crispy goodness—courtesy of INTERCEDE. That was just the start. The elaborate feast went on to include such mouth-watering favorites as *menudo*, *dinuguan* and *puto*, chicken and pork barbecue, fried fish, *laing*, *pinakbet*, spaghetti, macaroni and fruit salad, and other traditional delicacies. The *sago* and those juicy mangoes and watermelons did not fail to bring back treasured memories of family picnics...long, long ago.

Many came—members, board, staff, friends and supporters of INTERCEDE. And all indulged their appetite for fun. A group played ball, others settled into their version of splendor in the grass, chatting, shuffling cards or simply enjoying the breeze and the expansive scenery. Amidst the bustle, INTERCEDE board and staff grabbed the opportunity to conduct a short but fruitful meeting under a shady tree. Such a fun-filled, or rather food-filled day!

We wish to thank the Citizenship and Immigration Canada Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program; (ISAP) and Job Search Program With COSTI-OCASI: Status Of Women Canada; Canadian Heritage, Multiculturalism Program; Ministry of Citizenship, Culture & Recreation (NSP) and the Municipality of Toronto for their financial support.

Be Updated!

Child Care Training Course

(workshop will focus on infants to children five years of age)

September 18, 1999 to November 6, 1999

(1 - 4 p.m. every Saturday)

Please make a cheque of \$70.00 payable to Seneca College and mail to INTERCEDE at 234 Eglinton Ave. E., S-205, Toronto, On M4P 1K5.

Register before September 10, 1999

Emergency First Aid with Infant/Child CPR

September 19, 1999 10 - 6 pm

Please make a cheque of \$51.36 payable to St. John Ambulance and mail to: INTERCEDE at

234 Eglinton Ave. E., S-205 Toronto, On M4P 1K5

Register before September 10, 1999

Mark Your Calendar for the following:

October 30, 1999 - INTERCEDE Caregivers Co-op Halloween Costume Party

November 7, 1999 - INTERCEDE Monthly Meeting Topic: Stress Management

December 5, 1999 - INTERCEDE Christmas Party Pot Luck

Our Heartfelt and Deepest Sympathy to the Bereaved Families of:

Remedios Roque who passed away
on July 25, 1999.

A dedicated, loving mother and wife
& Evelyn Estrella who died on August 1, 1999.
A loving daughter any parents could be proud of.

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 205,
Toronto, Ont. M4P 1K5

Time: Monday-Friday, 9 am - 4 pm

Tel: (416) 483-4554 Fax: (416) 483-9781

INTERCEDE STAFF

Coordinator	Gene Lara
Counsellors:	Columbia Diaz Carol Salmon
Admin. Support	Melinda Gutierrez
Intake Worker:	Eva Jacob