

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

November 1993



INTERCEDE

INTERCEDE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING GRACED BY NAC PRESIDENT, HONOURS COUNSELLOR, COCO DIAZ, FOR 10-YEAR SERVICE

Guest Speaker, Sunera Thobani, President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) described to members how the changes to the Immigration Act continue to discriminate against domestic workers and to leave them vulnerable to abuse and harassment at INTERCEDE's Annual General Meeting in October.

NAC commended INTERCEDE on our ongoing pressure to improve the conditions of domestic work and supports our position that domestic workers should not be forced to live in the home of their employer and that they should be allowed to come to Canada as Permanent Residents, like other immigrants.

Thobani called on all candidates in the federal election to state their position on this important issue and for the next government to remove these requirements.

The current President of the Board, Joan Grant-Cummings appealed to all INTERCEDE members, even those who get their landing, to get involved in advocacy work and to continue to support the struggle to improve the rights of domestic workers.

INTERCEDE Coordinator, Fely Villasin reported on the past years advocacy work which included the joint study on union rights, our recommendations to improve the Employment Standards Act as well as the changes to the Immigration Act and

how its discriminatory policies have drastically cut the number of domestic workers entering Canada. Copies of the Coordinator's report will be available at the November monthly meeting should anyone wish to purchase the report.

The business portion of the AGM ended with the nominations for the openings on INTERCEDE's Board of Directors for 1993/1994. Since there were no nominations from the floor this year, all nominees were acclaimed. New members Elisa Bisenio, Maise Lai Kwan Mak, Teresa Hernandez, Beverly Richards and Jean Jovero join Joan Grant-Cummings and Enid Singh who were also acclaimed and will be serving their second term on the Board.

Long time counsellor Columbia Tarape-Diaz, fondly known as "Coco" was applauded by INTERCEDE Staff, members and friends for her contribution, dedication and 10 years of service to INTERCEDE. Coco was presented with an engraved crystal vase in appreciation of her efforts to help domestic workers fight for their rights.

The festivities came to a close with a fabulous presentation put on by the members of the various support groups at INTERCEDE. From the popular Peruvian dance by the Reunion Hispana group, to the Filipina folk dance of lights, the singing of Auld Lang Syne by the Chinese group and the heavenly voice of Daphne from the Caribbean group all who attended were thoroughly entertained. Bravo!

Come to INTERCEDE's monthly meeting on Sunday, November 7, 1993, 3-5 p.m. at Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street, south of College & Spadina

2-3 p.m. New member applications and renewals. Members with ID numbers 92-1668 to 92-1714 must renew or be dropped from membership list.

*3-5 p.m. **PROTECTING DOMESTIC WORKERS AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT**
Presenter from the Barbra Schlifer Clinic*

CLASP Legal Clinic will be open.

MORE CLIENTS, MORE CONTACTS FOR INTERCEDE

The INTERCEDE Service Unit received a total of 6,128 contacts by phone. Add to this, 1,339 contacts by mail, 561 total in-person visits and 86 contacts at the monthly legal clinic of CLASP, total contacts came up to 8,114.

This number does not include the contacts made through our various meetings and other activities (3051) and represents an increase of 42 per cent over the previous year's total contacts at the Service Unit.

The increase is not only due to a stricter and more accurate counting system but also to the changes brought about in the Immigration program and in Immigration law during the course of the year.

More questions and more problems were brought to the Unit by 5,501 domestic workers, most of whom find it difficult to get "permission" to take time off to see an INTERCEDE counsellor and must be satisfied with using the telephone.

Inquiries also came from about 700 friends, relatives, employment agencies and employers on behalf of domestic workers as well as to clarify for themselves the new rules and procedures that came into effect. Employers' questions mostly touched on calculating wages, the process of hiring under the LCP and other requirements of Canada Employment.

Service agencies made 278 contacts mainly for information and referrals and there were about 120 people wanting to access the library and materials resource of INTERCEDE.

Majority of domestic workers who contacted the office are from the Philippines at 77 per cent which reflected a dominant pattern of entrants under the FDM. 13 per cent of contacts were made by Caribbean domestic workers, and 4 per cent by workers from Latin America.

18 per cent of domestic workers contacting the office used English, 77 per cent spoke Pilipino. 98 per cent were female and on temporary status. First time callers among the domestic workers totalled 3019 or 55 per cent. There were more calls from women residing in Toronto, 3020, than those residing in Metro and outlying areas, 2401.

Subjects of Inquiry

A total of 7008 queries were on the subject of immigration, of which 2402 focused on the FDM

and LCP, 2209 were about visas and work permits and 1060 were related to the mail-in system.

The influx of calls centred around the effect of the change in the program on those who entered through the FDM. Specifically, questions were raised about when and how to file an application for permanent residence under the new LCP, changes to the criteria for landing and the confusion over filling out old application forms under the new program.

Questions about visa/work permits and mail-in system centred around forms, procedures and delays as well as expiry and application dates. Complaints were made about excessive delays not just in receiving renewed work and open work permits but also in receiving permanent residence approvals that were delayed from a year and a half to even three years.

Misrepresentation of marital status, dependents or education was the subject of 190 calls. Misrepresentation remained a problem particularly of Filipino domestic workers who were still being advised not to declare their true marital status or number of dependents for fear of being denied access to the domestic program.

Police clearances were a concern for 235 callers who were frustrated or confused about fulfilling this requirement for permanent residence.

This is an excerpt from the Annual Report 1992-1993, Fely Villasin, Coordinator

JAMAICA'S SISTREN WORKSHOP LEADERSHIP AND GROUP BUILDING

New INTERCEDE Board directors and members could have spent one more day of fun with four women from SISTREN, a theatre group traveling in Canada from Jamaica.

One afternoon turned out to be too short but still, they had learned enough about some basics of how to build a team and how leaders are made and chosen.

From the outset, participants' interest was piqued with a surprising introduction of the afternoon's

We wish to thank the Employment and Immigration Canada (Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program); Secretary of State; Multiculturalism and Citizenship; 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.

subject matter - three women disagreeing about how three chairs were arranged, or supposed to be, in the middle of the room.

They learned about how dependent on each other members and leaders are. They analyzed negative and positive attitudes that affected unity in an organization.

They even invented two new ball games - through which leaders were identified and leadership styles discussed.

At the end of the day, everyone had tight hugs for the sisters from SISTREN, Afola, Bess, Becky and Marion, who might have had a needed Sunday rest but instead gave their energy and time to INTERCEDE so that members could improve and strengthen the organization.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q. Please confirm the information I got from my friend that when I file my application for Permanent Residence this month, I will no longer be issued an Open Employment Authorization.

A. Open Employment Authorizations are still granted to domestic workers who file an application for Permanent Residence. An Open Permit will be issued after you have been approved in principle for landing, a process that usually takes 3 to 6 months from the time you submit your application.

Q. I am an Open Permit holder and presently employed as Live-In babysitter. My employer just gave me notice of termination effective

DID YOU CHANGE ADDRESS?

Please inform us by phone or mail so that you can continue getting your newsletter and we don't waste up to \$43 in postage expenses for returned mail!

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Sunday, December 5, 1993, 3 pm
Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.

"About Confidence-Building and Self-Assertiveness"

Guest: Honor Ford-Smith,
Founding Director, SISTREN

Christmas carols and
exchange of gifts (not less than \$5)

November 30, but I have already paid my ticket to go home to the Philippines for December 7, 1993. Is it safe for me to go home if I do not have an employer?

A. As we always advise to callers in our office, it is not advisable and you are taking a big risk. However, of all the Open Permit domestic workers in contact with INTERCEDE who have went home to the Philippines they were able to secure a re-entry visa at the Canadian Embassy in the Philippines. The danger in your case is that you do not have an employer who can issue you a letter of support.

Q. I filed an application for Permanent Residence in August and my present Employment Authorization will expire on December 7, 1993. Do I need to renew my Employment Authorization in December?

A. Yes, you need to renew your Employment Authorization at least two weeks before it expires. It will take 3 to 6 months before you receive an Open Permit. You can attach a letter to your application to extend your work permit advising Immigration of when you filed your Permanent Residence Kit and asking that you be issued the Open Permit instead.

TO ALL SUBSCRIBERS (Does not apply to current members)

INTERESTED TO CONTINUE RECEIVING THIS NEWSLETTER? SEND THE FORM BELOW WITH PAYMENT.
IF NO RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION BY END OF NOVEMBER, WE'LL REMOVE YOUR NAME FROM OUR MAILING LIST.

RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION NEW SUBSCRIPTION CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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

Please send DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS to:

NAME : _____
ADDRESS : _____
CITY/PROVINCE : _____
POSTAL CODE : _____ TELEPHONE : _____

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES :

INTERCEDE Members :	FREE	Non-member Domestic :	\$20.00
Non-Profit Organizations:	FREE	Others	\$25.00

MARK YOUR INTERCEDE CALENDAR

Caribbean Group Meeting

Sunday, November 14, 1993
3-5 pm, Cecil Community Centre
58 Cecil St.
Call Carol 324-8751

Reunion Hispana

Domingo, el 21 de noviembre 1993
3-5 de la tarde
Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.
Llame a Coco 324-8751

Chinese Group

English Class with Rebecca Chong
Sunday, Nov. 21, 1993
4:00 - 5:00 p.m.
L'Amoreaux Community Center Teen Lounge
2000 McNicoll Avenue, Scarborough
Call 324-8751 to confirm

INTERCEDE Bowling Sundays

Thorncliffe Bowlerama; 1 - 4 pm
Call Eva, 324-8751 for Sundays in
November & December

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Canada Immigration Centre	973-4444
Educ & Skills Training Ctr, Labour Council	345-9312
Employment Standards Enforcement	326-7160
Immigrant Women's Health Centre	323-9986
Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre	656-8933
OHIP	
Toronto	482-1111
Scarborough	1-800-263-3814
Mississauga	275-2730
Ontario Human Rights Commission	326-9511
Unemployment Insurance	730-1211
Workers' Compensation	927-9555
Revenue Canada (taxation)	869-1500

Toronto Rape Crisis Center (24 Hr line) 597-8808
Assaulted Help Line 863-0511

EMERGENCY HOUSING

Nelle'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. 924-4244
Metro Tor. Chinese & SE Asian Legal Clinic 971-9674
Toronto Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic 971-8832

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489 College Street, Suite 402
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 1A5

FIRST CLASS

Q. Will I be entitled for Christmas Holidays, Boxing Day and New Year's Day? I only arrived in Canada in July 1993 and have been working with the same employer.

A. Yes, you are entitled to these 3 statutory holidays. Under the Employment Standards Act of the Ministry of Labour, domestic workers who have worked for more than 3 months with the current employer are qualified.

Q. I have worked for 4 years with one employer, I decided to move out to accept an offer of live-out employment for a couple who have one child. I had received an excellent reference letter from my previous employer as I had been the live-in babysitter of their 3 young children. Unfortunately, I was turned down for the job because when my previous employers were contacted by phone they gave me a bad reference. What will I do?

- A.**
1. Be open to your prospective employer, tell her what prompted you to move out (ie. preference to care for only one child, higher salary, change of location, live-out position etc).
 2. Show your prospective employer reference letters from previous employers.
 3. Also, it is important to stress that if your previous employers were not happy or satisfied with your work performance, personality or character they would not have let you work for their family for 4 years.

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: 489 College St., Suite 402, Toronto, Ont.
Time: Monday-Friday, 9 am - 4 pm
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