



□□□□ **JASON KENNEY**

The Filipino Canadian community is more and more becoming suspicious of the changes made to the Federal government's Live-in caregiver program (LCP) and remain further committed to campaigning for justice in the face of the continuation of the antiquated, anti-woman program.

The restrictive policies of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) stall the development of Filipino workers, prolonging their economical marginalization and confinement to low skilled positions. CIC in continuing to refuse the recognition of education and qualifications of Filipino workers is exploitative and oppressive, and a conscious aim to keep Filipino-Canadian women under the rule of the LCP.

The changes which were implemented last April 1, 2010 include extension of the period of being able to complete the live-in requirement from three years to four years; completing 3,900 hours of work to apply for Permanent Residence; the elimination of a second medical examination when applying for Permanent Residence; the live-in caregiver's travel and medical costs being met by the employer.

Written by Special to the Filipino Reporter
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These changes are only band-aid solutions, a ploy by the government to lengthen the time spent on the program and will only make life more difficult for this group of already vulnerable temporary workers. For example, the elimination of a second medical examination has only made the first examination much more difficult to pass, prevented many from coming to Canada in the first place.

The federal government stubbornly ignore the main issues which actually perpetuate wide-spread abuse, namely the requirement of having to live with the employer, employer-specific work permits and the temporary immigration status.

The Filipino-Canadian community has remained unchanged in it's view that "live in" should be optional. Not every family need a live-in caregiver, rather it places the caregiver in a position of being a modern-day slave to the family, available 24 hours a day.

The Canadian government should also allow the caregiver's family to accompany them to Canada, and issue open work permit to their spouse. It is heartbreaking that the Canadian Government supports the pulling apart of families in order to keep live-in caregivers on low wages.

Rumours are rife through the community that the changes are an underhand way of shutting down the program altogether, and putting an end to Filipino caregiver immigration to Canada.

These stories persist of would be overseas applicants failing to find a Canadian employer even willing to pay the larger costs. One does wonder if adding these costs to employers, fully knowing they wouldn't pay for it, is a slow but sure way of killing the Live-in caregiver program with all its continuous problems.

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The only solution is to give caregivers permanent residence status.

Jason Kenney, Minister of Immigration, Citizenship and Multiculturalism; champion of selling his significant improvements to the trusting Filipino-Canadian Community, mostly in the GTA area, and to some of the rather green caregiver groups who seem to worship him, both in Canada and more recently in the Philippines also, has failed to truly appreciate the value and importance of Filipino caregivers in Canada.

He has, however, succeeded in self-believe that he and his party have actually made progress through their miserable arbitrary attempt to score Filipino votes for the next Federal election.

Until this Government truly values Filipino caregivers, we maintain we will not vote for you.

The idea of employers paying the airfare and all recruitment fees does not go nearly far enough to make a positive change. Even so, no government body is enforcing the new rules resulting in many caregivers continuing to shoulder huge expenses afraid not to lose the opportunity to work in Canada.

If Canadian families are too cheap to pay all the fees associated when hiring a caregiver then perhaps they should not have the right to hire one in the first place.

Once a caregiver arrives in Canada, they should have to right to choose which employer and what location is most suitable for them. Why should a caregiver stay with a family they are not happy with?

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A Canadian worker doesn't have to so why should a caregiver?

Agencies are crying wolf with claims of a loss of business, yet nobody has sympathy for them. The simple fact is that Canada does not need caregiver placement agencies!

The solution is that caregivers should be accepted on arrival to Canada as Permanent Residents in order to prevent our fellow peers from continuing to be milked by recruitment agencies and consultants, and even now by Canadian employers. Canadian families demanding money to sponsoring relatives of Filipinos living in Canada is also a common occurrence.

The Live in caregiver program is, and always has been, an employer-driven program. If the government was really interested in the rights of foreign workers and justice for them, rather than the overreaching and greed-fueled demands of employers, they would grant Permanent Residence to caregivers on arrival. Caregiver would then be willing to shoulder their own airfare and expenses and have the choice to work for a family and the location they choose.

We maintain that for the empowerment and liberation of the Filipino Canadian community, changes to the LCP must go much further. They have not even scratched the surface of the exploitation and wide spread abuse.

Marlon Rey Bilaton