

LABOUR, MIGRATION AND RESISTANCE: THE LEGACY OF INTERCEDE IN  
DOMESTIC WORKERS ADVOCACY IN 1980s ONTARIO.

A Thesis Submitted to the Committee of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Faculty of Arts and Science.

TRENT UNIVERSITY

Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

© Copyright by Jamila Haruna 2025

History M.A. Graduate Program

January 2026

## Abstract

### Labour, Migration and Resistance: The Legacy of INTERCEDE in Domestic Workers Advocacy in 1980s Ontario

Jamila Haruna

In 1980s Ontario, racialized migrant domestic workers faced systemic exploitation, precarious immigration status and exclusion from labour protections, reinforced by provincial and federal policies that devalued domestic labour. This thesis examines how INTERCEDE, a Toronto-based coalition, challenged these structural inequalities. Employing an intersectional approach, this study reveals how race, gender, immigration status, and class collectively marginalized migrant care workers. Drawing on extensive primary sources, it analyzes INTERCEDE's influence on major policy changes, including reforms to the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program and to provincial labour laws. The thesis argues that while INTERCEDE effort contributed to securing significant, albeit often fragile, victories, these gains highlighted both the power of activism and the persistent challenges under neoliberal regimes. It contributes to feminist labour history, migration studies, and care work scholarship by demonstrating how organized resistance reshaped Canadian policy and contested institutionalized marginalization.

Keywords: Labour, Migration, Resistance, INTERCEDE, Domestic Workers, Advocacy, Ontario, Policy, Exploitation, Care Work, Labour Advocacy, Feminist Labour History

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Almighty Allah for granting me the strength, clarity of thought, and endurance necessary to undertake and complete this thesis.

This work would not have been possible without the exceptional mentorship of my supervisor, Professor David Sheinin. My deepest gratitude goes to him for shaping the early conception of this project and for his rigorous academic standards, which consistently elevated the work throughout its development. His guidance, unwavering support, and belief in this project were indispensable.

I am equally grateful to my committee member, Professor Robert Wright, and my external examiner, Dr. Susan Miranda, for their invaluable time, insightful critiques, and thoughtful engagement with my research.

I extend my sincere thanks to Catherine O'Brien for her essential assistance in navigating the administrative side of graduate studies, which made this complex process far more manageable. I must also acknowledge Professor Sally Chivers, who first sparked my interest in the history and politics of female domestic workers, and Professor. Finis Dunaway, whose guidance during my coursework significantly strengthened the intellectual foundations of this research.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my husband, Habib Hamzat, without whose unwavering presence and practical support this thesis would quite literally not have come to light. His patient engagement with my ideas, willingness to critique early drafts, and sustained brainstorming sessions were crucial in the most challenging stages of this work.

I am profoundly grateful to my parents, Dr. I.O Haruna and Mrs. K.I Haruna, my sisters, Basirah, Sherifah, and Amirah, and my daughter, Iman, for their constant love, encouragement, and understanding throughout this extended journey.

Finally, I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to Mr. Muhideen and his family for their extraordinary generosity and kindness. Their support in providing me with food and shelter over an extended period made the successful completion of this work possible in ways that words can hardly capture.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Abbreviations	vi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Roots of Exploitation: Migrant Domestic Work in Ontario	22
Chapter 2: Organizing Resistance: Founding INTERCEDE	56
Chapter 3: Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization Report and FDM	83
Chapter 4: INTERCEDE's Legislative Advocacy and Successes (1980–1990)	108
Conclusion	125
Bibliography	137

## List of Abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting
ASPIRE	Assisting Single Parents in Reaching Employment
CADIW	Committee Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women
CAR	Committee Against Racism
CCF	Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
CDS	Caribbean Domestic Scheme
CECs	Canada Employment Centres
CEIC	Canada Employment and Immigration Commission
CEIC	Canada Employment Insurance Commission
CPP	Canada Pension Plan
ESA	Employment Standards Act
ESIW	Employment Services for Immigrant Women
FDM	Foreign Domestic Movement
GWA	General Welfare Assistance
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INTERCEDE	International Coalition to End Domestic Exploitation
ISAP	Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program
LCP	Live-In Caregiver Program

LEAF	Legal Education & Action Fund
LRDS	Labour Rights for Domestic Servants
MPP	Members of Provincial Parliament
NDP	New Democratic Party
OCAP	Ontario Career Action Program
OHRC	Ontario Human Rights Code
PLURA	Presbyterian, Lutheran, United, Roman Catholic, Anglican
R.S.O.	Revised Statutes of Ontario
ROE	Record of Employment
TEAP	Temporary Employment Authorizations Program
UI	Unemployment Insurance
WCA	Workers' Compensation Act
WIDS	West Indian Domestic Scheme
WIN	Work Incentive Program

## Introduction

Throughout the 1970s, Ontario underwent profound shifts in its political, economic, and social landscape. During this period, policymakers in many industrialized countries including Canada moved away from Keynesian welfare-state principles and embraced neoliberal economic theories.<sup>1</sup> Labour markets were increasingly shaped by policies that prioritized market-driven solutions and curtailed government intervention. Gregory Albo highlighted how neoliberal policies emphasized labour market flexibility, rolling back institutional protection for workers and reducing the role of the state in regulating employment. These measures, which included weakening trade unions, minimizing welfare disincentives and eliminating market restraints such as minimum wages and unemployment insurance, were designed to create a more flexible labour market, driven by market forces rather than government intervention.<sup>2</sup> For migrant domestic workers, particularly those from the Global South, this ideological shift resulted in a significant erosion of labour protections and a rise in exploitation. Even though immigrant domestic workers had historically enjoyed landed status in the first decades of these programs, this began to change gradually as more women of colour entered them.<sup>3</sup>

The federal and provincial government pledges to uphold the welfare state began crumbling throughout this decade due to pressure from the recession and later, more

---

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Clarkson, "Economics: The New Hemispheric Fundamentalism," in *The Political Economy of North American Free Trade*, ed. Ricardo Grinspun and Maxwell Cameron (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), 61.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory Albo, "Competitive Austerity and the Impasse of Capitalist Employment Policy," in *Between Globalism and Nationalism: Socialist Register*, ed. Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch (London: Merlin Press, 1994) 146.

<sup>3</sup> Patricia Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1993), 135.

extensive economic restructuring and deregulation. Between the 1940s and 1970s, Canada's welfare state took shape alongside major political and economic shifts, including the rise of industrialization and urban labour forces. During this period, unions gained influence and left-leaning parties such as the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and New Democratic Party (NDP) pushed for social welfare measures to support workers and reduce inequality.<sup>4</sup> However, as the economic boom of the 1960s faded and public disillusionment set in, politicians seized the opportunity to advance neoliberal agendas favouring reduced government intervention, fiscal austerity, and traditional social values. This transition marked the end of the Keynesian era of steady growth and robust welfare programs.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the economic crises of the 1970s with stagflation and rising unemployment exposed the limits of Keynesian policies and fuelled the rise of a new conservative politics characterized by deregulation, tax cuts and a diminished role for the state. The vibrant idealism and social activism of the 1960s met a backlash in the 1970s. Neoliberalism surged in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, redefining the accepted role of government and the economy.

There were four major changes in Canada's socio-economic environment during the 1970s that particularly pressured women especially single mothers to leave welfare and take paid employment:<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Keith G. Banting, "The three federalisms and change in social policy." in *Canadian federalism: performance, effectiveness, and legitimacy*, ed. Herman Bakvis and Grace Skogstad (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 286.

<sup>5</sup> Sean Antaya, "The New Left at Work: Workers' Unity, the New Tendency, and Rank-and-File Organizing in Windsor, Ontario, in the 1970s," *Labour/Le Travail* 85 (2020): 53–89, <https://www.lltjournal.ca/index.php/llt/article/view/6016/6936>.

<sup>6</sup> Wendy McKeen, "Work Incentives for 'Welfare Mothers' in 1970s Ontario: Screening Out the Political," *Labor / Le Travail*, no.85 (2020): 91–126. <https://www-jstor-org.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/stable/26976139?sid=primo&seq=195>.

1. Women's liberation and changing social norms: The second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s campaigned for women's equality in education and the workforce. By the late 1970s, there was growing acceptance of women as competent professionals and breadwinners. Feminist advocacy helped influence governments and organizations to implement policies supporting women's employment (such as job training programs and anti-discrimination measures). This heightened awareness of women's rights and independence meant that society increasingly viewed women not only as caregivers at home but also as workers who should be gainfully employed.
2. Economic recession and austerity: The global economic slowdown of the mid-1970s brought high unemployment, inflation, and stagnant growth. In response, governments enacted austerity policies, cutting back on social spending and benefits. These cuts disproportionately affected single mothers on welfare, who suddenly faced reduced support even as jobs were scarce.
3. Rise of neoliberal and neoconservative ideology: By the late 1970s, neoliberal ideas (often overlapping with social conservatism) gained popularity. There was a growing belief in government that social programs like welfare created disincentives to work. As a result, policies were implemented to activate welfare recipients, frequently tightening rules and imposing work requirements with insufficient assistance. Single mothers on assistance were prime targets of these reforms.
4. Changing attitudes toward motherhood and work: Social attitudes in the 1970s began to shift regarding parenting and employment. It became increasingly expected that mothers, even those with young children would join or remain in

the workforce. This change was partly economic necessity and partly evolving gender norms.

The late 1970s and early 1980s in Ontario marked a decisive ideological shift in social policy, driven by the rise of a New Right discourse that emphasized personal responsibility and individual accountability over collective welfare. This shift was taken up by the Progressive Conservative government under Premier William Davis. Ontario's Justice Minister Gordon Walker published *Conservative Canada*,<sup>7</sup> attacking big government and calling for a return to free-market principles, traditional family values and a strong work ethic.<sup>8</sup> And public commentators aligned with this view, like Claire Hoy in the *Toronto Sun*, argued that public spending on welfare and childcare had grown unsustainably large, displacing the responsibilities of families and communities.<sup>9</sup>

In response, the provincial government implemented a series of welfare reforms beginning in 1976 that aimed to reduce reliance on public assistance by making recipients accountable for their own self-sufficiency. Ontario's Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services introduced the (federal-provincial) Sole-Support Mothers Employment Pilot in November 1976 to encourage single mothers (sole-support mothers on welfare) to re-enter the labour force. Under this program, if a participant secured full-time employment, her family benefits payments would be gradually phased out. The program offered services like personal assessment, job

---

<sup>7</sup> Gordon Walker and G. P Williams, *A Conservative Canada* (Sutton West: Paget Press, 1983).

<sup>8</sup> McKeen, "Work Incentives for 'Welfare Mothers' in 1970s Ontario: Screening Out the Political," 100.

<sup>9</sup> *Toronto Sun* 29 March 1982 quoted in Wendy McKeen, "Work Incentives for 'Welfare Mothers' in 1970s Ontario: Screening Out the Political," *Labor / Le Travail*, no.85 (2020): 91–126.

training or education referrals, and a brief orientation to employment course to prepare mothers for full-time work.<sup>10</sup> In 1979, the government introduced the Work Incentive Program (WIN), which provided a limited monthly wage supplement initially to Family Benefits recipients who left welfare for full-time jobs. In 1981, Social Services Minister Frank Drea created the accelerated welfare-to-work measures. In 1982, the ministry launched the ASPIRE program (Assisting Single Parents in Reaching Employment), later proposing structural changes to tighten welfare eligibility for single parents.<sup>11</sup> Notably, plans to integrate single mothers on family benefits into the General Welfare Assistance (GWA) program. In the area of childcare, the Progressive Conservatives likewise resisted calls for universal, publicly funded services. Instead, they promoted private, often for-profit alternatives, as exemplified by the 1974 Birch Proposals which sought to reduce staffing standards in daycares to allow more private operators to enter the sector.<sup>12</sup>

This ideological shift in social policy meant that the postwar conception of a broad welfare state where every citizen had a right to a basic standard of living and society collectively ensured each member's well-being was no longer viable. After 1980, many focused on the market as a regulating force.<sup>13</sup> In this market-liberal governance

---

<sup>10</sup> McKeen, "Work Incentives for 'Welfare Mothers' in 1970s Ontario: Screening Out the Political," 103.

<sup>11</sup> McKeen, "Work Incentives for 'Welfare Mothers' in 1970s Ontario: Screening Out the Political," 103.

<sup>12</sup> "History Repeats: Undermining Child Care in Ontario," Childcare and family, Justice politics & government, Sue Colley. last modified June 16, 2023, [https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/history-repeats-undermining-child-care-in-ontario?fbclid=IwY2xjawK92FRleHRuA2F1bQIxMABicmlkETFQaHM3UXU4TktwbTh0WVJNAR5oV1O0JBgzFljgj5moH17y6RdgUZaS8I3W8iC9WnPhHyEOkXvgXh9d6g2Ufg\\_aem\\_KEV9d7a1OHO\\_UzxAkV27Pw](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/history-repeats-undermining-child-care-in-ontario?fbclid=IwY2xjawK92FRleHRuA2F1bQIxMABicmlkETFQaHM3UXU4TktwbTh0WVJNAR5oV1O0JBgzFljgj5moH17y6RdgUZaS8I3W8iC9WnPhHyEOkXvgXh9d6g2Ufg_aem_KEV9d7a1OHO_UzxAkV27Pw)

<sup>13</sup> Sedef Arat-Koc, "Neo-Liberalism, State Restructuring and Immigration: Changes in Canadian Policies in the 1990s," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 2 (1999): 31–56, <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/article/672951/pdf>.

model, the good citizen is one who participates in the market, acknowledges the limits of government support, and assumes responsibility for self-sufficiency.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, government cuts to education, health care and welfare compelled women already burdened with the bulk of private caregiving responsibilities to work even more at home, compensating for the loss of public services. Since women make up a disproportionate number of welfare claimants, these changes had a detrimental impact on them.<sup>15</sup> During this period, women's labour-market policy shifted away from supporting women's employment and tackling structural inequalities and toward encouraging women's individualism and entrepreneurial initiative.<sup>16</sup> Even though women may have been working harder in domestic settings, their contributions were often invisible and undervalued because they did not fit into the market-driven framework of the period, which only valued work that was paid and took place in the public sphere. In this thinking, unpaid domestic caregiving and household management, predominantly done by women, were dismissed as not real work precisely because it did not generate a paycheck or profit.<sup>17</sup>

The late 1970s also saw scholars and activists beginning to analyze how neoliberal globalization was affecting the migration of women of colour from the Global South

---

<sup>14</sup>Janine Brodie, *Restructuring and the New Citizenship.* *Rethinking Restructuring: Gender and change in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), quoted in Sedef Arat-Koc, "Neo-Liberalism, State Restructuring and Immigration: Changes in Canadian Policies in the 1990s," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 2 (1999): 34, <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/article/672951/pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Janine Brodie, *Politics on the Margins: Restructuring and the Canadian Women's Movement* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1995), 55.

<sup>16</sup> Tammy Findlay, "Gendering the State: Women and Public Policy in Ontario" in *Divided Province: Ontario Politics in the Age of Neoliberalism*, ed. Bryan Evans and Gregory Albo (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), 212.

<sup>17</sup> Arat-Koc, "Neo-Liberalism, State Restructuring and Immigration: Changes in Canadian Policies in the 1990s," 34.

to perform domestic work in wealthy countries. A substantial body of literature from the late 1970s onward addressed this phenomenon. Sociologists Daiva Stasiulis and Abigail Bakan, for example, examined how contemporary citizenship and migrant labour were shaped by global capitalism. They argued that neoliberal policies like the IMF's structural adjustment program operated to the detriment of the workers from the Third world, resulting in pressure on women of these countries to seek work as nannies, maids and caregivers in first-world households.<sup>18</sup> Domestic workers from the Caribbean and the Philippines where national labour markets struggled to absorb surplus labour and where people were negatively impacted by the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) structural adjustment policies, migrated to Canada, where the government encouraged them to work without granting citizenship rights.<sup>19</sup> They presented two interrelated arguments about how global structural forces and policies negatively impacted women from poorer countries, particularly in the context of migration and labour.<sup>20</sup>

First, global economic forces rooted in neo-imperial relationships set the stage for the mass migration of domestic workers from the Global South. For instance, the IMF's Structural Adjustment Programs of the 1980s devastated many Caribbean economies, leading to cuts in social services and high unemployment that particularly impacted women.<sup>21</sup> In Jamaica in the early 1980s, IMF-imposed austerity forced the government to slash healthcare spending by 30 percent disproportionately harming women who relied on public services. Facing such hardships at home, many

---

<sup>18</sup> Stasiulis and Bakan, *Negotiating Citizenship: Migrant Women in Canada and the Global System* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 40.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

Caribbean women felt compelled to seek precarious domestic work abroad. Canada's Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program, introduced in 1981, institutionalized this dynamic by recruiting women from regions like the Caribbean and later the Philippines as temporary labourers essentially exporting caregivers. A telling example is the case of Melrose Morgan, a Jamaican domestic worker in Canada from 1979 to 1982. Morgan endured long hours and low pay and was given no time off to attend the mandatory evening classes she needed to upgrade her skills for permanent residency. When she asked her employer to adjust her hours so she could go to class, she flatly refused, reportedly saying: "My friend's helper is not taking courses, so why should you?"<sup>22</sup>

Denied the chance to complete the required training, Morgan ultimately had her application for permanent residency rejected by immigration authorities, leaving her in legal limbo. Wealthy countries like Canada continued to profit from the labour of women from poorer countries while excluding those women from labour laws and citizenship rights. By refusing to extend full legal protections to domestic workers, Canada shifted the financial burden of social reproduction onto the backs of racialized migrant women like Melrose Morgan.

Second, wealthy country actors have exploited this influx of migrant women to further their own policy agendas and household needs. Instead of expanding public childcare or social services, governments made austerity cuts, then outsourced care work to imported labour. They framed such cutbacks as beneficial to certain women

---

<sup>22</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1985," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified October 10, 2024, [https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE)

namely, middle and upper-class women in their own countries. For instance, the failure of Canada's federal government to develop a cohesive childcare policy led to a market-driven system. This system favoured higher-income families who could afford private childcare, while low-income families faced limited access and increased costs.<sup>23</sup> These women benefitted from hiring cheaper domestic labour, often provided by migrant women from poorer countries. This allowed the wealthy women to pursue careers and higher-status opportunities, while migrant women bear the burden of this labour under exploitative conditions.

### Colonization Revisited

Exploitation was rooted in colonial legacies, where racialized and gendered bodies were viewed as sources of cheap labour. Daenzer divided Canada's economic and social development into two major stages.<sup>24</sup> The first occurred during the colonial era, when France and Britain exploited the land, labour, and resources of the territory. To further their economic goals, these colonial powers appropriated resources from Indigenous peoples, destroyed their preexisting social structures and installed new ones in their place. In the second, modern phase, specific economic systems have changed, but the fundamental pattern of exploitation remains. Immigrant women's labour, Daenzer contends, had become the chief commodity of this new era of colonization. Like raw materials under colonialism, the caregiving labour of migrant women is mined and exploited, often in the private sphere of the home, which renders it invisible. The exploitation of these women of colour, carried out in the private

---

<sup>23</sup> Martha Friendly et al., *Risky business: Childcare ownership in Canada past, present and future* (Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2021), 25.

<sup>24</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940s-1990s*, 1. Leach, "Canada's Migrants without History: Neoliberal Immigration Regimes and Trinidadian Transnationalism," 34.

homes of privileged white Canadians, was analogous to colonization in that it was aided and abetted by Canadian state policies.<sup>25</sup>

Evidence showed that the Canadian government had found certain foreign governments to be willing participants in the trafficking of female servants.<sup>26</sup> For example, in 1955 the Canadian state worked with Caribbean authorities to establish the West Indian Domestic Scheme (WIDS), a program to recruit women from Jamaica and Barbados to work as domestics in Canada. This scheme was explicitly a quid pro quo: it gave a limited number of Caribbean women access to jobs in Canada, and in return Canada appeased Caribbean governments (and protected its interests in the region) by reducing unemployment at home and generating remittance income for those island nations. The remittances these domestic workers sent back were touted as a form of financial aid from Canada to the Caribbean nations.<sup>27</sup> Because Canadian officials feared that they would lose access to the region if they did not embrace a more diverse and inclusive immigration policy that allowed women of colour to migrate. Caribbean government leaders were pacified, and Canada was able to continue trading and investing in the region thanks to initiatives like the WIDS, which

---

<sup>25</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Stasiulis and Bakan, *Negotiating Citizenship: Migrant Women in Canada and the Global System*, 40.

gave Caribbean nationals limited access to Canada.<sup>28</sup> They rationalized this cooperation as economic expediency in the context of managing poverty.<sup>29</sup>

By the mid twentieth century, domestic service in Canada had become racially stratified. Women of colour were explicitly sought out to fill domestic positions; a job sector historically associated with low pay and servitude. At first, West Indian women made up the largest group of non-white domestics arriving in the country. Later, especially after the introduction of the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program in 1981, the overall numbers of women admitted as domestic workers swelled and migrant women from the Philippines eventually became the predominant group.<sup>30</sup> 8,302 domestic workers arrived in Canada in 1980 and another 12,875 were brought in the following year. From 1982 to 1989, 56,590 domestic workers were brought in to work in private Canadian households; 97 percent of these workers were women.<sup>31</sup>

The experiences of the seven Jamaican mothers provide a vivid illustration of how gender and race interact in labour exploitation. Lola Anderson, Eliza Cox, Carmen Hyde, Elaine Peart, Gloria Lawrence, Elizabeth Lodge, and Rubina White were recruited from Jamaica and arrived in Canada as landed immigrants in the early to

---

<sup>28</sup> Tungohan, *Care Activism: Migrant Domestic Workers, Movement-Building, and Communities of Care*, 25. Also in Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis, 'Foreign Domestic Workers Policy in Canada and the Social Boundary of Modern Citizenship,' in *Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, ed. Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 33.

<sup>29</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Audrey Macklin, "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant," *McGill Law Journal* 37, no. 3 (1992): 681–760, [https://heinonline-org.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/mcgil37&id=700&men\\_tab=srchresults](https://heinonline-org.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/mcgil37&id=700&men_tab=srchresults).

<sup>31</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 2.

mid-1970s.<sup>32</sup> The seven Jamaican mothers faced two types of discrimination because they were Black women.<sup>33</sup> Upon arrival, they worked as live-in domestic caregivers, providing essential child-care, housekeeping, and eldercare services. However, they shared a hidden truth that exposed a grave injustice in the system: each of the seven women was a mother to minor children whom she had left in Jamaica.<sup>34</sup> They had deliberately concealed their motherhood during the Canadian immigration application process. In fact, they later revealed that Jamaican authorities advised them to omit their children from their applications, knowing that Canadian immigration rules at the time would disqualify women with dependent children from being accepted as independent domestic workers. The women complied, believing that they would otherwise never be admitted to Canada. They also claimed that Canadian Manpower and Immigration officials were tacitly aware that many incoming domestic workers were mothers but chose to look the other way because those workers were needed to meet Canada's demand for domestics.<sup>35</sup>

By the late 1970s, as Canada faced an economic downturn and rising unemployment, public sentiment increasingly turned against immigrants, who were frequently scapegoated for job shortages and economic strain. "Social discontent and anger was

---

<sup>32</sup> Erica Lawson, "The Gendered Working Lives of Seven Jamaican Women in Canada: A Story about 'Here' and 'There' in a Transnational Economy," *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 1 (2013): 138–56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43860670>.

<sup>33</sup> Lawson, "The Gendered Working Lives of Seven Jamaican Women in Canada: A Story about 'Here' and 'There' in a Transnational Economy," 142–43.

Arat-Koc, "From Mothers of the Nation to Migrant Workers," 56-61.

<sup>34</sup> Position Paper by Committee Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women (CADIW), 1977–1978, 10-001-S1-F629, Box 18, File 40, Canadian Women's Movement Archives (CWMA) Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa Library, Ottawa, ON.

<sup>35</sup> Lawson, "The Gendered Working Lives of Seven Jamaican Women in Canada: A Story about 'Here' and 'There' in a Transnational Economy," 139.

directed against the immigrant, and the Government pretends to "alleviate unemployment" by conducting mass deportation of immigrants."<sup>36</sup> The government moved to deport the Seven Jamaican Mothers on the grounds that they had misrepresented their family status by not disclosing their children in their immigration applications. From the women's perspective, this was a betrayal: the Canadian government had been content to ignore their motherhood as long as their labour was filling the domestic labour gap created when Canadian women entered the paid workforce in large numbers.<sup>37</sup> Facing deportation, the seven women filed a joint complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission on March 1, 1978, arguing that the deportation order constituted discrimination on multiple grounds; sex, race, ethnicity and colour.<sup>38</sup> They acknowledged that they hadn't declared their children, but they insisted that both the Jamaican and Canadian authorities had always been aware of this common practice and had chosen to disregard it until it became politically convenient to get Blacks out of the country.<sup>39</sup> Not only were these women being punished for being mothers but their treatment highlighted how gendered labour was exploited without offering any long-term security or respect.<sup>40</sup> After years of

---

<sup>36</sup> Position Paper by Committee Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women (CADIW), 1977–1978, 10-001-S1-F629, Box 18, File 40, Canadian Women's Movement Archives (CWMA) Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa Library, Ottawa, ON.

<sup>37</sup> Position Paper by Committee Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women (CADIW), 1977–1978, 10-001-S1-F629, Box 18, File 40, Canadian Women's Movement Archives (CWMA) Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa Library, Ottawa, ON.

<sup>38</sup> Lawson, "The Gendered Working Lives of Seven Jamaican Women in Canada: A Story about 'Here' and 'There' in a Transnational Economy," 139.

<sup>39</sup> Position Paper by Committee Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women (CADIW), 1977–1978, 10-001-S1-F629, Box 18, File 40, Canadian Women's Movement Archives (CWMA) Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa Library, Ottawa, ON.

<sup>40</sup> Lawson, "The Gendered Working Lives of Seven Jamaican Women in Canada: A Story about 'Here' and 'There' in a Transnational Economy," 139.

serving Canadian families, none of the Seven Jamaican Mothers were given the opportunity to transition into other jobs or to settle permanently. The rigid WIDS criteria erased their personal and family lives, forcing women to fit into a narrow mold of what was acceptable, thereby reinforcing their subordination as workers and individuals.<sup>41</sup> The assumptions embedded in the program treated domestic workers as labour commodities rather than as full individuals with rights, families and potential for integration into Canadian society.

By the early 1980s, however, the domestic workers movement in Canada had achieved a new level of organization and recognition. No longer were domestic workers seen merely as isolated, voiceless individuals at the mercy of their employers and the state. This shift in perception was due in large part to the efforts of emerging coalitions like INTERCEDE (International Coalition to End Domestic Exploitation). Founded in 1979, INTERCEDE quickly became a central force advocating for migrant domestic workers labour and immigration rights in Ontario. It was established by a broad alliance that, at its outset, included 25 local organizations and 4 international endorsing organizations,<sup>42</sup> ranging from labour unions to feminist groups, immigrant advocacy organizations, religious institutions and more.

---

<sup>41</sup> Lawson, "The Gendered Working Lives of Seven Jamaican Women in Canada: A Story about 'Here' and 'There' in a Transnational Economy," 145. For more on erasure of the family and personal lives of these domestic women, Ian MacKenzie, "Early Movements of Domestic Workers from the Caribbean and Canadian Immigration Policy," *Alternate Routes*, no. 8 (1988): 124–43, <https://archive.org/details/alternateroutesj08alte/page/134/mode/2up>,

<sup>42</sup> List of "Endorsers of INTERCEDE" by Steering Committee; INTERCEDE: Statement of goals and objectives, annual reports, grant proposals, 20 June 1980, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 11, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

The formation of INTERCEDE can be seen as part of a broader mobilization that began in the 1970s. What started as defensive struggles such as fighting deportations like those of the Jamaican mothers and protesting gross exploitation matured by the 1980s into a proactive and strategic campaign for legislative reform. By uniting various stakeholders and framing their cause in terms of human rights and social justice, domestic workers through INTERCEDE secured a place at the policy table. They went from being invisible help to being recognized as a legitimate and important workforce within Canadian society. Within just a few years of its founding, the International Coalition to End Domestic Exploitation emerged as the leading voice for domestic workers rights in Ontario.

This thesis argues that INTERCEDE's advocacy during the 1980s contributed to shaping government policies and public perceptions of domestic workers in Ontario, winning reforms in both labour law and immigration policy. By strategically linking worker exploitation to systemic inequities in Canada's neo-imperial labour system, INTERCEDE compelled policymakers to address the exclusion of migrant domestic workers from basic rights.<sup>43</sup> INTERCEDE tackled issues on two fronts: it fought to extend provincial labour protections (such as minimum wage coverage and workplace safety regulations) to domestic workers, and it simultaneously pushed for federal immigration changes to provide domestic workers with fairer access to permanent residency. For example, one of INTERCEDE's main targets was the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program introduced in 1981. The FDM offered migrant

---

<sup>43</sup> Rise Up Feminist Archive, "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1985." After six years of campaigning, INTERCEDE secured coverage for domestic workers under Ontario's Workers' Compensation Act in April 1985. This marked the first time live-in domestics could claim benefits for workplace injuries or illnesses.

domestic workers a potential pathway to landed immigrant status, but only on stringent conditions: a woman had to complete two full years of live-in domestic service with a designated employer to be eligible, and even then, her application for residency could be refused for subjective reasons like not proving sufficient self-sufficiency. Moreover, under FDM rules a domestic worker could not freely change employers during those two years without special permission from immigration officials, effectively binding her to one household and one employer's goodwill. INTERCEDE recognized that the power imbalance inherent in this program kept workers vulnerable to abuse and deportation, even as it held out the promise of eventual permanent residence. In response, the coalition campaigned relentlessly to expose and amend the injustices of the FDM, advocating both for immediate improvements to domestic workers' working conditions and for structural changes to the immigration system that trapped them in dependency.

Over the course of the 1980s, INTERCEDE empowered domestic workers to assert their rights and win tangible gains. One early victory came at the start of 1981: under mounting pressure from INTERCEDE and its allies, the Ontario government amended the law to guarantee that domestic workers were covered by the province's minimum wage regulations (establishing minimum daily, weekly and monthly pay rates for live-in domestics).<sup>44</sup> This was a historic breakthrough, the first time Ontario's domestic workers ever had a legal right to a minimum wage. In subsequent years, INTERCEDE's sustained advocacy contributed to further legislative victories. In

---

<sup>44</sup> Judy Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers in Ontario," in *Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, ed. Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 126.

1981 and 1985, domestic workers were finally brought under the protections of Ontario's Employment Standards Act and the Workers Compensation Act (later renamed Workplace Safety and Insurance Act) respectively, granting them many of the same rights as other employees in the province (such as regulated hours, overtime pay and compensation for workplace injuries). These successes were not achieved overnight but were the culmination of years of activism dating back to the 1970s. The evolution of domestic worker organizing, from the defensive battles of the 1970s to the proactive, coalition-driven campaigns of the 1980s transformed these workers from a marginalized group into a recognized labour force with a voice in Canadian policy discussions.

This study draws largely on primary sources from INTERCEDE, including notices of meetings, press statements, policy briefs and reports, internal letters and correspondence, and INTERCEDE's newsletters, the *Domestic Cross-Cultural News* and government reports, as well as archival documents to analyze the objectives that INTERCEDE sought to achieve in domestic workers' struggles in 1980s Ontario. Chapter One discusses the historical context of migrant domestic work in Ontario prior to 1980. It provides an overview of the labour and immigration conditions faced by domestic workers (primarily women from the Caribbean) during the 1940s through 1970s. The chapter explores how programs like the West Indian Domestic Scheme (WIDS) and the Temporary Employment Authorizations Program (TEAP) entrenched racialized and gendered inequalities. Migrant domestics were legally excluded from many basic labour protections. For example, they were long denied minimum wage coverage and limits on hours, and live-in domestics were not protected by normal

tenancy or safety laws.<sup>45</sup> They were often treated as invisible workers under Canadian law and policy, which made them especially vulnerable to exploitation. In this context, the need for an organization like INTERCEDE became evident amid widespread abuses and the systemic exclusion of migrant domestic workers from both labour standards and immigration pathways.

Chapter Two examines the formation and organizational evolution of INTERCEDE from its inception in 1979 onward. It traces INTERCEDE's origins in grassroots activism and coalition-building among diverse groups immigrant women's Organizations, feminist groups, church-based advocates, and labour unions. The chapter recounts the pivotal "A View from the Kitchen" forum in October 1979,<sup>46</sup> that catalyzed INTERCEDE's creation and outlines INTERCEDE's core objectives such as pressing for legislative reform, creating avenues to permanent residency for domestic workers, and securing inclusion under labour laws. Chapter Two also details INTERCEDE's internal structure during the 1980s: its Steering Committee governance model, the role of its member organizations, its funding strategies and the establishment of its Service Unit to assist domestic workers directly. These adaptive strategies reveal how INTERCEDE managed to sustain and strengthen its advocacy efforts throughout the decade.

---

<sup>45</sup> "The status of domestic workers in Ontario: recommendations for legislative change: a brief to the Government of Ontario" by INTERCEDE and Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization, Dec 1980, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 7, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>46</sup> Housewives Initiative Press release A View from the Kitchen, Value of housework: A View from the Kitchen forum by the Housewives Initiative; pamphlets, flyers and correspondence, 10 October 1979, 10-008-S6-F8, box 2, file 14, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

Chapter Three analyzes the 1981 federal Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations report,<sup>47</sup> and the subsequent implementation of the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program in the 1980s. It offers a critical evaluation of the FDM's framework, which tied migrant domestic workers legal status to temporary work permits and imposed the live-in requirement and a two-year service condition for eligibility for permanent residency.<sup>48</sup> The chapter underscores INTERCEDE's vigorous advocacy against the inequities built into the FDM, including the program's implicit racial biases, the inconsistent and often arbitrary enforcement of its self-sufficiency criteria, and the exploitative nature of employer-controlled contracts under the live-in requirement. Chapter Three shows how the FDM perpetuated domestic workers vulnerability even as it ostensibly offered a pathway to citizenship, thereby exposing the gap between the policy's stated intent and its actual implementation. The chapter also documents how INTERCEDE engaged with government through submissions and lobbying to reform the FDM.

Chapter Four details INTERCEDE's efforts throughout the 1980s to influence labour rights for migrant domestic workers within Ontario. It begins by discussing how domestic workers had been explicitly excluded from key provincial labour laws before 1980 including employment standards, workers compensation and even human rights protections in certain cases, and the rationale that had been used to justify those exclusions. The chapter then chronicles INTERCEDE's multi-pronged efforts to

---

<sup>47</sup> William. G Robinson and Ed Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1981).

<sup>48</sup> Audrey Macklin, "On the inside looking in: Foreign domestic workers in Canada," in *Maid in the Market: Women's Paid Domestic Labour*, ed. Giles Winona and Sedef Arat-Koc (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1996), 18.

challenge and change these laws. This includes INTERCEDE's involvement in pushing for amendments to the Employment Standards Act (ESA) to cover domestic workers, amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act (WCA) to cover full-time domestics securing injury compensation benefits and advocacy to bring domestic workers under the Ontario Human Rights Code protecting them against discriminatory hiring practices. Some successes were recorded, such as the early 1981 amendment extending the ESA's minimum wage to live-in domestics and the policy changes that finally extended basic protection to domestic workers, such as a minimum wage of \$3/hour, maximum of \$50/week deduction for room and board.<sup>49</sup> The chapter also addresses areas where progress was limited, such as domestic worker exclusions from the Ontario Labour Relations Act, which continued to bar them from forming unions.<sup>50</sup> It discusses INTERCEDE's creative strategies to work around these limitations, including legal challenges, lobbying opposition members and awareness campaigns that shamed the government for maintaining archaic exemptions.

The last chapter reflects on INTERCEDE's legacy and the broader impacts of its work, while also noting the enduring challenges that persisted into the 1990s and beyond under neoliberal policy regimes. It examines how, by 1992, the federal government replaced the FDM program with the new Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP), a program that incorporated some improvements, partly due to pressure from INTERCEDE and others, but still maintained the fundamental live-in requirement and temporary status

---

<sup>49</sup> Yan Jin, "Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers" (Masters diss., Carleton University, 1995) 20.

<sup>50</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 119.

that left workers exploitable.<sup>51</sup> The chapter underscores how the intersection of race, gender and class remained central to the devaluation of caregiving labour. It points out, for example, that the relative professional advancement of many middle-class Canadian women was made possible by the underpaid work of racialized immigrant women, a dynamic that feminist scholars termed the global care chain. The concluding analysis connects this insight to the political shifts of the 1990s: in Ontario, the election of a Conservative government under Premier Mike Harris and its Common Sense Revolution led to an aggressive rollback of labour rights and social programs, including cuts that affected domestic workers and their communities.<sup>52</sup> The erosion of collective bargaining rights and employment standards in the mid-1990s posed new challenges for the gains that domestic worker advocates had secured. Chapter Five concludes by considering calls to reimagine concepts of citizenship, labour and caregiving in a way that transcends market-driven exploitation, for instance, proposals for global labour standards for domestic workers, or frameworks of citizenship that would not tie rights to one's employer or marital status. In sum, the final chapter assesses how far the movement had come by the end of the 1980s and early 1990s.

---

<sup>51</sup> Daenzer, "*Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*," 126.

<sup>52</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 138.

## **Chapter 1: The Roots of Exploitation: Migrant Domestic Work in Ontario Pre-1980**

The struggles of racialized migrant domestic workers in 1980s Ontario were rooted in longstanding social injustices, restrictive immigration laws, and entrenched labour exploitation. To fully understand the importance of INTERCEDE's advocacy in the 1980s, one must first examine the historical background that paved the way for these workers battles and victories. Between 1871 and 1941, domestic service was the single most common form of paid employment for women in Canada. This work was in high demand and, at the time, one of the few occupations considered socially respectable for women. However, the perceived respectability of a woman's domestic labour was conditional, it hinged on societal expectations regarding the worker's chastity and importantly, her race and ethnicity.<sup>53</sup> Canadian society harboured strong prejudices, and domestic servants were valued (or devalued) in accordance with a racial hierarchy as well as sexist notions of proper femininity.

Before the 1940s, white British women comprised most of the foreign domestics admitted to Canada, and they typically enjoyed relatively privileged treatment.<sup>54</sup> Upon arrival, most British and other European domestics were granted landed immigrant status, affording them citizenship rights and freedom of mobility within Canada. These young women were recruited primarily to fill a labour shortage in Canadian homes, but policymakers also openly saw them as future wives and mothers who

---

<sup>53</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 121.

<sup>54</sup> Patricia Daenzer, "An Affair between Nations: International Relations and the Movement of Household Service Workers," in *Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, ed. Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 91.

would help build the nation.<sup>55</sup> In the rhetoric of the time, British domestics were idealized as nation-builders and civilizers. They were expected not only to cook and clean, but also to assimilate and eventually settle, marrying and raising children, thus contributing to Canada's population growth and Anglo-European character. Within the social hierarchy of domestic labour, different European ethnic groups occupied varying rungs. British women were the most sought after by employers and officials. Other northern and western European women (e.g. from France, Germany, Scandinavia) were somewhat less preferred but still welcomed and later on even southern and eastern European women were allowed to immigrate as domestics and eventually transition to other roles.<sup>56</sup> In stark contrast, women from the Caribbean, and later Asian countries were placed at the bottom of this racial hierarchy. Initially, these women were considered unworthy of Canadian citizenship, reflecting the deeply ingrained racial and ethnic biases of the era.

During the war years, Canada had problems in balancing the demand and supply of domestic work particularly due to two main reasons.<sup>57</sup> First, in 1937 the British government discontinued the Empire Settlement Act of 1922, a scheme that had subsidized passage for British subjects to settle in parts of the Commonwealth like Canada. With that subsidy gone, it became financially challenging to bring new British domestics across the Atlantic. Second, Britain's wartime and post-war reconstruction economies created attractive job opportunities at home for the very women who might have gone abroad as domestics. This prompted influential and

---

<sup>55</sup> Arat-Koc, "From Mothers of the Nation to Migrant Workers," 54.

<sup>56</sup> Tungohan, *Care activism: migrant domestic workers, movement-building, and communities of care*, 22.

<sup>57</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 21.

affluent Canadians to informally approach the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, exploring the possibility of directly sponsoring domestic workers from the British West Indies.<sup>58</sup> In June 1952, a survey by Canada's Unemployment Insurance Commission revealed observations from Canadians who had spent winters in the West Indies. The latter noted an abundant supply of skilled and affordable domestic workers in the region. Upon returning to Canada, they faced a limited pool of inexperienced workers who demanded higher wages. This disparity heightened their interest in recruiting domestic help directly from the West Indies to mitigate Canada's ongoing labour shortages.<sup>59</sup>

However, the post-World War II period brought substantial economic and social transformations that began to reshape the domestic labour sector. In the 1950s and 1960s, Canada's system shifted away from explicitly racist exclusions toward an ostensibly universal, skills-based selection process. Racially based immigration restrictions were incrementally dismantled: major reforms in 1962 and 1967 removed most overt race and national-origin criteria, replacing them with a points system that ranked potential immigrants on factors like education, work experience, language ability and occupational demand.<sup>60</sup> This chapter examines the historical context of migrant domestic work in Ontario during the 1970s, focusing on labour and immigration policies that entrenched racialized and gendered inequalities. By exploring the conditions under programs such as the Caribbean Domestic Scheme and

---

<sup>58</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 70.

<sup>59</sup> *Survey of employment in domestic services in Canada* June 1952 quoted in Patricia Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1993), 70.

<sup>60</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 66.

TEAP, this chapter sets the stage for understanding the significance of INTERCEDE's advocacy in the 1980s.

### West Indian Domestic Scheme (WIDS); A Precursor to Modern Exploitation

During the 1950s, even before the official introduction of a points system, Canadian immigration policy took a notable turn with respect to domestic workers. In 1955, Canada launched an experimental program to admit Caribbean women as domestic servants, an initiative that marked the first substantial opening for non-white immigration in this sector after decades of exclusion. In June of that year, the federal Cabinet approved the admission of 100 Black domestic workers from the British West Indies (mainly Jamaica and Barbados), framing it as a one-year trial run to be assessed afterward. The quota was then increased to 280 the following year.<sup>61</sup> This program, later known as the West Indian Domestic Scheme (WIDS) also known as the Caribbean Domestic Scheme (CDS), was celebrated by Toronto's Black community leaders who had long advocated for such an opportunity. As early as the 1940s, West Indian men in Toronto who found it difficult to form families due to the lack of Black women immigrants had petitioned Ottawa to allow Caribbean women to come work and possibly settle in Canada.<sup>62</sup>

Canadian employers and recruitment agencies were quick to embrace the new supply of Caribbean domestic workers. Many held patronizing and racist beliefs that these Caribbean women would be more compliant and easier to control than their European

---

<sup>61</sup> Marilyn Barber, *Immigrant Domestic Servants in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991), 23.

<sup>62</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 54.

predecessors,<sup>63</sup> a view that was further reinforced by a growing perception among some Canadian employers that European domestic workers were too disruptive due to their involvement in protest actions.<sup>64</sup> Employers often described Caribbean domestics as well-educated, fond of children, obliging and less demanding than other domestics, a stereotype that simultaneously praised and diminished them.<sup>65</sup> Of course, this supposed desirability from the employers' perspective came hand-in-hand with exploitation: because of prevailing racial biases, Caribbean women were typically paid far less than white domestic workers. Some Canadian employers bragged that by hiring a West Indian nanny they saved up to \$150 per month in wages compared to employing a European or Canadian-born maid.<sup>66</sup>

Despite Canadian employers viewing Caribbean women as well-suited for domestic service, their status as reserve labourers hindered their ability to secure permanent settlement in the country.<sup>67</sup> Unlike European migrant care workers, who entered Canada as immigrants with pathways to citizenship, Caribbean women were admitted exclusively through the Caribbean Domestic Scheme (CDS). The CDS restricted these women to temporary roles, reinforcing their marginalized position within the labour market and limiting their opportunities for long-term integration. The Canadian government framed the CDS as a gesture of goodwill, but it was a strategic move to secure and maintain Canada's preferential trade and investment position in the British

---

<sup>63</sup> Tungohan, *Care activism: migrant domestic workers, movement-building, and communities of care*, 24.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Macklin, "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant," 690.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Tungohan, *Care activism: migrant domestic workers, movement-building, and communities of care*, 25.

Caribbean.<sup>68</sup> They feared losing access to the region if they failed to adopt measures that fostered goodwill. By granting Caribbean nationals limited access to Canada through programs like the CDS, the government appeased Caribbean officials while ensuring the continuation of trade and investment opportunities in the region.<sup>69</sup>

The introduction of the Caribbean Domestic Scheme marked a significant shift in the perception of domestic labour in Canada. It redefined domestic work as a field predominantly associated with women of colour from the Global South, moving away from its earlier association with European women.<sup>70</sup> The Caribbean women, however, did not enjoy the same privilege as the European women they were going to be replacing as the majority. First, they were not granted assisted passage like the British, German and some European women, rather the responsibility of coming to Canada fell on the Caribbean government.<sup>71</sup> Although women admitted through the Caribbean Domestic Scheme were technically granted landed immigrant status, unlike their European counterparts, it was conditional and unequal in practice. Only single, healthy women aged 18 to 40 without dependents and with at least an eighth-grade

---

<sup>68</sup> Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis, "Foreign Domestic Worker Policy in Canada and the Social Boundaries of Modern Citizenship," *Science & Society* 58, no. 1 (1994): 1–19, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40403381>.

<sup>69</sup> Tungohan, *Care activism: migrant domestic workers, movement-building, and communities of care*, 25.

<sup>70</sup> Kim England and Bernadette Stiell, "'They Think you're as Stupid as Your English is': Constructing Foreign Domestic Workers in Toronto," *Environment and Planning A* 29, no.2 (1997): 195–215, <https://www.migrantworkersrights.net/fr/resources/they-think-you-re-as-stupid-as-your-english-is-cons>.

<sup>71</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 54. 'Assisted passage' is a provision of Empire Settlement Act of 1921, a British law that aims to facilitate migration from United Kingdom to other parts of the British empire, particularly the commonwealth. The British government worked in partnership with the governments of Canada and Steamship companies to subsidize the costs of migration, including travel and settlement expenses. Canada ceased recognizing the law in 1937 (see Daenzer. 34)

education were eligible. They were required to remain in live-in domestic service for at least one year as a condition of their immigration a restriction not imposed on European women.<sup>72</sup> Many of the women admitted through the Caribbean Domestic Scheme were highly qualified professionals, including nurses, teachers and civil servants, seeking better job opportunities in Canada.<sup>73</sup>

Canadian immigration authorities also put in place harsh conditions to maintain control over the Caribbean domestics. For instance, the WIDS guidelines specified that any woman deemed unsuitable for domestic work could be deported back to the West Indies at her government's expense.<sup>74</sup> The definition of "'unsuitable,'" however, was not given.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, these workers endured invasive gynecological examinations a degrading practice rooted in racial stereotypes about the supposed promiscuity of Black women.<sup>76</sup> These degrading examinations were not required of European domestics.

There was also a profound social anxiety in Canada about the integration of Black women into society. The government was keen to prevent the Caribbean domestics from settling permanently in any way other than through their domestic service.

Officials were particularly apprehensive that these women might leave their low-

---

<sup>72</sup> Macklin, "On the inside looking in: Foreign domestic workers in Canada," 16.

<sup>73</sup> Macklin, "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant," 690.

<sup>74</sup> Ping-Chun Hsiung and Katherine Nichol, "Policies on and Experiences of Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada," *Sociology Compass* 4, no. 9 (2010): 766–78, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00320.x>.

<sup>75</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 54. Scholars like Macklin in "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant," and Ping-Chun Hsiung, and Katherine Nichol in "Policies on and Experiences of Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada," wrote that 'unsuitable' could be as simple as just getting pregnant or leaving her employment for a better one.

<sup>76</sup> Hsiung and Nichol, "Policies on and Experiences of Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada," 767.

paying domestic jobs to seek better employment in other sectors, or that they might marry Canadian men and start families, thereby assimilating and staying forever. In a May 1955 memo to a senior official, immigration officer W. W. Dawson outlined concerns that if even a few of the West Indian women married Canadians or quit domestic work for higher-paying jobs, critics would call the scheme a failure.<sup>77</sup> This racialized fear of Black women's upward mobility and intermarriage led Canadian authorities to state that failure to complete the terms by the Black domestic workers would result in the scheme's cancellation.<sup>78</sup>

The Caribbean Domestic Scheme was declared a success, largely because it effectively restricted the mobility of the women involved. The Department of Labour praised the 1955 experimental group, describing the Caribbean domestics as among the best received workers from any country since World War II. Evaluating the program based on criteria such as satisfactory job placements, continuity of employment, general health and the complete absence of reports of immorality,<sup>79</sup> officials deemed it the most successful group of domestics managed under various immigration programs since the war. By 1956, all 100 women from the 1955 cohort remained in domestic employment and reported contentment with their roles, further

---

<sup>77</sup> RG 76, vol. 383, file 553-36-644-2 pt 1, W. W. Dawson to A.H Brown, re; *Jamaican Domestic* May 10, 1955, quoted in Patricia Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1993), 64.

<sup>78</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 54.

<sup>79</sup> LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 p 3, Deputy Minister of Labour to the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration March 13, 1956, quoted in Ciprian Bolah, "Excellent Workers but Wrong Colour of Skin Canada's Reluctance to Admit Caribbean People as Domestic Workers and Farm Labourers" (M.A diss, University of Saskatchewan, 2014), 41.

reinforcing the program's favourable reception by Canadian authorities.<sup>80</sup>

Nonetheless, from a policy perspective, the scheme's success in 1955–56 paved the way for continued recruitment of Caribbean women in subsequent years albeit under ever-stricter conditions until the scheme's termination in 1967.

### The 1960s: Shifting Policies and Persistent Inequalities

The 1960s marked a shift in Canada's immigration policies, moving from explicitly racist practices to a skills-based system, reshaping opportunities for migrant domestic workers and promoting a more inclusive approach. In 1962, Canada eliminated most nation-of-origin restrictions, and in 1967 it implemented the points system to evaluate immigrants. The new rule meant there would no longer be special quotas like WIDS; instead, domestic workers would be assessed just like any other applicants. The special domestic worker immigration programs were, on paper, replaced by an equal opportunity system. The new system introduced its own challenges. While it aimed to evaluate workers based on their value to the Canadian labour market and the demand for specific occupations, in practice it created greater barriers for Black women from the British Caribbean. Canadian immigration officials continued to operate with significant bias and devised administrative strategies to preserve a preferential system under the veneer of universality. One recurring idea within government was to bar unskilled women from immigrating a category that, in the minds of officials, disproportionately included women from the Caribbean. A memo from the Department's Region A director to the Foreign Settlement Service in the mid-1960s candidly questioned whether Canada should admit low caliber, poorly qualified and

---

<sup>80</sup> Ciprian Bolah, "Excellent Workers but Wrong Colour of Skin Canada's Reluctance to Admit Caribbean People as Domestic Workers and Farm Labourers" (M.A diss, University of Saskatchewan, 2014), 41.

intellectually ill-equipped individuals who might only work as domestics briefly and then leave that occupation.<sup>81</sup>

At the same time, the policymakers, and the federal immigration bureaucracy entrenched the idea that domestic work was women's work and not appropriate for men, a sexist notion that further shaped policy. By then, domestic work was widely viewed as women's work and undervalued, while the racialization of the workforce further marginalized migrant women. In the 1940s, a few European male refugees had been allowed into Canada under domestic servant schemes because they had no other way to immigrate and Canada was sympathetic after the war.<sup>82</sup> But by the mid-1960s, that practice was gone; domestic work was firmly classified as a female domain. By 1985, women made up 40 percent of all temporary workers in Canada, and an overwhelming 90 percent of those women were employed in domestic service.<sup>83</sup> Canadian immigration would only consider male applicants for domestic positions if they were going to fill roles like butlers, houseboys, or cooks often perceived as areas having higher status than domestic workers or requiring specific skills. But such cases were rare.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile, Canada faced high unemployment among unskilled men in the 1960s. Rather than allowing unemployed Canadian men to take domestic jobs, the government maintained that domestic service was simply not a field for men by

---

<sup>81</sup> RG 76 Volume 83/84/349 File 5850-6-4-533. Part 2. To: Director, Foreign Branch. From: Director, Region A 10 May 1955 quoted in Patricia Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1993), 64.

<sup>82</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 66.

<sup>83</sup> Macklin, "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant," 695.

<sup>84</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 77.

simply focusing of creating a female-exclusive immigration pipeline like the West Indian Domestic Scheme and FDM scheme that imported mainly women from developing countries. This reinforced the idea that women and especially marginalized women would be channeled into this low-status work. The outcome was a gendered ghettoization: domestic work remained a low-paid, undervalued job reserved almost exclusively for women, many of whom were immigrants or women of colour with little hope of mobility.

Before the 1960s, Caribbean domestic workers were the only group admitted to Canada through a special program, the WIDS. Canadian officials exploring the end of the program faced a conundrum. Under a universal points system, many Caribbean women might apply to immigrate as domestics and, if they met the criteria, would have to be admitted. Officials debated administrative fixes. The two options they debated were:<sup>85</sup> First abolishing the special domestic scheme entirely (thus technically subjecting everyone to the same rules but potentially slamming the door if they adjusted those rules). Second, the government maintained limited entry through special administrative quotas. They opted for a bit of both: they announced the end of the special scheme in 1967, but then they quietly adjusted the points system to limit domestic workers. By undervaluing the importance of domestic work and requiring unrealistic qualifications that included formal training as a nanny, largely unavailable in the Caribbean, they ensured few Caribbean women would qualify. While these debates unfolded, Canadian officials actively sought to recruit British women for

---

<sup>85</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 77.

domestic work through aggressive marketing campaigns promoting such opportunities in Canada.<sup>86</sup>

In 1966, Canada doubled the annual quota for domestic workers from 250 to 500, a move that initially appeared progressive. However, Caribbean officials quickly recognized it as a calculated measure. Rather than allowing Caribbean women to compete in the universal immigration system based on their labour market readiness, Canadian officials sought to prevent large numbers of these women from meeting the requirements and entering Canada.<sup>87</sup> The quota increase was a strategy to cap their immigration at a mere 500 per year, maintaining control over their entry. This prevented any surge of independent applicants in the new system. In 1967, when the points system took full effect and WIDS was scrapped, Canada concurrently revealed the fine print: domestic work was rated extremely low in the points hierarchy despite evident demand. In 1968, it was revealed that immigration officials assigned fewer points to domestic workers than they were worth.<sup>88</sup> This significantly reduced the chances of domestic workers, particularly from the Caribbean, to qualify for immigration. Essentially, Canada created a two-tier classification for domestic labour.<sup>89</sup> In the top tier were roles labeled as nannies or nursemaids, which implied a level of training or specialization and were effectively reserved for women from countries with nanny schools or formal certifications (mostly European countries). In the bottom tier was plain domestic servant, which in theory anyone could apply for,

---

<sup>86</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 73.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>88</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 123.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

but which carried so few points that almost no one would be accepted under that code, especially not if they came from a country where their education and experience weren't valued by Canadian standards.

Perhaps the most significant change to the 1967 Immigration Act was the removal of the requirement to apply for immigrant status from the country of origin.<sup>90</sup> This allowed Caribbean domestic workers to enter Canada not as direct immigrants, but on temporary employment authorizations or visitor visas turned work permits. While this change initially appeared to offer more flexibility, it set the stage for new challenges for Caribbean domestic workers in the following decade, as they navigated an increasingly complex and often discriminatory immigration landscape.

#### Temporary Employment Authorizations Program (TEAP); A Temporary Solution with Permanent Exploitation

The 1970s were a transformative period for migrant domestic workers in Ontario. As Canada underwent significant economic and social changes, the vulnerabilities of migrant domestic workers became increasingly apparent. This decade marked the intensification of neoliberal policies and a shift in immigration frameworks, both of which heavily influenced the lives of migrant domestic workers. By the 1970s, the legacy of the Caribbean Domestic Scheme became increasingly evident as workers began to voice concerns about poor wages, long hours and lack of autonomy. Many workers faced racial discrimination and were excluded from labour laws that protected other Canadian workers. The live-in requirement imposed on Caribbean domestic workers created significant isolation, making it challenging for them to seek

---

<sup>90</sup> Macklin, "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant," 691.

support or advocate for their rights. By confining migrant women to domestic roles within Canadian households, the government ensured a steady, controlled supply of domestic workers to meet the demands of Canadian families.<sup>91</sup> This policy not only limited their autonomy but also reinforced systemic exploitation and dependence and the Canadian authorities were aware of these exploitations. The experiences of Caribbean domestic workers during this decade highlighted the intersection of race, gender, and class in shaping labour exploitation.

By the early 1970s the workers coming from Caribbean nations were caught in bureaucratic tangle during which the manpower and immigration department struggled to process the issuing visas. Private recruitment agencies took advantage of this situation by bringing more women into the country as non-immigrants, which was permitted under the 1967 amendment. This arrangement appealed to both employers and domestic workers. Employers benefited from the opportunity to interview potential workers in person, ensuring a better match for their needs. For domestic workers, entering Canada on a visitor visa and then applying for landed immigrant status from within was faster and more efficient than the lengthy procedures required in their home countries. However, seeking employment as a non-landed immigrant primarily benefited employers, as it significantly restricted the social and economic status of domestic workers. These workers, often driven by urgency and desperation, had limited bargaining power, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and less likely to demand improved working conditions or fair wages.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 87.

<sup>92</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 91.

The demand for domestic workers remained high as more Canadian women joined the paid workforce.<sup>93</sup> In response, the government introduced in 1973 the Temporary Employment Authorizations Program (TEAP), which had profound implications for migrant domestic workers. TEAP allowed employers to hire foreign workers for specific roles on temporary contracts. For domestic workers, this program reinforced their precarity by tying their immigration status to their employment. Workers who lost their jobs risked deportation, creating a significant power imbalance between employers and employees. TEAP was a turning point because it broke ranks with its predecessors. Previously, most domestic workers entered Canada as landed immigrants, granting them rights nearly equivalent to citizens, except for voting, holding public office and the ability to apply for citizenship after three years.<sup>94</sup> Between 1973, when the Temporary Employment Authorization Program (TEAP) was introduced, and 1978, only about 10 percent of Caribbean domestic workers in Canada obtained landed immigrant status; by 1980, that number had declined to just 6 percent.<sup>95</sup> This sharp decrease illustrates the growing difficulty and restrictive nature of the policies that the migrant domestic workers faced during this period. Starting in 1973 new domestic workers arrived on temporary employment visas, stripping them of those previously available rights and tying their status directly to their employers. Not only could they not leave the domestic work sector for another field, but they could also not change jobs without informing the immigration and manpower

---

<sup>93</sup> Macklin, "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant," 691.

<sup>94</sup> England and Stiell, "'They Think you're as Stupid as Your English is': Constructing Foreign Domestic Workers in Toronto," 200.

<sup>95</sup> Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis, "Making the Match: Domestic Placement Agencies and the Racialization of Women's Household Work," *Signs* 20, no. 2 (1995): 303–35. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174951>.

department.<sup>96</sup> Unlike other workers who could change jobs, INTERCEDE recognized that domestic workers on employment visas often had no realistic option other than to return to their country of origin if they wished to leave an abusive job.<sup>97</sup>

This shift effectively rendered them indentured workers, increasing their vulnerability and limiting their autonomy. This visa regime effectively turned domestic workers into a class of disposable migrant labourers, the labour power of domestic workers was cultivated at the expense of their home countries and extracted in Canada through childcare, housework, and cooking. Losing their jobs meant facing deportation, making them highly vulnerable.<sup>98</sup> To transition from temporary worker to landed immigrant under the new points system, an applicant had to meet stringent Immigration Department criteria and prove a capacity for “self-sufficiency.” Because domestic work was undervalued, these women received low scores in the Specific Vocational Preparation category, reflecting broader societal biases that dismissed their skills.<sup>99</sup> They also scored poorly in Occupational Demand, as Canada had gradually lowered the points allocated to domestic labour from 15 in the 1960s to only 9 by 1973, despite the persistent need for such services that Canadians themselves refused to perform.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> Barber, *Immigrant Domestic Servants in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 24.

<sup>97</sup> Sedef Arat-Koc, “In the Privacy of Our Own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as Solution to the Crisis in the Domestic Sphere in Canada,” *Studies in Political Economy: A Socialist Review* 28, no.1 (2023): 48, <https://doi.org/10.32920/24201099.v1>.

<sup>98</sup> Macklin, “On the inside looking in: Foreign domestic workers in Canada,” 17.

<sup>99</sup> Arat-Koc, “In the Privacy of Our Own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as Solution to the Crisis in the Domestic Sphere in Canada,” 45.

<sup>100</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 86.

Domestic workers were brought in when needed and expected to depart when no longer wanted, with few ever allowed the stability of immigration status. The labour of these women was extracted by Canadian households (through childcare, eldercare, and housekeeping) at a low cost, and when their labour was used up or not needed, they could be sent away. This is analogous to the way colonial powers used to extract resources from colonies. Here, the resource was caring labour. The home countries, meanwhile, bore the social costs: for example, Barbados experienced a significant brain drain as many of its educated professionals whom the country had invested in training over the years, emigrated abroad.<sup>101</sup> Yet the Canadian state benefited: it got labour without having to invest long-term in those labourers

Under TEAP, domestic workers occupied the ambiguous technically nonexistence immigration category of visiting immigrant bearing the burden of both an immigrant and a visitor while receiving the benefit of neither.<sup>102</sup> In what has been called an "inside/outside paradox,"<sup>103</sup> on the one hand, these workers entered Canada more easily by coming as visitors, skipping the stricter requirements that immigrants must meet before arrival. Policies under TEAP reflected racialized and gendered hierarchies in immigration that had been entrenched in Canada since the early twentieth century, and that were also evident in other white settler states and European countries. Prior to World War II, Canada's immigration policy graded

---

<sup>101</sup> Agnes Calliste, "Canada's immigration policy and domestics from the Caribbean: the second domestic scheme," in *The social basis of law: critical readings in the sociology of law*, ed. Stephen Brickery and Elizabeth Comack (Halifax: Garamond Press, 1991), 106.

<sup>102</sup> Bakan and Stasiulis, "Foreign Domestic Workers Policy in Canada and the Social Boundary of Modern Citizenship," 34.

<sup>103</sup> Macklin, "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant," 698.

potential migrants according to their proximity to constructed white British ideals, granting more secure legal status to British and European domestics while imposing stricter conditions on others.<sup>104</sup> Though the immigration framework shifted by the 1960s–70s, these earlier constructions of who counted as a desirable settler persisted in policy attitudes toward non-citizen women of colour, making it politically acceptable to apply restrictions such as lack of mobility and exclusion from benefits that would have been unacceptable for higher-status migrants or citizens.

Another axis of exploitation under TEAP was financial. Despite being labeled temporary, domestic workers were required to contribute to Canada’s social insurance programs from their wages. They paid income taxes like any resident worker; they also paid into the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Unemployment Insurance (UI) (now Employment Insurance) funds.<sup>105</sup> Yet because of their temporary status, these women had virtually no access to the benefits those contributions were supposed to provide. If a domestic worker lost her job, she was not eligible to collect unemployment insurance since doing so would require her to remain in Canada without work, which her visa did not allow. Similarly, she would likely never benefit from the CPP deductions because she was not expected to retire in Canada nor work long enough to get a significant pension. Between 1973 and 1979, it is estimated that migrant domestic workers in Canada paid more than \$11 million into CPP and UI combined, with little chance of ever drawing a dollar from those programs.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> Bakan and Stasiulis, “Foreign Domestic Workers Policy in Canada and the Social Boundary of Modern Citizenship,” 32.

<sup>105</sup> Arat-Koc, “In the Privacy of Our Own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as Solution to the Crisis in the Domestic Sphere in Canada,” 44.

<sup>106</sup> Arat-Koc, “In the Privacy of Our Own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as Solution to the Crisis in the Domestic Sphere in Canada,” 44.

By the late 1970s, domestic workers in Ontario still enjoyed no protection under provincial labour laws such as the Employment Standards Act which governed hours of work, rest days, and overtime pay, or the Occupational Health and Safety regulations. Recognizing these gaps, the federal government was somewhat moved by advocacy and tried to introduce some minimal protections via administrative policy. At the heart of this initiative was a system designed as a middle ground between those who believed domestic work should operate under free-market principles and those concerned about ongoing exploitation in private households.<sup>107</sup> Although modest, this effort aimed to compel employers to recognize and uphold the rights of domestic workers by linking their access to immigrant labour with certain conditions. Through an immigrant validation process, employers had to commit to fair wages, set at the prevailing regional rate and decent working conditions. By doing so, the federal government sought to deny exploitative employers easy entry into the domestic labour market, ensuring that at least a basic standard of treatment was enforced despite the lack of direct provincial legislation. Although the initiative aimed to ensure fair treatment for domestic workers, it lacked any enforcement power. There were no checks in place to confirm that employers paid the agreed-upon wages, and the system itself did not function as a legally binding employment contract. As a result, domestic workers remained largely unprotected and unsupervised by government authorities, continuing to operate outside the scope of standard labour protections.

#### Demographic Shift: Filipina Workers Emerge as the Dominant Group

---

<sup>107</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940s-1990s*, 98.

The introduction of the FDM program in 1981 also accelerated a profound demographic shift in Canada's in-home care sector. Whereas in earlier decades Caribbean women had made up the bulk of non-white foreign domestics, by the early 1980s this pattern began to change.<sup>108</sup> Historical data shows that by the mid-1970s, West Indian women accounted for over 30 percent of all workers on employment visas and 90 percent of non-white domestic workers in Canada.<sup>109</sup> However, the introduction of the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) in 1982 shifted this trend. In its first year, the Philippines overtook the West Indies as a leading source of domestic workers, supplying 24.5 percent of entrants second only to the UK at 27 percent and ahead of the Caribbean at 18.3 percent.<sup>110</sup> By the end of the decade, Filipino domestic workers comprised approximately 50 percent of all workers admitted through the FDM, cementing their dominant presence in the program.

The rise in the recruitment of Filipino domestic workers also coincided with a period when Caribbean women began mobilizing to demand their rights. Similar to how white Canadian women were sometimes portrayed when asserting themselves, Caribbean domestic workers were increasingly depicted through racist stereotypes as aggressive, incompetent, or deceitful.<sup>111</sup> One agency owner said; "Jamaican girls are just dumb. They are not qualified to be childcare workers, it is not their fault, they just

---

<sup>108</sup> Macklin, "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant," 692.

<sup>109</sup> Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 49.

<sup>110</sup> Macklin, "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant," 692.

<sup>111</sup> Tanya Schecter, *Race, Class, Women and the State: The Case of Domestic Labour in Canada* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1998), 122.

don't have the education...."<sup>112</sup> In response to this growing activism and the negative narratives surrounding Caribbean workers, Canada shifted its focus to the Philippines as its new primary source of domestic labour.

The arrival of Filipino domestic workers, like that of many other migrant groups, was shaped by historical and political factors. In the 1960s, tensions arose when the Philippine government threatened to impose reciprocal sanctions on Canadian and American businesspeople seeking entry into the country.<sup>113</sup> To maintain access and smooth relations, the Canadian government responded by removing Filipino citizens from its list of inadmissible aliens, paving the way for greater Filipino migration to Canada in the years that followed. And by the beginning of the 1970s Canadians increasingly began to recruit Filipinas as domestic workers,<sup>114</sup> driven by both recruitment agencies and the Philippine government, which sought labour migration as an alternative source of revenue to combat poverty.<sup>115</sup> Recruitment agencies, in particular, reinforced stereotypes by promoting the idea that certain groups of women especially Filipinas were inherently more suited for domestic work. Another placement boss opined that "Filipino nannies are very soft...they come from a culture where they are extremely respectful of elders, of authority and they are trained not to

---

<sup>112</sup> Bakan and Stasiulis, "Making the Match: Domestic Placement Agencies and the Racialization of Women's Household Work," 321.

<sup>113</sup> Daenzer, "An Affair between Nations: International Relations and the Movement of Household Service Workers," 87.

<sup>114</sup> Jon Malek, *Filipinos in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 2021), 15.

<sup>115</sup> Schechter, *Race, Class, Women and the State: The Case of Domestic Labour in Canada*, 122.

offer their views too aggressively...Filipino nannies were always more giving, very professional in a sense.”<sup>116</sup>

Like most of the Caribbean nations, the Philippine economy struggled economically and politically post-independence. Predatory loans from the IMF and World Bank, which began in 1958, plunged the Philippines into a severe debt crisis. By 1985, the country’s external debt had ballooned to \$28.6 billion, crippling its economy and pushing the government to promote labour export as a key strategy for generating foreign exchange.<sup>117</sup> The IMF’s structural adjustment policies forced the Philippines to implement harsh economic measures, including the devaluation of the peso, reduction of food subsidies, wage restraints, austerity programs, and significant concessions to foreign investors.<sup>118</sup> These conditions drove many families to view women’s labour as a cheap commodity for export.<sup>119</sup> Philippine governments reinforced this dynamic by promoting labour migration as a strategy to generate quick foreign exchange and mitigate domestic poverty, effectively turning the overseas deployment of women into a cornerstone of its economic policy.<sup>120</sup> And by 1974 President Ferdinand Marcos had established an overseas employment program to regulate the migration of Filipino workers overseas.<sup>121</sup> Government agencies heavily

---

<sup>116</sup> Bakan and Stasiulis, “Making the Match: Domestic Placement Agencies and the Racialization of Women’s Household Work,” 322.

<sup>117</sup> Stasiulis and Bakan, *Negotiating Citizenship: Migrant Women in Canada and the Global System*, 58.

<sup>118</sup> Nona Grandea, *Uneven Gains: Filipina Domestic Workers in Canada* (Ottawa: The North-South Institute, 1996), 11.

<sup>119</sup> Macklin, "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant," 692.

<sup>120</sup> Nona Grandea, *Uneven Gains: Filipina Domestic Workers in Canada* (Ottawa: The North-South Institute, 1996), 11.

<sup>121</sup> Nona Grandea, *Uneven Gains: Filipina Domestic Workers in Canada* (Ottawa: The North-South Institute, 1996), 12.

marketed Filipino workers abroad including domestic helpers as an ideal solution for foreign employers. Advertisements and training programs touted Filipinas as docile,<sup>122</sup> passive and naturally skilled as nannies.<sup>123</sup> This state-sponsored labour migration system created a steady flow of Filipino women into domestic work roles worldwide, including in Canada. Over two decades, the number of Filipino workers employed abroad rose sharply from 12,501 in 1975 to 304,600 in 1984, and 719,602 by 1994.<sup>124</sup> By 1995, an estimated 7 million Filipinos were working in 135 countries, representing roughly 10 percent of the country's population.

By the end of the 1980s, Filipino women had established an enduring presence in Canada's domestic work industry, transforming a niche labour program into a pivotal immigration pathway. This transformation was rooted in policy changes of the 1970s and 1980s: the shift from exclusionary or temporary-only schemes to the more open Foreign Domestic Movement Program gave migrant caregivers a coveted chance at permanent settlement.

Planting the Seeds of Advocacy: Good enough to work, Good enough to stay

---

<sup>122</sup> Malek, *Filipinos in Canada*, 15.

<sup>123</sup> Bakan and Stasiulis, "Making the Match: Domestic Placement Agencies and the Racialization of Women's Household Work," 320.

<sup>124</sup> Nona Grandea, *Uneven Gains: Filipina Domestic Workers in Canada* (Ottawa: The North-South Institute, 1996), 12.



Figure 1. Stop the Deportation of Jamaican Mothers, International Women's Day (IWD) 11 March 1978, 10-001-S3-I192, Box 1, Canadian Women's Movement Archives (CWMA) Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa Library, Ottawa, ON

Conditions for domestic workers in the 1970s remained as they had been, featuring precarious legal status, low wages, excessive work hours and limited legal recourse.

The Canadian government's focus was still on meeting the demand of Canadian families for domestic help, rather than on fixing the inequalities facing the workers.<sup>125</sup>

Domestic workers recognized the urgent need for a coordinated response to the exploitation they faced. This resilience and advocacy would help pave the way for more organized efforts in the 1980s, ultimately contributing to the formation and influence of organizations like INTERCEDE.

A pivotal catalyst for this burgeoning movement was the high-profile case of the Seven Jamaican Mothers, described earlier. Their fight against deportation in the late 1970s galvanized many in the immigrant and feminist communities. It exposed on a public stage the double standards and inhumanity of Canada's treatment of migrant domestic workers. In response to cases like this, organization like Committee Against

---

<sup>125</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940s-1990s*, 100.

the Deportation of Immigrant Women (CADIW), which was founded in Toronto in the mid-1970s rose up to defend domestic workers. CADIW was a coalition of immigrant women, activists, and supporters who came together specifically to combat the injustices faced by women like the Seven Jamaican Mothers. From the outset, CADIW framed its mission in systemic terms. In a 1977 position paper the committee stated that; “CADIW has been formed in response to the growing discrimination and harassment faced by Immigrant Women.”<sup>126</sup>

CADIW broadcast that Canada’s immigration and labour system was dehumanizing immigrant women, using them when convenient and discarding them when not.

CADIW made a point to capture the intersectional injustice at play. Immigrant women like the Jamaican domestics faced multiple layers of marginalization, they were undervalued because they were women doing women’s work, stigmatized and excluded because they were immigrants and in the case of the Caribbean women, also confronting anti-Black racism in Canadian society; “Immigrant women, therefore, are further threatened by the double blow of racism and sexism. They are discriminated against for being women, as immigrants and, in the case of West Indians, for being Black as well.”<sup>127</sup>

Similarly, Committee Against Racism (CAR) was another grassroots organization active during the 1970s and 1980s. While not exclusively dedicated to immigrant

---

<sup>126</sup> Position Paper by Committee Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women (CADIW), 1977, 10-001-S1-F629, Box 18, File 40, Canadian Women's Movement Archives (CWMA) Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa Library, Ottawa, ON.

<sup>127</sup> Position Paper by Committee Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women (CADIW), 1977, 10-001-S1-F629, Box 18, File 40, Canadian Women's Movement Archives (CWMA) Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa Library, Ottawa, ON.

women like CADIW, CAR played an important role in highlighting the broader racial injustices faced by racialized workers, particularly women from the Global South employed as domestic workers. Working under the rallying war cry “Good enough to work, good enough to stay,” a slogan still central to immigrant rights activism today, domestic worker organizations spent the preceding decade planting seeds of resistance.

By championing high-profile cases such as the Seven Jamaican Mothers, CADIW exposed how Canadian immigration and labour policies dehumanized immigrant women and demonstrated that collective action could achieve tangible results. In January 1979, the women were deported to Jamaica, but six months later following sustained public pressure and organized advocacy, the Minister of Employment and Immigration exercised discretionary authority to grant them special permits for re-entry.<sup>128</sup> The networks, strategies, and momentum built through this and similar campaigns laid the groundwork for INTERCEDE’s formation later that year, later uniting over 40 organizations and numerous individuals into a single coalition.

#### A View from the Kitchen: Immigrant Women Speak Out on the Value of Housework

As the 1970s ended, the stage was set for a shift in the landscape of migrant domestic work in Ontario. The cumulative effects of years of exploitative policies, legal exclusions and systemic discrimination created an untenable situation for thousands of migrant domestic workers. The seeds of resistance planted throughout the decade were beginning to take root. On October 27, 1979, a pivotal event brought together immigrant domestic workers and Canadian housewives in a united call for change. On

---

<sup>128</sup> Lawson, “The Gendered Working Lives of Seven Jamaican Women in Canada: A Story about ‘Here’ and ‘There’ in a Transnational Economy,” 150.

that day, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute's Jorgensen Hall was the venue for a groundbreaking public forum entitled "*A View from the Kitchen: Immigrant Women Speak Out on the Value of Housework*".<sup>129</sup> The forum, co-sponsored by Employment Services for Immigrant Women (ESIW) and The Housewives' Initiative, became a watershed moment in the struggle for domestic workers rights. It explicitly connected the struggles of immigrant live-in caregivers with those of Canadian women performing unpaid housework in their own homes.<sup>130</sup> In doing so, it reframed domestic labour whether paid or unpaid as real work that was both undervalued and essential to the economy and society. This forum was not a spontaneous meeting; it was the result of careful planning and coalition-building among Toronto activists. ESIW (an organization serving immigrant women's employment needs) and the Housewives' Initiative (a group advocating for recognition of housewives' contributions). The symbolism and strategy behind the forum were evident even in the details: the date, the venue, the speakers all were deliberately chosen. October 27, 1979, was selected for its symbolic resonance. It fell just after two significant anniversaries in women's history.<sup>131</sup> First, it was nine days after the 50th anniversary of the Persons Case (October 18, 1929), the legal decision that affirmed women's status as persons under Canadian law and allowed them to be appointed to the Senate.

---

<sup>129</sup> "For immediate release", Value of housework: A View from the Kitchen forum by the Housewives Initiative; pamphlets, flyers and correspondence, 10 October 1979, 10-008-S6-F8, box 2, file 14, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

<sup>130</sup> "For immediate release", Value of housework: A View from the Kitchen forum by the Housewives Initiative; pamphlets, flyers and correspondence, 10 October 1979, 10-008-S6-F8, box 2, file 14, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

<sup>131</sup> Formal invitation letter by Frances Gregory, 22 Aug 1979, A View from the Kitchen, 10-094-S2-SS3-F1, box 2, file 28, Frances Gregory Fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

Second, it was only two days after the fourth anniversary of the 1975 Icelandic Women's Strike (October 24, 1975), when 90 percent of the women in Iceland stopped all paid and unpaid work for a day to demonstrate the importance of women's labour.<sup>132</sup> By positioning "A View from the Kitchen" between these dates, the organizers consciously anchored their event in a global feminist tradition of struggle and achievement. They invoked the memory of the Persons Case to stress legal and political empowerment and the example of Iceland's strike to underscore the economic value of women's invisible work. As Frances Gregory noted in an invitation letter, the timing was a symbolic compromise linking the fight for women's legal recognition with the fight for economic recognition.<sup>133</sup>

The choice of venue at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute was equally calculated. Ryerson, located in downtown Toronto, was Canada's largest technical college at the time and was known for its diverse student body, including a significant number of international students from the West Indies.<sup>134</sup> It was known as an accessible, community-connected institution. By holding the forum at a Polytechnical Institute rather than, say, a government building or a hotel, the organizers signaled that this was grassroots, inclusive gathering. The campus setting made it geographically and socially accessible: immigrant women (including domestic workers on their Sunday

---

<sup>132</sup> "Icelandic women strike for economic and social equality 1975," Content, Global Nonviolent Action Database, accessed Jan 3, 2025, <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/icelandic-women-strike-economic-and-social-equality-1975>.

<sup>133</sup> Formal invitation letter by Frances Gregory, 22 Aug 1979, A View from the Kitchen, 10-094-S2-SS3-F1, box 2, file 28, Frances Gregory Fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

<sup>134</sup> Formal invitation letter by Frances Gregory, 22 Aug 1979, A View from the Kitchen, 10-094-S2-SS3-F1, box 2, file 28, Frances Gregory Fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

day off), students, activists and curious members of the public could all comfortably attend. Furthermore, hosting the forum in an educational space carried its own symbolism. It suggested that part of the mission was to educate the public and policymakers about the worth of housework and the plight of domestic workers to dismantle stereotypes about domestic workers.

Every aspect of the forum's program was deliberately curated to bridge local and global perspectives on domestic labour. The panel of speakers featured women with diverse experiences and expertise, ensuring that the discussion would cover domestic workers' issues from multiple angles. All the speakers at the event were women, underscoring the importance of centering women's voices in conversations about work that has been, and continues to be, overwhelmingly performed by women.

Panelists included<sup>135</sup>

- Judy Ramirez, a long-time feminist and economic justice advocate, co-founder of the Toronto Wages for Housework campaign in 1975, who spoke on Wages for Housework.
- Sheila Arnopoulos, a Montreal-based journalist and activist, who addressed the situation of Domestic Workers in Canada.
- Amory John, an immigrant rights activist and Director of International Student Affairs at Ryerson Polytechnic, who presented on Immigrant Women in Canada.

---

<sup>135</sup> Formal invitation letter by Frances Gregory, 22 Aug 1979, A View from the Kitchen, 10-094-S2-SS3-F1, box 2, file 28, Frances Gregory Fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

- Doris Anderson, who moderated the event, was then Chair of the federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women and a leading figure in the early push for recognizing and compensating domestic labour in Canada.

The guest speaker and keynote, however, was Joan French, whose participation made the forum historic. French was the President of the National Union of Democratic Teachers in Jamaica and had come to Toronto on a fact-finding mission to learn about West Indian domestic worker conditions in Canada.<sup>136</sup> Her speech, entitled Housework in the Third World, offered a global South perspective on the value of

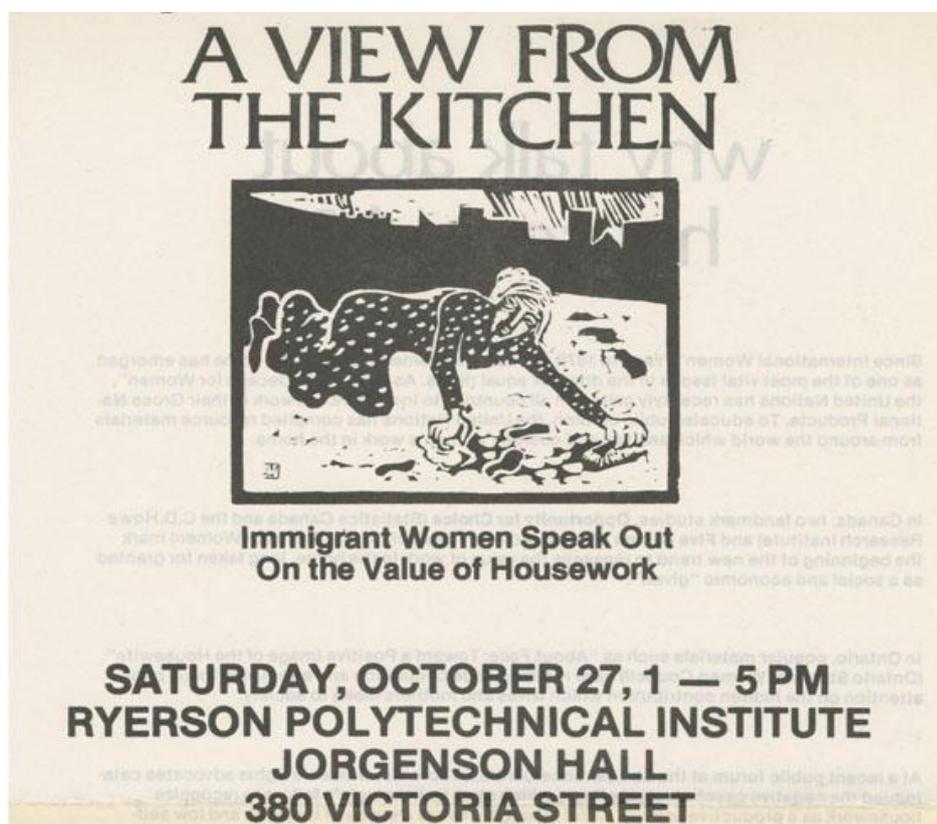


Figure 2 - Flyer for the forum "A View from the Kitchen: Immigrant Women Speak Out on the Value of Housework" 27 October 1979, 10-008-S6-F8, box 2, file 14, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

women's domestic labour. French provided a comprehensive critique of how

<sup>136</sup> "For immediate release", Value of housework: A View from the Kitchen forum by the Housewives Initiative; pamphlets, flyers and correspondence, 10 October 1979, 10-008-S6-F8, box 2, file 14, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

women's unpaid domestic work and underpaid wage work like domestic service was exploited under global capitalism. French argued that the devaluation of women's labour was a worldwide phenomenon, cutting across both capitalist and socialist systems.<sup>137</sup> She argued that both systems perpetuate the devaluation of women's labour by maintaining patriarchal structures. In her words "Neither capitalism nor socialism, as practiced, has solved the problem of housework, both systems depend on the unpaid or underpaid labour of women to sustain their economic frameworks."<sup>138</sup> French emphasized that women not only give birth to the workforce in every country but also bear the primary responsibility for raising, nurturing, and caring for that workforce particularly during periods of sickness, disability, or when individuals are no longer engaged in productive labour.

French's remarks highlighted how the patriarchal and racial hierarchies of the global economy assign the most thankless, low-paid forms of labour to women of colour from poorer nations. She pointed out a hard truth; that emancipation and women's liberation movements in Canada and US helped ease white women's entry into the workforce, improving their overall working conditions. However, these advancements often overlooked the challenges and exploitation faced by immigrant and racialized women, who remained marginalized despite the broader gains in women's rights.<sup>139</sup>

French reframed immigration not as a favour granted by Canada but as a rightful

---

<sup>137</sup> "Housework and the Third World" by Joan French, Value of housework: A View from the Kitchen forum by the Housewives Initiative; pamphlets, flyers and correspondence, 27 October 1979, 10-008-S6-F8, box 2, file 14, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

<sup>138</sup> "Housework and the Third World" by Joan French, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee fonds.

<sup>139</sup> "Housework and the Third World" by Joan French, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee fonds.

claim migrant women had earned through the exploitation of their labour by wealthier nations, declaring that “Immigrants are here by right, the right of their labour performed on behalf of developed countries, both in the Global South and in the North.”<sup>140</sup> French called for a reimagining of feminist and labour movements to include immigrant and racialized women at the center to address the root causes of women’s oppression globally, not just win gains for some women, saying “The struggle of immigrant domestic workers is the struggle of all women. To value our labour is to value our humanity.”<sup>141</sup>

Judith Ramirez made a connection between unpaid domestic labour performed by Canadian homemakers and the paid, yet still undervalued, labour of immigrant domestic workers. She argued that both groups face systemic devaluation, but in different ways. Canadian homemakers labour is dismissed because it occurs in the private sphere, while immigrant domestic workers face not only economic exploitation but also racial and immigration-based discrimination.<sup>142</sup> In the same speech, Ramirez critiqued state policies that perpetuate the devaluation of domestic labour. She highlighted how immigration and labour laws create a system of exploitation where immigrant women are treated as disposable labour. She emphasized that these policies disproportionately affect immigrant domestic workers,

---

<sup>140</sup> “Housework and the Third World” by Joan French, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee fonds.

<sup>141</sup> “Housework and the Third World” by Joan French, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee fonds.

<sup>142</sup> Ryerson Forum Speech by Judith Ramirez, A View from the Kitchen, 27 October 1979, 10-094-S2-SS3-F1, box 2, file 28, Frances Gregory Fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

who face additional layers of vulnerability due to their precarious immigration status.<sup>143</sup>

By the end of the “A View from the Kitchen” forum, a sense of solidarity and urgent momentum filled the auditorium. The participants, immigrant domestics, housewives, activists, allies collectively recognized that the undervaluation of housework, whether unpaid in Canadian homes or underpaid in the lives of immigrant workers, was a common struggle rooted in gendered, racialized and class inequalities. In heeding the call, representatives from the four main organizing groups Employment Services for Immigrant Women (ESIW), the Housewives Initiative, Labour Rights for Domestic Servants (LRDS) and the Toronto Wages for Housework Committee along with other supporters coming together to form INTERCEDE (International Coalition to End Domestic Exploitation) which sought to connect the women’s liberation movement with immigrant women activists who opposed capitalist exploitation of their domestic labour.

At INTERCEDE’s first official meeting in late November 1979, the coalition adopted five key demands, many echoing the proposals discussed at the forum:<sup>144</sup>

1. The immediate inclusion of domestic work under Ontario’s minimum wage laws.
2. Legally binding employment contracts be signed by both employers and domestic workers.

---

<sup>143</sup> Ryerson Forum Speech by Judith Ramirez, Frances Gregory Fonds.

<sup>144</sup> “Resolution from the Forum: Immigrant Women Speak Out,” 1979, 10-008-S6-F8, box 2, file 14, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee Fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

3. Creation of government funded independent community agencies to enforce these regulations.
4. Immediate eligibility for landed immigrant status for all domestic workers currently on work permits; and
5. Access to raised welfare benefits for immigrant women without the threat of deportation.

By placing immigrant women's voices and experiences at the forefront, INTERCEDE not only highlighted the systemic inequities of the period but also directly challenged the entrenched structures that undermined domestic workers' rights and autonomy. In the decade that followed, this approach proved a powerful catalyst for advocacy, policy changes and the broader recognition of domestic workers essential contributions to Canadian society.

## **Chapter 2: Organizing Resistance: Founding INTERCEDE and Shaping Its Structure**

The late 1970s marked a turning point in the landscape of advocacy for migrant domestic workers in Ontario. Neoliberal economic policies, restrictive immigration frameworks, and persistent societal biases had combined to place domestic workers, predominantly women of colour from the Global South in precarious working conditions with severely limited rights and protections. The formation of the International Coalition to End Domestic Exploitation (INTERCEDE) in 1979 emerged as a critical response to these systemic injustices.<sup>145</sup> Unlike earlier advocacy efforts that were fragmented or narrowly focused, INTERCEDE sought to address both labour and immigration inequalities through grassroots organizing and coalition building. This chapter explores the founding of INTERCEDE, detailing the socio-political context that gave rise to the coalition, the key events and strategic decisions behind its creation, and the development of its organizational structure, funding model, and early initiatives. It also examines the internal challenges INTERCEDE faced in its first years including governance growing pains and conflicts and how the coalition adapted its structure to sustain its advocacy efforts.

INTERCEDE did not emerge in isolation, rather it was born out of the broader climate of social justice activism that was flourishing throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. Across North America and indeed globally, radical movements were introducing innovative strategies for social change, galvanizing new grievances to

---

<sup>145</sup> “Intercede: International Coalition to End Domestic Exploitation Organization profile published 1981,” Library, Title Index, Connexions, last modified May 16, 2025, <https://www.connexions.org/CxLibrary/CX2351.htm>.

spark collective action, and pioneering fresh methods of organizing and communication.<sup>146</sup> During this era, movements for civil rights, women's liberation and anti-racism were gaining momentum on both sides of the Canada–U.S. border, creating fertile ground for a coalition like INTERCEDE to take shape. In Canada, grassroots organizations of immigrant women like the Committee Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women (CADIW), the Committee Against Racism (CAR), Toronto Wages for Housework, Employment Services for Immigrant Women (ESIW), Indigenous communities and racialized workers were actively challenging discriminatory legislation and workplace practices and demanding inclusion in labour rights and citizenship rights for marginalized groups.

#### The Founding of INTERCEDE

As discussed in Chapter One, the groundwork for INTERCEDE was established throughout the 1970s, a period marked by increasing public concern over the precarious conditions faced by domestic workers in Canada. By the end of the decade, many domestic workers particularly from the Caribbean and the Philippines had joined with allies to voice their grievances and press for change. On that day, feminist activists from Employment Services for Immigrant Women (ESIW) and The Housewives Initiative along with immigrant domestic workers and other supporters convened to unite immigrant women and Canadian homemakers in a shared fight to

---

<sup>146</sup> Dominique Clement, "Generations and the Transformation of Social Movements in Postwar Canada," *Histoire sociale / Social History* 42, no. 84 (2009): 361–87, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/379822>.

recognize the value of domestic labour.<sup>147</sup> It was at this forum that the idea of a permanent coalition was formally proposed and embraced.

By July 1980, INTERCEDE released a foundational document entitled “What is INTERCEDE?”<sup>148</sup> which stated its mission and goals. This document proclaimed INTERCEDE’s mandate to advocate for domestic workers rights at provincial, national and international levels and seek changes to any laws, whether under Ontario’s jurisdiction or that of the federal government that negatively affected domestic workers.<sup>149</sup> The language was unequivocal: all domestic workers, whether Canadian citizens, landed immigrants or temporary permit holders should enjoy the same rights and benefits as other workers in Canada. This meant pressing the Ontario government to amend labour standards and pressing the federal government to amend immigration and employment regulations.

### Organizational Purpose and Objectives

The formation and operational structure of INTERCEDE reflected its foundational mission to challenge systemic exploitation and advance the rights of domestic workers in Canada. From the start, INTERCEDE adopted a collaborative approach to organizing. INTERCEDE developed a robust organizational framework that prioritized advocacy, education and direct support for domestic workers. In practice, that meant the coalition would not only lobby government officials and hold news conferences (advocacy) but also hold workshops or clinics for domestic workers

---

<sup>147</sup> Ethel Tungohan, “From the Politics of Everyday Resistance to the Politics from Below: Migrant Care Worker Activism in Canada” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2014), 170.

<sup>148</sup> “What is INTERCEDE”, Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>149</sup> “What is INTERCEDE”, Roxana Ng fonds.

(education and direct support). The coalition explicitly aimed to involve domestic workers themselves in leadership roles and to remain accountable to the community of workers it represented.<sup>150</sup>

In July 1980, INTERCEDE's Steering Committee outlined the coalition's core mission and objectives. The mandate was broad: push for any legislative reforms needed to ensure that all domestic workers, whether Canadian-born or migrants (with any status), receive the same rights and benefits as other workers.<sup>151</sup> That meant lobbying both the Ontario government and the federal government to fix laws that were seen as discriminating against or excluding domestic workers. At the provincial level, as later chapters will detail, this focused on the Employment Standards Act, Workers Compensation Act, and the Ontario Human Rights Code, among others. At the federal level, it meant engaging with the Ministry of Employment and Immigration to reform the Foreign Domestic Movement program and the Temporary Employment Authorization Program (TEAP) and advocating in the context of Canada's immigration act and regulations.

While INTERCEDE's initial energy was devoted to the five resolutions from the founding forum (the demands enumerated at the end of Chapter One),<sup>152</sup> its broader aims quickly became apparent through its early publications and activities. The coalition's vision was nuanced and multifaceted, extending well beyond those first five points. Early newsletters and statements from 1980–81 reveal, for example, that

---

<sup>150</sup> Letter to "Dear friends" by INTERCEDE Steering Committee, 8 July 1982, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>151</sup> List of Endorsers of INTERCEDE, Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>152</sup> "Resolution from the Forum: Immigrant Women Speak Out," Toronto Wages for Housework Committee Fonds.

INTERCEDE was interested in not just winning a minimum wage for domestics (one of the five points) but also in how to enforce that wage and how to change public attitudes such that domestic workers would feel empowered to assert their new rights. They discussed issues like the live-In requirement under the FDM program,<sup>153</sup> or how racism in hiring needed to be tackled in parallel with legal changes.<sup>154</sup> This broad approach underscored INTERCEDE's commitment to championing domestic workers rights across multiple fronts: legislation, public opinion, community support and coalition-building.

The objectives of INTERCEDE can therefore be summarized into key points:

Legislative pressure: Lobby both the Ontario and federal governments to amend any and all laws that adversely affect domestic workers. This included provincial labour codes and federal immigration and employment regulations.<sup>155</sup>

Inclusion under labour laws: Work to ensure domestic workers are included under core employment protections such as minimum wage laws, overtime pay, hours of work limits, workers' compensation, and human rights codes. Historically, domestic workers had been exempted from many of these; INTERCEDE sought to abolish those exemptions.<sup>156</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup> "Report to the 1991 Annual General Meeting: April 1990 to March 1991" by Felicita o. Villasin, n.d., B2014-0005, box 043, folder 11, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>154</sup> "Minutes of Intercede Steering Committee Meeting of June 16 1982 Held at 348 College", B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>155</sup> "What is INTERCEDE", Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>156</sup> "What is INTERCEDE", Roxana Ng fonds.

Pathways to residency: Campaign for clear, accessible pathways to permanent residency for migrant domestic workers. This specifically entailed allowing women on temporary work permits to apply for landed status from within Canada, abolishing the restrictive two-year live-in requirement or the work permit system altogether and returning to a policy where domestics could arrive as landed immigrants from the start.<sup>157</sup>

Improving work conditions: Push for tangible improvements in the working conditions of domestic workers. This included things like ensuring the minimum wage applied to domestic work, advocating for legally binding employment contracts to formalize employer obligations, and establishing independent agencies or mechanisms to monitor employers' compliance with labour standards. The idea of independent agencies harks back to one of the founding demands for government-funded community agencies to protect domestics.

Public awareness and education: Raise awareness in Canadian society about the plight and contributions of migrant domestic workers. INTERCEDE recognized that public opinion could be a powerful ally or adversary, so it committed to outreach through media, public forums, and educational campaigns to shift perceptions of domestic work from servitude to essential labour.<sup>158</sup>

National networking: Build national and international networks to coordinate legislative efforts at the federal level. Domestic worker issues were not confined to Ontario and immigration policy certainly wasn't, so INTERCEDE aimed to connect

---

<sup>157</sup> "What is INTERCEDE", Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>158</sup> "Annual Report: May 1980–May 1981", 1981–1991, Roxana Ng fonds, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 11, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

with allies across Canada and beyond, to present a united front especially when dealing with the federal government.<sup>159</sup>

Support and education for workers: Provide direct support services to domestic workers and inform them of their rights. This meant helping domestic workers navigate legal processes, pointing them to resources, and offering counselling in cases of abuse.<sup>160</sup>

Solidarity with other movements: Foster solidarity not only among domestic workers themselves but between domestic workers and other labour and social justice movements.

#### Structure of INTERCEDE at inception

By the early 1980s, INTERCEDE's leadership reflected its origins as a feminist, community-driven coalition. The organization was founded in 1979–1980 by women's rights and immigrant advocacy groups, and its initial Steering Committee was populated largely by feminist allies rather than domestic workers themselves. For example, Frances Gregory a veteran of the Wages for Housework campaign and Housewives Initiative served as INTERCEDE's first Steering Committee Coordinator from January 1980 to May 1982. Under Gregory's coordination, INTERCEDE began laying the groundwork for advocating live-in domestics rights, drawing on her feminist organizing experience. Gregory's tenure exemplified the founding leadership dynamic: committed activists from outside the domestic work occupation often

---

<sup>159</sup> “What is INTERCEDE”, Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>160</sup> “What is INTERCEDE”, Roxana Ng fonds.

middle-class feminists spearheaded the group and lent it organizational structure and political voice.

The core components of INTERCEDE's structure in its early years included:

Members: Initially, INTERCEDE started with a base of 4 key member organizations namely, the Employment Services for Immigrant Women (ESIW), The Housewives Initiative, Labour Rights for Domestic Servants (LRDS) and Toronto Wages for Housework Committee plus a handful of individual activists.<sup>161</sup> But it expanded rapidly. By mid-1981, INTERCEDE's membership base had grown to encompass 40 endorsing local organizations and 4 international organizations from the Caribbean, along with numerous individual members from Ontario and the Caribbean.<sup>162</sup> Initially, each member of the Steering Committee had an equal vote, including non-domestic worker allies. However, organizational reforms in 1982 restructured INTERCEDE's governance to promote grassroots, worker-led control to allow individual domestic workers to become voting members, provided they agreed with INTERCEDE's objectives and paid an annual membership fee.<sup>163</sup> This meant that domestic workers could not only vote at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) but also be eligible to be elected to INTERCEDE's Steering Committee. And by 1994, its membership had grown to over 1,100 domestic workers.<sup>164</sup>

---

<sup>161</sup> A newsletter on "A View from the Kitchen: Immigrant Women Speak Out on the value of HW" by Wages for Housework Committee, 24 January 1980, 10-008-S6-F8, box 2, file 14, Toronto Wages for Housework Committee Fonds, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

<sup>162</sup> "Annual Report: May 1980–May 1981", Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>163</sup> Letter to "Dear friends" by INTERCEDE Steering Committee, 8 July 1982, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON

<sup>164</sup> "INTERCEDE", February 7, 1994, Standing Committee on General Government, House documents, Committees, Legislative business, Legislative Assembly of

## The Steering Committee

At the core of INTERCEDE's governance was the Steering Committee, established in May 1980.<sup>165</sup> This initial committee consisted of 13 dedicated members, including representatives from immigrant community groups, feminist organizations, legal advocates, and domestic workers themselves.<sup>166</sup> The Committee had one-year, full-voting authority over all major decisions, including setting the coalition's strategic direction, authorizing key initiatives and coordinating the organization's various activities. However, a group that endorses INTERCEDE can nominate one of its members to serve on the committee.<sup>167</sup> Such nominated member should be prepared to attend meetings at least every three weeks and take on some responsibility for the ongoing activities of INTERCEDE. Even though domestic workers were involved from the start, in these early years decision-making lay with ally organizations. Key Features of the Steering Committee:

- Open Access: All meetings were open to endorsers, who could contribute agenda items by notifying the INTERCEDE office in advance.
- Representation: Members included representatives from immigrant groups, feminist organizations, legal advocates and domestic workers themselves, ensuring diverse perspectives informed the coalition's work.

---

Ontario, last modified March 14, 2025, [https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/committees/general-government/parliament-35/transcript/committee-transcript-1994-feb-07#P79\\_4131](https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/committees/general-government/parliament-35/transcript/committee-transcript-1994-feb-07#P79_4131)

<sup>165</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 14 May 1980, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>166</sup> List of Endorsers of INTERCEDE, Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>167</sup> List of Endorsers of INTERCEDE, Roxana Ng fonds.

In July 1982, INTERCEDE undertook significant constitutional reforms to amplify the voice and influence of domestic workers within its governance. The reconstitution of the structure was aimed at guaranteeing strong representation and voice for domestic workers within the organization.<sup>168</sup> Under the revised structure, individual domestic workers were allowed to join INTERCEDE as voting members in their own right a shift from the earlier model where only organizations were the primary members. These individual domestic worker members gained the right to vote at general meetings, to help elect Steering Committee representatives, and to propose agenda items at Committee meetings. Organizations that joined INTERCEDE would continue to have one vote each and could still elect members to the Committee and receive meeting minutes, but their representation was limited to one representative per organization. Most importantly, the new rules in 1982 reconstituted the Steering Committee to ensure that a majority of seats were held by domestic workers. The committee's composition was fixed at 14 members, of whom 8 had to be current or former domestic workers amounting to about 57 percent of the committee. The remaining seats were reserved for ally representatives now termed Associate Members, with no more than three permitted on the committee at a time. Through these changes, by the end of 1982 domestic workers moved from having a consultative presence to holding formal decision-making power within INTERCEDE. They could directly influence strategic direction, vote on initiatives, and hold leadership positions.

#### From Steering Committee to Board of Directors

---

<sup>168</sup> Letter to "Dear friends" by INTERCEDE Steering Committee, 8 July 1982, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

By 1986, INTERCEDE faced an internal governance crisis that tested the organization's commitment to domestic worker leadership.<sup>169</sup> A serious dispute arose within the Steering Committee over personnel policies in INTERCEDE's Service Unit. This reorganization marked a pivotal moment in the coalition's history, transitioning from an informal governance structure to a formally incorporated non-profit organization under Ontario law. In response, INTERCEDE's Executive Committee and the senior members of the old steering committee took decisive action: in mid-1986 they dissolved the old Steering Committee and general membership and initiated the process to formally incorporate INTERCEDE as a non-profit organization under Ontario law.<sup>170</sup> After completing incorporation, granting the organization a legal identity and establishing a more formal governance structure. The newly formed board assumed several key responsibilities, including:<sup>171</sup>

1. Conduct research on domestic workers rights and work with all levels of government for changes in policy and legislation.
2. Foster public awareness of domestic workers rights.
3. Provide counselling to domestic workers on immigration, employment, human rights and social services.
4. Publish educational materials and conduct educational workshops.

---

<sup>169</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1986," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified February 25, 2025.

[https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE)

<sup>170</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – March 1986," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified February 25, 2025.

<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-MAR-1986.pdf>

<sup>171</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – March 1986," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified February 25, 2025.

<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-MAR-1986.pdf>

5. Organize social and cultural events.
6. Network with other organizations with similar objectives.

Domestic worker influence, rather than diminishing in this transition, was reaffirmed and strengthened. The new Board of Directors continued the practice of maintaining a domestic worker majority. Throughout the late 1980s, the Board structure continued to evolve but remained dominated by domestic workers. New mechanisms for member participation were introduced for instance, monthly general membership meetings and the formal Annual General Meeting where members could vote on key issues and elect Board members further solidifying grassroots control.<sup>172</sup>

#### Year-by-Year Committee/Board Membership (1980–1989)

Frances Gregory served as INTERCEDE's first Coordinator, guiding the organization during its formative period. The inaugural Steering Committee, elected at the general meeting in May 1980 reflected INTERCEDE's white, middle-class feminist origins and drew members from a range of feminist organizations.<sup>173</sup> The committee included Lois de Shield and Anna Mennozzi (Employment Services for Immigrant Women), Judith Ramirez (Immigrant Women's Centre and Wages for Housework Campaign), Frances Gregory and Francie Wyland (Wages for Housework and Housewives Initiative), as well as Cathy Pike, Annette Valdez, Roxanna Ng, Amory John, Gwen Morgan, Susan Ballantyne, Himani Bannerji, and Carol Houlihan (Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa).

---

<sup>172</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1986," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified February 25, 2025.

<sup>173</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 14 May 1980, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

In May 1981, INTERCEDE elected a new Steering Committee for the 1981-1982 year that broadened its representation to include domestic workers, notably Mary Dabriou from the West Indies and Columbia Tarape from the Philippines.<sup>174</sup> Frances Gregory continued to serve as Coordinator. The committee also drew members from a variety of community organizations, including Moira Bradshaw (Parkdale Legal Services), Carole Houlihan (Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa), Anna Menozzi (Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre), Judith Ramirez (Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Housework – CASH), Maureen Jackman (North York Library's Community Information), and Francie Wyland (Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund). Additional individual endorsers included Gwen Morgan, Roxanna Ng, Annette Valdez, and Cathy Pike. Despite the new additions, the steering committee was still primarily composed of the more affluent community organizers who initially founded the coalition.

In 1982 however, INTERCEDE reorganized to open up the steering committee to domestic workers and allow domestic workers to take the majority of the seats available in the steering committee.<sup>175</sup> Consequently, 8 of the 14 seats available in the steering committee went to domestic workers or former domestic workers a pattern that continued well into the next decade. The 1982-1983 steering committee members are the six domestic workers: Eulene Boyce, Mary Dabreo, Zeny Dumlao, Marguerita Forde, Avril Higginson, Chris Sandhu, Columbia Coco Diaz and Marion Thomson.

---

<sup>174</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 30 May 1982, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>175</sup> Letter to "Dear friends" by INTERCEDE Steering Committee, 8 July 1982, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

Alongside community representatives Joyce Fraser (Black Women's Sisterhood), Barb Jackman (Law Union), and associate members Frances Gregory and Annette Valdez.<sup>176</sup> During this period, Judith Ramirez assumed responsibility as the coordinator following Frances Gregory's resignation in 1982<sup>177</sup> to pursue law school. In June 1984 members elected new 3 new domestic workers. Linda Lising from the Philippines, Beverley Wilson and Pamela Skeete from Barbados and one new community member Cathy Gilbert (CLASP)<sup>178</sup> joined existing steering committee members Avril Higginson, Dulcie Ledgister, Eulene Boyce, Daphne Tucker, Lynette Munian, Cecilia Grave, Barbara Jackman, Joyce Fraser, Coco Diaz and Judith Ramirez.

During 1985–1986, INTERCEDE restructured its leadership, appointing Eulene Boyce, a former domestic worker, as President of the newly formed Executive Committee, while Judith Ramirez continued as Coordinator. The Steering Committee expanded to 16 members with the addition of two Alternate members, both domestic workers. The committee featured a strong presence of domestic workers and former domestics, including Eulene Boyce, Avril Higginson, Columbia Diaz, Lynette Munian, Linda Lising, Daphne Tucker, Beverley Wilson, Elvira Boncato, Barbara Donaldson, and Apolonia Williams. Community representatives included Joyce Fraser, Barbara Jackman, Jane Horsley (CLASP), Cathy Gilbert, and feminist

---

<sup>176</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 30 May 1982, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>177</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – August 1985," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 25, 2025.

<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-AUG-1985.pdf>

<sup>178</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – July 1984," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 25, 2025. <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-JUL-1984.pdf>

organizer Alison Kerr, reflecting the organization's commitment to both grassroots leadership and diverse community alliances.<sup>179</sup>

The Board of Directors was set up following INTERCEDEs incorporation in March 1986. Each board member served a two-years term.<sup>180</sup> At INTERCEDE's first Annual General Meeting (AGM) as an incorporated body held on October 5, 1986,<sup>181</sup> a full Board was elected in line with the new bylaws. The Board elected in 1986 comprised a total of 13 members, including seven domestic or ex-domestic workers and six community representatives. This included women like Eulene Boyce and Debra Boyce (both Barbadian domestic workers), Lynette Munian (a former domestic from Guyana), Avril Higginson (a former domestic from the UK), Avelina Villanueva (Philippines), Patricia Yuen (Malaysia), and Clementina Martinez (Philippines) all current or former domestic workers.<sup>182</sup> The rest of the Board included community representatives such as Barbara Jackman, poet Lillian Allen, Cornelia Soberano, Shirin Perston, Mary Mouammar, Judith Ramirez, Catherine Gilbert. With domestic worker leaders holding majority on this inaugural Board, the coalition achieved in practice the commitment to worker-led governance first envisioned in 1982.

---

<sup>179</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – August 1985," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 25, 2025.

<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-AUG-1985.pdf>

<sup>180</sup> "Report to the 1990 Annual General Meeting", 1990, by Felicita o. Villasin, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 10, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>181</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – October 1986," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified February 25, 2025.

<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-OCT-1986.pdf>

<sup>182</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – October 1986," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified February 25, 2025.

<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-OCT-1986.pdf>

In 1987–1988, INTERCEDE elected Clementina Martinez, a former domestic worker from the Philippines, as President. Catherine Gilbert served as Vice President, with Lynette Munian, Cornelia Soberano, Shirin Perston, Eulene Boyce, and Judith Ramirez (continuing as Coordinator) holding key leadership roles.<sup>183</sup> The rest of the board included Patricia Yuen, Gina Hayden, Melita Carbungco, Eugenia Yuen, Mary Mouammar, Barbara Jackman, and Cornelia Soberano, creating a strong mix of domestic worker leaders and supportive community advocates.

The 1988–1989 period marked a significant transition for INTERCEDE. Felicita Vallasin, a seasoned community organizer who had previously led the Ad Hoc Committee of Filipino Women, became Coordinator in January 1989,<sup>184</sup> succeeding Judith Ramirez, who stepped away in September 1988.<sup>185</sup> Cornelia Soberano assumed the presidency, with Joyce Stanford and Mary Jarrel serving as Vice Presidents, Magda Aguada as Secretary, and Yola Grant as Treasurer. The board also included Eva Smith, Brenda Wall, Dolores Alapide, Eusebio Aquintey, Nessie Gascon, past president Clementina Martinez, Eugenia Yuen, Carmencita Hernandez.<sup>186</sup>

### Working Committees

---

<sup>183</sup> Domestics Cross-Cultural News – January 1987,” INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 25, 2025.

<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-JAN-1987.pdf>

<sup>184</sup> Domestics Cross-Cultural News – October 1988,” INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 25, 2025.

<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-DEC-1988.pdf>

<sup>185</sup> Domestics Cross-Cultural News – October 1988,” INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 25, 2025.

<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-OCT-1988.pdf>

<sup>186</sup> Domestics Cross-Cultural News – October 1988,” INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 25, 2025.

<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-OCT-1988.pdf>

To further its mission, INTERCEDE created specialized Working Committees that focused on different areas of advocacy and operations. Each committee reported directly to the Steering Committee, ensuring their efforts remained aligned with the coalition's overarching goals. The initial Working Committees included:<sup>187</sup>

1. Research Committee: Responsible for preparing policy briefs and research documents for both provincial and federal governments. This committee gathered and analyzed information critical to shaping INTERCEDE's advocacy strategies. This committee was headed by Judith Ramirez who was an immigrant herself and had helped found the Toronto Wages for Housework in 1975. Being a feminist activist, Judith brought her wealth of experience in grassroots organizing.

2. Outreach Committee: Tasked with maintaining relationships with community organizations, media outlets, and the public, the Outreach Committee played a key role in raising awareness of domestic workers' issues and building solidarity across various groups.

3. By-laws Committee: This committee drafted and reviewed INTERCEDE's constitution and by-laws, providing the legal and structural framework necessary for the coalition to operate effectively and transparently.

4. Fundraising Committee: Charged with applying for grants and organizing other revenue-generating activities, the Fundraising Committee ensured the coalition had the resources needed to support its programs and campaign.

#### Executive Committee

---

<sup>187</sup> "What is INTERCEDE", Roxana Ng fonds.

INTERCEDE had been governed by a broad Steering Committee and later a Board of Directors chosen from the membership. The Board designated the executive officers of the organization among its members with the first executive officers being elected in November 1985,<sup>188</sup> to speed up day-to-day decisions and sharpen its public profile while the board retained ultimate authority.

### Funding Model of INTERCEDE

The funding model of INTERCEDE evolved significantly from its inception in 1979 through the 1980s, reflecting the organization's growth, expanding services and shifting financial priorities. This evolution also mirrored changes in the broader political context and the success of INTERCEDE's advocacy in securing external support.

In its earliest phase, INTERCEDE relied on community donations and in-kind support from allied organizations to sustain its activities. At the time, INTERCEDE had no paid staff and was run by volunteers, so its expenses were modest. Feminist and immigrant organizations like ESIW and the Housewives Initiative provided crucial in-kind assistance: for example, ESIW donated office space and administrative resources to the new coalition.<sup>189</sup> The Housewives' Initiative, which had fundraising experience, helped raise small sums to cover immediate needs. In July 1980, recognizing these groups' fundraising prowess, the INTERCEDE Steering Committee formally delegated fundraising responsibilities to ESIW and the Housewives Initiative.<sup>190</sup>

---

<sup>188</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – November 1985," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 26 25, 2025.

<https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-NOV-1985.pdf>

<sup>189</sup> "Annual Report: May 1980–May 1981", Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>190</sup> "What is INTERCEDE", Roxana Ng fonds.

These member organizations quickly leveraged their networks to secure INTERCEDE's first grant: an amount of \$8,200 from the PLURA (Presbyterian, Lutheran, United, Roman Catholic, Anglican) churches coalition.<sup>191</sup>

In July 1980, it submitted a grant proposal to OXFAM Canada for requesting \$5000 to "write, publish and distribute a popular booklet. It will consist of interviews with domestics and a mini analysis of underdevelopment in the 3rd world and what's being done to combat the exploitation of domestics."<sup>192</sup>

INTERCEDE also relied heavily on donations in its formative years as it had yet secured federal and provincial governments grant that allowed her to expand its operations. In its first published financial statement, it received \$1707 in private donation, including \$1200 from United Church of Canada.<sup>193</sup> A constant feature of all the steering committee's minutes of meetings was the announcement of donations either from new endorsing organizations or private donations from members, signifying how vital donations were sustaining INTERCEDE's activities.

#### FINANCIAL REPORT (MARCH 1980 – MAY 1981)<sup>194</sup>

Revenue		
PLURA Grant	\$	8,200.00
OXFAM Grant	\$	4,000.00
Donations	\$	1,707.00
Honoraria	\$	50.00
Miscellaneous	\$	4.00
Total Revenue		\$13,961.00
Expenses		
Wages	\$	6,500.00

<sup>191</sup> "What is INTERCEDE", Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>192</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 23 July 1980, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>193</sup> "Annual Report: May 1980–May 1981", Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>194</sup> "Annual Report: May 1980–May 1981", Roxana Ng fonds

Benefits	\$	88.28	
Postage	\$	853.00	
Supplies	\$	584.06	
Printing	\$	296.74	
Long Distance	\$	119.99	
Miscellaneous	\$	127.92	
			<u>\$ 8,969.99</u>
Balance			<u>\$ 4,991.01</u>
Disposable Balance			\$ 991.73

Faced with challenges to its structure, INTERCEDE reorganized its funding model in July 1982.<sup>195</sup> This reorganization included the introduction of a membership fee to help inject more funds into the organization. Individual members who were domestic workers paid a \$5 annual fee for voting rights and participation in decision-making, while organizational members paid \$10 annually and received one vote at general meetings.<sup>196</sup> Membership fees from individual domestic workers and organizations remained a consistent funding source. INTERCEDE organized local fundraising events, including discos and social gatherings organized by immigrant communities (for example, Filipino domestic workers), which helped cover specific operational costs, such as travel expenses for advocacy campaigns and event planning.<sup>197</sup>

A major breakthrough in INTERCEDE's funding came with the securing of government grants. INTERCEDE had long identified that having government funding for independent community agencies was crucial and one of its five founding

---

<sup>195</sup> Dear Endorsers of INTERCEDE by Frances Gregory, 13 May 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>196</sup> Letter to "Dear friends" by INTERCEDE Steering Committee, 8 July 1982, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>197</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 19 November 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

resolutions explicitly called for that. In 1984, INTERCEDE's persistent advocacy and growing reputation paid off when it obtained a federal government grant of \$50,000 under the Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP).<sup>198</sup> This grant allowed INTERCEDE to formally establish its Service Unit, essentially providing the coalition with a stamp of legitimacy.<sup>199</sup>

By 1985, INTERCEDE's effective lobbying and partnerships with other organizations (like the Congress of Black Women of Canada and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women) helped it secure an additional ISAP grant of \$61,000 for 1985–86.<sup>200</sup> These funds were used to continue and expand the Service Unit's operations, particularly to address the needs of domestic workers who did not have permanent residency. INTERCEDE influenced ISAP policy by successfully arguing that workers on temporary permits should be eligible for settlement services, an opportunity that was not extended to domestic workers without landed status before.<sup>201</sup> Since 1984, INTERCEDE has relied on annual ISAP funding and support from both federal and provincial sources, underscoring the importance of government support in addressing the systemic challenges faced by domestic workers.<sup>202</sup>

By the end of the decade, INTERCEDE's revenue grew to approximately \$150,000.00 with provincial and federal grants making over 70 percent of the total funds received for 1989 but the expenditures also ballooned to over \$127k.

---

<sup>198</sup> Jin, "Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers," 28.

<sup>199</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 125.

<sup>200</sup> Jin, "Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers," 32.

<sup>201</sup> Jin, "Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers," 32.

<sup>202</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 125.

FINANCIAL REPORT (MARCH 1988 - MAY 1989)<sup>203</sup>

Revenue		
Grants-Federal	\$ 126,119.00	
Province	\$ 18,365.00	
Membership	\$ 2,192.00	
Interest	\$ 2,140.00	
Donations	\$ 274.00	
Total Revenue		\$ 149,090.00
Expenses		
Salaries (net of grants of \$1425)	\$ 78,602.00	
Printing, postage and materials	\$ 15,119.00	
Rent	\$ 6,703.00	
Fixed assets (note 5)	\$ 3,170.00	
Employee benefits	\$ 5,574.00	
Office and general	\$ 7,643.00	
Professional fees	\$ 4,006.00	
Telephone	\$ 4,295.00	
Meetings	\$ -	
Travel	\$ 208.00	
Special events	\$ -	
Courses and workshops	\$ 77.00	
Memberships	\$ -	
Advertising	\$ 1,752.00	
Interest and bank charges	\$ 385.00	
		\$ 127,934.00
Recovery of prior years' expenses		\$ 1,068.00
		<u>\$ 126,866.00</u>
Excess of receipts over expenditures		<u>\$ 22,224.00</u>

<sup>203</sup> "Report to the 1990 Annual General Meeting", 1990, by Felicita O. Villasin, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 10, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

### Strategic Partnerships

INTERCEDE was also able to sustain its operations with strategic partnerships, especially in its early years, which enabled the organization to expand its reach and maintain critical services while minimizing financial strain. One key partnership was with the Ontario Career Action Program (OCAP) which funded a 16-weeks grant for a staff person to be shared with the Housewives Initiative.<sup>204</sup> Another such collaboration was with Parkdale Community Legal Services, which ensured that domestic workers could access free legal advice and support reducing operational costs while addressing one of the most pressing needs of the community.<sup>205</sup> These alliances reflect INTERCEDE's ingenuity in building a sustainable funding and operational model that aligned with its long-term advocacy goals.

### INTERCEDE's Service Unit

The Service Unit was a pivotal addition to the organization, marking a significant expansion of its services and advocacy for domestic workers. Established in March 1984 with help from the federal government grant of \$50,000 from the ISAP,<sup>206</sup> the Service Unit was integral to INTERCEDE's mission of empowering domestic workers and addressing their immediate and systemic needs. It began with two full-

---

<sup>204</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 24 September 1980, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>205</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 27 August 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>206</sup> Jin, "Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers," 28.

time counsellors, both former domestic workers and visible minority women, with initial objectives:<sup>207</sup>

- To assist domestic workers in meeting the criteria for landed immigrant status.
- To provide information, referrals, and advocacy related to immigration, employment, legal, and social service needs.
- To educate domestic workers about their rights and obligations.

Two months later, the Service Unit expanded its outreach by launching the monthly newsletter, *Domestics Cross-Cultural News* with a \$3,000 grant from PLURA. The newsletter played a crucial role in disseminating information to domestic workers, especially those unable to attend regular meetings.<sup>208</sup> Through the newsletter, domestics could receive updates on immigration policies, labour laws, upcoming events, and success stories of fellow workers, thereby fostering a sense of community and shared knowledge. Services provided by the Service Unit itself included one-on-one information and referral, advocacy and case intervention, personal counselling, monthly legal clinics, skills workshops, educational sessions, and general settlement support. All of these services were offered in a culturally sensitive manner, recognizing the diverse backgrounds of domestic workers. Service Unit assistance was free of charge.

The response to INTERCEDE's Service Unit was tremendous from the start. In its first year of operation March 1984 to February 1985, staff handled 1,196 inquiries and provided in-depth counselling to 675 domestic workers; in addition, 69 workers received advice through INTERCEDE's monthly legal clinic, bringing the total to 744

---

<sup>207</sup> Jin, "Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers," 28.

<sup>208</sup> Jin, "Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers," 31.

domestic workers served in the first year.<sup>209</sup> The second year of the Service Unit saw even greater demand. In the first quarter of 1985–1986 alone March through May 1985, the Unit handled a record number of cases 198 domestic workers were counselled, a 34 percent increase compared to the same period the previous year.<sup>210</sup> By the third quarter of 1985 March–November 1985, an internal report showed 1,326 cases handled year-to-date, up from 833 in the equivalent period of 1984 a dramatic 59 percent increase in overall caseload.<sup>211</sup> The number of new clients rose to 711 a 21 percent increase over the prior year, and the total number of domestic workers served climbed by 12 percent. Service statistics also illuminated the profile and needs of the clients: about 86 percent of cases in 1985 involved foreign domestic workers (most of whom were in Canada on temporary work permits). Seventy-six percent of clients were women from the Caribbean and the Philippines, and fully 90 percent of inquiries dealt with immigration-related problems.<sup>212</sup>

The Service Unit’s second full year was marked by both an expansion of services and concrete successes for domestic workers. During that year, staff fielded 1,698 calls from clients 42 percent more than in the first year.<sup>213</sup> They assisted 926 new

---

<sup>209</sup> Domestics Cross-Cultural News – June 1985,” INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 26 25, 2025. <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-JUN-1985.pdf>

<sup>210</sup> Domestics Cross-Cultural News – August 1985,” INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 26 25, 2025. <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-AUG-1985.pdf>

<sup>211</sup> Domestics Cross-Cultural News – December 1985,” INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 26 25, 2025. <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-DEC-1985.pdf>

<sup>212</sup> Domestics Cross-Cultural News – December 1985,” INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 26 25, 2025. <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-DEC-1985.pdf>

<sup>213</sup> Domestics Cross-Cultural News – March 1986,” INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 27 25, 2025. <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-MAR-1986.pdf>

individuals a 20 percent increase in new clients and ultimately served 843 domestic workers in total that year, a 13 percent increase over the previous year.<sup>214</sup> The success of the Service Unit was remarkable. The counsellors handled 100 in-depth cases of foreign domestic workers applying for permanent residence in Canada. By early 1986, not a single case had been rejected outright by Immigration, a remarkable success rate. In fact, 49 percent of those 100 clients had already been accepted for landed status, and 47 percent were still awaiting decisions. The remaining 4 percent had withdrawn their applications or had been referred to lawyers, with 0 percent rejected.<sup>215</sup> The Service Unit also took on 39 additional cases of domestic workers who came to INTERCEDE after having been initially refused landing. Through determined advocacy and appeals on their behalf, INTERCEDE won reversals in a significant number of those cases: 36 percent of these previously rejected applicants were eventually accepted for landing, 33 percent were still pending a decision as of early 1986, and only 5 percent were ultimately rejected a second time the rest had withdrawn or sought outside counsel.<sup>216</sup>

By the end of the decade, the Service Unit was serving even more people year after year. In 1989, the Service Unit recorded 3,572 contacts, half of which were first-time interactions.<sup>217</sup> Of these contacts, 71 percent were related to immigration issues, while the remaining cases dealt with employment concerns. The majority of clients 80

---

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – March 1986," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 27 25, 2025. <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCCN-MAR-1986.pdf>

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> "Report to the 1990 Annual General Meeting", 1990, by Felicita O. Villasin, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 10, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

percent were from the Philippines, followed by 9 percent from the Caribbean, 2 percent from Europe/UK, and the remaining 9 percent from Asia, Latin America, and Africa. These figures highlighted both the unit's growing reach and the continuing predominance of Filipino domestic workers within its client base.

### **Chapter 3: Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization Report and The Birth of FDM**

The 1980s marked a critical turning point in the struggle for the rights and recognition of migrant domestic workers in Canada. In this decade, INTERCEDE emerged as a major force, not only challenging established exclusionary policies but also reimagining the legal status of domestic work. Central to this transformation was confronting the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM), a policy framework that constructed foreign domestic workers, especially from the Global South, as passive and exploitable entities.<sup>218</sup> This chapter examines how INTERCEDE confronted the FDM at the federal level throughout the early 1980s, drawing on primary sources including the Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization Report, the white paper on FDM policy, and INTERCEDE's briefs to both the Ontario and federal governments.

#### **Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization Report and the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM).**

At the heart of the policy debate in the 1980s was the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM), a framework governing the recruitment and employment of migrant domestic workers. The FDM was characterized by temporary entry, forced live-in conditions and exclusion from standard labour protections. By this time, the exclusionary provisions of the 1976 immigration policy had sparked ongoing conflicts among domestic workers, employers and immigration department officials.<sup>219</sup> To solve this persistent conflict, the new minister of labour and immigration Lloyd Axworthy

---

<sup>218</sup> Macklin, "On the inside looking in: Foreign domestic workers in Canada," 26

<sup>219</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 109.

initiated a review of its immigration practices as they pertained to domestic work. A landmark moment in this process was the establishment of the Task force on Immigration Practice and Procedures in 1980, chaired by W.G Robinson. This Task Force was established to advise the minister on the objectives of the 1976 Immigration Act and to assess how well those objectives were being met under current regulations and practices.<sup>220</sup> The Task Force was created due to mounting criticism that his department of immigration was condoning the exploitation of domestic workers,<sup>221</sup> further exacerbated by escalating tensions between domestic workers and their Canadian employers.

In April 1981, the Task Force released its now famous 97-page report *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization Report*, which reaffirmed what had been known to everyone for decades; that domestic workers on temporary employment visas faced severe disadvantages and abuses due to inherent occupational vulnerabilities.<sup>222</sup> In the report's introduction, the Task Force identified two major problems for foreign domestic workers in Canada.<sup>223</sup>

1. Problems relating to working conditions.
2. Problems relating to opportunities in attaining landed immigrant status.

First, the report recognized that domestic workers frequently endured low wages and poor working conditions, often amounting to exploitation. It pinpointed several

---

<sup>220</sup> Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 1.

<sup>221</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 111.

<sup>222</sup> Daenzer, "An Affair between Nations: International Relations and the Movement of Household Service Workers," 88.

<sup>223</sup> Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 12.

contributing factors, such as the isolation experienced in private homes, which severely limited opportunities for socialization and collective action. “She depends on her employer not only for wages, but also for her dwelling place and continued stay in the country. And while she is legally entitled to stay in Canada as a visitor, for all practical purposes she can only remain so long as she is in domestic employment and must report a change of status to appropriate officials immediately.”<sup>224</sup> It further identified that there was little or no protection for domestic workers under provincial labour law, while federal law was of little value and may in fact create additional difficulties for the domestic workers.

Second, the Task Force identified significant challenges in attaining landed status for domestic workers. They noted two main issues as well; first, the inherent difficulties immigrant domestic workers face when trying to enter Canada as landed immigrants from their country instead of on temporary visas. These hardships stemmed from labour market conditions, particularly the shortage of domestic workers. Since domestic workers with landed status tended to leave their positions more quickly, bureaucratic bottlenecks are imposed to ensure that foreign domestic workers were unable to attain landed status from their home countries, thereby preserving a steady supply of labour for Canadian families through temporary work visas.<sup>225</sup> In essence, the temporary work visa functioned as a deliberate means of restricting domestic workers mobility, ultimately leading to their “In other words, the employment authorization device serves to maintain the supply domestic workers by restricting

---

<sup>224</sup> Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 12.

<sup>225</sup> Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 14.

their mobility...it also serves to inhibit the type of improvement in wages and working conditions which might ultimately attract Canadians to these jobs and reduce the need for foreign workers.”<sup>226</sup>

Additionally, the Task Force discussed the plight of domestic workers who had spent many years in Canada on successive temporary work visas and had built strong ties in the country may still face forced departure if they are unable to obtain landed status. It observed that easing the process for new domestic workers to obtain landed status from abroad would be unfair if those already in Canada on temporary visas were forced to leave due to their inability to secure permanent status. Consequently, the Task Force proposed a grandmothing mechanism designed to facilitate the approval of domestic workers who have already been in Canada on temporary work visas.

With regard to the legislations and regulations themselves, the Task Force pointed to ways in which the point-based system of the 1976 immigration act made it difficult for domestic workers to qualify for landed status. The classification system for evaluating potential immigrants to Canada, particularly in the context of domestic work, places a low value on the qualifications and experiences of domestic workers. For example, positions like babysitters and personal servants are assigned very few points for Specific Vocational Preparation (SVP), making it difficult for individuals in these roles to score high enough to qualify for permanent residency. This low rating for domestic work reduces the chances of these workers meeting the criteria needed to gain landed status, as they can only secure a fraction of the available points, regardless of their experience. Furthermore, there could be no immigrant visa for an

---

<sup>226</sup> Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 14.

applicant who had no occupational demand or experience.<sup>227</sup> For domestic workers, this became a significant barrier as those with low ratings in the classification system were unlikely to meet the minimum required points. In the case of domestic workers, who often did not fit neatly into the categories set out for immigration purposes, the discretion given to visa officers could disadvantage them “...It is virtually impossible for someone to obtain landing on the basis of a plan to work as a domestic. The only way to become landed from outside Canada is to obtain a favourable exercise of discretion under section 11(3) of the regulation.”<sup>228</sup>

Domestic workers in Canada faced challenges regarding their wages, UI contributions, and income tax implications. Despite Ontario introducing a minimum wage of \$568 per month in January 1981, after intense lobbying from INTERCEDE, domestic workers saw their take-home pay reduced because of the notional add-on of room and board, which inflated their reported wages but did not accurately reflect their actual cash earnings.<sup>229</sup> This created a situation in which domestic workers earned less than the minimum wage once required deductions were made.

Additionally, while domestic workers were technically eligible for UI benefits, the irregularity and uncertainty of their employment status often prevented them from accessing those benefits. Many workers had to leave the country before qualifying or could not claim UI benefits because of the nature of their temporary work status.

Furthermore, contributions to the CPP were often inaccessible to domestic workers, as

---

<sup>227</sup>Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 22.

<sup>228</sup>Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 23.

<sup>229</sup>Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 67.

they typically did not meet the conditions for qualifying for a pension, and few pursued claims for the CPP contributions they had made.

The Task Force put forward several recommendations to address these issues, particularly in relation to the tax treatment of domestic workers and their employers. It recommended that the Income Tax Act be amended to allow employers of domestic workers to claim a tax deduction for the expenses of employing them, ensuring that employers who paid the minimum wage could receive appropriate deductions. This change was intended to improve the financial situation of domestic workers and to create a more equitable relationship between workers and employers. Additionally, the Task Force suggested that better tax treatment for employers of live-in domestic workers could address disparities between daycare services and domestic employment, encouraging more investment in domestic work. By offering financial incentives to employers, the government could potentially increase the supply of domestic services and reduce reliance on public daycare subsidies, benefiting both employers and workers.

On the issue of employment contracts, the Task Force also criticized the lack of enforceable contract between employers and domestic workers. However, despite recognizing the potential benefits, the Task Force rejected the mandatory enforcement of formal employment contracts because of practical and constitutional concerns.<sup>230</sup> This contradiction was evident in the fact that, while the Task Force acknowledged that contracts could safeguard workers' rights, it chose not to enforce them. This decision effectively served to benefit Canadian employers, as it left workers without

---

<sup>230</sup> Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 81.

formal protections and allowed employers to continue with informal or exploitative agreements without legal accountability. In its final recommendation, the Task Force identified four policy directions for the issue of foreign domestic workers.

1. Deny entry altogether, either as landed immigrant or on temporary work visas.
2. Restrict entry to landed immigrants only.
3. Restrict entry to employment authorizations only.
4. A combination of 2 and 3 with modifications to present practice and procedure.<sup>231</sup>

The first alternative proposed by the Task Force embodied a market-driven ideology in which employers, by inducing scarcity in the domestic labour pool, could pay higher wages. The idea was that if the immigration of domestic workers were limited, employers would be forced to compete for a smaller pool of workers, thereby increasing wages. However, the Task Force noted that the admission of immigrants to do domestic work could not be driven purely by market forces, as it would place these workers on equal footing with other service workers in Canada. Historically, domestic workers, particularly women, had been rejected by the Canadian labour market, which tended to keep them in a low-wage, undervalued position. The second approach suggested admitting domestic workers without regard to their length of stay or immigration status, essentially granting them citizenship and access to labour market rights regardless of their residence status. The Task Force saw this as a way to recognize domestic workers as legitimate participants in the Canadian labour market. However, without strong protections and regulations, the Task Force acknowledged

---

<sup>231</sup> Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 81.

that such an approach could leave these workers vulnerable to exploitation in an unregulated market. The third policy alternative, which the Task Force ultimately critiqued, involved continuing to admit domestic workers under a paternalistic system.<sup>232</sup> This approach operated on the assumption that domestic work, especially that performed by immigrant women, was inherently inferior and unskilled. The Task Force argued that this view perpetuated racial and gender biases that undervalued domestic labour. It specifically critiqued the 1976 Immigration Act's point system for assigning an arbitrarily low value to domestic work, particularly for tasks like childcare, which severely limits the ability of domestic workers to qualify for immigration. Applicants in these roles receive minimal points under the occupational demand category, effectively denying them the ability to gain landed status.

Finally, policy option four, which the Task Force ultimately adopted as its recommendation, presented a balanced approach to managing the entry of domestic workers into Canada while ensuring a sense of fair treatment. The policy focused on continuing the use of employment authorizations for foreign domestic workers, but with modifications to address key concerns. One major recommendation was the imposition of time limitations on employment authorizations. The Task Force suggested that employment authorizations should be limited to two to three years, after which workers would need to apply for permanent residency if they wished to remain in Canada. This limitation was intended to prevent workers from staying in temporary status indefinitely and encouraged them either to apply for landing or to leave the country. Additionally, the Task Force emphasized the importance of clearly

---

<sup>232</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 113.

informing workers about the temporary nature of their employment status before they arrived in Canada. The Task Force also discussed the “grandmothering” provision, which allowed workers who had been in Canada on employment authorizations for an extended period to remain in the country and apply for permanent residency from within. This exception was designed to provide fairness to domestic workers who had been excluded from landing opportunities by the 1976 Immigration Act, a policy that revoked the earlier privilege under which domestic workers could secure permanent residency. Under the 1976 Act, domestic workers were forced either to leave Canada at the end of their temporary contracts or to remain as long-term non-residents.<sup>233</sup> This provision recognized that forcing workers to return home after long periods of employment in Canada created undue hardship. “Although we are not proposing any general relaxation of the requirement of applying for landing offshore, there are good reasons for an exception here... the affected group has up until now been excluded from landing largely because of low values on their training, experience and job demand, which may well have little relation to their individual merits.”<sup>234</sup> Improving working conditions for domestic workers was another key recommendation of the Task Force. They strongly advocated for the introduction of a grace period for domestic workers, allowing them time to find new employment if their original job ends due to issues like low wages or poor working conditions. This period would provide greater stability for domestic workers, enabling them to transition between employers without losing their legal status. In addition, the Task Force recommended reworking the Confirmation of Offer of Employment form to create a clear contract

---

<sup>233</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 97.

<sup>234</sup> Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 92.

that outlines the terms and conditions of employment between the workers and employer. This was intended to provide more transparency and better protection for domestic workers from exploitation. However, it was acknowledged that the government could not directly regulate contracts between landed immigrants and employers, which presented an enforcement challenge.<sup>235</sup>

The recommendations announced in 1981 regarding the entry of foreign domestic workers to Canada were framed as an attempt to balance the needs of Canadian families for domestic workers against the need to protect these workers from exploitation. However, two things were clear from the policy announcement. First, Canadian families would be assured access to immigrant domestic workers, meaning they would have a steady supply of labour to meet their needs. Second, foreign domestic workers would continue to enter Canada as non-immigrants, with only a limited number being granted full immigrant status after a period of employment. This policy, later known as the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM), required workers to qualify for landed immigrant status only after working for a period in domestic service, a system that disproportionately affected certain groups of workers, especially those from the Caribbean and the Philippines.

#### Foreign Domestic Movement program (FDM)

On November 22, 1981, domestic workers organized their most impactful protest to date. INTERCEDE, in collaboration with the Ad Hoc Committee of Filipino Domestics for Landed Status, the International Association of Filipino Patriots, and other advocacy groups, staged a major demonstration outside the Canadian

---

<sup>235</sup> Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 81.

immigration offices in Toronto. At the same time, a parallel protest was held in Vancouver, led by the Vancouver Association of Filipino Domestic Workers, the Labour Advocacy and Research Association, and the International Association of Filipino Patriots.<sup>236</sup> The protests were sparked by the Ministry of Immigration's refusal to implement the findings and recommendations of *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*.<sup>237</sup> Protesters demanded that domestic workers on work visas be allowed to apply for landed status without leaving Canada, called for the abolition of the work visa system that kept women of colour in conditions akin to indentured servitude, and insisted that on-landed domestic workers be granted the same rights as those already holding landed immigrant status. Four days later, on November 26, 1981, Minister Lloyd Axworthy and his departmental officials announced policy changes to the domestic work program that would now be known as the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM). Under this framework, domestic workers who had completed at least two years of employment were eligible to apply for permanent residence when their work permits came up for renewal.<sup>238</sup>

*Figure 3 Flyer for Landed Status Now protest that happened on 22 November 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.*

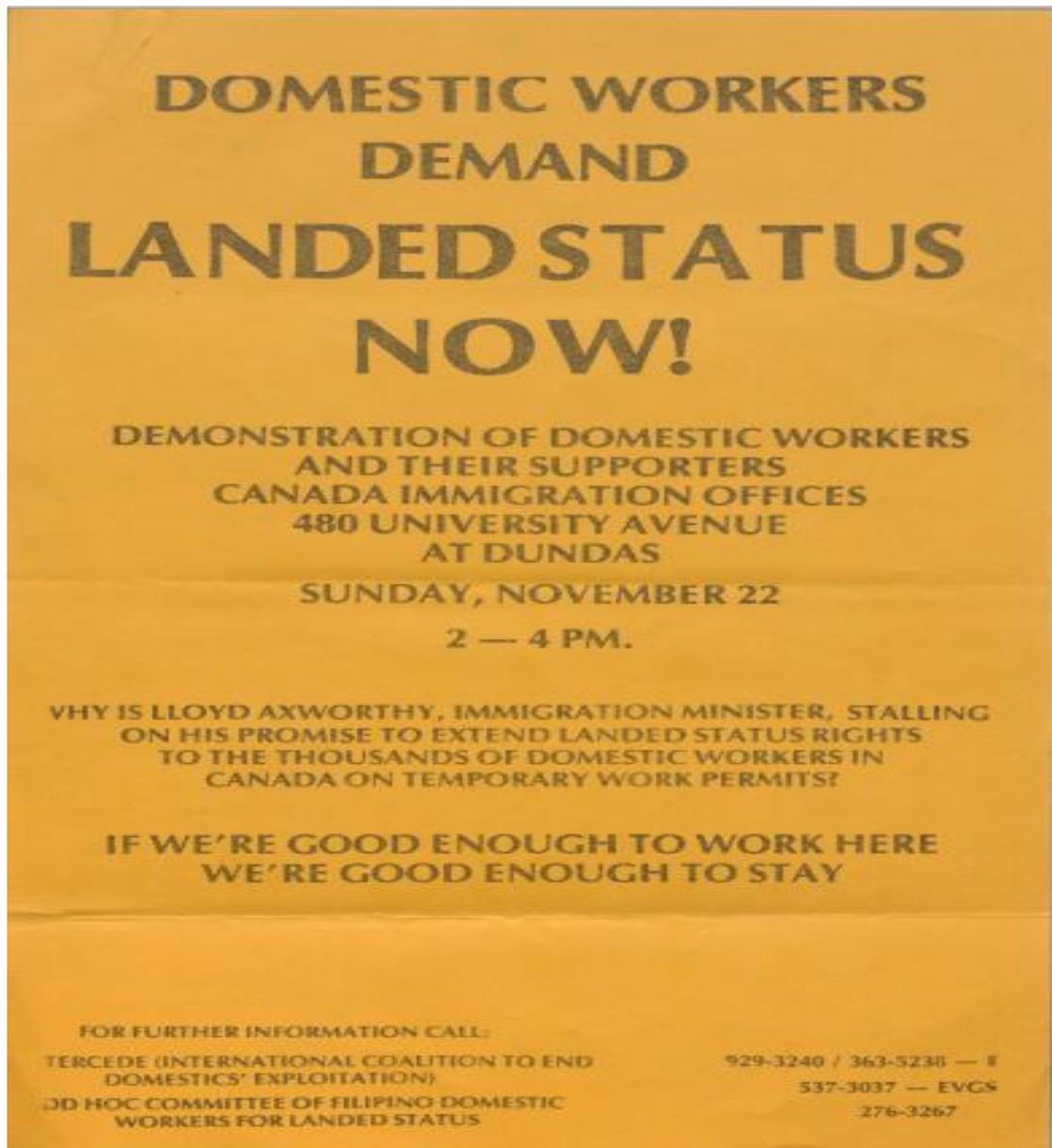
---

<sup>236</sup> Fact sheet on domestic workers major protest by INTERCEDE, 22 November 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>237</sup> Fact sheet on domestic workers major protest by INTERCEDE, 22 November 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>238</sup> Judith Ramirez, "Domestic Workers Organize," *Canadian Woman Studies* 4, no.2 (1982): 89–91, <https://cws.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cws/article/view/13906>.

As part of this process, they must undergo an initial assessment to evaluate their potential for self-sufficiency.<sup>239</sup> This assessment considered various criteria, including the applicant's level of education, job-related skills, personal suitability, and the



presence of family or community connections in Canada. The FDM ultimately failed to inspire confidence among domestic workers. While many welcomed the opportunity to apply for landed status with optimism, the additional requirements for upgrading and proving self-sufficiency generated significant apprehension, especially

---

<sup>239</sup> Ramirez, “Domestic Workers Organize,” 89.

among older domestic workers with limited formal education.<sup>240</sup> In the end, the new policy framework continued to admit foreign domestic workers on employment visas without granting them immediate permanent status. The Minister's new policy largely disregarded the nineteen recommendations made by the Task Force, adopting only two: first, that domestic workers would continue to enter Canada on work authorization visas and could obtain landed status only after completing two years of compulsory live-in service with a designated employer, a condition that exceeded the one-year recommended by the Task Force; and second, that they would receive increased points for occupational training, with ten out of a possible fifteen points awarded to those who had formal training.<sup>241</sup>

Although there was no guarantee of acceptance as permanent resident, the opportunity to apply marked an improvement over the previous temporary visa regime. Their eligibility had been based solely on their ability to perform domestic work, and because many lacked the required certifications, they were unable to meet the point-system criteria needed for landing.<sup>242</sup> Until a domestic worker secured landed immigrant status, she remained classified as a temporary visitor on a work visa,<sup>243</sup> and despite the moral argument made by the Task Force, only a one-year extension was given to those who were eventually deported.

---

<sup>240</sup> Judith Ramirez, *Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada* (Toronto: INTERCEDE, 1983), 3.

<sup>241</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 116.

<sup>242</sup> "Information Paper; Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization" by Ministry of Employment and Immigration Canada, November 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 1, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>243</sup> Macklin, "On the inside looking in: Foreign domestic workers in Canada," 18.

In March 1983, INTERCEDE raised a series of objections to the FDM policy through a brief, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for change*,<sup>244</sup> submitted to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. INTERCEDE criticized how the ostensibly progressive goals were undermined by bureaucratic arbitrariness, racialized assumptions, and institutional neglect, even though it viewed the policy as a significant step forward for temporary domestic workers in Canada. INTERCEDE highlighted the discretionary power given to officers in determining self-sufficiency for applicants and how this served as a barrier for domestic workers seeking status. To achieve landed status under the FDM, four key conditions had to be met:<sup>245</sup>

1. Employer Support: The domestic worker's employer needed to show sufficient benevolence by giving her time off for schooling or training and sometimes even paying for those courses. If an employer was unsympathetic or refused to accommodate upgrading (or worse, if the worker had to change employers due to abuse), the worker's chances in the program plummeted.
2. Employment Counsellor Support: Government employment counsellors (from Canada Employment Centres) were expected to respond compassionately when a domestic worker faced abuse or job loss, by helping her find new employment or training opportunities. The program relied on these counsellors

---

<sup>244</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*.

<sup>245</sup> Daenzer, "An Affair between Nations: International Relations and the Movement of Household Service Workers" 97.

to act in the worker's best interest rather than simply cancelling her work permit when things went wrong.

3. Immigration Officer Discretion: Immigration officers were supposed to interpret vague criteria such as personal suitability, adaptation, and self-sufficiency generously when assessing a domestic worker's application. In other words, officials needed to give the benefit of the doubt to the worker's efforts and potential, rather than look for reasons to reject her.
4. Bureaucratic Coordination: Both immigration and employment officials (across different departments) had to cooperate and set aside interdepartmental tensions to ensure the program worked fairly. This meant, for example, that immigration and labour departments needed to communicate about individual cases and not let jurisdictional disputes harm the worker's outcome.

New entrants were selected based on their personal suitability and their demonstrated potential or ability to undergo sufficient training or upgrading essential for achieving self-sufficiency in the Canadian labour market. Immigration officers, both overseas and within Canada, were tasked with thoroughly counselling prospective domestic workers to ensure they were fully aware of the opportunity to apply for permanent residency upon successful completion of their skills-upgrading programs.<sup>246</sup>

Meanwhile, domestic workers already in Canada who wanted to take advantage of the FDM had to notify immigration officials of their intent when applying to extend their work permits.<sup>247</sup> Those who, after two years, were deemed achievers, meaning they

---

<sup>246</sup> "Information Paper; Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization", Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>247</sup> "Information Paper; Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization", Roxana Ng fonds.

had shown initiative and become self-sufficient, were allowed to apply for landing without further scrutiny, whereas those labeled non-achievers, judged to lack initiative or potential, were slated for removal back to their home country.<sup>248</sup>

INTERCEDE's investigation revealed that giving immigration officers such broad latitude led to wildly uneven outcomes across different regions, directly contradicting the FDM program's promise of fairness. For example, in 1982 (the first full year of the FDM), the chances of a domestic worker being approved for landing at her initial evaluation varied dramatically depending on where she was assessed. In British Columbia, roughly 90 percent of first-assessment applicants were approved for permanent residence, whereas in Ontario the approval rates ranged from only 24 percent in Ottawa to about 75 percent in smaller centres like London–Windsor, with Toronto's rate at a mere 32 percent.<sup>249</sup> These disparities were far too large to be explained by differences in applicants qualifications; instead, they reflected conflicting institutional philosophies in the various immigration offices. Toronto officials, for instance, adopted a notably punitive gatekeeping approach. They insisted that each domestic worker devise her own detailed self-sufficiency plan for the two-year period and warned applicants that “the single biggest reason for rejection will be the lack of a plan.”<sup>250</sup>

---

<sup>248</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 121.

<sup>249</sup> Ramirez, *Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 7.

<sup>250</sup> Ramirez, *Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 7.

By contrast, immigration officers in Hamilton prioritized assistance over strict scrutiny. One FDM coordinator in Hamilton was quoted as saying, “If they don’t have a plan, I’m here to help, not be a policeman.”<sup>251</sup> This reflected a fundamentally different attitude: Hamilton officials saw their role as guiding workers toward success, even helping them develop plans if needed, rather than using the absence of a plan as a reason to deny them. Meanwhile, in Ottawa, officials went further in the supportive direction by crafting detailed timetables for workers struggling with requirements,<sup>252</sup> providing them with a step-by-step roadmap to achieve self-sufficiency. These examples illustrated that the program’s implementation depended enormously on the luck of where a domestic worker was located. INTERCEDE condemned this arbitrariness, arguing that the FDM’s “greater discretion given to immigration officers was at best a mixed blessing,”<sup>253</sup> enabling bias rather than equity. The coalition also noted a troubling pattern: the regional discrepancies appeared correlated with the racial background of the workers. British Columbia’s domestic worker pool at that time included more Filipina and European women, and that province had the most lenient outcomes, while Ontario (especially Toronto) had a larger proportion of Black Caribbean women among its domestic workers and also the harshest scrutiny.<sup>254</sup> The broad discretion allowed under the FDM became a tool through which racial biases could manifest, intentionally or not, resulting in women of colour facing higher hurdles.

---

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>254</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 9.

Another issue INTERCEDE highlighted was the FDM policy's failure to account for the diverse career aspirations and family circumstances of domestic workers, a shortcoming that in practice harmed Caribbean women the most. The official FDM guidelines had assured that participants would not be penalized for the particular field in which they chose to upgrade their skills. The policy even stated: "Some may find it most realistic to continue in the same general type of work they now do. In those instances, in order to improve their chances for becoming permanent residents, the domestics will be assisted in taking household and child-care courses under the Canada Manpower Training Program and thus increase their earning capacity in these fields."<sup>255</sup>

In practice, however, INTERCEDE found that immigration officers consistently favoured training in more marketable skills. One immigration official candidly admitted: "The whole point of the program is to train domestic workers for other jobs."<sup>256</sup> While the Minister's Office assured INTERCEDE that courses in any field would be acceptable, officers often applied a labour-market-driven standard, steering workers toward in-demand occupations and discouraging alternatives. Domestic workers who pursued courses in fields deemed low demand were warned that such choices could harm their "personal suitability."<sup>257</sup> This shifting of criteria undermined

---

<sup>255</sup> "Information Paper; Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization", Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>256</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 14.

<sup>257</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 13.

the program's stated intent adding another layer of confusion about what types of courses were considered acceptable for meeting the upgrading requirement.

INTERCEDE argued that the authorities were sabotaging workers' autonomy by pressuring them to conform to a narrow vision of economic utility rather than supporting their chosen paths of self-improvement.

To illustrate this bias, INTERCEDE cited the case of a 42-year-old Jamaican domestic worker who had eight years of experience in Canada but limited literacy. When she went for her FDM assessment, officials told her she needed nothing in terms of further preparation for the next review, essentially giving her no guidance or training opportunities. Unsurprisingly, with no new training and given her profile, she failed to meet the program's self-sufficiency standards and was slated for deportation.

INTERCEDE argued that this situation revealed a structural bias: "The test for self-sufficiency must be geared towards a realistic appraisal of the field which the domestic worker chooses."<sup>258</sup>

Family circumstances presented another hurdle. Many domestic workers from the Caribbean had left children or other dependents at home when they came to Canada, and part of their goal in seeking permanent status was to eventually sponsor their families to join them. Although Canada Employment Insurance Commission (CEIC) headquarters acknowledged that family members could help a domestic worker successfully establish herself in Canada, the situation in Toronto was quite different. Immigration officers there assessed applications based on projected support costs for dependents, even those who might never immigrate, effectively treating children and spouses as financial burdens. Consequently, unless a domestic worker could provide a

---

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 14.

job offer for any dependents of working age, her family was viewed as a liability rather than an asset in her bid for permanent residency.<sup>259</sup> INTERCEDE blasted this as an arbitrary and unfair addition to the criteria. Moreover, it hardly solved any problem: even if a worker somehow obtained job offers for her adult children, Canada's family reunification process under the FDM took at least a year after she obtained PR, meaning those offers would likely expire long before the dependents could immigrate.<sup>260</sup> In practice, this was a Catch-22 that disproportionately affected Caribbean women, who were more likely to have left families behind and thus more likely to be flagged under these dubious dependents tests. The net effect was that women with dependents (especially single mothers) had a steeper hill to climb to convince officials of their self-sufficiency, since their true motive, to reunite with and provide for their families, was perversely construed as a risk factor.

The FDM policy also required domestic workers who needed further counselling to qualify for landed status to be referred to Canada Employment Centres (CECs) for skill upgrades. The policy stated: "Domestics who have not yet attained a suitable level of self-sufficiency will be assessed and given the same opportunities as new entrants to upgrade their skills... they will be referred to the nearest Canada Employment Centre for counselling"<sup>261</sup>

In theory, this meant that a worker who had not passed the first assessment could undergo additional training and then be re-assessed for permanent residence.

---

<sup>259</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 8.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>261</sup> "Information Paper; Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization", Roxana Ng fonds.

However, INTERCEDE found that this aspect of the program was also handled inconsistently and often ineffectively. Across Canada, local immigration offices differed in how readily they referred domestic workers to CEC for skills upgrading. In British Columbia, it appeared that nearly all unsuccessful domestic workers were referred for further counselling and training at CEC. By contrast, in Toronto only about 23 percent of unsuccessful applicants were referred, and of the Caribbean women in Toronto's program who were turned down on their first try, 45 percent reported receiving no help whatsoever. About 10 percent of those who were told they would get a referral said they were never contacted by the employment centre for an appointment.<sup>262</sup> A Toronto supervisor admitted "We are not referring to the CEC's much anymore... domestic workers got more confused than anything else."<sup>263</sup> This startling admission suggested that some officials had effectively given up on the very mechanism that was supposed to improve workers chances.

Even those who did get referred to a CEC often found that the system was not set up to prioritize them. Employment counsellors at CEC tended to focus on unemployed Canadian workers, not on supporting migrant domestics through bureaucratic immigration hurdles. INTERCEDE noted that immigrant women were often left in limbo waiting for courses or counselling slots, only to discover that nothing concrete had been arranged. Workers dutifully appeared for their next immigration

---

<sup>262</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 11.

<sup>263</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 12.

reassessment after months, only to report that no upgrading had actually taken place during the interim because of delays and lack of follow-up.<sup>264</sup>

Perhaps the defining characteristic of the FDM was its mandate that domestic workers complete two years of continuous employment to qualify for permanent residency. Even relatively brief employment gaps lasting between one and four weeks were treated as breaks in continuity, forcing workers to restart their two-year eligibility period. Additionally, domestic workers were required to maintain positive relationships with their employers, a requirement typically verified through letters of reference or employer interviews.<sup>265</sup> INTERCEDE argued that such stringent rules imposed harsh penalties for employment gaps, even when those gaps were the result of systemic failures. Domestic workers were often left in the dark about how to address gaps or disputes. For example, one worker was told she needed nothing to prepare for reassessment after losing her job, leaving her without a clear path forward.<sup>266</sup>

One area where the FDM introduced a concrete improvement was in formalizing the employment contract for domestic workers. For the first time, Canadian employers of foreign domestics were required to sign a legally binding contract with the worker, spelling out the basic terms of employment. These contracts included a minimum monthly wage of \$710 in Ontario (where most domestics worked), of which no more

---

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 16.

<sup>266</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 16.

than \$5 per week could be deducted for room and board, as well as provisions on working hours, duties, and time off. The goal was to create clarity and prevent some of the worst abuses such as excessively long hours or gross underpayment, by having everything agreed to in writing at the outset.<sup>267</sup> However, despite these intentions, INTERCEDE highlighted failures in enforcing the policy's wage and working-condition protections. Wage violations were widespread: 20 percent of domestic workers in Toronto reported underpayment, and some employers even coerced workers into performing unpaid labour. In one case, a domestic worker from the Dominican Republic was forced to clean a neighbour's house without pay, being told: "Don't you think your back would ache if you were back home working in the fields?"<sup>268</sup> implying that no matter how hard the extra work was, she should consider herself lucky given her origins.

Moreover, the lack of effective monitoring and enforcement compounded workers vulnerability. Federal authorities lacked the power to enforce these contracts, and provincial agencies declined to intervene, citing jurisdictional limits restricted to provincial minimum standards. This regulatory gap created a grey area in which employers could breach contracts with little fear of repercussions. Employers frequently made arbitrary changes to contract terms altering hours, duties, or pay rates

---

<sup>267</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 20.

<sup>268</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 20.

without consequence,<sup>269</sup> and workers who reported these violations often faced severe retaliation, including termination or deportation, as employers wielded significant control over their immigration status.<sup>270</sup>

Immigration officers frequently acted as gatekeepers to permanent residency for domestic workers, with procedural delays only compounding the injustices they endured. Fifteen months into the program in Toronto, the city with the largest number of participants, only a handful of domestic workers had successfully navigated the process and received final approval for landed status. Complaints of unfair treatment under the program overwhelmingly came from Black Caribbean women, who made up a significant portion of the domestic workforce. About 75 percent of the formal grievances and reports of problems that INTERCEDE handled involved Caribbean applicants.<sup>271</sup> INTERCEDE's verdict was unequivocal: the implementation of the FDM fell far short of expectations. As one Toronto immigration officer put it, the policy was a major failure because its supposed empowerment mechanisms merely replicated the systemic inequities they claimed to dismantle.<sup>272</sup>

---

<sup>269</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 20.

<sup>270</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 121.

<sup>271</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 21.

<sup>272</sup> Ramirez, Canada Employment Immigration Commission and INTERCEDE, *Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*, 23.

By privileging officer discretion over objective criteria, penalizing domestic work as unskilled, and ignoring the racialized realities of Caribbean women, the policy entrenched marginalization. INTERCEDE's findings highlighted an urgent need for systemic change: clearer guidelines, stronger oversight, and equitable enforcement were essential to ensure that immigration policies truly protected those they were meant to serve. Over the next few years, INTERCEDE continued to battle the federal and provincial governments over the implementation of the FDM, constantly demanding improvements to its application.

## **Chapter 4: INTERCEDE’s Legislative Advocacy and Successes (1980–1990)**

As noted earlier, from 1980 to 1990 INTERCEDE emerged as a force in transforming the legislative framework affecting migrant domestic workers in Canada, with a particularly significant impact in Ontario. This chapter examined the legislative battles and struggles that defined INTERCEDE’s advocacy during this period, focusing on key legal efforts that led to the inclusion of domestic workers under the Employment Standards Act (ESA), the Workers’ Compensation Act (WCA), the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Labour Relations Act (LRA). The following sections analyze INTERCEDE’s engagement in legislative debates and its attempts to influence provincial policy in the 1980s. They consider the organization’s advocacy around proposed reforms to the ESA, WCA, OHRC, and LRA, assessing how these campaigns sought to expand protections for domestic workers while acknowledging the mixed outcomes and persistent limitations that followed.

### The Legal Vacuum

Before the legislative victories of the 1980s, domestic workers in Ontario were systematically excluded from protective labour legislation.<sup>273</sup> Under Ontario law, domestic workers employed directly by householders were denied access to key labour protections. INTERCEDE emphasized that most domestic workers in Ontario lacked coverage under both labour and human rights laws. As one report noted: “...75,000 women worked without the benefit of any provincial labour legislation because, with the exception of the relative few who were employed and paid through

---

<sup>273</sup> Robert Storey, “From Invisibility to Equality? Women Workers and the Gendering of Workers Compensation in Ontario, 1900–2005,” *Labour/Le Travail*, no. 64 (Fall 2009): 75–106, <https://www.lltjournal.ca/index.php/llt/article/download/5576/6439/0>.

agencies, domestic workers were specifically excluded from every piece of labour and human rights legislation designed to protect Ontario workers.”<sup>274</sup>

Provincial statutes explicitly carved out domestic work. For instance, the Employment Standards Act, 1974 (Chapter 112) and Ontario Regulation 803/75, Section 3(f) denied domestic workers rights such as minimum wage, overtime pay, vacation pay and paid public holidays. Similarly, the Labour Relations Act (R.S.O. 1970) explicitly excluded domestic workers employed in private homes. Section 4 of the Ontario Human Rights Code (R.S.O. 1970, Chapter 318) excluded domestic workers employed in single-family residences, making them the only occupational group not protected by the Code. Section 127 of the Workers’ Compensation Act (R.S.O. 1970, Chapter 505) stated that the Act did not cover domestic or menial servants or their employers.<sup>275</sup> These exclusions reflected deep-seated societal biases. Domestic work had long been considered an extension of unpaid housework, a gendered role historically relegated to women and deemed of low economic value. Furthermore, as INTERCEDE later pointed out, the Ontario government was hesitant to enforce the ESA on domestic employers, fearing that doing so might impose hardships on households and spur increased demand for public childcare support.<sup>276</sup>

#### From Major Wins to Small Losses: The Battle for Domestic Worker Rights

Following the release of the federal Task Force’s Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization report in 1980, Canada’s Minister of Employment and Immigration

---

<sup>274</sup> “The status of domestic workers in Ontario: recommendations for legislative change: a brief to the Government of Ontario” by INTERCEDE and Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization, Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Jin, “Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers,” 21.

acted on a few recommendations that did not require regulatory change. On April 15, 1981, the Minister announced that domestic workers and their employers would henceforth be required to sign a standard employment contract outlining duties and terms of employment.<sup>277</sup>

This early adoption of one of INTERCEDE's proposed reforms prompted the organization to update its own objectives at its AGM on May 27, 1981. At that AGM, INTERCEDE revised its objectives as follows:<sup>278</sup>

1. To pressure the Ontario government to include fully all classifications of domestic workers under the Employment Standards Act, the Workmen's Compensation Act, the Labour Relations Act and the Human Rights Code.
2. To pressure the federal government to allow women presently working as domestics in Canada, whether on temporary employment authorizations or illegally, to apply for landed status from within the country under attainable assessment criteria.
3. To ensure that changes in immigration policy allowing women to enter Canada as landed immigrants to work as domestics are implemented and applied fairly, regardless of national origin of the applicant, or country of origin of the application.
4. To pressure the federal government to fund non-governmental community agencies to provide advocacy and counselling services for domestic workers.

---

<sup>277</sup> "Information Paper; Domestic Workers on Employment Authorization", Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>278</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 27 May 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

5. To pressure the government to raise welfare rates to a living wage, and to allow immigrant women to apply for welfare with no threat of deportation.

This reprioritization made the fight for labour protections INTERCEDE's foremost objective. Discussions had already begun in 1980. At its May Steering Committee meeting, members prepared a brief, *The Status of Domestic Workers in Ontario: An Update of the Recommendations for Legislative Change*,<sup>279</sup> and by July Frances Gregory wrote to Dr. Robert Elgie, Ontario's Minister of Labour, requesting a meeting. Elgie agreed to meet on December 16, 1980.<sup>280</sup> The INTERCEDE delegation included representatives from the Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization, immigration lawyer Barb Jackman, Leona Gislason of the Metro Toronto YWCA, and Susan Kilburn of the United Church of Canada.<sup>281</sup>

At the meeting, Elgie confirmed that he had recommended amending the OHRC to include domestic workers, though the revised bill still contained an exemption for companions and personal attendants. INTERCEDE protested this exemption and was invited to submit its objections in writing. Elgie also announced forthcoming changes to the ESA, to take effect on January 1, 1981, and expressed personal support for

---

<sup>279</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 14 May 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>280</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 2 July 1980, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>281</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 5 November 1980, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

extending WCA coverage to domestics, as recommended by the 1980 Weiler Report.<sup>282</sup>

The Ontario Ministry of Labour did indeed move forward: effective January 1, 1981, the ESA was revised to extend basic protections to domestic workers for the first time. These measures included a minimum wage of \$3 per hour for live-in domestics, a cap of \$50 per week on deductions for room and board, a guarantee of 36 consecutive hours per week, paid statutory holidays, and paid annual vacation.<sup>283</sup>

INTERCEDE welcomed these reforms but emphasized their shortcomings. A May 1981 brief noted that the remaining 132 hours of each week were left unregulated, leaving workers vulnerable to excessive demands. The \$50 deduction for room and board was higher than the \$30 limit for other workers. Most significantly, live-in domestics were still excluded from provisions on maximum hours of work and overtime pay.<sup>284</sup> When INTERCEDE pressed for the general minimum hourly wage to apply to all hours worked, Elgie refused, maintaining the exemption.<sup>285</sup>

The government defended these exclusions under Regulation 1013/80 on the grounds that requiring household employers to record daily and weekly hours was impractical

---

<sup>282</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 17 December 1980, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>283</sup> Jin, "Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers," 20.

<sup>284</sup> Draft "The Status of Domestic Workers in Ontario: An Update of the Recommendations for Legislative Change Presented to the Government of Ontario in December 1980" by INTERCEDE and Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization, Dec 1980, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 7, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>285</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 126.

and that regulating private homes exceeded provincial authority.<sup>286</sup> In effect, the needs of Canadian employers were being placed ahead of the rights of domestic employees. This placed employers' convenience above workers' rights. INTERCEDE urged repeal of the regulation and argued that establishing a minimum wage was only a first step: without meaningful enforcement, protections remained illusory. The coalition stressed that real enforcement could only be achieved through collective organization.<sup>287</sup>

INTERCEDE continued to press for overtime pay throughout the 1980s. Officials resisted, warning that any increase in the cost of live-in domestic help could disrupt child-care arrangements for working parents, many of whom already faced financial pressures.<sup>288</sup> In November 1986, INTERCEDE launched a Charter challenge. *Chittenden, Villanueva, and INTERCEDE v. Ontario* supported by the Women's Legal Education & Action Fund (LEAF) argued that the provisions in the Employment Standards Act violated s.15 of the Charter. The provisions denied domestic workers protections and benefits based on their occupation and, by extension, based on their sex and national origin.<sup>289</sup> Explaining its decision to approach the court to challenge the government under the Charter of Rights for its

---

<sup>286</sup> Draft "The status of domestic workers in Ontario: recommendations for legislative change: a brief to the Government of Ontario" by INTERCEDE and Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization, Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>287</sup> Draft "The status of domestic workers in Ontario: recommendations for legislative change: a brief to the Government of Ontario" by INTERCEDE and Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization, Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>288</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 128.

<sup>289</sup> "Melita M. Chittenden, Avelina M. Villanueva, *The Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights v. Attorney General of Ontario (1986)*", Case Summary, Women's Legal Education & Action Fund (LEAF), last modified June 27 8, 2025, [https://www.leaf.ca/case\\_summary/melita-m-chittenden-1986/](https://www.leaf.ca/case_summary/melita-m-chittenden-1986/)

failure to pay overtime, INTERCEDE stated: ‘We're concerned that the law rolls out a red carpet for any employer who wants to exploit a domestic worker... We're tired of waiting for the politicians to act.’<sup>290</sup> INTERCEDE expressed disappointment over the government's plan to segregate domestic workers, most of whom were Third World women, further marginalizing them within the province's labour laws.<sup>291</sup> The organization argued that under this policy most domestic workers would still never actually receive overtime pay.

In what appears to be a direct response to the legal pressure, the Ontario government introduced Regulation 322, effective October 1987.<sup>292</sup> It established specific minimum employment standards for domestic workers. The new regulations allow employers of domestic workers to grant time off instead of paying time-and-a-half for overtime. While other employers are required to provide the additional pay, employers of domestic workers are given a special exemption that lets them avoid this obligation.<sup>293</sup>

The fight over the ESA did not stop with Regulation 322, as INTERCEDE did not give up on its fight. In October 1988 it organized a letter writing campaign to the Minister of Labour, Gregory Sorbara to grant stronger protection against unpaid

---

<sup>290</sup> Ann Rauhala, “Domestics launch Charter challenge,” *The Globe and Mail*, 10 April 1987, <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical/dccn-apr-1987>.

<sup>291</sup> “Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1987,” INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified February 25, 2025, [https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE)

<sup>292</sup> Arat-Koc, “In the Privacy of Our Own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as Solution to the Crisis in the Domestic Sphere in Canada,” 41.

<sup>293</sup> “Domestics Cross-Cultural News–June 1987,” INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 25, 2025, [https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE).

---

Mr. Gregory Sorbara  
Minister of Labour  
Government of Ontario  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Mr. Minister:

I am writing to you as the new Minister of Labour and Minister Responsible for Women's Issues.

The new overtime regulations are supposed to protect live-in domestic workers from unpaid overtime: they are not doing the job. I believe that lieu time is a loophole for any employer who wants to avoid paying a live-in domestic the money she is owed for working overtime.

It is next to impossible for most domestics to negotiate for time and a half rather than lieu time. They simply do not have the bargaining power to do so. Domestics are again left vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

To add insult to injury domestic workers are denied the right to unionize. How can that possibly be justified?

Today the vast majority of domestic workers are: a) women, and b) members of visible minorities from Third World countries. Under present labour laws they are relegated to an inferior position; in violation of their rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I call on you to take immediate action to end the racism and sexism now sanctioned by Ontario law.

I strongly support the recommendations made to you by INTERCEDE (Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights) and the Ontario Federation of Labour, and urge you to:

1. Meet with INTERCEDE to negotiate changes in the overtime regulations.
2. Grant domestic workers the right to unionize under the Labour Relations Act.

Respectfully,

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

I am: a domestic worker ( ) community supporter ( ). CHECK ONE.

Figure 4: Domestic workers letter to minister of labour, "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – July 1988," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 25, 2025.

overtime.<sup>294</sup> Despite these efforts, the provincial government left overtime pay unaddressed, so under-compensation remained the decade's dominant grievance for domestic workers. A 1989 study of domestic workers in the Toronto area found that 65 percent reported working overtime on a regular basis. Of these, only 33 percent

---

<sup>294</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – July 1988," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified July 25, 2025, [https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE).

received the legally mandated compensation either 1.5 times their regular pay or time off in lieu while 43.7 percent received no compensation whatsoever.<sup>295</sup>

#### Workmen's Compensation Act (WCA)

INTERCEDE began lobbying the provincial government for the inclusion of domestic workers under the WCA as early as 1979.<sup>296</sup> It emphasized that, because domestic workers were excluded under Chapter 505, Section 127 of the WCA (R.S.O. 1970), they had to pay for their own medical treatment and lost income during health-related absences. This exclusion created a form of double jeopardy: live-in domestic workers risked termination if they became medically unfit for work, and those on temporary visas paid unemployment insurance premiums yet remained ineligible for UI benefits. At a December 1980 meeting, Minister of Employment Dr. Robert Elgie informed the INTERCEDE delegation that he had recommended amending the OHRC to include domestic workers, although the revised bill still exempted companions and personal attendants. INTERCEDE protested this exemption and was invited to submit objections in writing.

By mid-1981, Ontario's Ministry of Labour released a white paper on a new WCA bill that would affect domestic workers.<sup>297</sup> INTERCEDE intensified its lobbying efforts by reaching out to allied organizations such as the Injured Workers

---

<sup>295</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 127.

<sup>296</sup> Rise Up Feminist Archive, "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1985."

<sup>297</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 9 July 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

Association,<sup>298</sup> expressing strong support for the proposed legislation and urging them to endorse it.<sup>299</sup> they argued that domestic workers and their employers should be treated the same as all other workers and employers in Ontario. It proposed creating a dedicated industrial classification for domestic work, which would require employers to contribute to the compensation accident fund and would subject them to the same penalties for non-compliance as other employers. This change, INTERCEDE noted, would benefit both sides: domestic workers would receive compensation in the event of a workplace injury, and employers would no longer be personally liable for injuries occurring in their homes.<sup>300</sup> Throughout the early 1980s, INTERCEDE pressed for the elimination of Section 127 of the WCA and for revisions to the Act's schedules so that domestic workers and their employers would receive equal coverage under the compensation system.

After five years of sustained activism, these efforts bore fruit. Effective April 1, 1985, domestic workers in Ontario were finally brought under the protection of the Workers' Compensation Act. Under the 1985 amendments, any domestic worker employed 24 hours or more per week became entitled to the full range of benefits provided to other injured workers: coverage of medical expenses, compensation for lost wages, vocational rehabilitation services, disability pensions, and death benefits

---

<sup>298</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 8 October 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>299</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 3 December 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>300</sup> Draft "The status of domestic workers in Ontario: recommendations for legislative change: a brief to the Government of Ontario" by INTERCEDE and Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization, Roxana Ng fonds.

for dependents.<sup>301</sup> The amendment also stipulated that if an employer failed to register a domestic worker with the Workers' Compensation Board, the worker would still be covered. In such cases, the domestic worker could report a claim directly to the Board, which would investigate and hold the employer liable for the full cost of the claim and any related assessments. INTERCEDE closely monitored the implementation of the new law. Then-coordinator Judith Ramirez cautioned: "We are cautiously optimistic, and we will be watching closely to see how the Board handles claims by domestic workers and whether it takes action against employers who do not register."<sup>302</sup>

#### Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)

Another key focus during this period was securing the inclusion of domestic workers under the OHRC. In its 1980 brief to the Ontario government, INTERCEDE highlighted that the Code (R.S.O. 1970, c. 318) explicitly excluded domestic workers employed in single-family homes from its protections.<sup>303</sup> In effect, domestic workers were the only occupational group not protected by the statute, which allowed prospective employers to discriminate openly in hiring. INTERCEDE pointed to newspaper advertisements where employers specified racial or national preferences, for example, "Europeans only",<sup>304</sup> a practice that would have been illegal if domestic work had been covered by the Code.

In December 1980, INTERCEDE met with Minister of Labour Robert Elgie. He informed the delegation that he had already recommended amending the Code to

---

<sup>301</sup> Rise Up Feminist Archive, "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1985."

<sup>302</sup> Rise Up Feminist Archive, "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1985."

<sup>303</sup> "The status of domestic workers in Ontario: recommendations for legislative change: a brief to the Government of Ontario" by INTERCEDE and Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization, Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

include domestic workers. INTERCEDE, however, noted that the draft still contained an exemption for employers hiring companions or personal attendants, effectively undercutting the new protections. The delegation protested and was invited to submit its objections in writing. In April 1981, INTERCEDE wrote to all Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) regarding Bill 209, introduced by Elgie to revise and extend human rights protections in Ontario. The bill would, for the first time, extend anti-discrimination protections in employment to domestic workers. INTERCEDE strongly opposed subsection 20(6)(c), which exempted employers hiring companions or personal attendants from the new provisions. The subsection read: “20(6) The right under section 4 to equal treatment in employment is not infringed where, (c) a person refuses to employ another for reasons of any prohibited ground of discrimination in section 4, where the primary duty of the employment is attending to the medical or personal needs of a person in a private household.”<sup>305</sup>

In essence, Section 23(c) carved out a special exception for hiring in private domestic situations, INTERCEDE expressed concern to MPs that the section might create a loophole for employers and employment agencies to circumvent the Act’s intended protections, despite Dr. Elgie’s assurances that domestic workers would be covered under the new legislation.<sup>306</sup> The organization pressed MPPs to address this issue when the bill came up for debate, recommending that subsection 20(6)(c) be deleted or reworded.<sup>307</sup> INTERCEDE warned that this clause created a loophole allowing

---

<sup>305</sup> Letter to MPP by Frances Gregory for INTERCEDE, 24 April 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 3, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>306</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 27 May 1982, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>307</sup> Letter to MPP by Frances Gregory for INTERCEDE, Roxana Ng fonds.

employers and agencies to continue discriminatory practices. In a follow-up letter on the reprinted bill, now renumbered Bill 7, INTERCEDE reiterated its opposition to Section 23(c), writing: “INTERCEDE would like to go on record as being opposed to Section 23(c) of the reprinted Bill 7... new wording... could be interpreted not only to allow discrimination in employment in a private household, but in any institution where private care is required as well.”<sup>308</sup>

During the House debate on December 1, 1981, NDP leader Jim Renwick echoed INTERCEDE’s concerns. He argued that the clause sanctioned discrimination in the hiring of domestic workers and noted that the opposition had tried unsuccessfully in committee to narrow its scope.<sup>309</sup> In response, Elgie defended the provision, insisting it had been introduced “with a great deal of thought and sensitivity about people with medical or personal needs.”<sup>310</sup> He argued that considerations of family privacy and care needs justified allowing employers to choose caregivers, even if that choice involved otherwise prohibited grounds of discrimination.

Despite vigorous debate, Section 23(c) was retained unchanged. Bill 7 passed in December 1981 and received Royal Assent on December 7. Although INTERCEDE failed to secure the removal of the exemption, it continued to monitor the Code’s

---

<sup>308</sup> Frances Gregory to Hon. Robert Elgie, 26 November 1981, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 3, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON. By the time the bill was reintroduced to the House in 1981, the contested section had been renumbered from 20(c) to 23(c), and it was ultimately passed as Section 23(c). Although this renumbering was not explicitly mentioned, INTERCEDE’s early communications referenced Section 20(c), and by November, when they wrote to the minister, they had updated their reference to Section 23(c).

<sup>309</sup> “Human Rights Code (Continued)”, December 1, 1981, Parliament 32 Session 1, House documents, Legislative business, Legislative Assembly of Ontario, last modified March 14, 2025, <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/house-documents/parliament-32/session-1/1981-12-01/hansard-1>

<sup>310</sup> Legislative Assembly of Ontario, “Human Rights Code (Continued).”

implementation.<sup>311</sup> By June 1982, the organization was systematically scanning newspaper job ads for violations and urging workers who believed their rights had been denied to report cases to both INTERCEDE and the Ontario Human Rights Commission.<sup>312</sup>

However, for domestic workers, the continued existence of Section 23(c) meant that full protection under the Code did not extend to many in home caregiving roles. Even when the Human Rights Code was amended again in 1986, the focus was on adding sexual orientation and enhancing the Commission's powers, while the exemption for hiring domestic caregivers remained intact.<sup>313</sup> This exemption was carried forward into the Revised Statutes of Ontario (1990), renumbered as Section 24(1)(c)<sup>314</sup>, which permitted employers to refuse to hire a personal attendant on discriminatory grounds that would have been illegal in any other employment context.

### The Labour Relations Act (LRA)

Even as domestic workers gained some individual employment rights in the 1980s, a major gap remained unresolved: they still lacked the right to unionize and bargain collectively. Beginning in 1980, INTERCEDE launched one of its longest-running

---

<sup>311</sup> Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 5 February 1982, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>312</sup> “Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meeting, 16 June 1982, B2014-0005, box 043, folder 5, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

<sup>313</sup> “Adding sexual orientation to the Code”, A bit of history, Home, Ontario Human Rights Commission, last modified March 14, <https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/en/bit-history#:~:text=In%201986%2C%20the%20Code%20was,the%20request%20of%20another%20party>

<sup>314</sup> Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Hiring? A Human Rights Guide*, 1997. (Toronto; 1997), [https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/human\\_rights\\_hiring\\_guide.pdf](https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/human_rights_hiring_guide.pdf)

campaigns, pressing the Ontario government to recognize domestic workers right to collective bargaining. At the time, the 1970 Labour Relations Act explicitly excluded domestic workers from its protections, as stated in Section 2: “This act not apply to a domestic employed in a private home...”<sup>315</sup>

This exclusion meant that the Ontario government not only failed to enforce existing labour legislation but also actively prevented domestic workers from collectively defending their rights. They could not unionize, nor could they access an impartial tribunal to address unfair labour practices.<sup>316</sup> INTERCEDE further noted that even if Section 2 were repealed, another barrier would remain: Section 6(1) of the LRA required every bargaining unit to include more than one employee.<sup>317</sup> Since most domestic workers laboured alone in private households, this rule effectively denied them union recognition.

In its 1980 brief on labour rights, INTERCEDE recommended three key reforms:<sup>318</sup>

- That Section 2 is removed, so that domestics have equal access as other Ontario workers to the certification procedures established by the Act.
- That Section 6(1) be removed, so that a bargaining unit of one worker may be recognized.

---

<sup>315</sup> “The status of domestic workers in Ontario: recommendations for legislative change: a brief to the Government of Ontario” by INTERCEDE and Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization, Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>316</sup> Arat-Koc, “In the Privacy of Our Own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as Solution to the Crisis in the Domestic Sphere in Canada,” 41.

<sup>317</sup> “The status of domestic workers in Ontario: recommendations for legislative change: a brief to the Government of Ontario” by INTERCEDE and Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization, Roxana Ng fonds.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

- That domestic workers be covered by the Unfair Practices Section of the Act (Section 79).

Throughout the 1980s, INTERCEDE continued to press for reform of the LRA so that domestic workers could choose to join or form unions if they wished. Yet collective bargaining remained elusive. The exclusion of domestic workers, first introduced in 1943, had been crafted for an industrial model of labour relations in which employees worked collectively in centralized workplaces, a framework incompatible with the isolated conditions of household employment.<sup>319</sup> Even as awareness grew, little political will existed to change the status quo. Business groups such as the Metropolitan Toronto Board of Trade argued that hiring a nanny or housekeeper was a private relationship beyond state regulation,<sup>320</sup> reinforcing policymakers reluctance to extend union rights to domestic workers.

From its earliest years, INTERCEDE framed its mission around reshaping provincial labour law for domestic workers. While it did not achieve legislative reform of the LRA, its persistent advocacy influenced broader debates. The organization's campaigns helped secure minimum wage protections and overtime provisions under the ESA, inclusion under the WCA in 1985, and partial coverage under the OHRC. Each struggle raised the question of whether domestic work should continue as an exception within labour law. Although carve-outs remained, such as the Human Rights Code's personal-care exemption, the LRA's single-worker barrier, and the ESA's overtime exclusions, INTERCEDE's advocacy kept these issues visible,

---

<sup>319</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 119.

<sup>320</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 131.

circulated the testimonies of racialized immigrant women, and provided both evidence and language that subsequent advocates would draw upon.

## **Conclusion**

Reflecting on INTERCEDE's decades-long advocacy reveals a mixture of gains tempered by sobering setbacks in the struggle for migrant domestic workers rights. Central to this history was a critique of neoliberal immigration policies that prioritized global competitiveness by favouring immigrants who were educated, financially secure, self-sufficient, and perceived as immediately beneficial to Canada's economy.<sup>321</sup> Policymakers treated the recruitment of foreign domestic workers as a convenient solution to a crisis in the domestic sphere, effectively offloading the costs of social reproduction onto immigrant women of colour.<sup>322</sup>

Under this neoliberal framework, longstanding ideologies of domesticity and privacy combined to justify keeping domestic workers outside many of the basic legal entitlements available to other workers.<sup>323</sup> Domestic labour continued to be framed as a private concern, a "labour of love" that remained ideologically invisible as real work, even when waged.<sup>324</sup> This entrenched devaluation of care labour set the stage for the precarious status and limited rights granted to migrant domestic workers. One can situate this devaluation within a gendered class struggle, one that ultimately benefited white, middle-class Canadian women by freeing them from household labour at low cost.<sup>325</sup>

---

<sup>321</sup> Arat-Koc, "Neo-Liberalism, State Restructuring and Immigration: Changes in Canadian Policies in the 1990s," 36.

<sup>322</sup> Arat-Koc, "In the Privacy of our own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as Solution to the Crisis in the Domestic Sphere in Canada," 33.

<sup>323</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 119

<sup>324</sup> Arat-Koc, "In the Privacy of Our Own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as Solution to the Crisis in the Domestic Sphere in Canada," 38.

<sup>325</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 9.

Throughout the 1980s, INTERCEDE and its allies pushed back against these inequities, challenging discriminatory immigration rules. Their advocacy efforts contributed to a landmark federal victory when the government introduced the FDM program in 1981, which for the first time offered a pathway to permanent residence for domestic workers on temporary visas. Through the FDM, live-in domestics could apply for landed status after two years of service. This reform, spurred by lobbying and community organizing by groups such as INTERCEDE, meant that migrant domestic workers were no longer permanently trapped in temporary status. It represented a partial but significant recognition of their contributions and demonstrated how marginalized immigrant women, through collective action, could influence policy at the highest levels.

At the provincial level, INTERCEDE began the decade pressing for basic labour protections. By the late 1980s, Ontario had amended its regulations to extend minimum wage, hours of work provisions, and Workers' Compensation Act coverage to domestic workers, and even faced a Charter challenge over its refusal to grant overtime pay.<sup>326</sup> In short, the 1980s saw both federal and provincial breakthroughs that would have been unthinkable a decade earlier. Yet these victories remained fragile and incomplete, as persistent exemptions and weak enforcement left many domestic workers vulnerable.

#### From FDM to LCP: A New Name, Old Inequities

---

<sup>326</sup>Ann Rauhala, "Domestics launch Charter challenge," *The Globe and Mail*, April 10, 1987, <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical/dccn-apr-1987>.

By the early 1990s, Filipino domestic workers dominated Canada's domestic work sector.<sup>327</sup> INTERCEDE's membership also became overwhelmingly Filipino, as only about 5 percent of foreign domestic workers entering Canada came from the Caribbean, while more than 58 percent arrived from the Philippines.<sup>328</sup> In 1992, just as INTERCEDE marked a decade of advocacy, the federal government replaced the FDM program with the new Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP). The LCP emerged from a 1989 policy review, initiated in part because of INTERCEDE's lobbying, and was intended to address problems identified under the FDM.<sup>329</sup> Yet, in practice, it preserved, and in some respects intensified many of the most burdensome aspects of its predecessor.<sup>330</sup>

Most notably, the LCP continued to mandate live-in employment: domestic workers were required to reside in their employer's home as a condition of both their job and their immigration status. The program also maintained the requirement that a worker secure authorization from Employment and Immigration Canada before changing employers, perpetuating dependence and vulnerability to abuse. Under the LCP, participants had to complete twenty-four months of live-in caregiving work within thirty-six months of arrival to qualify for permanent residence.<sup>331</sup> Applicants from

---

<sup>327</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 126.

<sup>328</sup> Bakan and Stasiulis, "Making the Match: Domestic Placement Agencies and the Racialization of Women's Household Work," 316.

<sup>329</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – January 1992," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified March 12, 2025, [https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE)

<sup>330</sup> Daenzer, "Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's," 126.

<sup>331</sup> "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1993," INTERCEDE, Periodical, Rise Up Feminist Archive, last modified March 12, 2025,

overseas also faced tougher entry criteria. They were required to demonstrate completion of secondary education equivalent to Canadian Grade Twelve and at least six months of full-time formal training directly related to caregiving.<sup>332</sup> INTERCEDE strongly opposed these changes. Organizers sent more than thirty handwritten letters to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Sergio Marchi, protesting the impact of the new requirements. They argued that mandating Canadian-equivalent secondary education, formal caregiving training, and proficiency in English or French was unduly exclusionary.<sup>333</sup> On the surface, the LCP appeared to offer some liberalizations: it removed the requirement for employer release letters before changing jobs, instead requiring employers to issue a Record of Employment (ROE). It also dropped the FDM's mandatory skills upgrading provisions. Yet, as INTERCEDE observed, the apparent flexibility in the pathway to permanent residence was outweighed by stricter entry requirements.<sup>334</sup>

However, as INTERCEDE observed, the devil was in the details. The LCP's apparent flexibility in the pathway to permanent residence was offset by stricter entry requirements. Under the FDM, applicants could qualify either through formal training or through equivalent practical experience in domestic or caregiving work, an avenue that allowed many women from the Global South to participate even without formal credentials. The LCP explicitly eliminated the experience-based option, requiring

---

[https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE).

<sup>332</sup> Macklin, "On the inside looking in: Foreign domestic workers in Canada," 26.

<sup>333</sup> Domestics' Cross-Cultural News, Rise up feminist archive, April 1994, [https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE).

<sup>334</sup> Macklin, "On the inside looking in: Foreign domestic workers in Canada," 27.

formal training without exception.<sup>335</sup> It also added the Grade 12 education cutoff. Data from Employment and Immigration showed that in 1989, 44 percent of Filipina domestic workers and 49 percent of Caribbean domestic workers who were approved for permanent residence had not completed 12 years of schooling, compared to only 22 percent of British applicants.<sup>336</sup> The new Grade 12 rule would thus have disqualified roughly one-third of the traditional applicant pool (and a disproportionately higher share of candidates from the Philippines and the Caribbean). The LCP also undermined domestic workers access to basic rights. Participants were issued employer-specific work permits that tied them to one household. Changing employers required applying for a new permit, paying additional fees, and enduring a waiting period of up to a month during which they could not legally work.<sup>337</sup> Workers who failed to complete the required twenty-four months of live-in caregiving within three years became ineligible for permanent residence and were forced to leave Canada. In addition, many caregivers faced delayed or denied entry into provincial health insurance schemes and remained excluded from occupational health and safety protections.<sup>338</sup>

INTERCEDE concluded that these rules represented a rollback of the modest liberalizations won under the FDM in submissions to the House of Commons, it stressed that the manipulation of entry criteria disproportionately disadvantaged women of colour. Women from the Philippines and the Caribbean, who often lacked

---

<sup>335</sup> Macklin, “On the inside looking in: Foreign domestic workers in Canada,” 28.

<sup>336</sup> Macklin, “On the inside looking in: Foreign domestic workers in Canada,” 28.

<sup>337</sup> Khan, “From Labour of Love to Decent Work: Protecting the Human Rights of Migrant Caregivers in Canada,” 28.

<sup>338</sup> Sabaa A Khan, “From Labor of Love to Decent Work: Protecting the Human Rights of Migrant Caregivers in Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 24, no. 1 (2009): 28, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0829320100009753>.

access to the educational qualifications and training required by the LCP, faced heightened barriers, while women from Britain were more likely to meet the standards. The program thus reinforced existing racial hierarchies in Canadian immigration policy.<sup>339</sup> In both the FDM and LCP frameworks, domestic workers continued to face unequal treatment. Unlike other immigrants who arrived with permanent status, they had to prove themselves through years of exploitative live-in labour before earning rights that others received on landing.

### Rights Won; Rights Lost: Collective Bargaining in the Shadow of Common-Sense Revolution

Political shifts in the 1990s compounded the challenges for INTERCEDE and the domestic workers movement. In 1990, Ontario elected its first New Democratic Party (NDP) government, raising hopes among labour and social justice advocates. The NDP had campaigned on a social equity platform and pledged to modernize labour laws. Many caucus members had also supported INTERCEDE's legal challenge against unequal protections in the Employment Standards Act.<sup>340</sup> For a brief moment, it seemed that domestic workers might finally gain the right to unionize and bargain collectively. In November 1992, after more than a decade of advocacy, the NDP government repealed the exclusion of domestic workers from the Ontario Labour Relations Act through Bill 40, a sweeping labour law reform. For the first time, domestic workers were no longer explicitly barred from collective bargaining rights under provincial law. Yet this victory was not complete. The reform removed the

---

<sup>339</sup> Jin, "Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers," 54.

<sup>340</sup> Fudge, "Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers," 128.

legal ban but did not address the structural barriers to unionization.<sup>341</sup> The ESA provided no mechanism to facilitate organizing in single-employee workplaces, and domestic workers remained isolated in private homes with no co-workers, making it practically impossible to meet certification requirements such as signing up a majority of a bargaining unit. Even the NDP recognized that “the right to bargain collectively under the Labour Relations Act was virtually meaningless for domestic workers”<sup>342</sup> without additional support. Proposed solutions, such as sectoral bargaining or a centralized registry for dispersed workers, were never implemented due to political resistance from business and household employer groups, who framed domestic work as a private relationship beyond state regulation.<sup>343</sup>

Recognizing that simply granting a paper right to unionize was insufficient, INTERCEDE continued to press for stronger enforcement of basic labour standards. In September 1993, it submitted a brief to the Ontario Ministry of Labour recommending practical protections.<sup>344</sup> These included requiring government inspections of room-and-board conditions before an employer could hire a live-in domestic, conducting random spot checks of employer compliance, and imposing stricter penalties for violations of the Employment Standards Act. INTERCEDE emphasized that without proactive enforcement, rights on paper would not translate into real protections for such an isolated workforce.

---

<sup>341</sup> Pura Velasco, “We Can Still Fight Back: Organizing Domestic Workers in Toronto,” in *Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, ed. Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 162.

<sup>342</sup> Fudge, “Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers,” 120.

<sup>343</sup> Fudge, “Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers,” 131.

<sup>344</sup> Jin, “Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers,” 56.

By 1995, however, the political landscape had shifted dramatically. The NDP became engulfed in turmoil after abandoning its plan for public auto insurance, raising taxes, and introducing the Social Contract, which imposed unpaid Rae Days on public-sector workers. At the same time, business groups resisted increases to the minimum wage, employment equity laws, and limits on replacement workers during strikes. The party lost support on all sides.<sup>345</sup> In the 1995 provincial election, Ontario voters elected the Progressive Conservatives under Premier Mike Harris. The Harris government ushered in the Common-Sense Revolution, a program of more neoliberal austerity and deregulation. Domestic workers lost even the symbolic bargaining rights they had briefly gained: the government re-amended the LRA to re-exclude them, rolling back Bill 40. It also repealed employment equity laws and other worker protections introduced by the NDP, framing these moves as necessary to restore economic balance and competitiveness.<sup>346</sup> The new Minister of Labour, Elizabeth Witmer, couched the ideological shift in a language of workplace democracy, as a simple choice of choosing market efficiency over social equity,<sup>347</sup> while in practice the redefinition of domestic work as a private, non-commercial activity reinforced its devaluation and ensured a continued supply of cheap caregiving labour for middle-class families.

---

<sup>345</sup> “In the mood for cuts: How the ‘Common Sense Revolution’ swept Ontario in 1995,” Ontario Election, Politics, Jamie Bradburn, last modified April 17, 2025, <https://www.tvo.org/article/in-the-mood-for-cuts-how-the-common-sense-revolution-swept-ontario-in-1995>.

<sup>346</sup> Fudge, “Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers,” 138.

<sup>347</sup> Fudge, “Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers,” 138.

These policy reversals revealed a deeper pattern of how gender, race, and class interests intersected in globalized care work. Canada's reliance on migrant domestic labour functioned as a double-edged sword: it provided vital childcare, eldercare, and household services, but through programs that institutionalized inequality.

INTERCEDE's history illustrates both sides of this tension. The victories of the 1980s demonstrated the power of coalition-building and legal mobilization from below. By centring the lived experiences of racialized immigrant women, INTERCEDE forced Canadian policymakers and the public to confront the contradiction between Canada's egalitarian, multicultural self-image and the reality of a racially stratified labour migration system.

At the same time, the setbacks of the 1990s offered a cautionary lesson about the limits of reform. Rights secured through legislation could be easily rescinded when political tides shifted, particularly when they were not accompanied by structural changes. Without addressing underlying conditions such as temporary immigration status, the mandatory live-in requirement, and the exclusion of domestic work from broader labour protections, domestic workers remained precarious. Their struggle underscored a broader truth about citizenship under neoliberal immigration policy: even when it offered a conditional pathway to permanent residency, it entrenched dependency through employer-specific visas, restrictive eligibility criteria, and the privatization of responsibility for worker welfare. The racialized gatekeeping that privileged formally educated and credentialed applicants disproportionately excluded women from the Global South, thereby reinforcing the hierarchies of race and class that INTERCEDE sought to dismantle.

At the Intersection: Race, Class, Gender and the Politics of Domestic Labour

The legacy of INTERCEDE's advocacy must also be understood in light of how domestic worker policies were historically shaped by class privilege and gendered power dynamics, realities often glossed over in mainstream feminist narratives.<sup>348</sup> The domestic work program constituted a process of subordinating women for economic and social gain, with middle-class Canadian women and the state itself acting as primary beneficiaries.<sup>349</sup> The liberation of professional, white middle-class women to pursue both career and family was often made possible by the invisible, low-wage labour of migrant domestic workers from the Global South. A 1977 study by Robert Dubois revealed that 71.4 percent of employers cited their primary reason for hiring a live-in domestic worker as enabling both spouses to engage in full-time employment.<sup>350</sup>

Feminist discourse offered differing interpretations of the dynamics of social reproduction, particularly concerning women's efforts to challenge or reinforce the role of the state. Socialist feminism bridged the gap between radical feminism and classical Marxism by linking women's oppression to both capitalism and patriarchy. It emphasized the connection between production and reproduction and advocated restructuring the sexual division of labour to eliminate the divide between paid and unpaid work.<sup>351</sup> By contrast, gender-focused explanations offered by radical feminists proved inadequate, since women employers themselves often occupied positions of social and economic power. These women benefited from state policies that

---

<sup>348</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 143.

<sup>349</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 143.

<sup>350</sup> Robinson and Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*, 35.

<sup>351</sup> Jin, "Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers," 4.

systematically restricted the rights of migrant domestic workers, who entered Canada as non-citizens with limited mobility, unable to freely change employers or access full social protections. Such conditions were not imposed solely by male employers or abstract patriarchy, but also actively maintained by women employers who lobbied against policies extending overtime pay or self-improvement subsidies to domestic workers.<sup>352</sup> A more suitable approach, and the one adopted by this thesis, is to consider the intersection of multiple factors such as race, gender, and class that shape the experiences of women with lower social status and limited power. This intersectional perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of marginalization and structural barriers faced by domestic workers in pursuit of landed status.

The domestic workers' movement of the 1980s consistently exposed the contradiction between feminist empowerment for (mostly white) middle-class women and the marginalization of the racialized women whose labour assisted in making empowerment achievable. Through lobbying, education, community organizing, and legal mobilization, INTERCEDE refused to allow domestic work to be dismissed as a purely private arrangement outside the scope of labour rights. The coalition's advocacy revealed how state policies enabled Canadian women to achieve career success on the backs of other women's exploited labour. The Canadian welfare state reinforced this intra-gender class struggle by keeping domestic work unregulated

---

<sup>352</sup> Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*, 144. Daenzer pointed out that in this way, women employers have assumed the attributes of male oppressors, reinforcing hierarchies of class and race even as they resisted gender oppression in their own lives.

under the guise of the free market, leaving it economically exploitable.<sup>353</sup> In this context, INTERCEDE's activism became even more critical. Its advocacy exposed the hidden structures of Canadian social policy, a framework that consistently prioritized the interests of capital, whiteness, and middle-class respectability at the expense of migrant women's autonomy and rights.

The fight for legislative reform was, and remains, a struggle not only for fair wages and status but also for the redefinition of whose lives, whose labour, and whose dignity mattered in a nation that prided itself on multiculturalism and equity. The story of INTERCEDE and Ontario's migrant domestic workers was one of resilience and resistance. Despite operating in the shadows of other households, domestic workers refused invisibility. Their advocacy redefined social inclusion in the Canadian context by expanding the definition of both worker and citizen to encompass those embedded in global care chains.

The conclusion to be drawn is that dismantling systemic inequities requires more than piecemeal reforms, since the underlying structures were deeply entrenched. Yet the activism of domestic workers was far from a mere band-aid on a broken system. It provided both material resistance and a radical vision for change.<sup>354</sup> By demanding rights and recognition, domestic workers also demanded a reimagining of citizenship itself, one that rejected market-driven definitions of value and instead centred care and human dignity as a collective responsibility.

---

<sup>353</sup> Daenzer, "Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's," 145.

<sup>354</sup> Tungohan, *Care Activism: Migrant Domestic Workers, Movement-Building, and Communities of Care*, 198.

## Bibliography

### Secondary Sources

- Albo, Gregory. "Competitive Austerity and the Impasse of Capitalist Employment Policy." In *Between Globalism and Nationalism: Socialist Register*, edited by Miliband Ralph and Leo Panitch, 144–70. London: Merlin Press, 1994.
- Antaya, Sean. "The New Left at Work: Workers' Unity, the New Tendency and Rank and File Organizing in Windsor, Ontario, in the 1970s." *Labour/Le Travail*, no.85 (2020): 53–89. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lt.2020.0003>.
- Arat-Koc, Sedef. "Neo-Liberalism, State Restructuring and Immigration: Changes in Canadian Policies in the 1990s." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 2 (1999): 31–56. <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/article/672951/pdf>.
- Arat-Koc, Sedef. "From Mothers of the Nation to Migrant Workers." In *Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, edited by Bakan, Abigail and Daiva Stasiulis, 53–80. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- Arat-Koc, Sedef. "In the Privacy of Our Own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as Solution to the Crisis in the Domestic Sphere in Canada." *Studies in Political Economy: A Socialist Review* 28, no.1 (2023): 33–58. <https://doi.org/10.32920/24201099.v1>.

Bakan, Abigail and Daiva K. Stasiulis. "Making the Match: Domestic Placement Agencies and the Racialization of Women's Household Work." *Signs* 20, no. 2 (1995): 303–35. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174951>.

Bakan, Abigail and Daiva Stasiulis. "Foreign Domestic Workers Policy in Canada and the Social Boundary of Modern Citizenship." In *Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, edited by Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis, 29–52. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.

Bakan, Abigail and Daiva Stasiulis. *Negotiating Citizenship: Migrant Women in Canada and the Global System*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

Bakan, Abigail, and Daiva Stasiulis. "Foreign Domestic Worker Policy in Canada and the Social Boundaries of Modern Citizenship." *Science & Society* 58, no. 1 (1994): 1–19. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40403381>.

Banting, Keith G. "The three federalisms and change in social policy." in *Canadian federalism: performance, effectiveness, and legitimacy*, edited by Herman Bakvis and Grace Skogstad, 282-309. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020.

Barber, Marilyn. *Immigrant Domestic Servants in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991.

Bolah, Ciprian. "Excellent Workers but Wrong Colour of Skin Canada's reluctance to admit Caribbean people as domestic workers and farm labourers." M.A diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2014.

Bradburn Jamie. "In the mood for cuts: How the 'Common Sense Revolution' swept Ontario in 1995," Ontario Election, Politics. Last modified April 17, 2025. <https://www.tvo.org/article/in-the-mood-for-cuts-how-the-common-sense-revolution-swept-ontario-in-1995>

Brodie, Janine. "'Restructuring and the New Citizenship.'" *Rethinking Restructuring: Gender and change in Canada.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), quoted in Arat-Koc Sedef, "Neo-Liberalism, State Restructuring and Immigration: Changes in Canadian Policies in the 1990s," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 2 (1999): 34. <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/article/672951/pdf>.

Brodie, Janine. *Politics on the Margins: Restructuring and the Canadian Women's Movement.* Halifax: N.S: Fernwood, 1995.

Calliste, Agnes. "Canada's immigration policy and domestics from the Caribbean: the second domestic scheme." In *The social basis of law: critical readings in the sociology of law*, edited by Stephen Brickery and Elizabeth Comack, 95–121. Halifax: Garamond Press, 1991.

Clarkson, S. (1993). Economics: The New Hemispheric Fundamentalism. In: Grinspun, R., Cameron, M.A. (eds) *The Political Economy of North American Free Trade.* Palgrave Macmillan, London. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-13325-3\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-13325-3_4).

Clement, Dominique. "Generations and the Transformation of Social Movements in Postwar Canada." *Histoire sociale / Social History* 42, no. 84 (2009): 361–87. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/379822>.

Colley, Sue. "History Repeats: Undermining Child Care in Ontario," Childcare and family, Justice politics & government. Last modified June 16, 2025. [https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/history-repeats-undermining-child-care-in-ontario?fbclid=IwY2xjawK92FRleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFQaHM3UXU4TktwbTh0WVJNAR5oV1O0JBgzFIjgj5moH17y6RdgUZaS8I3W8iC9WnPhHyEOkXvgXh9d6g2Ufg\\_aem\\_KEV9d7a1OHO\\_UzxAkV27Pw](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/history-repeats-undermining-child-care-in-ontario?fbclid=IwY2xjawK92FRleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFQaHM3UXU4TktwbTh0WVJNAR5oV1O0JBgzFIjgj5moH17y6RdgUZaS8I3W8iC9WnPhHyEOkXvgXh9d6g2Ufg_aem_KEV9d7a1OHO_UzxAkV27Pw)

Connexions. "Intercede: International Coalition to End Domestic Exploitation Organization profile published 1981," Library, Title Index. Last modified May 16, 2025. <https://www.connexions.org/CxLibrary/CX2351.htm>

Daenzer, M. Patricia, "An Affair between Nations: International Relations and the Movement of Household Service Workers." In *Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, edited by Bakan, Abigail and Daiva Stasiulis, 81–118. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.

Daenzer, M. Patricia. *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1993.

England, Kim., and Bernadette Stiell. ““They Think you’re as Stupid as Your English is””: Constructing Foreign Domestic Workers in Toronto.” *Environment and Planning A* 29, no. 2 (1997): 195–215.

<https://www.migrantworkersrights.net/fr/resources/they-think-you-re-as-stupid-as-your-english-is-cons>.

Findlay, Tammy. “Gendering the State: Women and Public Policy in Ontario” In *Divided Province: Ontario Politics in the Age of Neoliberalism*, edited by Evans Bryan and Albo Gregory, 212–46. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018.

Friendly, Martha, Rachel Vickerson, Sophia Mohamed, Laurel Rothman, and Ngoc Tho Nguyen. *Risky business: Childcare ownership in Canada past, present and future*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2021.

Fudge, Judy. “Little Victories and Big Defeats: The Rise and Fall of Collective Bargaining Rights for Domestic Workers in Ontario,” In *Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, edited by Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis, 119–45. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.

Global Nonviolent Action Database, “Icelandic women strike for economic and social equality 1975.” Content. Accessed Jan 3, 2025.

<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/icelandic-women-strike-economic-and-social-equality-1975>.

Hsiung, Ping-Chun., and Katherine Nichol. "Policies on and Experiences of Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada." *Sociology Compass* 4, no. 9 (2010): 766–78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00320.x>.

Jin, Yan. "Intercede: The Struggle of Foreign Domestic Workers." Masters diss., Carleton University, 1995.

Khan, Sabaa A. "From Labour of Love to Decent Work: Protecting the Human Rights of Migrant Caregivers in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 24, no. 1 (2009): 23–45. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0829320100009753>.

Lawson, Erica. "The Gendered Working Lives of Seven Jamaican Women in Canada: A Story about 'Here' and 'There' in a Transnational Economy." *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 1 (2013): 138–56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43860670>.

Leach, Belinda. "Canada's Migrants without History: Neoliberal Immigration Regimes and Trinidadian Transnationalism." *International Migration* 51, no. 2 (2013): 32–45. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12019>

Lobo, Rachel. "'A Willingness to Dig': Autonomous Feminist Struggles and Care Work". Winning Essay of the 2021 Graduate-level Michael Baptista Essay Prize. Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC), York University. November 2021.

- MacKenzie, Ian. "Early Movements of Domestic Workers from the Caribbean and Canadian Immigration Policy." *Alternate Routes*, no. 8 (1988): 124–43.  
<https://archive.org/details/alternateroutesj08alte/page/134/mode/2up>.
- Macklin, Audrey. "Foreign Domestic Worker: Surrogate Housewife or Mail Order Servant." *McGill Law Journal* 37, no. 3 (1992): 681–760. [https://heinonline-org.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/mcgil37&id=700&men\\_tab=srchresults](https://heinonline-org.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/mcgil37&id=700&men_tab=srchresults).
- Macklin, Audrey. "On the inside looking in: Foreign domestic workers in Canada," In *Maid in the Market: Women's Paid Domestic Labour*, edited by Giles Winona, and Sedef Arat-Koc, 13-39. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1996.
- Malek, G, Jon. *Filipinos in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 2021.
- McKeen, Wendy. "Work Incentives for 'Welfare Mothers' in 1970s Ontario: Screening out the Political," *Labour / Le Travail*, no.85 (2020): 91–126.  
<https://www-jstor-org.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/stable/26976139?sid=primo&seq=1>.
- Ramirez, Judith. "Domestic Workers Organize," *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* 4, no. 2 (1982): 89–91.  
<https://cws.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cws/article/view/13906>.
- Schechter, Tanya. *Race, Class, Women and the State: The Case of Domestic Labour in Canada*. Montreal: Black Rose, 1998.

Storey, Robert. "From Invisibility to Equality? Women Workers and the Gendering of Workers Compensation in Ontario, 1900–2005." *Labour/Le Travail* 64 (2009): 75–106. <https://www.lltjournal.ca/index.php/llt/article/download/5576/6439/0>.

*Toronto Sun*. 29 March 1982. Quoted in Wendy McKeen. "Work Incentives for 'Welfare Mothers' in 1970s Ontario: Screening Out the Political." *Labor / Le Travail*, no.85 (2020): 91–126.

Tungohan, Ethel. "From the Politics of Everyday Resistance to the Politics from Below: Migrant Care Worker Activism in Canada." PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2014.

Tungohan, Ethel. *Care Activism: Migrant Domestic Workers, Movement-Building, and Communities of Care*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2023.

Velasco, Pura. "We Can Still Fight Back: Organizing Domestic Workers in Toronto." In *Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, edited by Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis, 157–64. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.

Villasin, Felicita, "Report to the 1991 Annual General Meeting: April 1990 to March 1991", Roxana Ng fonds. University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

Wages for Housework Committee. Toronto Wages for Housework Committee Fonds.  
Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

Walker, Gordon, and G. P Williams. *A Conservative Canada*. Sutton West: Paget  
Press, 1983.

Women's Legal Education & Action Fund (LEAF). "Melita M. Chittenden, Avelina  
M. Villanueva, The Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers Rights v.  
Attorney General of Ontario (1986)", Case Summary. Last modified June 27  
8, 2025. [https://www.leaf.ca/case\\_summary/melita-m-chittenden-1986/](https://www.leaf.ca/case_summary/melita-m-chittenden-1986/)

### **Primary Sources**

Committee Against the Deportation of Immigrant Women (CADIW). Canadian  
Women's Movement Archives (CWMA) Collection. Archives and Special  
Collections, University of Ottawa Library, Ottawa, ON.

Cross Cultural Communication Centre, Letter to "INTERCEDE Steering Committee".  
Roxana Ng fonds. University of Toronto Archives and Records Management  
Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

Cross Cultural Communication Centre, Letter to INTERCEDE. Roxana Ng fonds.  
University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services  
(UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

Gregory, Frances. Dear Endorsers of INTERCEDE, 13 May 1981, Roxana Ng fonds.

University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services  
(UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

Gregory, Frances. Frances Gregory Fonds. Archives and Special Collections,

University of Ottawa Library, Ottawa, ON.

Gregory, Frances. Letter to MPP by Frances Gregory for INTERCEDE, Roxana Ng

fonds. University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services  
(UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

Gregory, Frances. Letter to Hon. Robert Elgie, 26 November 1981, Roxana Ng fonds.

University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services  
(UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

Housewives Initiative. Toronto Wages for Housework Committee fonds. Archives

and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

INTERCEDE and Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization. "The status of

domestic workers in Ontario: recommendations for legislative change: a brief  
to the Government of Ontario", Dec 1980, Roxana Ng fonds. University of  
Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto,  
ON.

INTERCEDE Steering Committee. Roxana Ng fonds. University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

INTERCEDE Steering. Roxana Ng fonds. University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

INTERCEDE, Reply to CCCC. Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 p 3, Deputy Minister of Labour to the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. March 13, 1956. Quoted in Ciprian Bolah. "Excellent Workers but Wrong Colour of Skin Canada's reluctance to admit Caribbean people as domestic workers and farm labourers." M.A diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2014.

Legislative Assembly of Ontario. "Human Rights Code (Continued)," December 1, 1981, Parliament 32 Session 1, House documents, Legislative business. Last modified March 14, 2025. <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/house-documents/parliament-32/session-1/1981-12-01/hansard-1>.

Legislative Assembly of Ontario. "INTERCEDE," February 7, 1994, Standing Committee on General Government, House documents, Committees, Legislative business. Last modified March 14, 2025, <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/committees/general->

[government/parliament-35/transcript/committee-transcript-1994-feb-07#P79\\_4131](https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/en/bit-history#:~:text=In%201986%2C%20the%20Code%20was,the%20request%20of%20another%20party)

Ministry of Employment and Immigration Canada. Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

Minutes of the of Steering Committee Meetings, 1980-1982, Roxana Ng fonds. University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

Ontario Human Rights Commission. “Adding sexual orientation to the Code,” A bit of history, Home. Last modified March 14. <https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/en/bit-history#:~:text=In%201986%2C%20the%20Code%20was,the%20request%20of%20another%20party>

Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Hiring? A Human Rights Guide, 1997*. Toronto: 1997. [https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/human\\_rights\\_hiring\\_guide.pdf](https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/human_rights_hiring_guide.pdf).

Ramirez, Judith. Ryerson Forum Speech, 27 October 1979. Frances Gregory Fonds. Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

Ramirez, Judith., Employment Immigration Canada, and INTERCEDE.

*Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers: Findings*

*and Recommendations for Change: A Brief to the Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada*. Toronto: INTERCEDE, 1983.

Rauhala, Ann. "Domestics launch Charter challenge," *The Globe and Mail*, 10 April 1987. <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical/dccn-apr-1987>.

Report to the 1990 Annual General Meeting, 1990, Roxana Ng fonds, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

RG 76 Volume 83/84/349 File 5850-6-4-533. Part 2. To: Director, Foreign Branch.  
From: Director, Region A. Patricia Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1993.

RG 76, vol. 383, file 553-36-644-2 pt 1, W. W. Dawson to A.H Brown, re; Jamaican Domestic May 10, 1955, in Patricia Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1993.

Rise Up Feminist Archive. "Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1985."

Periodical. Last modified February 28, 2025.

[https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE).

Rise Up Feminist Archive. “Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1986.”

Periodical. Last modified February 28, 2025.

[https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE).

Rise Up Feminist Archive. “Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1987.”

Periodical. Last modified February 28, 2025.

[https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE).

Rise Up Feminist Archive. “Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1993.”

Periodical. Last modified February 28, 2025.

[https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE).

Rise Up Feminist Archive. “Domestics Cross-Cultural News – April 1994.”

Periodical. Last modified February 28, 2025.

[https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE)

Rise Up Feminist Archive. “Domestics Cross-Cultural News – January 1992.”

Periodical. Last modified February 28, 2025.

[https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical\\_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/periodical_title/domestics-cross-cultural-news?highlight=INTERCEDE).

Robinson, G William and Ed Ratushny, *Domestic Workers on Employment Authorizations: A Report of the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures*. Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1981.

Steering Committee. Roxana Ng fonds. University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS), Toronto, ON.

*Survey of employment in domestic services in Canada*. June 1952. Quoted in Patricia. "Regulating Class Privilege Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940's-1990's." Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1993.