



# ***FNSG NEWS***

**a publication of the Filipino Nurses Support Group**

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Toiling 24 hours a day as home support workers:

## **FILIPINO NURSES ARE MODERN-DAY SLAVES**



Supporters rally against the privatization of health care.

Amidst a critical nursing shortage, thousands of highly educated and skilled Filipino nurses continue to be recruited into Canada not as nurses, instead recruited under the LCP. Nurses are among the mass migration of Filipinos in search for a better life abroad and seeking to escape the chronic political and economic crisis in the Philippines. But, we are not allowed to enter Canada as nurses. Instead we are recruited as domestic workers and 24-hour home support workers under Canada Immigration's Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP).

Filipino women make up the overwhelming majority of people who enter Canada under the LCP. For a minimum of two years, as Filipino nurses under the LCP, we hold temporary worker status and are forced to live in our employers' homes. "Hundreds of Filipino nurses are here in B.C. not recognized as nurses. Instead we are doing home care for our elderly employers or employers with disabilities," states Joyce Lovitos, a registered nurse in the Philippines who is currently doing 24-hour home support work under the LCP. We are forced to do everything from household work to providing health care for the elderly and people with disabilities for families who can afford to hire private,

live-in care. Under the LCP, we often earn less than minimum wage and are even restricted from accessing training or education. We, as Filipino nurses doing domestic and home support work under the LCP, are responsible for our employers 24 hours a day. The isolating environment that the LCP creates leaves us vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, including workplace injuries that many times go unreported. Filipino nurses doing 24 hour home support work is a stark example of modern-day slavery in Canada.

"Because of the LCP requirements, we become responsible for our employers 24 hours a day, but we are paid for only 8 hours – with no overtime pay. For some of us, we accompany our employers to the hospital and even sleep at our employer's bedside in the hospital!" exclaims Mayette Laureano, also a member of the Filipino Nurses Support Group (FNSG).

This uncompensated 24 hour home support work fits into Canada's drive towards the privatization of health care. Everyday, patients are pushed out of hospitals before their full recovery. The government is slashing its funding support for health care, like home care services. As the government abandons its social responsibility to provide "health for all", more private institutions will take advantage of the cheap labour of nurses from the Third World. Once we complete our temporary work contract and obtain landed status, many of us continue to do home support work, domestic work, or become care aides because of the many barriers that prevent us from practicing nursing in B.C. The LCP effectively creates a supply of highly skilled and educated, yet extremely low-paid, health workers.

Filipino nurses doing 24-hour home support work under the LCP are commodified as a supply of cheap health workers, from which the growing private health care sector demands to ensure its profits.

The actions by government and health institutions to resolve the health care crisis have been disappointingly slow. The issue of the nursing shortage has fallen on deaf ears.

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# EDITORIAL

## Third World nurses scapegoated for nursing crisis

In a public radio interview on CKNW, a representative from the Registered Nurses' Association of B.C. (RNABC) stated that RNABC "feels pressured" to lower the standards for nursing practice in order to ease the accreditation process of Filipino and other foreign-trained nurses.

These assumptions about the lower quality of education and skills of foreign-trained nurses blatantly expose the systemic racism deeply embedded in Canada's institutions and policies. Canada is built off the beaten-down backs of immigrants seeking the promised "better life" in Canada.

In fact, B.C. has consistently relied on the migration of nurses from other provinces and countries to fill nursing vacancies. Last year, nurses from the Philippines ranked #1 among source countries of nurses, making up 42% of all foreign-trained nurses who successfully obtained registration from RNABC.

Also present at the interview were the Filipino Nurses Support Group (FNSG) and an immigration lawyer who attested to the bureaucratic barriers that work against foreign-trained nurses seeking to practice in B.C. amidst a critical, nationwide nursing shortage.

There is increasing concern over the deteriorating quality of health care that fails British Columbians when they need it most. Yet, this does not justify the racist assumption, even among nurses themselves, that Filipino and other foreign-trained nurses lower the quality of nursing practice. It is the severe lack of nurses on hospital wards that force practicing nurses to work in gravely unsafe environments.

Many nurses are unable to meet safe nursing practice when they are overworked, burned out, and stretched to their limits – putting their patients' and their own health at risk.

With the growing numbers of Filipino and other nurses of colour entering the nursing workforce, these nurses, mainly from Third World countries, are the latest targets and "easy scapegoats" for the worsening health care crisis that has created the nursing shortage.

With the recent funding of \$2 million given to RNABC by the government, they should commit their efforts to find concrete ways to address the nursing shortage instead of fostering anti-immigrant sentiment against foreign-trained nurses. Institutional and policy changes must be made to reflect and address the systemic racism that is inherent in Canadian institutions.

# SHARING OUR STORIES OF STRUGGLE

## Theresa's story

I am from Cotabato, the farthest South side of the Philippines. I am a registered nurse with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. I arrived in Canada in October 1994. I worked here in Canada as a nanny for more than five years. I had to go back to school for the nursing refresher course in 1999. I am a landed immigrant now, and after six years

of struggle, I finally became a registered nurse here in Canada.

I was hired as janitorial staff but worked as a staff nurse in the Philippines. I felt degraded.

My salary was not really enough even for myself to survive. I had no savings. I received a letter from the Canadian Embassy saying that I had a job offer - it was for

the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP). I didn't know what the LCP meant. All I wanted was to get out and find a better and higher paying job.

There is really very little opportunities if I stayed in the Philippines. So when the opportunity came to go abroad, I grabbed it. In seven months, I finished processing my papers for the LCP.

I understood the LCP to be related to nursing. What was written was that "caregivers" look after infants, children, or elderly. I had no idea I was applying for domestic work.

It was so expensive: processing fees, travel fees, lodging, OWWA, POEA, etc.

I arrived in Canada on October 1994. My expectations in coming to Canada was that I could work in the line of my profession and I could obtain my license as a nurse. After arriving in Canada, my expectations were not fulfilled, because I was forced to do two years of domestic work plus process my nursing accreditation. I was still adjusting to a foreign country. The environment was stressful. The best thing I could have done was to upgrade myself, but the LCP restricted me from accessing any academic or



vocational upgrading.

My first experience in Canada was very isolating. As a new immigrant, I was scared and lacked confidence. With my first employer, she refused to write a supporting letter to renew my temporary work authorization. At the last minute, my employer told me that she did not need me anymore. I was really disappointed with her as she gave me very short notice. I didn't have enough time to process another permit to find a new employer. Also, I only found out that she hired her relative from Scotland as her new nanny when her relative had already arrived. I learned not to easily trust employers.

I stayed with a friend for the meantime. My following employer, a nurse, wasn't aware that nannies are covered under Employment Standards Act (ESA). I met a member of the Philippine Women Centre of BC (PWC) and PWC

The LCP really hinders our progress. Instead of being able to work in our profession, we get deskilled because of those restrictions. Instead of going forward, our development regresses.

I got a lot of experience since volunteering at the PWC, like in public speaking, workshops, my involvement with the PWC research projects, and studies really helped me develop my personality and interactions. I was really empowered to stand in front of people and speak on radio programs and forums about my experience, and the issues of the LCP and Filipino nurses doing domestic work. I also helped form the Filipino Nurses Support Group.



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## The LCP really hinders our progress. Instead of going forward, our development regresses.

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educated me about my rights. I became empowered to demand my employer to comply with the ESA. I had the confidence to ask for overtime, legal hours of work - I was working more than twelve hours a day - my schedule was dependent on my employer's schedule. I only received \$900 a month when I'm entitled pay for 18-24 hours a day. When I asked her about my overtime, she said that my extra hours were covered with personal breaks like meal breaks. I still persisted to assert that these "personal breaks" were still within my working hours.

### ...Update on Theresa...

After struggling to make ends meet as a domestic worker, a waitress, and in other low-paying jobs, Theresa decided to concentrate her efforts to return to nursing. She enrolled in the OLA refresher course while working multiple jobs, but was unable to complete it because of financial responsibilities to her family. She then had to stop working and obtained a student loan in order to enroll in the Kwantlen refresher course full time, from which she graduated in the summer of 2000. After six years of struggle in Canada, she is now a registered nurse. She continues to be an active member of FNSG and educates other Filipino nurses to fight for their liberation from modern-day slavery.



FNSG members prepare for Canadian Nurses Association Test (CNAT) at biweekly review classes.

# Are you a Filipino Nurse who is not

I'm a registered nurse in the phils. but i'm not working as a registered nurse (rn) instead i'm working as a registered nanny.

WHY CAN'T YOU PRACTICE AS A NURSE? especially since THERE IS A BIG SHORTAGE OF NURSES IN CANADA.



I CAN'T, I'M STILL UNDER THE LIVE-IN CAREGIVER PROGRAM (LCP).

YOU COULD START COMPLETING ALL YOUR REQUIREMENTS WHILE YOU ARE UNDER THE LCP.



## did you know ?

a canadian Nurses association (cna) STUDY in november 1997 showed that there will be a shortage of 59,000 to 113,000 regisreTEREd nurses in canada by the year 2011.

BUT HOW? AND WHERE DO I GO TO GET AN APPLICATION AND LIST OF THE NECESSARY REQUIREMENTS.

CALL Registered nurses association in b.c. (RNABC), ASK THEM TO SEND AN APPLICATION FORM.



# working as a nurse?

AFTER ONE WEEK, SHE RECEIVED THE APPLICATION FORM.

THEN YOU SHOULD START GATHERING THE REQUIREMENTS for accreditation SUCH AS THE ENGLISH EXAM (TOEFL/TSE) OR THE NEW ALTERNATIVE FOR THE ENGLISH EXAM (IELTS). ITS CHEAPER AND MORE

CONVENIENT. I HAVE AN APPLICATION FORM!



yes! i will lend you my copy, but you still need to get your prc confirmation & school transcript. by the way when was the last time you practiced nursing?

do you have a reviewer for this exam?



look at your application form. it says there you need to have 1,125 hrs. of nursing practice within

1998. why? the last 5 years.



i'm so happy today, i received my open visa, but the sad part ... my english exam, i only got 45 pts. on the tse.

don't worry, you can waive it and YOU don't need to take another exam. And when the rnabc accepts it you could apply for AN intern permit & practice nursing while waiting to COMPLETE YOUR accreditation



oh gosh! you're unbelievable to share all this information. hey! how did you know all of this?

well, i'm a member of fnsng (Fil. nurses support group) and i benefit a lot from them. they provide review classes on the 2ND & 4TH sun. of EACH month. fnsng lobbies ON issues like the 24 HOUR home support. WORKERS.

by the way, this coming march 25

at 2 pm

they are giving an information session on THE step by step process FOR becoming

A registered nurse, you should attend there too!



definitely, i'll JOIN THEM. AND HELP OTHER NURSES

# FNSG CELEBRATES OUR VICTORIES

The Filipino Nurses Support Group (FNSG) leads the struggle in advancing our rights and welfare as Filipino nurses doing domestic work and 24-hour home support. FNSG works particularly in B.C., but has also projected their campaign across Canada and internationally.

Filipino nurses doing domestic and home support work is modern-day slavery in Canada. Through FNSG's work, our oppression as Filipino nurses has been brought into the public consciousness.

Since 1995, over 225 members and contacts of FNSG have organized ourselves to resist our extreme exploitation and marginalization. FNSG has led a vigorous educational and political campaign to bring our presence and key issues into the mainstream and to raise our struggle to a political level.

## Community organizing:

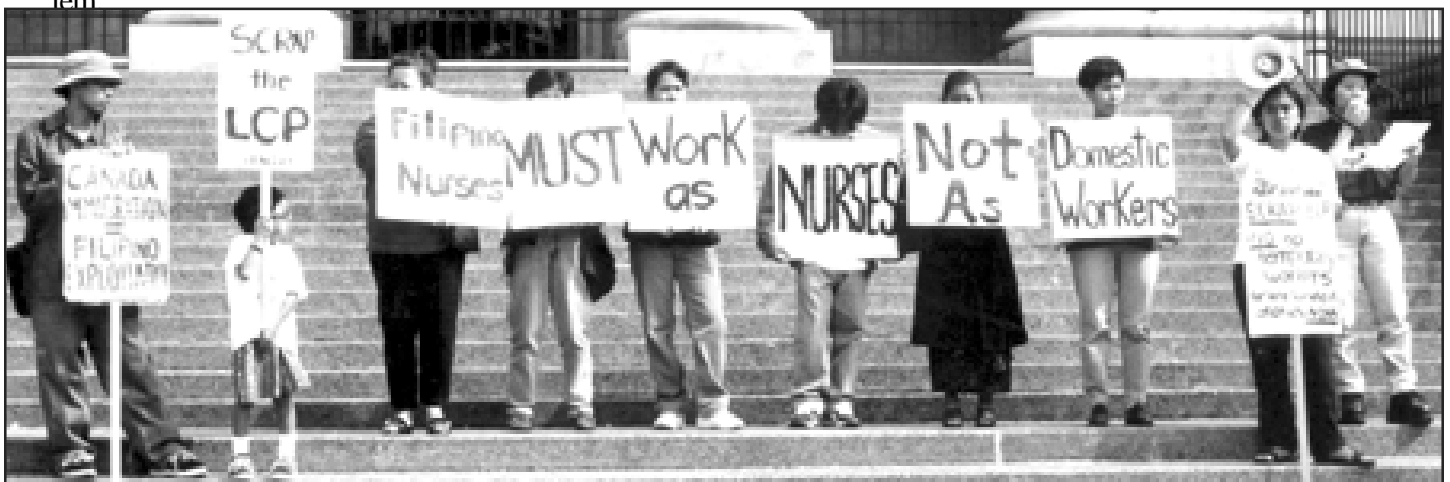
1. Our members hold bi-weekly nursing review classes to support Filipino nurses through the accreditation process. Through our self-reliant efforts and peer-leadership, these review classes have developed into sessions of political education, empowerment, advocacy, peer counselling, nursing education, and clinical practice labs.
2. We have supported over 25 nurses through the accreditation process and many of them are now practicing their profession as registered nurses.
3. We have been successful in raising the consciousness of Filipino nurses and shedding the false belief that live-in caregivers are the same as practicing nurses, when in fact they are recruited as domestic workers and 24-hour home support workers as part of Canada's scheme to obtain cheap labour and privatize its health care system.

## Advocacy and Lobbying:

FNSG consistently advocates for the rights of Filipino nurses. We expose and oppose racist and other discriminatory, marginalizing programs set up by the federal and provincial governments, the Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia (RNABC), the B.C. Nurses Union (BCNU), and other institutions.

1. We pressured the RNABC to recently make changes in the accreditation process of foreign-trained nurses. Recent changes gained:
  - Filipino and other foreign-trained nurses can get interim permits that allow us to practice nursing while waiting to write the RN board exam and obtain approval for our landed immigrant status;
  - The implementation of IELTS, a more affordable and accessible English fluency exam rather than the TOEFL and TSE.
2. We have publicly held Canada Immigration accountable for the barriers in returning to the practice of nursing – we have raised and continue to raise public awareness of our key issues and concerns through all forms of media; public events; forums; and conferences held locally, nationally, and internationally.
3. We continue to lobby the federal and provincial governments, professional associations, educational institutions, trade unions, and concerned organizations and individuals to liberate Filipino nurses from domestic work, to recognize our profession, and to concretely support the community-based initiatives of FNSG.
4. Recently, FNSG has received support from the Minis-

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FNSG supporters bring their call to the public: "Liberate Filipino Nurses from domestic work. Let them work as nurses now."

# AND CONTINUES OUR STRUGGLE

FNSG organizing... continued from page 6

tries of Multiculturalism and Immigration and Women's Equality to hire project co-ordinators who will systematize and coordinate the work of FNSG.

5. BCNU and RNABC have finally agreed to have bilateral meetings with FNSG to discuss the issues and concerns of Filipino nurses doing domestic and 24-hour home support work.

With the rich experiences and lessons we have gained over the past few years, FNSG looks forward to continuing and intensifying our work among Filipino nurses. We will continue our struggle to be liberated from domestic work and to rightfully practice our profession. FNSG plays an active part in the ongoing struggle against the root causes of our migration and the struggle for social justice. Only through our collective militancy in advancing our full rights and welfare as workers in Canada will we succeed.

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**"It's only through organization that you will be heard.**

**For if you're shouting alone, you won't be heard. But if you're many making noise, your voices would really be heard."**

**Annette, FNSG member**

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FNSG members with Jenny Kwan, MLA at a roundtable discussion with provincial ministers.

## **24 hour home support... continued from page 1**

Only now, when the nursing shortage and health care crisis are out of control, are millions of dollars poured into health care. This action, however, has not resolved the crisis since health workers continue to work at "bare bones" staffing levels. This crisis will surely intensify through the decade.

Meanwhile, Canada Immigration continues to recruit Filipino nurses into Canada as 24-hour home support workers under the LCP. As Third World nurses are forced into 24 hour private home support, the wages of Canadian nurses are driven down. This pits Canadian nurses against nurses from the Third World, particularly Filipino nurses.

"The LCP truly violates every aspect of our human rights! We truly are modern-day slaves in Canada!" asserts Lovitos.

Since 1995, the Filipino Nurses Support Group (FNSG) has been raising public awareness of the racist



FNSG members at a SIKLAB anniversary.

and anti-woman Live-in Caregiver Program and warning the public of the nursing shortage and the privatization of health care. FNSG has contact with over 225 Filipino nurses toiling as modern-day slaves in the Lower Mainland. There are thousands across the country. We have supported over 25 Filipino nurses to work as registered nurses in B.C.

FNSG will continue the struggle to be liberated from domestic work and to rightfully practice our nursing profession. The struggle of Filipino nurses is a legitimate struggle for the social justice for all overseas Filipino workers in Canada.

# CONGRATULATIONS!

*FNSG members who have passed the Canadian Nurses Association Test:*  
Aileen Conejar, Armer Aquino, Beverly Molena, Ellen Magsilang, Gigi Basit  
*have received an Interim Permit:*  
Genevieve Coloma, Arlene Casilla, Arvin Aguilera  
*starting / enrolled in a nursing refresher course*  
Gina Terrado, Josephine Carillo, Maria Batoon, Marilyn Padoan, Myra Ona,  
Alberto Ellema, Christy Arguelles, Fatima Sera

## **Filipino Nurses Support Group:**

### **Review Classes: Canadian Nurses Association Test (CNAT)**

Classes are every other Sunday, by donation.  
For more information call Sheila, Leah, or Ana at 255-6870.

## **SIKLAB**

*an overseas  
Filipino workers'  
organization*

*215.1103*

- Attend free workshops
- Review application for Landed Status
- Employment Standards Branch & WCB issues
- Fill out your family class sponsorship application
- Help on Immigration & EI questions
- Referrals

**MEET OTHER FILIPINOS!**

### **HELP SUPPORT FNSG!**

Enclosed is my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Enclosed is my pledge of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
I would like to become a member \_\_\_\_\_  
(enclose \$10 for one year membership fee)  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Upcoming events:**

**Sunday,  
March 25**

### **Information session: step by step process on becoming a registered nurse in BC**

organized by FNSG  
2-5 pm at the Kalayaan Centre  
for more information call Sheila or  
Leah at 255-6870

**Wednesday,  
April 3 and  
May 2**

### **Tinig ng Masa: the people's views on Philippine news**

monthly community radio program,  
every first Wednesday of the month,  
6-7pm  
Vancouver Co-op radio, 102.7 fm  
for info call Ethel at 215-1103

**Sunday,  
April 8, 22**

### **Review Classes: Canadian Nurses Associa- tion Test (CNAT)**

organized by FNSG  
2-5 pm at the Kalayaan Centre  
for information call Sheila or Leah at  
255-6870

**Saturday,  
April 21**

### **Immigration forum**

co-sponsored by the Philippine  
Women Centre and SIKLAB (Over-  
seas Filipino workers' organization)  
2pm at the Kalayaan Centre  
for information call Jane at 215-1103

**July 27-29**

### **Filipino-Canadian Youth National Consultative Forum: reclaiming our past, shaping our future!**

Toronto, Ontario  
for info call Monica at 215-1103

**date TBA**

### **Community Forum: housing issues**

date and time to be announced  
for more information call Marlyn at  
255-0725 or 684-7498