

Reform of Immigration Law and Policy

SPONSORSHIP

1. Overseas and Inland Sponsorships

There are two ways in which spousal sponsorships are processed: overseas and inland. Overseas processing takes place when the sponsored spouse remains in the country of origin until being granted permanent resident status. Inland sponsorships are processed while the sponsored spouse is here in Canada. In recognition of the fact that it would be a hardship for spouses to be separated during the lengthy process of sponsorship, Canada Immigration allows people already in Canada to remain here while they are being sponsored by their spouses (An exception to the rule that permanent residence must be granted before entering Canada is obtained by means of an Order-in-Council, or O-I-C.) Spouses who are sponsored while "inland" are here without any permanent status (e.g. visitors, students, persons without formal immigration status) and are at risk of deportation if the sponsorship is withdrawn during the processing of the application.

Once a spouse has been granted permanent resident status (a.k.a. landed immigrant status) she has a right to remain in Canada independently of her sponsor although, as a sponsored spouse, she has less access to subsidized government training programmes.¹ Since isolation and lack of language skills can make women more vulnerable to ongoing abuse,² full eligibility of sponsored relatives for federal language and skills training programmes is an important step in fighting violence against women.

1 See for example: Monica Boyd Migrant Women in Canada: Profiles and policies; Report submitted to the Monitoring Panel on Migrant Women, OECD (Canada Immigration Policy Branch Policy Analysis Directorate, 1989); Alma Estable and Mechthild Meyer A Discussion Paper on Settlement Needs of Immigrant Women in Ontario (Toronto, March 1989); Roxana Ng "Immigrant Women and Institutionalized Racism" in Changing Patterns: Women in Canada Sandra Burt, Lorraine Code and Lindsay Dorney eds. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988) pp 184 - 203; Shirley B. Seward and Kathryn McDade Immigrant Women in Canada: A Policy Perspective (Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1988).

2 We note here that the threat of deportation is a common form of mental abuse used against immigrant women, sometimes even after they are granted permanent resident status. Isolation and limited official language skills make it more difficult for women to learn about their rights and to take action against their abusers.