

Allow 'illegals' to remain here

'Illegal' tradesmen marked for exploitation

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The Canadian Hispanic Congress (CHC) wishes to thank Jim Rankin and the Star for taking up the case of the "illegal workers." As the representative body of the Hispanic community across Canada, the CHC had been in contact with Judith Sgro, before she became Minister of Immigration, to discuss the situation of the undocumented Hispanic workers and to discuss possible solutions. The then Member of Parliament seemed genuinely interested in the plea of the undocumented and promised to help.

In October, 2003 the CHC presented Sgro with a proposal on how to deal with the undocumented. Keeping in mind that an amnesty was out of the question we suggested that a special program be offered, tailored in the spirit of the 1986 administrative review and the 1989 backlog regulations that saw as many as 150,000 legalized between the two programs. At the time there was also a great demand for construction workers.

As was done in the past, we requested the government allow people who had proven themselves to be contributing members of Canadian society, people who had established themselves economically and socially and who had no criminal record, to be allowed to remain in Canada as permanent residents.

The government has been studying the possibility of a special program for the undocumented for at least the last three years. A special report was prepared by MP Maria Mina MP in 2003 whose conclusion was also that a special program be granted to the undocumented. Three ministers of immigration have discussed the possibility of a special program and it is still being studied. Enough studying. The undocumented are here. They are needed by the construction industry and other industries. Most can prove to be hard working and honest. They are established and have made Canada their home.

The CHC urges the Minister of Immigration to act in a responsible and humane manner. The longer the undocumented workers are kept underground, the more opportunities unscrupulous employers have to abuse and exploit them. The longer the minister waits to announce a special program, the more pain and suffering the undocumented and their families suffer. Let's uphold Canada's humanitarian tradition by allowing those who are already established among us to remain.

Vilma C. Filici, National President,

Canadian Hispanic Congress, Toronto