Non-Status Women and COVID-19:
Updates on legal changes, resources and advocacy

Friday July 31, 2020 | 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. EST

Hosted by: Rights of Non-Status Women Network
In partnership with: Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
Land Acknowledgement
Who We Are

The Rights of Non-Status Women Network is an organized network of agencies and community members with a mandate to address barriers to services and resources faced by non-status women through coordinated public education & advocacy for the purpose of systemic change.

https://rnswn.wordpress.com

Twitter: @RNSWNetwork

The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic is a specialized clinic offering legal support in family, immigration, criminal and sexual assault law, counselling and interpretation services to marginalized populations of women who have survived violence.

http://schliferclinic.com

416-323-9149 ext. 234
(For info on programs & services)
Learning Objectives

1. Understand legal changes that could disproportionately affect non-status women during the COVID-19 pandemic

2. Discover and share resources available and how to access them

3. Connect with the Rights of Non-Status Women Network to collectively advocate for change
Topics

1. Emergency Supports
   (Income, Housing, Health and Food)
2. Domestic Violence
3. Workers’ Rights
4. Immigration and Refugee
5. Policing and CBSA
A Few Reminders

- Please turn off your audio and video
- This session is being recorded and may be posted online
- A copy of this presentation will be emailed to participants
- Please ask questions in the chat throughout the presentation! We will have 3 slots for Q & A’s and will do our best to address as many questions as possible during those slots

**Please note:** The information contained in these slides and throughout this presentation is for informative purposes only and is not legal advice.
Income Supports
The Rights of Non-Status Women’s Network calls on municipal, provincial and federal authorities to:

Make the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) available to all, regardless of immigration status. At the present time, the reliance on a SIN to distribute benefits excludes non-status workers and either obliges them to put themselves at even more risk through non-compliance with social isolation directives and unsafe work, or potentially leaves them destitute.
The Rights of Non-Status Women’s Network calls on municipal, provincial and federal authorities to:

Make social assistance accessible for those who may not qualify for the CERB during this time of crisis. This access should be free of any immigration consequences. While social assistance in Ontario is accessible to some people without status, including H&C applicants and those who have an enforceable removal order but cannot leave the country for reasons beyond their control, this does not include all non-status women. The lack of access to social assistance leaves non-status women without the most basic resources or supports to protect themselves and their families.
The Rights of Non-Status Women’s Network calls on municipal, provincial and federal authorities to:

Make the child benefit available to everyone by amending s. 122.6(e) of the Income Tax that ties eligibility for the Canada Child Benefit to the immigration status of the applicant parent. Deep social, health and economic inequities and high rates of poverty existed prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Rather than this virus being any sort of equalizer, it is amplifying these inequities multifold and children are paying the highest price.

Our Demands
Income Supports

- Eligibility for the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) has not changed – in order to receive CERB, applicants must have a valid Social Insurance Number (SIN). More information here.

- If you do not have a SIN, you may be able to get Ontario Works or the Ontario Emergency Assistance

- Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP):
  - If you need to apply for OW, you do not need a certain kind of immigration status to be able to get OW. However, you may not qualify if you’re in Canada as a tourist or visitor. If you are currently under a removal order, there may be restrictions. It is best to speak with your local community legal clinic to find out if you qualify. Find more information about qualifying here.

  - If you are already on ODSP or OW, OW workers can give extra “discretionary benefits” to people getting assistance. You can access benefits through the OW program through online applications such as MyBenefits, contacting your OW caseworker or online. If you are on ODSP, you may also receive these benefits, contact your ODSP caseworker for more information. Find more information here.
Income Supports

- **Ontario Emergency Assistance:** Emergency assistance helps people who are in a crisis or emergency situation. It covers needs such as food, rent, medicine, informal childcare, and other services. [Find more information here.](#)

- **Child Tax Benefit:** If your spouse has status in Canada, your family can receive the Child Tax Benefit. The May 2020 Canada Child Benefit (CCB) payment will be increased by up to $300 per child, for one time only. [Find more information on the CCB here.](#)

- [Find more emergency income supports here.](#)
Housing & Bill 184
Our Demands

The Rights of Non-Status Women’s Network calls on municipal, provincial and federal authorities to:

While there is currently a moratorium on evictions in Toronto, there must be no reprisals from landlords once the moratorium is lifted. Non-status women, in particular, may be susceptible to this violence, as they may be forced to leave their accommodation under the threat of being reported to immigration officials.
Housing & Bill 184 Updates

- **Bill 184, *Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act*** was passed on July 22, 2020
  - This law makes it easier for landlords to evict tenants when they sign a rent repayment agreement
  - This could make it easier for landlords to evict tenants who have been unable to pay rent during the COVID-19 pandemic
  - This Bill gives landlords the power to create their own repayment plans without having to go to a hearing at the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB)
  - The Ontario Superior Court has amended its Emergency Order suspending residential evictions, which could see evictions resume as early as August 1.
Take Action & Resources - Keep Your Rent

What John Tory and Toronto City Council can do:

1. Use the Mayor’s emergency powers under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act to implement an eviction moratorium in the City of Toronto to protect the health, safety and welfare of Toronto tenants.

2. Call on the Ontario government to repeal Bill 184 and to take eviction and forced rent payments off the table for unpaid rent during the months of the COVID-19 crisis.

3. Direct Toronto Police Services to not participate in the enforcement of evictions.

4. Declare support for all Toronto tenants that cannot pay rent due to COVID-19 that refuse to abandon their homes.

Resources

Tenant sign up form - find your neighbours!

Facebook group - find your neighbours!

How to organize your neighbours

Organizing Guide for Low Density Areas

How To Research Your Landlord - And Why You should

What Do I Do If My Landlord... (PDF download)

Tenants of Toronto Newsletter - English

Tenants of Toronto Newsletter - Chinese (simplified)

Images from, and more info at: https://keepyourrent.com
torontokeepyourrent@gmail.com | 647-874-8793
More Resources

- Parkdale Organize Factsheet: [What do I do if my landlord...?](#)
- If your landlord asks you to sign an agreement to re-pay rent, do not sign and [contact your local community legal clinic](#) for legal advice.
- **Housing Stabilization Fund**: Provides money for emergency housing needs to people receiving financial assistance through Ontario Works or income support through the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) in the city of Toronto. [Find more information here.](#)
Health & COVID-19
Health & COVID-19

- Anyone, whether they have OHIP or other health insurance, can be tested or treated for COVID-19. You do not need insurance.

- If you don’t have access to a family doctor, nurse, or nurse practitioner you can call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000

- Healthcare providers, medical clinics and hospitals should not share your personal health or contact information with Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada or the Canada Border Services Agency. Find out more information here.

- For the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak, all hospitals must give medically necessary services to everyone, including those without OHIP. These medically necessary services do not need to be related to COVID-19. See the government update here and find out more information about hospital procedures here.

- Other medical needs? Find out more information here.
Food Resources
Food Resources

- For a quick resource of open food banks in Toronto, click here.
- **The Red Cross Hamper Delivery Program:** If you reside in Toronto (M postal code) and cannot access grocery stores or community food programs such as food banks due to self-isolation or quarantine; and you do not have any other options to secure food delivery call The Red Cross at 1 833 204 9952.
- **Pop-up Library turned Food Banks:** The North York Harvest ones listed (Albion, Don Mills, Jane/Sheppard) are appointment only but the rest (Agincourt, Steeles, Kennedy, Cedarbrae, Eatonville, & Taylor (all Daily Bread)) are drop in from 2-4pm. No documents are needed and a prepacked box will be served outside. Find more information here.
Questions,

▷ Reflections & Updates
Domestic Violence
Domestic Violence

- Social isolation measures are making it more difficult for those who are at risk of abuse or violence to safely reach out for help.

- The “Signal for Help” Campaign is a simple one-handed sign someone can use on a video call to silently show they need help and need someone to check in with them in a safe way.

More info at: [https://canadianwomen.org/signal-for-help/]
Contact Us

- The Clinic uniquely offers legal, counselling and interpretation services to marginalized populations of women who have survived violence.
- To find out more about our services, please call our intake counsellors at 416-323-9149 ext. 234.
- A counsellor will contact you as soon as possible between Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE: To access our counselling services, a woman must call herself, her service provider cannot call on her behalf.

If You Call Us

- You may have to leave a message.
- Please say your name and number clearly and tell us when we can reach you.
- Please tell us if it is safe for us to call you back and safe for us to leave a message.
Workers’ Rights
Workers’ Rights

➤ You cannot be fired for having COVID-19. Your employer cannot require you to get a doctor’s note.

➤ Laid-off/fired/workplace permanently closes: If your employer fires or lays you off, or if the workplace permanently closes, your employer may have to pay you termination pay, which could be a week or more worth of pay. Find more information here.

➤ Decreased hours: If your employer has decreased your hours, you should ask your employer to apply to the Workshare Program. Find more information here.

➤ No child care: You have a right to take time off to take care of your children. Talk with your employer. Find more information here.
Workers’ Rights

- **Unsafe work**: If you are concerned about how your employer is handling your safety during COVID-19, you can make a complaint to the Ministry of Labour. [Find more information here.](#)

- **Medical conditions**: If you have a medical condition that makes you at a higher risk of getting COVID-19, your employer has to accommodate your needs. [Find more information here.](#)

- **Caring for a family member**: If you need to take time off to care for a family member who is sick or because you need to self-isolate because a family member is at high risk of getting sick, your employer has to try to accommodate you. [Find more information here.](#)

- **More questions about your rights as a worker during COVID-19?** Call the Workers Action Centre at [416-531-0778](tel:416-531-0778) (toll free: 1-855-531-0778) Mon-Thur 12pm-5pm

- **Update on new developments** [here](#)
Questions, Reflections & Updates
Immigration and Refugee
RIGHTS OF NON-STATUS WOMEN NETWORK

All of us are in this together: regularization now! Status for all!

@RNSWnetwork
Immigration and Refugee Updates

- **Refugee Protection Division (RPD):** The RPD intends to resume in-person hearings in Ontario for the week of August 3, 2020. The Board will be working at a reduced capacity to respect physical distancing. [See more information here.](#)

- **Family Sponsorship:** CERB is not considered social assistance. If your sponsor is receiving CERB, they are still eligible to sponsor their spouse, parent, grandparent, child or other relative as long as they meet all the other requirements to be a sponsor. [Find more information here.](#)

- **Temporary Foreign Workers:** Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) released a new policy that will allow temporary foreign workers who are in Canada to change their employer or listed job within approximately 10 days via IRCC webform. This will allow workers to transition to a new role quickly, without waiting for a new work permit to first be issued. [Find more information here.](#)
Policing and CBSA
The Rights of Non-Status Women’s Network calls on municipal, provincial and federal authorities to:

Ensure that policing measures do not put non-status women more at risk. Moreover, if non-status women do seek protection from gender-based violence, there must be absolutely no immigration enforcement actions. This would require police authorities to enforce strict access without fear policies. Extended powers of monitoring and enforcement such as the City of Toronto online system for reporting non-compliance should be terminated, and all provincial offenses officers must refrain from collecting any information related to immigration status.
The Rights of Non-Status Women’s Network calls on municipal, provincial and federal authorities to:

Since physical distancing cannot be maintained within immigration detention, everyone currently detained must be released for their safety, as well as for the safety and health of others. Moreover, since the same is true of the shelter system, alternative accommodation must be provided that enables physical distancing and self-isolation.
CBSA, Policing & Immigration Detention

- The Province is under a State of Emergency and during this time, the police are enforcing physical distancing and have more powers.

- The police, certain municipal bylaw officers, campus officers, TTC and other transportation constables, community housing constables, public health officers, and others can require you to carry and produce identification with your correct name, date of birth, and address on request. If you do not provide identification, you can be fined. Find more information here.

- **Update:** In June 2020, the CBSA imposed controversial electronic monitoring bracelets as a condition for immigration detention releases in Quebec and Ontario (see more here). The CBSA is taking advantage of the pandemic to normalize and push for the use of electronic monitoring of undocumented immigrants.
Resources

Find out more information about your rights with this resource guide by No One Is Illegal

TWO THINGS YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW IF YOU DON’T HAVE IMMIGRATION STATUS

1. Develop a strategy of what you will do if confronted by an immigration or police officer at home, in the street or at work. The rest of this guide will help you plan a strategy that best fits your situation.

2. Make a safety plan in case of arrest. This plan may help you get out of detention faster and may reduce the stress of being arrested. You can use the following checklist to make sure your safety plan is as complete as possible.

*Excerpt from No One is Illegal Resource Guide

For more information, visit: https://toronto.nooneisillegal.org/about
Other Resources
Legal:

- Pro Bono Law Ontario: https://www.probonoontario.org/ or +1 888-915-5912
- Legal Aid Ontario: 1-800-668-8258
- Find your community legal clinic: https://www.legalaid.on.ca/legal-clinics/

Migrant Rights:

- Migrant Rights Network: https://migrantrights.ca/
- No One is Illegal: https://toronto.nooneisillegal.org/
- Juntxs Comemos Juntxs: comemosjuntxs@gmail.com
- Migrant Workers Alliance for Change: https://migrantworkersalliance.org/
- Butterfly (for Migrant/Asian sex workers): https://www.butterflysw.org

Visit https://schliferclinic.com for a full list of Resources for Non-Status Women
Three Actions to Support the Rights of Non-Status Women Network:

1. Join our listserv
2. Endorse our campaign
3. Attend our organizers’ meeting on Friday September 4th at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom

Email us at rightsofnonstatuswomen@gmail.com for more info!
Questions,

▶ Reflections & Updates
Thank You!

Rights of Non-Status Women Network: Statement on COVID-19

Connect with us: rightsfnonstatuswomen@gmail.com