

Bringing Yevgeniya's mother to Canada...

Dear Cathedral Friends

As I am writing these lines, it is Sunday, November 12, and we are observing Remembrance Day at Christ Church Cathedral. I have a few hours for a sandwich and a coffee and a bit of writing before the next choral service. I've always loved this service: singing for so many people is particularly rewarding for me as a volunteer chorister. This is also the only day in the year when we sing the Canadian national anthem in the church. Still a relatively new citizen, I love singing "O Canada": it reminds me of my own beautiful citizenship ceremony, with the inspiring speech from the judge, an immigrant herself, about Canadian values of working, helping others, protecting the vulnerable and volunteering. But this time I just couldn't sing the Canadian anthem: my voice suddenly stopped obeying me in the middle of the sentence, as my mind wandered off to the maple leaf on the "Procedural Fairness Letter" issued by the immigration officials to my mother, a 67 year old widow living in Ukraine, that I am sponsoring to come to Canada. The letter stated that my mother appears to be inadmissible on health grounds.

Now I will try to explain what has been happening.

It's been over 7 years since I moved to Canada from Atlanta where Joel Amis, my husband, was born and where I also lived and worked for 5 years. Changing countries and starting our lives at zero is not something people do light-heartedly (and especially doing it for the second time, as was my case: I moved to North America from Ukraine in 2005), but a decision to move to Canada somehow was easy and natural. We are happy and grateful that all worked out well -- we successfully immigrated to Montreal, studied, and got employed, became Canadian citizens, and are volunteers / board members of many organizations.

As my mother lives alone in Ukraine, we started the process to sponsor her to come join us in Canada as soon as we were eligible, after three years of paying taxes, and having sufficient salary for three people, as well as waiting until the program was reopened. Unfortunately, the quota of 5,000 people was filled in no time that year, and our package was returned unprocessed... The next year we reapplied and got accepted. We were approved as sponsors, and when the time came for the final step: medical examination, I was afraid of it more than anything, because of my mom's "pre-existing condition".

While totally mobile, very active and always helping others, my mother has a genetic disorder called polycystic kidney disease (PKD). Many people live with PKD until advanced age, my grandmother lived with PKD without dialysis until 85, but some need dialysis or a transplant at some point in their lives... and because of that probability, my mother, too, was deemed as a person whose demand for health services might exceed the cap of \$6,655 per person per year...

I believe, however, my mother, Olena Zvierieva, should be allowed to join her family in Canada because:

- She is a widow and doesn't have any close relatives in Ukraine
- She deserves to live her remaining years with her family in Canada who will take care of her as she gets older

- She is not seeking a transplant and she is not on a dialysis or in immediate need of dialysis; it is possible she will never need it
- Moving to Canada and having access to better nutrition and preventive care would be best for her health and well-being, both physical and psychological
- The healthcare system in Ukraine is underdeveloped, and PKD is practically unknown in Ukraine, but it is well known and researched in Canada and especially in Montreal which has a number of PKD units
- The situation has already impacted me in a very negative way (insomnia, anxiety, inability to concentrate), and the inability to bring my mother would have a deep emotional impact on myself, as well as my husband and his work and ministry
- Frequent travel to Ukraine might cause inability to keep my job and continue all my volunteer activities (church/music, organizing World Esperanto Convention in Montreal, etc.)

I would be grateful for your support and/or prayers.

Thank you,
Yevgeniya Amis

Note: The Social Justice Action Group has drafted a letter of support. On Sunday copies will be made available in the baptistry for anyone interested in signing at that time. Thank you.