

Sunday Soundoff

Immigration exceptionally stupid

It's nice to see that immigration officials are diligently protecting Canadians from fraudulent interlopers.

We should be thankful that vigilant government workers have told Kateryna Geleta that she must return to Ukraine by June 27.

Canadians have a right to be shielded from the likes of a 43-year-old single mother whose Canadian husband died of cancer before she could get permanent residency.

God knows what Kateryna's been up to. She could be a layabout bilking hard-working Canadians out of their tax dollars. Well, no, actually. She's never received a penny of public money.

Since her husband Steve died in August 2000, she's survived on about \$1,100 a month from her widow's pension and her daughter Solomiya's trust fund set up by Steve before his death.

She wants to work - not sponge off Canadians. In fact, the sympathetic residents of Lamont have rallied around

Kateryna and her four-year-old daughter. There's a job for her at a Lamont seniors' lodge.

Is she a security threat? A criminal? Burdened with health problems? No. No. No.

Her daughter's a Canadian citizen but immigration busybodies have decreed that Kateryna has got to leave. There will be no bending of the rules for humanitarian and compassionate reasons. God forbid that immigration officials should stray from the letter of the law because it's the right thing to do.

You'd think the government would worry more about getting rid of the foreigners who sweet-talked their way into Canada and then left a trail of misery and broken lives wherever they went.

Like the three men who hacked John Arruda to death on Whyte Avenue in September 2000.

Two of the thugs - brothers from Vietnam - were convicted drug dealers who were ordered deported long ago.



Mindelle Jacobs

One brother appealed his 1998 deportation order and was turned down in 1999. He was still here a year later to kill Arruda. Immigration officials were waiting for his travel documents. I see.

The other brother was ordered deported in 1999. His appeal was rejected in December 2000.

Under new immigration legislation, which comes into effect June 28, landed immigrants who have been jailed for two or more years will no longer be able to appeal deportation orders.

That will be small comfort to Arruda's widow who is now raising three kids by herself.

It was acceptable to let two Vietnamese mobsters appeal their deportations but it's a no-no to allow a harmless woman from Ukraine to stay in Canada because the man who had planned to sponsor her is dead.

There are some who believe Kateryna simply took advantage of Steve for a ticket to an easier life. A rift has apparently developed between Kateryna and Steve's grown children from a previous marriage.

Whatever the case, Kateryna and

Solomiya should be allowed to stay in Canada.

Immigration workers first rejected Steve's application to sponsor Kateryna in August 1999 because the couple wasn't married and officials didn't believe it was a bona fide relationship.

They did, however, allow Kateryna into the country on a special minister's permit in November 1999 because Steve was dying of cancer.

The couple wed in March 2000 and Steve applied again to sponsor her a month later. The request was nixed because applications are supposed to be made before a spouse comes to Canada.

Under the new immigration law, which takes effect the day after Kateryna is supposed to leave, spouses will be allowed to apply for permanent residence status from within Canada. But Steve is dead so Kateryna no longer has a sponsor, say the immigration overseers.

"We think this is an exceptional case," says Kateryna's lawyer Shirish Chotalia.

Indeed. And officialdom is being exceptionally stupid.