

# Canadian father died of cancer Mom, girl facing boot

By SHANE HOLLADAY

Staff Writer

Four-year-old Solomiya Geleta must leave Canada next month unless a last-minute appeal to Citizenship and Immigration Minister Denis Coderre is a success.

Although Solomiya has Canadian citizenship, her mother, Kateryna, has been asked to leave Canada by June 27.

That's just one day before a new, more lenient immigration act comes into effect, according to their immigration lawyer, Shirish Chotalia.

"We're calling on the minister to reverse the decision," said Chotalia.

"We are going to do everything in our power to ensure she stays here in Canada with her daughter."

Kateryna should be allowed to stay for humanitarian reasons, said Chotalia.

If Coderre denies the application, Chotalia said the case will go to federal court.

Officials have ruled that the death of Kateryna's husband leaves her without a sponsor.

The officer assigned to the case also said that the child, who speaks both English and Ukrainian, should adapt to a new country quickly.

Solomiya's father, Steve, met Kateryna in 1991 on a trip to Ukraine.

He eventually moved to Lamont in 1999, where she lived with him until he died of cancer a year later. She still lives there.

Shortly before his death, they were married, said Kateryna, through a translator.

This little child went through so much watching her father die," she said.

"I don't want to put further stress on her."

"I'm saddened they don't have the heart to leave her here, my little child."

If returned to Ukraine, Kateryna and her daughter face a life of poverty, she said.

Although she worked as a schoolteacher before meeting her husband, she said unemployment is so bad there she won't be able to get a job.

"Everyone leaves the country to get a job," she said.

She does have a place to stay — before his death her husband bought her a home in Ukraine, she said.

Supporters in Lamont have created a trust fund through Alberta Treasury Branches to help pay for any legal fees.

"We are asking her very politely to leave," said Citizenship and Immigration spokesman Fanny Ho.

Officials can extend the amount of time they're offering her to depart, she said, but the decision is final.

New legislation coming into effect June 28 won't change how officials look at this case, added Ho.

"Nothing will change, because this case has already been dealt with."

"The immigration officer's decision is final," Ho said.

Solomiya and Kateryna haven't yet been ordered to leave, said Ho. They could still face a hearing if they stay past June 27. In that case, their circumstances could still be considered.

"We're very considerate," said Ho.

The department is also legally bound to consider the best interests of the child, she said.

"Under the current regime, it is something we must consider."



Kateryna Geleta and daughter Solomiya face deportation after her husband's death from cancer left Kateryna without a sponsor, Immigration officials say.

— CHRISTINE VANZELLA, Sun