

Quadriplegic temporary foreign worker may have to leave Canada

29-year-old worker suing former employer for medical benefits

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A temporary foreign worker is one step closer to deportation from Canada after she was unable to renew her work visa following a car crash that left her a quadriplegic.

Maria Victoria Venancio, who previously asked to be called "Andrea" in order to protect her identity, was issued an exclusion order in a deportation hearing on Monday.

The actual removal would have to come from Canadian Border Services Agency, at an as-yet unscheduled enforcement hearing.

There, her lawyer will ask authorities to consider deferring the order while an application is considered for Venancio to stay in Canada on compassionate grounds.

Venancio moved to Edmonton from the Philippines in 2011 to work at a McDonald's franchise.

Two years ago, the 29-year-old was [commuting to her job by bike when she was hit by a car and seriously injured](#). The accident left her in a wheelchair and unable to work.

That meant she was unable to renew her visa and is now in the country illegally.

"We're still hoping that they can still allow me to stay here in Canada," she said after Monday's hearing. "I was so blessed and thankful for all my friends and church friends who came here to support me."

Her lawyer, Chris Bataluk, said if Venancio is forced to return to her rural home in the Philippines she will not have the kind of medical treatment she now needs.

"There's no public health infrastructure in the Philippines. It's all a private system, so she'd be in a very difficult position as a result of that.

"She's becoming more independent. And here in Canada, where we have things we take for granted, like paved streets and DATS buses, she has the opportunity to progress and live a relatively fulfilling life"

Earlier this month, Venancio told CBC News that she was so apprehensive about her future that she hasn't even told her family about the accident.

"My mother right now, she doesn't have any idea," she said. "It's been almost three years, what happened to me."

Since she is not legally in Canada, Venancio is not eligible for health care. She is currently taking part in a research project at the University of Alberta, which provides her with free treatment.

She is also suing her former employer for medical and disability coverage. The McDonald's franchisee claims she opted out of her benefits.

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