

Permanent resident cards lead to citizenship push

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

Permanent resident cards for Canada's landed immigrants were a sign for some in York Region it was time to become a citizen of their new country, says the head of an agency helping newcomers here.

The cards, mandatory since Jan. 1 for immigrants re-entering Canada, also sparked frustration from residents who thought for many years their status was not an issue, Mario Calla, executive director of COSTI Immigrant Services said this week.

The agency experienced a flurry of activity in the fall as it helped permanent residents complete applications for the card, which, for some, took as long as four months to arrive, Mr. Calla said.

Enrolment in COSTI's citizenship classes also increased as more people applied for citizenship, he added. "It forced them to take a look at their status and do something about it."

Announced as a security-boosting measure in 2002, the cards have been issued to 850,000 permanent residents far short of the estimated 1.5 million in Canada who may require it.

Some are concerned permanent residents of the region, on holiday or working for extended periods overseas, could be inconvenienced as a result.

As of Tuesday, 55 people have been barred from flights returning to Canada because they did not produce a card,

said Maria Iadnardi, a spokesperson for Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The card must be obtained in Canada but permanent residents out of the country without one could obtain a temporary travel visa at a Canadian visa office abroad.

The government has also posted migration integrity officers at airports to help permanent residents re-enter Canada, provided they can prove their residency, Ms Iadnardi said. "We had several contingency plans in place."

Although Ms Iadnardi said visa offices would produce the temporary visas in a single day, Eric To, settlement co-ordinator for the Toronto Chinese Community Services Association in Markham, said the process normally takes about six weeks.

Some immigrants believe they either will not have to leave Canada or will become a citizen soon, so they do not apply for the card, Mr. To said.

Stories of travellers stranded overseas will take time to surface, predicted Poonima Mohan, settlement councillor for AWIC, another local agency assisting newcomers. "The people that are stuck there are still stuck."

Chris Koddermann, special constituency assistant for Markham MP John McCallum, said his office assisted several dozen callers seeking information on the cards in the past two months and helped speed up the application process for some because they had travel plans.

How much do you like them BBQ ribs?

A really generous plate of absolutely delicious & tender BBQ'd & Grilled Beef Ribs - Liberally brushed with our famous BBQ sauce, these meaty big ribs are grilled to perfection & Served with all of the trimmings, for only \$12.95.

If you're actually hungry at the end of it all [we don't think so!] - we'll give you another Rib serving 'On The House'.

How hungry are you?

Get'em While They Last..... There's No Telling How Long That's Gonna Be!

Note: This Special Runs Sunday, Jan. 11th through Thursday, Jan. 15th Only. We simply couldn't handle it on the Weekends.



BBQ Beef Ribs With All Of The Trimmings

\$12.95

STEAKHOUSE

The Biggest Steakhouse In Town

DOWNTOWN LOCATION: 96 Richmond St. W., The Sheraton Centre 416 366-4333

MARKHAM: 7501 Woodbine (at Esna Park) 905 305-1808

AIRPORT LOCATION: 25 Carlson Court (Dixon Rd. at Hwy. 27) 416 798-4333

This price is valid from Sunday, January 11th, 2004 through Thursday, January 15th, 2004.

food Basics

Best Prices Everyday!!!

7700 Markham Road MARKHAM

5221 Highway 7 MARKHAM

EXTRA SPECIAL BONUS ITEMS THIS WEEK!

ANDY BOY RAPINI
PRODUCT OF U.S.A.
bunch

7.99

MR. GOUDAS RICE
CHINESE STYLE OF COOKING

4.44

8 KG BAG

BOUNTY PAPER TOWELS

3.97

PKG OF 6 ROLLS

PEPSI DIET PEPSI OR 7-UP

CASE OF 12x710 ML BTLS

3.47

NEW! 600 VALUE TO 2003 TOYS

QUAKER CRISPY MINIS

100 g or ORIGINAL CAKES 127-199 g

1.98

QUAKER INSTANT CEREAL

288-470 g

1.44

WHITE POTATOES

PRODUCT OF PEI NO. 1 GRADE

3.88

50 LB BAG

FROZEN BONELESS SKINLESS CHICKEN BREAST

SEASONED REGULAR OR BREADED

2.97

6.55kg

PRICES EFFECTIVE FROM SATURDAY, JANUARY 10TH TO FRIDAY, JANUARY 16TH, 2004 AT FOOD BASICS 5221 HIGHWAY #7 AND 7700 MARKHAM ROAD, MARKHAM LOCATIONS ONLY.