

Lawyer insists he took money for real immigration program, Canadian government denies its existence



By Sean O'Shea

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WATCH ABOVE: A Toronto lawyer who claims the federal government has a “pilot program” in place to help undocumented immigrants stay in the country says he's right and others are wrong. Sean O'Shea reports.

Paolo Romandia came to Canada with the hope of making this country his new home, but now the 30-year-old Italian citizen is being forced to leave.

“I like the country. I wanted to stay,” said Romandia, who has exhausted his efforts to remain and will fly back to Italy in mid-April.

He said he has filed a complaint with the Law Society of Ontario after paying his immigration lawyer, Richard Boraks, about \$10,000 for advice.

“I trusted him a lot,” said Romandia.

“After four years all I got was a removal order.”

Romandia said Boraks led him to believe he would be able to stay in Canada, in part, because of what the lawyer called a “pilot program” for undocumented workers.

There's just one problem: the federal government denies the existence of any such program.

“You haven't done your homework,” Boraks told Global News in an interview from his office.

“You've taken no time. You're an amateur,” he said, referring to a reporter.

Boraks adamantly claimed that a “pilot program” was instigated by former federal immigration minister John McCallum on Dec. 23, 2016.

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But when asked to produce evidence of any new pilot program, such as information on a government website, he said he could not. Boraks instead submitted video and audio clips from various public events attended by federal and provincial ministers. The material did not show the announcement of any new program.

Global News contacted the press secretary for federal immigration minister Ahmed Hussen, who said no pilot program for undocumented workers exists.

A spokesperson for Ontario Citizenship and Immigration Minister Laura Albanese echoed the federal government's statements.

Boraks was insistent that not only did a program exist but that his clients had filed applications directly to Peter Fonseca, the Liberal MP for Mississauga East-Cooksville.

“I can confirm that at this time there is no active pilot project and consequently no application,” Fonseca told Global News by email.

“No member of parliament is allowed to collect applications. I have not received any applications because there are no applications if a program is not in existence.”

Boraks would not say how many clients have hired him on the basis of his claim that there is government program in place, citing lawyer-client privilege.

“How I run my business is a side issue,” he said.

Boraks was disciplined by the Law Society of Ontario in 1999 for failing to return \$25,000 to a client. His licence to practice was suspended for 12 months, according to the law society's website.

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But in an interview, he first told Global News the penalty was only six months before agreeing it was a year.

Boraks cautioned against portraying him in an unflattering light.

“If you put me on air and you're grilling me and it comes across that I am not a very nice boy, and you haven't done your work, that's not a good thing,” he said.

“If you don't do your homework and you make me look like a fraud artist, I'm coming at you.”

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