

# Dream of new life turns into four-month nightmare

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What was once a dream for two West Germans immigrating to Cape Breton Island has turned into four months of nightmarish uncertainty.

Within a few weeks Peter Rudt and his wife Ingeborg Norres-Rudt might finally be freed from a tangle of bureaucratic red tape. Even after assurances from the Canadian Embassy in Bonn, Germany, they were refused working visas in Halifax. Consequently, their business plans have been temporarily shelved.

Last June, the couple arrived in Canada intending to establish a pottery and tile-making business. Before leaving Wolfsburg, Germany, they bought a home in Point Cross, about five kilometres outside Cheticamp.

They resigned from their jobs in West Germany and sold their home there. Ingeborg Norres-Rudt had been a nurse and her husband an engineer.

Now, the couple is living on savings in Point Cross. They are hoping that a federal-provincial

government committee will approve their business plans and grant them working visas.

"I was born in Germany," Mr. Rudt said. "But, sometimes you have two homes, the one in which you were born and one where your heart is. There is a difference."

Their application for permanent residence in Canada began two years ago. According to their lawyer, Davies Bagambiire, their applications were processed during that period. They passed medical and security screening and provided information on a proposed business.

In May, they were told their landing documents would be in Bonn in a few days and were advised to quit their jobs, Mr. Bagambiire said. They completed travel arrangements and shipped their belongings to Halifax.

In late May, en route to Halifax, they arrived in Bonn to pick up landing documents. Mr. Bagambiire said the couple was told by the embassy that the immigration department in Halifax had advised against issuing the documents, but to go to Nova Scotia and speak to immigration officials.

There was little choice. Without jobs, and with their personal belongings on the way to Halifax, the Rudts left Germany and, ever since, have been fighting their case in Canada.

Mr. Bagambiire said the Rudt case is unique in the element of encouragement the couple received from the Canadian Embassy in Bonn. He said the couple was given medical screening before their business proposal had been accepted. Forms to apply for social insurance numbers were also issued early in the application process, he said.

Normally, immigrants are advised not to sell fixed assets until working visas have been issued.

Davies Bagambiire appealed to federal politicians for help, including Employment and Immigration Minister Lloyd Axworthy.

Just as the Rudts' visitor visas were nearly expired, a one-month extension was granted to have their business proposal looked at. Eventually, help was enlisted from the Federal Business Development Bank under its counselling assistance for small enterprises program. The

business proposal was revised and submitted last week to a committee of officials from the department of regional economic expansion, the provincial development department and the department of immigration.

William Hamm, head of the Canada Immigration office in Sydney, said a decision is expected in two or three weeks. Technically, the couple must leave Canada again to pick up working visas.

Mr. Hamm said immigration officials will not only look at the viability of the business proposal, but whether the business will overload the pottery market. Another consideration is how the business can benefit the community through increased employment, he said.

The couple also has solid technical skills to fall back on in the job market, he said. Mr. Bagambiire said the business proposal projects a small profit margin during the first year of operation. Two or three additional people will be needed in the Rudts' second year in business, he said.