

Minimum Wage Hike Key to Cutting Poverty

Toronto Star

LOS TRABAJADORES INMIGRANTES RECLAMAN EL 15%

El Popular

Nanny takes her employer to court

Metro News Toronto

நீங்கள் முகவருக்கூடாகத் தொழில் புரிபவரா?

Thaiveedu

Temporary foreign workers: a growing reality.

But is it the right one?

The Independent

嚴重車禍外勞慘劇惹關注.組織籲改善外勞待遇

SING TAO

WORKERS CALL FOR TOUGHER LABOUR LAWS TO END WAGE THEFT

Toronto Star

2011/12 ANNUAL REPORT



WORKERS' ACTION CENTRE ORGANIZING FOR FAIR EMPLOYMENT



WAC celebrates
May Day 2011

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Tharmilan Nadarajah

A Big Thank You to our 2011-12

Project Funders:

CAW Social Justice Fund

City of Toronto (Community Service Partnership)

City of Toronto (Access & Equity)

Freedonia Foundation

The Law Foundation of Ontario

We would like to especially acknowledge and thank the following organizations for their support, guidance and commitment to social justice:

The Atkinson Charitable Foundation

The George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation

The Maytree Foundation

Ontario Employment Education and Research Centre

Parkdale Community Legal Services

A Special Thanks to:

Our Members, who make all our work possible.

Our union allies, community partners, volunteers and students who give their time, energy, commitment and spirit to improving the lives of all workers.

Our individual supporters and union brothers and sisters who made a financial contribution to our Solidarity Program to help make our work possible.



WORKERS' ACTION CENTRE

Together we are strong!

WAC is Organizing For Change!

In these times of recessionary budgets and cutbacks to government services, now more than ever, the voices of workers in low wage and precarious employment need to join together with organized labour and the social justice community to fight for fairness and equity in our society.

Precarious work – **part-time, temporary, self-employed** - continues to be on the rise, leaving many workers with limited protections or access to benefits. More funds and resources are needed to ensure **adequate enforcement** to protect the rights of workers from bad bosses. The **minimum wage remains frozen** for another year, leaving many working two or three jobs to make ends meet. Proposed **changes to Employment Insurance** will reduce access to this basic protection for many workers when they lose their jobs. **Migrant workers** have little protections on the job and are vulnerable to poor working conditions.

WAC CONTINUED THE FIGHTBACK IN 2011-12!

WAC fought for increased funds for employment standards enforcement, and in 2011 sixty additional Employment Standards Officers were hired by the Ministry of Labour to reduce the serious backlog in claims filed for unpaid wages and benefits.

WAC members, active in our Downtown and Scarborough Organizing Committees, were getting the word out to STOP WAGE THEFT through public presentations, participating at community events and working through the media.

WAC provided support and advice to activists in Windsor, Hamilton, St. Catharines, Peterborough and Sudbury who were interested in developing their own workers' center to be a voice for working people in their community.

WAC continued to deliver excellent educational programs and support services about workers' rights issues.

WAC strengthened alliances with workers' centers in the United States and around the world.

WAC was an active participant in grassroots networks and coalitions fighting for fair employment and social justice.



My employer told me not to tell anyone about my salary. They told me I would never get a job caring for another family. I was scared about losing my job. I was scared because my boss kept saying she was going to call immigration and I thought I would be deported.

~ Lilliane, a live-in caregiver

Stop Wage Theft!



WAC members join an anti-poverty rally in Toronto, March 2012

STOP WAGE THEFT!

Under our campaign banner STOP WAGE THEFT, WAC members could be seen at rallies and community events, marching in solidarity with other social justice and labour organizations. WAC is speaking out about the poor working conditions and unfair labour practices facing so many workers in Ontario.

3500

(and counting) emails and postcards from across Ontario sent a message to Queen's Park to STOP WAGE THEFT

2668

Union sisters & brothers attended a presentation about our campaign

1000+

Unique visitors to the WAC website monthly

630

Subscribers to WAC Action E-Alert

60

Public presentations at rallies & events by members and staff to spread the word about our campaign

58

Community & union allies endorse our campaign

53

TV, radio and newspaper hits where WAC speaks out against wage theft

32

Meetings with local MPPs and government officials

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR ACTIONS IN 2011-12:

Sending a message to Premier McGuinty

WAC reached out to our community allies and our union brothers and sisters to help us send a message to Premier McGuinty to STOP WAGE THEFT. Premier McGuinty received thousands of emails and postcards urging the Ontario government to STOP WAGE THEFT:

- Make all employers follow the law in all workplaces
- Update labour laws to protect all workers
- Increase the minimum wage to bring workers out of poverty



WAC members collect our Stop Wage Theft postcards for Premier McGuinty

VICTORY! Funding cuts to Employment Standards reversed

Early in 2012, WAC learned that the provincial government was planning to cut \$6 million from Employment Standards enforcement in the 2012 Ontario budget. We mobilized widespread support to save these funds WAC members organized urgent delegation visits to MPP offices across the city over 25 provincial organizations signed on to a letter demanding the cuts be stopped postcards from workers across Ontario were sent to Premier McGuinty to stop the cuts. After 3 intense months of pressure from our members and allies—\$5.5 million dollars for proactive enforcement of employment Standards was saved from the government chopping block. The Ministry of Labour promises to work with WAC and other community partners in 2012 to develop a plan for how the money can best be used to prevent wage theft and better enforce our basic labour laws.

Workers speak out against wage theft!

WAC produced two more videos in our STOP WAGE THEFT video series.



Video #3: Follow a group of painters as they track down a well-know repeat violator who has a history of hiring workers and not paying them. The workers' talk about the difficulties of their industry, the impact of stolen wages on their families and their lives and ask why the Ministry of Labour does not penalize employers who repeatedly disregard the laws that are meant to protect us.



Video #4: Lilliane and Vivian worked endless hours for two separate families taking care of young children and disabled seniors. Both were forced to leave their jobs, and heartbreakingly the family members in their care, by employers who refused to pay even the basic minimum standards. Highlighted in this video are the limits and problems with both the Live-In Caregiver Program and our provincial law that puts a cap on how much money workers can claim through the Ministry of Labour regardless of how much we are owed.



I am a university student and I am conscious of the social issues of precarious work and wage theft. It still happened to me. It is not just about knowing our rights, our rights have to be enforced on the job.
~ Alberto , a restaurant worker

**Visit WAC on
YouTube
to see the
Wage Theft
video series
& more**

**Find us on Facebook
and Twitter too!**

**JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN FOR FAIR
WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS!**

PROTECTING WORKERS' RIGHTS THROUGH EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

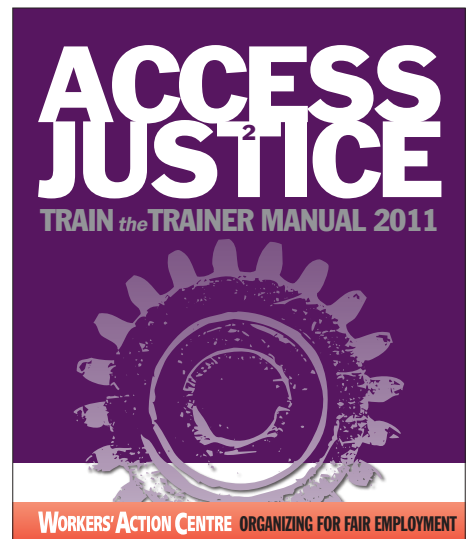
WAC continued to provide information and referral services to workers calling our **Workers' Rights Information Phonenumber** about a violation of their rights at work. Where we could offer further help, workers were invited to attend one of our Information Sessions and/or Support Clinics, where they would receive further information on employment legislation and one-on-one support. In 2011-12, we were able to hold regular Information Sessions in the North York neighbourhood, as well as continue our downtown and Scarborough sessions.

We expanded our **Know Your Rights** series with three new factsheets, and improved our website design to make all of our educational materials (available in 13 languages) more easily accessible for all communities in the province.

WAC delivered educational workshops on employment legislation and human rights to newcomers, job seekers, and community members at agencies throughout the Metropolitan Toronto region. In addition, a special **Access to Justice** program informed front-line community workers about the issues and challenges facing workers in precarious employment.

WAC LEADERS SHARE STRATEGIES ACROSS BORDERS: NYC LEARNING EXCHANGE

In March 2012 WAC staff and leaders journeyed to New York City on a learning exchange with a number of U.S. worker centres and their members. WAC was able to meet with restaurant workers fighting for a higher Federal minimum wage, bakery workers fighting to organize, and domestic workers who won legislative improvements to protect their members and others cleaning and caring for families in private homes. WAC returned to Toronto with a wealth of new ideas for leadership and education programs, creative organizing strategies and new models of membership development to inspire our own work here at home. WAC leaders shared the information with the broader membership through a compilation of photos, videos and reflections. We will continue to incorporate new ideas into our work and build on our existing model which our members were proud to share with others in NYC.



WAC FACTS

26700

"Know Your Rights" factsheets and booklets distributed across Ontario

1405

Workers attended an educational workshop on their rights

792

Workers called our Workers' Rights Information Phonenumber for help with a problem at work

753

Front-line staff at community agencies received our "Workers Rights on the Frontline" e-bulletin

124

Workshops were presented by WAC staff

111

Front-line staff attended our Access to Justice workshop series

36

Community agencies hosted a WAC educational workshop for their community

13

Number of languages that WAC educational materials are available in



Congratulations to the latest group of members who completed our Fall 2011 Leadership Training Program and are now out in the field organizing and educating for change!

POLICY AND RESEARCH

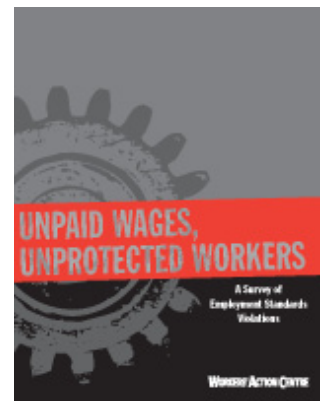
WAC continues to be called upon to play an active role in bringing forward the issues facing workers in low wage and precarious employment to the following public policy research initiatives:

- **Institute for Work and Health (Advisory Committee):** the focus of the research has been to understand the management of injury prevention and return to work practices in temporary work agencies
- **Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) (Community Advisory Committee):** a project mapping the impact of precarious work on families in Southern Ontario led by McMaster University
- **Law Commission of Ontario Consultation on Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Work (Advisory Group):** to support extensive consultation with groups in Ontario on precarious work, provide feedback and highlight gaps in policy and recommendations
- **Wellesley Institute** Roundtable on Labour Market Regulation

UNPAID WAGES, UNPROTECTED WORKERS

In May 2011, to a packed house at Beit Zatoun in downtown Toronto, WAC launched its latest research report **“Unpaid Wages, Unprotected Workers”**. The research report is based on a WAC survey in 2010 of 520 workers in low-wage and precarious jobs. The study exposed the lack of protection in Ontario workplaces which leaves many workers in significant economic hardship - where wages, overtime and vacation goes unpaid and people work at less than minimum wage.

Based on the findings of the report, WAC also presented a policy paper **“Taking Action Against Wage Theft: Recommendations for Change”**, with detailed recommendations calling on the Ontario government to update employment legislation and improve enforcement procedures to ensure that vulnerable workers are protected.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Year ended March 31, 2012

	2012	2011
<i>Revenue:</i>		
Project funding	165,085	322,164
Professional services	312,638	213,908
Supporter contributions	37,383	8,439
Honorariums and other	21,278	17,890
TOTAL REVENUE	536,384	562,401
<i>Expense:</i>		
Salaries and benefits	383,657	399,807
Office and administration	79,290	69,420
Publications and resources	22,700	33,642
Meetings, workshops and events	13,565	4,712
Communications and outreach	12,301	8,840
Volunteers and participants	10,995	13,742
Staff travel	8,671	4,497
TOTAL EXPENSE	531,179	534,660
Surplus for the year	5,205	27,741

Excerpt from audited statements prepared by Cowperthwaite, Mehta Chartered Accountants. Full audited statements are available on request.



I worked at a beverage company as a temporary agency worker for 1 year. I was paid \$9.00 per hour, which is under the minimum wage, with no vacation pay. At the end of the year I was asking for my T4 and the temp agency that I worked with immediately kicked me out of my job!
~ Aliza, a temp agency worker

SUPPORT OUR FIGHT FOR CHANGE

A donation to WAC will provide much needed resources to support our advocacy and political work to fight for better wages and working conditions. Please consider making a one-time gift or become a monthly supporter by joining our Monthly Solidarity Program. Together we can make a change!

Special Note: WAC is proud to be an advocate for change and thus, under current legislation, cannot be a registered charity or issue tax receipts.

Education and Leadership Fund for Workers in Precarious Employment

This special fund, set up by the Ontario Employment Education and Research Centre (OEERC), will support collaborative projects with the Workers' Action Centre to educate workers in precarious employment on their rights under employment legislation, and to support their development as leaders in their communities. For more information and to contribute, visit www.oeerc.org. The OEERC is a registered charitable organization.



I saw there was an injustice happening with what they were doing to me. They didn't want to pay me what they owed. There was so much unfairness, not only with me, but with the other employees in this workplace, and unfortunately in so many others places where I have gone to look for work. But I want to tell you, that those who don't give up, will succeed. They paid me my wages, they paid me what was fair. We can do it! When we have confidence to fight, we can achieve many things!

~ Lilia, a cleaner, won \$2300 in wages and other benefits

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