



ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2012 TO MARCH 2013



WORKERS' ACTION CENTRE



ORGANIZING FOR FAIR EMPLOYMENT!

STOP WAGE THEFT!

Under our STOP WAGE THEFT campaign banner, WAC spoke out about the need for real changes and stronger protections to improve the lives and working conditions of workers in low wage and precarious employment. We spoke at community events, conferences, rallies, public forums, on street corners, and in the media – reaching out to union members, frontline community workers, activists, academics, students and to our friends and neighbours in diverse communities across Toronto.



WAC members at May Day 2012

"We work hard. I went to work, without sleep and worked the night shift to make money. I worked in the cold weather when the employer didn't have a proper heater for the workplace. Now, the company is not paying us our money – this is unacceptable. My boss should be punished for not paying and the Ministry should help us to get our wages."
-Jesi speaks out in WAC's "12 Days of Action"

12 days of action = 12 ideas to Stop Wage Theft



In December 2012, WAC carried out a social media action profiling 12 stories of workers fighting for unpaid wages. Our call to action resulted in over 600 emails and twitter messages being sent to the Minister of Labour urging government action. Here are 12 great ideas to STOP WAGE THEFT:

- Increase fines and penalties for employers
- Make fines for employers who break the law mandatory
- Publicize all employers who are found guilty of wage theft
- Give workers 2 years to claim unpaid wages
- Get rid of the unfair \$10,000 claim limit on unpaid wages
- Make employers pay workers interest on unpaid wages
- Pay workers double when there are repeat and serious violations
- Increase proactive enforcement of workplaces
- Follow through on the \$10 million commitment for proactive enforcement
- Remove exemptions that deny some workers their rights
- Ensure equal rights and protections for temporary migrant workers
- Increase the minimum wage to bring workers out of poverty

WORKERS' ACTION CENTRE



fair employment



*WAC members deliver 100 postcards to
Premier Kathleen Wynne*

Postcard survey reports 62% of workers experiencing wage theft!

From October 2012 to February 2013, WAC members surveyed workers in four Toronto neighbourhoods about their experiences with wage theft. From the almost 1000 postcards collected, 62% of workers reported experiencing some form of wage theft – unpaid wages, no overtime, no vacation pay. On March 15, a delegation of WAC members visited four local MPP's to deliver the postcards collected from their constituents – and urged these MPP's to take action to Stop Wage Theft.

RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE Campaign

Minimum wage rates have been frozen since March 31, 2010. This now means that full-time workers are earning 19% below the poverty line in Ontario! During 2012 WAC and its members worked hard to develop a campaign strategy to fight back against this injustice, and win fairness for all Ontario workers. Our demands: minimum wage should be \$14 per hour (10% above the poverty line) and automatically updated each year with the cost of living.

WAC is a founding member of the provincial Raise the Minimum Wage campaign. On March 21, 2013 the province-wide campaign was officially launched, with rallies and actions in 14 cities across Ontario - Toronto, Ottawa, London, Peterborough, Hamilton, York Region, Kingston, Windsor, Belleville, Welland, Kitchener-Waterloo, Oshawa, Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury - demanding their local MPP's to MELT THE FREEZE on the minimum wage!

The work has just begun. Visit the campaign website at www.RaiseTheMinimumWage.ca. Follow the provincial campaign on Facebook. Be a part of making change happen in your local community!

**FAIR
wages
NOW!**



*WAC delivers a "frozen \$10.25"
to Toronto MPP's*

*"We are all struggling to live on the minimum wage. When you go to the grocery store, food prices are way up. Rent is increasing every year. We are hard working people. But with the current minimum wage, it's either you go hungry or pay the rent."
-Julia, WAC member*

You Deserve a RAISE

POLICY & RESEARCH

WAC has been active in bringing forward the issues facing workers in low wage and precarious employment to the following research projects and public policy discussions:



WAC & allies bringing our message to Queen's Park

Advisory Committee: **Institute for Work and Health** research on injury prevention and return to work for temp agency workers

Advisory Committee: **PEPSO (Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario)** project mapping the impact of precarious work on families in Southern Ontario led by McMaster University

Advisory Committee: **Law Commission of Ontario "Consultation on Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Work"**

Research partner: **Global Employment Standards Database (GESD)** research project at York University

Presentations and consultations with the **Ministry of Labour** on ESA enforcement

Deputation to the City of Toronto re **"Access without Fear"** consultation, in support of open access to city services for all residents, regardless of immigration status

Research & presentations on exploitative conditions faced by migrant workers in Ontario

COALITIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

Only by working together with our community and social justice allies can we hope to make real changes and achieve fairness and equity for workers in Ontario. WAC was an active member in the following coalitions and working groups:

- Campaign 2000
- Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage
- Chinese Inter-Agency Network
- CLEO Connecting Communities
- Employment Standards Working Group
- Good Jobs for All
- Local Immigration Partnership, Toronto South
- Migrant Workers Alliance for Change
- Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants
- OFL Common Front

"I'm owed \$2,300. I've called the employer many times. He never answers the phone. Sometimes he answers by mistake, he says 'oh ok, I'm going to pay you next time, next week, come over next week', but it never happens. The government has to do something better for workers, we need stronger rights."
-Mark speaks out in WAC's "12 days of Action"

Building the Provincial Network

WAC is proud and excited to be providing support to community activists in Hamilton, Peterborough, St. Catharines, and Sudbury, who are developing workers' centres in their communities. The movement is growing!

OUR MEMBER COMMUNITY



Fun & games at the WAC Annual Summer BBQ

WAC members are not only workers who have experienced first-hand poor working conditions – but they have also made a commitment to be a part of our action for change!

This year's member events explored the issues surrounding poverty - the effects of a frozen minimum wage, recessionary budgets, inadequate social assistance rates - through documentaries, guest speakers and informal discussions. Our Organizing Committees, both in Scarborough and Downtown, worked with staff to develop our campaign strategy to fight for a fair minimum wage to bring workers out of poverty.

Members marched in solidarity with labour and community activists; distributed workers' rights materials across the city; spoke at public events, conferences, and to the media about the issues facing workers; met with local MPP's and government officials; and supported other workers to challenge their bad boss and fight for their rights. Congratulations one and all!

"My confidence is building, I can feel it. I really enjoy talking to people and trying to inspire them to make the changes we need. People need this information on their rights, it's tough out there".
-WAC Community Leader



Our Community Leaders are ready to organize!

COMMUNITY LEADER TRAINING

Two groups of members participated in WAC's Community Leader training program in 2012-13. The focus of this year's trainings was to equip our Community Leaders with the skills necessary to become advocates in their local communities for workers' rights information and resources. The program involved in-class training on basic employment standards, group facilitation, public speaking, Canadian labour history, and community organizing techniques - followed by hands-on workshop experience. Participants this year represented 18 ethnic communities, speaking over 22 languages. They will be sharing their knowledge and increasing awareness of workers' rights in communities all across the GTA.

PROTECTING WORKERS' RIGHTS

WAC provides support, information, guidance, referral, training and educational materials to inform, educate and empower workers to enforce their rights under employment legislation.



Workers' Rights Information Phonenumber, providing immediate information, support and referral

Info Sessions, raising awareness on rights in the workplace

Support Clinics, connecting workers with one-on-one support with a workplace problem



Community Workshops, educating workers about their workplace rights at community agencies across the GTA

Frontline Trainings, increasing awareness of workplace legislation & issues with community agency workers. In 2012-13, trainings were held in Belleville, Ottawa and Owen Sound, as well as with staff working within the Spanish-speaking and South Asian communities in the GTA



Factsheets and Booklets, providing essential information on workers' rights issues



Social Networking, providing up-to-date information on issues affecting workers in low wage and precarious employment

"I worked at a restaurant for almost 1 year. They didn't pay overtime or public holiday pay. Every holiday I was the only person who would go and talk to the company. I am fighting to get the money back. I want to show other people that we can stand up. I want to make sure that this employer doesn't keep doing the same thing to other people."

-Sajikaran speaks out in WAC's "12 Days of Action"

FINANCES

	2013	2012
Revenue:		
Professional services	\$350,388	\$312,638
Project funding	\$193,003	\$165,085
Supporter contributions	\$25,186	\$37,383
Honorariums and other	\$15,068	\$21,278
TOTAL REVENUE	\$583,645	\$536,384
Expense:		
Salaries and benefits	\$417,681	\$383,657
Office and administration	\$88,371	\$79,290
Publications and resources	\$24,198	\$22,700
Volunteers and participants	\$17,851	\$13,565
Meetings, workshops and events	\$15,519	\$10,995
Communications and outreach	\$9,327	\$12,301
Staff travel	\$6,107	\$8,671
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$579,054	\$531,179
Surplus for the year	\$4,591	\$5,205

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

2012-13 Board of Directors

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SUPPORT OUR FIGHT FOR CHANGE



The Workers' Action Centre is a worker-based organization committed to improving the lives and working conditions of people in low-wage and unstable employment. The Centre provides information and education to enable workers to organize for change. Our work is guided by these principles: maximum involvement of the people affected, developing leadership among workers, shared learning, and action for change.

WAC is proud to be an advocate for change and thus, under current legislation, cannot be a registered charity or issue tax receipts. That is why we need your support. A contribution to WAC will provide much needed resources to support our advocacy and political work, fighting for better wages and working conditions for all workers in Ontario.

Please consider making a one-time gift or becoming a monthly supporter by joining our Monthly Solidarity Program. If you are a union member, please ask your union local to support our work. Contact us to see how you can help.

Together we can make change happen!

A Big Thank You to our 2012-13 Project Funders

CAW Social Justice Fund

City of Toronto
(Community Service Partnership)

City of Toronto
(Access & Equity)

City of Toronto
(Toronto Employment & Social Services)

Freedonia Foundation

The Law Foundation of Ontario

A Special Thanks to

Our Members,
who make all our work possible

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

**We would like to especially acknowledge
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



WAC by the Numbers 2012-13

20747 visits to our website

5700 factsheets & booklets on rights at work distributed to workers and community groups across Ontario

5548 allies & community members reached through campaign presentations by staff and members

1794 union sisters & brothers from across Ontario heard a presentation about our campaigns

1152 workers attended an employment standards educational workshop

974 workers received support with a problem at work through our Workers' Rights Information Phoneline

831 Stop Wage Theft postcards collected

791 subscribers to the WAC Action Alert! e-bulletin

590 Facebook "likes" follow our actions and events, and help us spread the word on important issues

550 Twitter followers listen to our message

122 community workshops presented by WAC staff on workplace rights

111 front-line staff from community agencies across Ontario attended a train-the-trainer session on employment legislation & human rights

44 media moments - print, tv and radio – with staff and members speaking out on the issues

29 member meetings & events both downtown and in Scarborough

29 support clinics connected workers with one-on-one support

28 community agencies in the GTA hosted a WAC employment standards workshop for members of their community

25 blocks of ice delivered to MPP's across Ontario by the Raise the Minimum Wage "melt the freeze" campaign launch

19 meetings with local MPP's & government representatives bringing forward the issues facing workers in low wage and precarious work

14 visits to bad bosses to support a worker to enforce their rights

13 language communities can access WAC educational materials

10 marches and rallies where WAC members and staff walked in solidarity with our social justice allies



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