



2009|10 Annual Report

Our Mission

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**.

2009-10 Board of Directors

Zainab Taiyeb, Chair • Clint Palmer, Vice-Chair • Ron Franklin, Secretary • Patricia Ramirez, Treasurer
Tim Vining • Jessica Farias

Our 2009-10 Funders

CAW Social Justice Fund • Citizenship & Immigration Canada • City of Toronto (Community Service Partnership)
City of Toronto (Access & Equity) • Freedonia Foundation • The Law Foundation of Ontario

Special Thanks

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

....to our individual supporters and union locals who made a financial contribution to our Solidarity Program.

...and to the following organizations for their support: The Atkinson Charitable Foundation, The George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation, The Maytree Foundation, Ontario Employment Education and Research Centre, and Parkdale Community Legal Services.

T  G E T H E R W E A R E S T R  O N G !

PROTECTING WORKERS' RIGHTS

Workers' Rights Information Line

Each month approximately 100 workers call our Workers' Rights Information Line to find out about their rights in the workplace, or to get information and strategies on what to do when their rights have been violated. Workers who call are invited to attend one of our Workers' Rights Clinics – held in our downtown offices and in Scarborough – where they can learn more about their rights at work, and receive one-on-one support with their problem. WAC Members and our allies play an important role by volunteering their time and expertise on our phone lines and at our clinics.

Educational Workshops on Rights at Work

WAC regularly provides information sessions on rights in the workplace through our in-house clinics or at workshops arranged on location with our community agency partners. In 2009-10, more than 1300 workers attended our sessions – new immigrants, youth, job seekers, LINC program participants, live-in caregivers, women and workers from racialized communities.

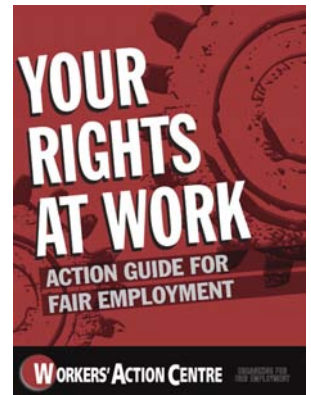


In addition, WAC trained more than 70 front-line staff of community agencies on basic employment legislation and strategies to protect rights in the workplace to help them assist members of their communities to find fair and equitable work.

Educational Resources

WAC continued to develop and distribute our plain language resources on worker's rights issues. Accomplishments in 2009-10 include:

- Distributed over 5000 copies of our "Your Rights at Work" booklet (available in English, Spanish, Tamil, Chinese and Hindi)
- Produced an updated 2010 edition of "Your Rights at Work." Our new edition is in a copy-friendly 8 ½ x 11 format for easy production by community groups across the province. ("Your Rights at Work" 2010 will be available in Tamil, Spanish and Chinese.)
- Updated and expanded our Know Your Rights factsheet series. Each factsheet now available in six translated versions, reaching ten language communities.



WAC is committed to sharing its resources with workers across Ontario. All of our educational resources are available on-line at www.workersactioncentre.org.



NEW Solidarity Program Launched!

In December 2009, WAC launched a new fundraising initiative for individual donors, organizations and union locals to support our work. Supporters can now join our monthly solidarity program to donate much needed resources to support our fight for better wages and working conditions.

ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

**VICTORY
BILL 139!**

New Protections for Temp Agency Workers!

In December 2008 the Ministry of Labour introduced Bill 139 - new legislation to give more protection for temp agency workers. WAC members and allies organized a campaign to make sure Bill 139 would be passed, and to push for some important improvements in the legislation. WAC members collected signatures on thousands of postcards which were delivered to MPPs, made submissions at Queen's Park and spoke to the media. In May 2009 the Ontario government passed Bill 139 that will ensure temp workers have access to new protections under the Employment Standards Act.



**VICTORY
BILL 210!**

New Protections for Live-in Caregivers

Throughout 2009 WAC worked with our community allies to fight for improved protection for temporary migrant workers. After a successful campaign, the Ministry of Labour introduced Bill 210 in October 2009 to provide more protections for live-in-caregivers. These changes came into effect on March 22, 2010 and give caregivers protections against recruitment fees and unscrupulous recruiters. WAC and our allies will continue to fight for more needed changes, including expanding these protections to all temporary migrant workers in Ontario.



Fighting for Fairness at Work!

WAC members challenged the Ontario government to live up to its promise of December 2008 to invest \$10 million annually to hire about 100 new employment standards officers. WAC and its members met many times with MPP's and Ministry of Labour officials to push for these much needed funds. With the March 2010 budget announcement, we have now seen a total of 7.5 million devoted to this commitment. We will continue to fight to see the full commitment upheld.



Struggling to make ends meet

The past two years have been especially difficult for many WAC members who have faced rising unemployment, unstable work, lower wages and poorer working conditions. This has been made even harder by the difficulties faced by workers trying to access Employment Insurance (EI) and Social Assistance (SA). Only one in four workers in Toronto has been able to get EI and the appallingly low rates of welfare have been pushing more and more people deeper into poverty. WAC members took to the streets this past year to leaflet communities, meet with MPs, organize forums and provide information on the changes needed to improve EI. Some of the basic demands we are pushing for are to increase the rates, increase the length of time to collect EI, lower the number of hours required to get EI and improve training opportunities.



BUILDING A MOVEMENT

Our Strong Membership

WAC Members have been taking a leadership role to ensure the message from our campaigns gets out into the community through participating in town hall meetings, meetings with politicians, rallies, and community events. WAC members mobilized in their communities to get signatures on our Bill 139 postcard campaign and have been making sure the word gets out about the new changes for temp workers. WAC members developed creative ways to share information, such as developing a short play and using social media.

Through our two Organizing Committees – Downtown and Scarborough – members get active in our campaigns, learn new skills and share ideas for change. WAC's leadership development program with members in 2009/2010 included a political education series with trainings on Employment Insurance, the new changes for temp workers, and workers' rights. Our movie nights featured movies that explored organizing as well as the recent financial crisis.

The WAC Steering Committee is made up of active members from our Organizing Committees who play a leadership role in our campaigns. The Steering Committee is helping to plan our next campaign leading up to and beyond the 2011 election. After undergoing facilitation and other leadership training, Steering Committee members have been taking on a greater role facilitating meetings and sharing information with members.



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Building Alliances

WAC continues to build strong alliances and relationships with a diverse array of community organizations, networks, coalitions, unions and grassroots groups across Ontario. A few highlights from this past year are:

- WAC supported the creation of a new coalition called Coalition for Change for Caregivers and Temporary Foreign Workers. Many groups have joined this important coalition to fight for better working conditions and fairer immigration policies for migrant workers coming into Canada to work in farms, restaurants, tourism, construction and homes.
- WAC organized with the Ontario Federation of Labour a joint one day conference on precarious work. In addition WAC spoke at the following union events – CAW National Council, OPSEU Women's Conference, CUPE Ontario Convention, and the UFCW National Human Rights Committee.
- WAC worked in partnership with organizations such as the Caregivers Action Centre, Mennonite New Life Centre, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, Justice for Migrant Workers, Mujeres Al Frente, No One is Illegal and the Good Jobs For All Coalition on joint campaigns, training, support and mobilization.
- The United Food and Commercial Workers Union, in partnership with WAC, is now making available their online webCampus courses FREE to all WAC members.
- WAC received an award from the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians in May 2009. The Activist Organization Award was presented to WAC for "their outstanding work in fighting for workers' rights."

Financial Overview

| Year ended March 31, 2010 | 2010 | 2009 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Revenue: | | |
| Project funding | \$ 256,415 | \$ 181,990 |
| Professional services | 210,656 | 242,459 |
| Fundraising and other | 21,615 | 26,783 |
| TOTAL REVENUE | 488,686 | 451,232 |
| Expense: | | |
| Salaries and benefits | \$ 325,647 | \$ 341,565 |
| Rent and administration | 67,313 | 72,258 |
| Publications and resources | 58,106 | 19,096 |
| Meetings and workshops | 18,541 | 18,274 |
| Communications and outreach | 11,254 | 4,867 |
| TOTAL EXPENSE | 480,861 | 456,060 |
| Excess of Revenue over Expenses for the year | \$ 7,825 | \$ (4,828) |

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