

# Taking it to the **STREETS**



June 2015 – Street Party for \$15 & Fairness at Access Point in Scarborough



**WORKERS' ACTION CENTRE**

ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16





May 2015 – supporting airport workers at Pearson International Airport in their fight for decent work

The **Workers' Action Centre** is a worker-based organization committed to improving the lives and working conditions of people in low wage and precarious work – through education, support, leadership development, research, policy analysis, advocacy and community action. Our work is guided by these principles: maximum involvement of the people affected, developing leadership among workers, shared learning and action for change.

With the announcement by the Ontario government early in 2015 of the “Changing Workplaces Review” – a review of both the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act – WAC, its members and allies have been getting the word out about the long-needed improvements to ensure fair working conditions for all workers in Ontario. Now is a momentous opportunity to bring our labour legislation forward into the 21st century to address the inequities of the altered nature of our workplaces, where part-time, contract, non-union and temp work have become everyday realities for so many working people.

WAC is proud to be an advocate for change, and thus is not a registered charity. That is why we need your support. A contribution to WAC will support our fight for fair wages and decent jobs for all workers in Ontario. Please consider making a one-time gift or becoming a monthly supporter. If you are a union member, please ask your union local to lend its support. Contact us to see how you can help. Join us in our fight for decent work.

## FEET ON THE GROUND

*New organizer training program launched*

In February 2016, WAC began an ambitious 9-month project to mentor and support 31 community organizers in neighbourhoods across Toronto, as well as in the communities of Brampton, Peterborough, Ottawa, Cambridge, and Sudbury. The project began with a 2-day training session in Toronto, focusing on advanced skills training to support local community organizing. Over the coming months each participant, with the support of a staff mentor, will develop local events and outreach strategies to encourage discussion about the range of issues facing workers in low wage and precarious employment, especially in the context of Ontario’s “Changing Workplaces Review”. It is essential that communities are made aware of the review process, the potential impact on their working lives of policy decisions, and how they, as workers, can play a role in this process.



## WAC MEMBERS 'TAKING IT TO THE STREETS'

WAC members understand the hardship caused by low wages and precarious work. It shows in the commitment of our members' time, energy and passion in fighting for fair and decent work for all workers in Ontario.

Through our Leadership Development programs, members continued to strengthen their skills in media communications, community organizing, facilitation, and public speaking. We would like to congratulate our first cohort of 5 Senior Leaders who completed their internship in December 2015, and who continue to take a lead role in our organizing. Our second cohort of 5 leaders started their internship in February 2016, and are proving to be a strong support for our Tamil and Mandarin speaking members, as well as taking the lead in our outreach, member newsletter, campaigns and programs.

Our monthly organizing meetings in Scarborough and downtown continue to be a central gathering place for our members to discuss the issues, share ideas and develop outreach strategies to connect with their local communities. WAC members have been "taking it to the streets" – at community events, rallies, street corners, in the media – and we're incredibly proud of all their accomplishments this past year.

## Members in Action

**15** media interviews by members

**22** member events and organizing meetings

**23** workers' rights workshops as co-facilitators

**26** community outreach opportunities attended

**39** meetings with government representatives

**68** attended a WAC leadership training program

**8000+** handouts on issues of precarious work



September 2015 – Outreach at Queen & Spadina



# THE **FIGHT FOR \$15 & FAIRNESS** MOVEMENT ACROSS ONTARIO

Since its launch in April 2015, the Fight for \$15 & Fairness campaign is a strong province-wide voice for fairness and decent work. With the backdrop of the Changing Workplaces Review currently underway by the Ontario government, union and local activists in communities large and small are reaching out to raise awareness of and encourage participation in this important review. This is a once in a generation moment to effect real change - which will impact our working lives for years to come.

WAC, as coordinator of the campaign, plays a key role in facilitating province-wide communications and information sharing, organizing local actions, managing the social network, developing on-line and print resources, and supporting emerging organizers across Ontario.



***Together we can improve the lives of all workers in Ontario.***



December 2015 – The “Decent Work Carollers” sing out the message of decent work at Yonge & Dundas



# OUR DEMANDS

- ✓ \$15 minimum wage for ALL workers
- ✓ Decent hours
- ✓ Paid sick days
- ✓ Respect at work
- ✓ Rules that protect everyone

# OUR SOCIAL NETWORK

*Engaging, sharing and informing*

 **1,700**

Web visitors on average each month to  
[www.15andfairness.org](http://www.15andfairness.org)

 **1,891**

Twitter followers #15andfairness

 **4,231**

subscribers to our regular “e-alerts”

 **5,500**

Facebook “likes” @fairwagesnow

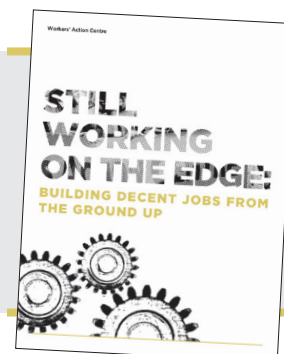


December 2015 – the campaign “drops the banner” at Toronto’s Eaton Centre



November 2015 – Dr. Kate Hayman and Dr. Andrew Pinto from the Decent Work & Health Network lead the paid sick days blitz in downtown Toronto

WAC’s 2015 report “Still Working on the Edge” is a thorough analysis of our current Employment Standards Act, with detailed recommendations for change to ensure fair and protected work standards in Ontario.



Download at  
[workersactioncentre.org](http://workersactioncentre.org)





July 2015 – WAC members join the People's March for Climate, Justice and Jobs

## ON THE POLICY FRONT

The Ontario government's Changing Workplaces Review of the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act is a critical moment and opportunity for labour reform. Staff and WAC members presented deputations to the public consultation process in the summer of 2015 – speaking out about the impact of weak legislation and poor enforcement on the lives of workers in low wage and precarious work. The Interim Report of the Review is expected in the Summer of 2016, with the final recommendations to the government in 2017. WAC and our members will be there every step of the way, fighting for real change.

### Provincial Strategy Meeting

In March 2016, WAC hosted a provincial conference attended by over 150 participants from a wide range of communities - anti-poverty and community organizations, trade unions, legal clinics, faculty associations, airport workers, students' unions, health providers, faith communities and more. The goal was to coordinate provincial efforts to ensure that workers' voices and concerns are heard and have an impact on the Changing Workplaces Review. Special guest organizers from the U.S. shared their experiences, learnings and strategies.

## ON THE RESEARCH FRONT

WAC continues to be involved in a large, ongoing research initiative - Closing the Employment Standards Enforcement Gap, a multi-year project involving 7 Ontario universities and 16 partner organizations researching enforcement of our basic labour laws. In today's labour market, where an increasing number of workers are engaged in precarious employment, the research seeks to investigate the gap between legislated standards and the enforcement of these standards, in order to develop strategies and best practices of enforcement that will strengthen protections for workers.

For more information on the project and it's findings, visit [closeesgap.ca](http://closeesgap.ca)

## PROTECTING WORKERS' RIGHTS IN 2015-16

**39** community agencies hosted a WAC employment standards workshop

**51** support clinics and info sessions on workplace rights

**65** community workshops on employment rights

**955** workers received support through our Workers' Rights Information Phoneline

**1,277** workers attended an employment standards workshop or support clinic

**6,156** factsheets & booklets distributed on rights at work

## ORGANIZING FOR FAIR EMPLOYMENT IN 2015-16

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

**31** meetings with MPP's & government representatives bringing forward the issues

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

**362** front-line workers attended a community organizing workshop

**2,408** Twitter followers

**2,411** subscribers to the WAC Action Alert! e-bulletin

**2,500** Facebook likes

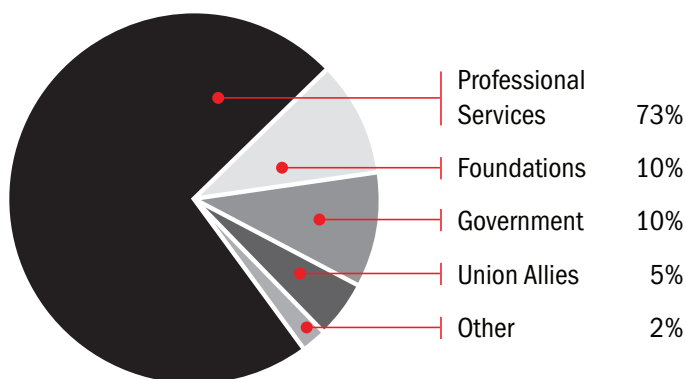
**5,282** allies & community members inspired by a presentation

**16,600** flyers and backgrounders distributed

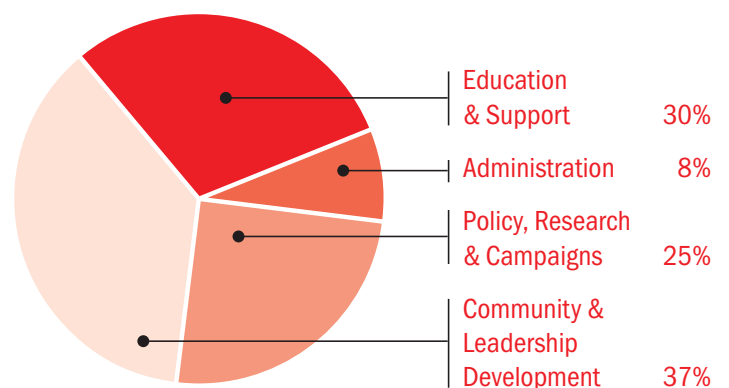
**19,800** visitors to our website

## FINANCE

**INCOME \$695,613**



**EXPENDITURES \$704,877**







March 2016 – WAC members proudly march on International Women's Day in Toronto

### A Big Thank You to our 2015-16 Project Funders

City of Toronto  
The Law Foundation of Ontario  
Unifor Social Justice Fund

### A Special Thanks to:

**Our Members**, who make all our work possible  
**Our allies** - union brothers & sisters, social justice activists, and community partners - for your commitment and spirit to improving the lives of all workers  
**Our legal volunteers** who give their time, energy and support  
**Our Solidarity Program Financial Supporters** (you know who you are!).

### 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

### 2015-16 Board of Directors

**Chair:** Patricia Ramirez  
**Vice-Chair:** Karuna Narain  
**Secretary:** Laurie Fisher  
**Treasurer:** Yonas Asfaw  
**Members:** Daisy Gusnisari, Nandal Budhu, Tim Vining

### Staff

**Coordinators:** Brenda Campbell, Deena Ladd, Karen Dick  
**Administrator:** Débora Demestre  
**Program Support:** Tajnin Mitu  
**Organizers:** Adriana Paz Ramirez, Beixi Liu, Karen Cocq, Martha Burbano, Nil Sendil, Pam Frache, Shaila Kibria-Carter, Tharmilan Nadarajah

### WAC Senior Leader Interns

#### 2015

Amelia White  
Gary Thompson  
Helena Rubiano de Ruiz  
Lorraine Ferns  
Weiguang Wu

#### 2016

David Harris  
Julie Wang  
Linda Bernard  
Shawna Dixon  
Yahui Wang

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