

# TIME TO CELEBRATE!



December 2, 2017: WAC members and allies celebrate the passing of the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act (Bill 148)*



**WORKERS' ACTION CENTRE**

**Annual Report**

**April 2017 - March 2018**

# FEET ON THE GROUND

## Training Grassroots Community Organizers



Taking the message to our MPPs

WAC, in partnership with the Ontario Employment Education & Research Centre, facilitated the second Feet on the Ground (FOG) 10-month community organizer training program. As with FOG 2016, the 28 participants were a diverse group, representing 9 Ontario cities, 6 Toronto neighborhoods, 9 workplace sectors, and 8 language communities. Ten of the participants were graduates of FOG 2016, and thus had the opportunity to deepen their organizing skills, as well as support the new members of the cohort.

Supported by in-class training and staff mentoring, participants organized events, educational and meetings with members of their local community. Participants raised awareness about the issues facing workers in precarious employment, and of the importance of *The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act (Bill 148)* proposed by the provincial government, which would make long needed improvements to labour legislation in Ontario.

### 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.

Some of their significant achievements were:

- Extensive outreach to faith communities in the GTA that generated significant support for Bill 148 from religious and community leaders
- Written submissions and deputations as part of the public hearings on Bill 148 through the summer of 2017.
- Organized over 170 outreach events distributing over 15,000 backgrounders and information pieces on decent work.
- Established and consolidated local bases of workers mobilizing for decent work: particularly in Regent Park, Brampton, Rexdale, Scarborough, and Ottawa.
- Coordinated a week of visits to more than 25 MPPs during Constituency Week in October 2017

We are proud to report that several of the FOG participants are continuing with WAC in 2018 as intern organizers and community leaders.

# WAC Members Organize to Win!

## Members in Action

**11** public presentations on decent work

**16** meetings with MPPs and government officials

**24** organizing meetings and member events

**35** media moments by members – reaching English, Spanish, Tamil and Punjabi communities

**48** community outreach opportunities

**19,100+** handouts distributed on issues of precarious work

WAC members - who themselves have experienced the hardships created by low wages, weak labour legislation and precarious work – worked tirelessly to fight for improved labour rights. Through neighbourhood outreach, ethnic media and meetings with government officials, our members raised awareness of the struggle that many workers face and the need for change. Their hard work, and that of our allies, was rewarded with the passing of *Bill 148: The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act* in November 2017.

Our monthly organizing meetings, trainings, mentoring and internship programs provide a range of opportunities for growth and learning – developing the capacity of our members as community leaders, educators and organizers. Representing the diversity of the GTA - ethnic, language, faith, low income, newcomer – our members play a major role in supporting workers' rights and advocating for their communities.

## Policy, Research & Capacity Building

In partnership with our ally Parkdale Community Legal Services, WAC continues to make major contributions to consultations and reviews of labour legislation to advocate for improvements to wages and working conditions for Ontario workers. Visit our website for details and to download our reports.

WAC plays a significant role as a resource to policy researchers on issues of precarious work, discrimination and poverty. In addition, WAC supported a number of networks and emerging organizations in developing their strategic direction and community organizing through providing feedback, participating in consultations or attending strategy meetings.

**Download policy papers from**  
**[www.WorkersActionCentre.org](http://www.WorkersActionCentre.org)**



Spreading the word

---

# FIGHT FOR \$15 & FAIRNESS: A Provincial Movement for Decent Work

The Fight for \$15 & Fairness campaign brings together the voices of unions, community organizations, faith leaders, healthcare professionals, students and local activists from over 45 cities across Ontario - all dedicated to improving wages and working conditions for Ontario workers. WAC plays a central role in coordinating communications, creating a social media presence, and developing resources on behalf of the campaign. The combined voices of the campaign had a significant impact on the successful passing of *Bill 148: The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act* on November 27, 2017, which resulted in historic legislative improvements and protections for workers in Ontario.

## STRATEGIC MOMENTS IN 2017/18

### Faith Leaders Speak Out in Support of Decent Work – May 2017

On May 30, religious leaders from multiple faith communities hosted a press conference presenting a statement signed by close to 200 faith leaders calling on the government to adopt the demands of the \$15 & Fairness campaign.

### Advocating for Decent Work at the Bill 148 Public Hearings – July 2017

Campaign supporters mobilized to depute in support of Bill 148 and other amendments needed to strengthen the legislation at the public hearings which took place in 10 cities around the province.





### **Student Assembly – September 2017**

Over 150 student leaders, staff and faculty from across the province met in Toronto for a 2-day training and strategy session aimed at winning \$15 & Fairness on their local campuses and in their communities.

### **Days of Action to “Fix the Bill” – October 2017**

During constituency week, supporters in Brampton, Hamilton, Kingston, London, Ottawa and Toronto organized 10 actions to advocate for stronger protections in Bill 148.

### **Taking on the corporate backlash to Bill 148 – January/February 2018**

Several large corporations have been working to undermine the gains workers have won. Some Tim Horton’s franchises have cut benefits, hours and paid breaks or took away tips and meal allowances. The campaign organized a media campaign and public demonstrations (52 across the province) to expose this mean-spirited corporate behaviour of a major Canadian company.

### **Provincial Strategy Meeting – March 2018**

Over 230 union, community, and grassroots activists gathered in Toronto in March 2018 to discuss issues affecting workers in low income and precarious work and to coordinate organizing strategies for change.

### **IN SOLIDARITY**

We would like to thank all of our union sisters and brothers for their generous financial support of the Fight for \$15 & Fairness campaign.

### **Special thanks to:**

Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario

Canadian Labour Congress

CUPE Local 79

CUPE Local 3902

Elementary Teachers of Ontario

IBEW Local 353

OPSEU

Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation

USW Revolving Fund

# The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act Passed on November 27, 2017!

Finally, after two years of consultations and reviews, we have won major improvements to our outdated labour laws, which will have a significant impact on the lives of millions of Ontario workers in low wage and precarious work. Some of the major wins...



Outreach in Toronto's Chinatown

## As of January 1, 2018

- An increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour (from \$11.60!) - \$13.15 for students under 18 years; \$12.20 for liquor servers
- 10 days of job-protected emergency leave, first 2 of which are paid
- 3 weeks paid vacation after five years with the same employer
- Temporary help agencies will have to give workers one week's written notice or pay in lieu of notice if a longer term assignment ends early
- Forming a union will be easier for homecare workers, building service workers, and temp agency workers. An employer must recognize a union if the majority of employees signs union cards. (A subsequent vote no longer has to take place.)
- Misclassification of employees as "independent contractors" is against the law. Employers will be responsible for proving that an individual is not an employee
- Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, employers can no longer require that workers wear footwear with an elevated heel, except in cases when such footwear ensures workers' safety.

## As of April 1, 2018

- Equal pay for equal work for casual, part-time, contract, and temporary workers doing work similar to full-time workers
- Equal pay for equal work for temp agency workers doing work similar to permanent employees

## As of January 1, 2019

- An increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour - \$14.10 for students under 18 years; \$13.05 for liquor servers
- Fairer scheduling
  - Workers will have the job protected right to refuse shifts if the employer gives less than 4 days (96 hours) notice
  - Workers will have the job protected right to ask for a schedule or location change after working at a company for 3 months
  - 3 hours of pay for shift cancellation with less than 2 days (48 hours) notice
  - 3 hours of pay for on-call workers who are not called in or work less than 3 hours

**Congratulations to all our members, union allies, and community activists who organized to make these changes possible.**

# Protecting Workers' Rights

**24**

Community agencies hosted a WAC employment standards workshop for their community members

**70**

Workshops on employment rights at locations across the GTA

**171**

Frontline staff of community agencies received training on workplace rights

**732**

Workers attended a "Know Your Rights" workshop

**842**

Workers supported through our Workers' Rights Information Phonenumber

**5,370**

Booklets & factsheets distributed on workers' rights

# Organizing for Fair Employment

**25+**

Community organizations, unions and coalitions as networking partners

**34**

Meetings with MPP's & government representatives

**75**

Community events, rallies & neighbourhood outreach opportunities

**89**

Members, workers and union allies took advantage of a WAC organizer training opportunity

**152**

Media moments - reaching English, Spanish, Tamil, Mandarin and Punjabi communities

**13,900+**

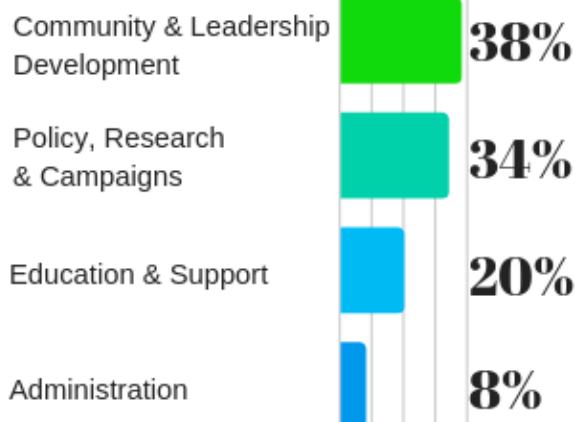
Allies & community members informed on decent work issues

**35,000+**

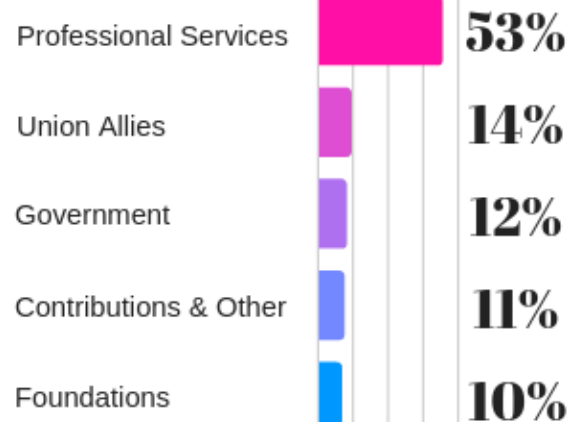
Flyers & backgrounders distributed on decent work

# Financials

## Expenses - \$973,369



## Revenues - \$976,273





## A Big Thank You to our 2017-18 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 and student activists, faith leaders, healthcare providers, 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 Monthly 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*

## 2017-18 Board of Directors

Chair: Patricia Ramirez  
Vice-Chair: Karuna Narain  
Secretary: Sarvananthan Thanaraja  
Treasurer: Justin Kong  
Members: Neville Jacobs, Pinky  
Paglingayen, Yvette LeClair

## Staff

Coordinators: Brenda Campbell,  
Deena Ladd

Administrator: Deborah Williams

Organizers: Adriana Paz Ramirez,  
Amanda Terfloeth, Beixi Liu, Jessica  
Farias, Karen Cocq, Marcia Gillespie,  
Martha Burbano, Nil Sendil, Pam Frache,  
Shawna Dixon, Tharmilan Nadarajah

## Interns

Erendira Bravo  
Jared Ong  
Laurie Fisher  
Navneet Auja

## Community & Senior Leaders

Ana Escobar  
David Harris  
Debbie Taylor  
Julie Wang  
Linda Bernard  
Nadira Begam  
Rajeane Hoilet  
Winnie Ma  
Yahui Wang

## Student Placements

Chrissy Lynn Trudel  
Jessica Bauer Urdangarin

## WORKERS' ACTION CENTRE

720 Spadina Avenue, Suite 223  
Toronto ON Canada M5S 2T9  
Tel: 416-531-0778  
Toll free: 1-855-531-0778  
Fax: 416-533-0107

✉ [info@workersactioncentre.org](mailto:info@workersactioncentre.org)  
 🐦 @WorkersAC  
 📘 WorkersActionCentre

[www.WorkersActionCentre.org](http://www.WorkersActionCentre.org)

**FIGHT FOR  
\$15 & FAIRNESS**

**Join the movement.**  
Text FIGHT to 647-360-9487

✉ info@15andFairness.org  
 🐦 @FairWagesNow #15andFairness  
 📘 Fightfor15andFairness  
 ☎ 647-360-9487

[www.15andFairness.org](http://www.15andFairness.org)