

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



This year was incredibly difficult for workers, especially those in precarious and low-wage work. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep systemic racial and gender inequities, and put a spotlight on low wages and poor working conditions particularly in those sectors deemed essential. Fulfilling our mandate of providing public education and awareness on workplace legislation, and supporting workers who have experienced violations of their rights has never been more important.

We remained committed to partnering with organizations with a proven record of developing and

delivering accessible public education, as well as a commitment to the development of peer networks and community leaders. This is because we believe – and know from experience – that the most effective public education and support happens at the community level.

This year, we supported our partners to pivot in response to the pandemic – from providing immediate relief and support to workers, to moving services and education online, to engaging on the policy front. It was all critical.



Workers' Action Centre

PROTECTING WORKERS' RIGHTS

- Over 1,200 workers supported through the Workers' Rights Information Phonenumber and expanded hotline hours to respond to increased demand.
- Hosted over 100 multilingual workshops on workers' rights. Topics included basic employment standard protections, how to access income supports, job-protected leave provisions, right to refuse unsafe work, strategies for staying safe at work, and workers' entitlements when they are laid off or had hours cut.
- Updated, developed, and distributed workers' rights fact sheets and materials in English, Chinese, Spanish, Tamil and Bengali, including developing materials on new and changing income supports through the pandemic.
- In response to the challenges and financial hardship workers were facing, set up a robust system for delivering emergency supports.

RAISING AWARENESS

- Reached over 12,200 workers through workshops or presentations.
- Earned over 200 media hits in English, Mandarin, Punjabi, Somali and Tamil on topics ranging from the need for adequate income supports to paid sick days to essential protections for essential workers.

- Leveraged expanding communications infrastructure and new digital tools to reach a growing audience of tens of thousands of decent work supporters.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP AND BUILDING CAPACITY

- Facilitated regular community organizing meetings for WAC members to strengthen peer support and provide a forum for discussion and learning.
- Supported workers to bring their issues and concerns to the attention of elected representatives, including over 10 meetings with Members of Provincial Parliament or government representatives.
- Supported community leaders in the Somali, Tamil, and Punjabi communities working in Peel, Etobicoke and Scarborough, as well as Senior Leaders working with Spanish and Mandarin speaking members across the GTA.
- Supported a provincial network of decent work supporters, including engaging over 1200 attendees at in-person and online meetings.

PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

- Worked to ensure that workers' perspectives influenced research projects on workers' rights issues.



Caregivers Action Centre

- Responded to calls to the dedicated hotline for migrant care workers. This included sharing information about employment and immigration rights, offering advice and problem-solving, making referrals, and providing support.
- Hundreds of new care worker contacts were made, as the pandemic resulted in an increase in care workers reaching out for support, on social media, through the hotline, and through existing members.
- Hosted three legal clinics and five workshops with over 500 combined attendees to provide information and peer support for care workers regarding the most urgent issues they were facing.
- Produced 16 Know Your Rights shareables on basic employment and immigration rights for social media that reached thousands of care workers across the GTA and across Canada.
- Posted 17 blog posts and sent over 50 emails to keep care workers up to date on important policy and program changes, on supports available for those impacted by COVID-19, and on on-going campaign efforts.
- Supported care workers to take leadership, including building their capacity to undertake outreach to their peers to share employment and immigration rights information.
- In partnership with care worker groups across the country, released a report entitled "Behind Closed Doors: Exposing Migrant Care Worker Exploitation During COVID-19" documenting the experiences of care workers during the pandemic.
- Supported care workers to speak out in the media about the issues they are facing and make their voices heard.
- Supported care workers to bring their issues and concerns to the attention of elected representatives, including through submission of letters and policy recommendations to key decision makers.



Migrant Workers Alliance for Change

- Responded to calls from migrant workers on three dedicated hotlines – two for farmworkers (English and Spanish) and one for migrant student workers (many of whom work in low-wage jobs in warehouses, cleaning, security, retail, trucking, delivery, and other sectors). This included sharing information about employment and immigration rights, offering advice and problem-solving, making referrals, and providing support.
- Thousands of new migrant worker contacts were made, as the pandemic resulted in an increase in workers reaching out for support, on social media, through the hotline, and through existing members.
- Released a report, “Unheeded Warnings: COVID-19 & Migrant Workers in Canada,” that provided a snapshot of the abuses faced by migrant farmworkers, including stolen wages during quarantine, being forced to work while awaiting COVID-19 test results, racist threats, decrepit housing and inhumane treatment.
- Hosted workshops and meetings for migrant student workers and farmworkers to share information on employment and immigration rights, COVID support, peer support for the most urgent issues they were facing, and share updates on campaigns.
- Earned media coverage of issues migrant workers were facing during the pandemic and supported migrant workers to speak out in the media. Earned over two hundred media hits.
- In response to the pandemic, provided emergency support including food and supplies and access to essential health care. Supported workers in crises on farms facing COVID-19 outbreaks and tragic worker deaths, including Gabriel Flores who was fired for speaking out after testing positive for COVID-19 and took his employer Scotlynn Farms to the labour board and won \$24,000.
- Supported migrant workers to bring their issues and concerns to the attention of elected representatives through petitions, letters, and policy submissions. Achieved significant gains, including pressing the federal government to improve border rules, standards for worker housing, and quarantine guidelines for agricultural workers, as well as make post graduate work permits (PGWPs) renewable for one time avoiding deportation for over 52,000 migrant student workers.
- Convened a coalition of migrant worker groups from across the province and played a leadership role in convening a national network to share information and resources, and coordinate effective response to support migrant workers across the country throughout the pandemic.
- Worked with over 500 organizational partners and allies across Canada to advance migrant worker rights and build support for immigration status for all.



Decent Work and Health Network

- Advanced a health worker perspective to make connections between precarious work and inequitable health outcomes, including the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on racialized, low-wage, migrant, and women workers.
- Released an open letter signed by hundreds of health providers calling for paid sick days and an end to sick notes, and launched a petition for paid sick days with thousands of signatories.
- Released a report, “Before it’s too late: Closing the Paid Sick Days Gap during COVID-19 and Beyond” drawing on best practices globally, the latest public health and medical evidence, interviews with workers impacted by lack of access to paid sick days, and a survey of health providers.
- Hosted press conferences to advance decent work issues at key moments throughout the pandemic, and earned over 65 media hits in print, radio and TV outlets.
- Grew list of contactable supporters six-fold, and more than doubled reach on social media.
- Worked with over 35 organizational partners across the health and labour sectors to advance decent work issues, including the urgent need for paid sick days.

The OEERC would like to thank our Funders in 2020:

- The Atkinson Charitable Foundation
- The George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation
- The Law Foundation of Ontario
- The Maytree Foundation
- The McConnell Foundation

We would also like to thank funders who provided special funding to support our COVID-19 response:

- Community Food Centres Canada
- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
- Canadian Red Cross Society
- Toronto Foundation
- The United Way Greater Toronto

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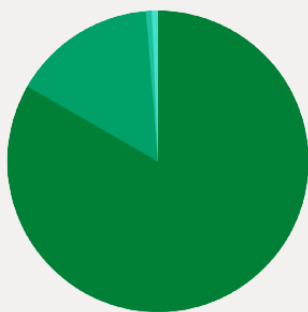
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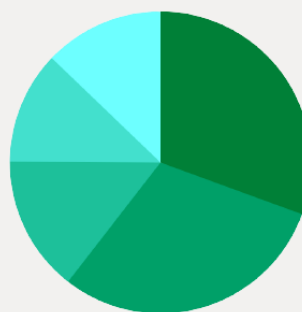
Thanks to all of our community allies who made our 8th annual Workers' Bowl fundraising event such an incredible success! And a special thanks to our private donors for their extraordinary personal commitment to furthering workers' rights awareness and support.

FINANCIALS



Revenues \$1,758,587

Foundations	83%
Donations	15%
Earned	1%
Misc.	1%



Expenses \$1,628,138

Education & Support	30%
Community & Leader Development	30%
Policy & Advocacy	15%
Administration	12%
Pandemic Support	13%



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