



# Protecting Workers' Rights

## 2022 Annual Report

## Year in Review

COVID continued to create hardship for frontline workers in 2022. Making matters worse, record inflation intensified the affordability crisis as workers increasingly struggled to pay for food, rent, and bills. **In this challenging context, OEERC continued to provide critical support to grassroots decent work groups.**

For many of our partners it was another year of growth—**more workers reaching out for support, more members and supporters, and more staff.** To meet these growing needs, online and in-person workshops were launched to bring workers together to discuss key priorities for their communities, to participate in skills-building sessions, and to strategize about new possibilities for their community outreach efforts.

**Our work has always been grounded in the belief that the people most affected by an issue must be part of its solutions.** In 2022, we were proud to work with our partners to strengthen the capacity of leaders in diverse communities across the province, enabling them to educate workers on their employment rights and raise awareness on the critical issues affecting workers during the pandemic and beyond.



## Partner Achievements

The Workers' Action Centre (WAC) is a worker-based organization, committed to improving the lives and working conditions of people in low-wage and unstable employment. OEERC offers WAC administrative support, financial planning, bookkeeping, program development, fundraising, mentorship and training, collaborative workspace, meeting and event space to power their organizing.



### Meeting Workers' Immediate Needs

- WAC and OEERC collaborated to supply workers in our network with weekly food boxes from FoodShare Toronto. **6,082 food boxes** were distributed to over **350 households**. Recipients were also connected with WAC organizers who provided much needed information, educational opportunities, and referrals for additional resources (such as income security programs or mental health supports).
- For workers in crisis situations, WAC was able to provide financial support through grocery cards and income support. Emergency grocery and income supports of over **\$23,000** were distributed to hundreds of workers.



### Protecting Worker Rights

- WAC grew its extensive resource bank in 2022 by developing **new education materials and information on employment rights**, building collective capacity to reduce barriers that prevent immigrant and refugee workers from accessing employment in various sectors.
- **1,139 workers** were supported through the WAC phone line, while **210,000 copies** of decent work materials were printed for distribution.
- They grew the base of workers through training and capacity building, and used new digital and communications tools to coordinate their contacts and advance decent work.



### Contributing Vital Research and Analysis

- WAC released **two reports** in 2022, *From the Frontlines: An Urgent Agenda for Decent Work* and *Justice for Workers Means Racial Justice*. These reports centred worker perspectives and provided key data on how COVID-19 not only highlighted the longstanding gender, racial, and economic inequalities in our labour market, but also how the pandemic deepened those inequalities.

## Partner Achievements

**Migrant Workers Alliance for Change (MWAC)** is building a member-led organization of migrant farmworkers, care workers, students and more to win worker and immigration justice. OEERC offers MWAC administrative support, organizational development, financial planning, mentorship and and training, collaborative workspace, meeting and event space.



### Providing Case Support to Impacted Sectors

- **Farm workers:** MWAC provided 1-on-1 case support to **540** food and farm workers, organized **16** meetings to discuss issues and make plans for action, and held **6** information sessions on immigration, worker rights, and campaign updates.
- **Fisheries:** In New Brunswick, MWAC supported workers at a fish processing plant to win a contract guaranteeing **30** hours a week regardless of fluctuations in supply. Workers at other plants were inspired, and organized to win similar contracts.
- **Care workers:** In 2022, care workers faced greater hurdles in applying for permanent residency: the Home Child Care Pilot pathway reached its application cap in just 17 days, leaving workers with few options for reuniting with their families. MWAC organizers connected with **800** care workers to support them in understanding pathways and advocating for change.
- **Health Care Workers:** MWAC membership of migrants working in health care—primarily undocumented workers and refugee claimants—grew significantly. MWAC connected with **2,000+** health care workers across Canada, and held **17** organizing meetings to determine priorities and organize actions.



### Regularization for All

- A significant victory of migrant worker organizing came when the Federal Government committed to pursuing a regularization program for undocumented people in Canada. In 2022, MWAC, along with Migrant Rights Network members across the country, united thousands of people in actions in dozens of cities and took **150 workers** to Ottawa to meet with elected leaders to discuss issues facing undocumented migrants.



### Organizing Migrant Student Workers

- Another important victory came for migrant student workers with the post-graduation work permit renewal program. As many workers were excluded, MWAC supported migrant student worker leaders as they organized to raise awareness of their plight. Migrant students gathered thousands of signatures, conducted community outreach on the issues, and spoke on the national news. Now, over **50,000 current and former international students have a second chance for permanent residency.**

## Partner Achievements

The **Decent Work and Health Network** (DWHN) is a group of health workers and trainees advocating for better health by addressing working and employment conditions in Ontario. OEERC offers DWHN administrative support, organizational development, financial planning, bookkeeping, fundraising, program development, mentorship, training, staff supervision, work planning support, collaborative workspace, and meeting and event space.



### Making the Case for Paid Sick Days

- In summer 2022, DWHN published *Prescription for a Healthy Recovery: Decent Work for All*, a timely report that **highlighted how precarious working conditions drove the spread of the pandemic** and showed the latest health evidence for decent work—including paid sick days.
- DWHN collaborated with hundreds of educators and health workers to centre workplace protections and paid sick days as central to a safe return to school in September.



### Growing the Network

- DWHN **grew the number of a range of health workers in active participation within the network** throughout 2022. They also mentored and supported a public health nurse and a speech-language pathologist to participate in the *Feet on the Ground Leadership Training* program. Both workers are racialized women who have been able to connect with and support community-led worker engagement in Scarborough where they work and/or live.
- DWHN **collaborated with more allied health groups** to make the connections between decent work and physical and mental wellbeing. This expanded their network to include more community mental health workers, physiotherapists, rehab workers, and nursing students who have direct engagement with patients with lived experience of precarious work.

# Funders

## Thank you to our funders in 2022

- Atkinson Charitable Foundation
- George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation
- Maytree Foundation
- Public Health Agency of Canada's Intersectoral Action Fund
- Trottier Family Foundation
- United Way Greater Toronto
- WES Mariam Assefa Fund

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

- Community Food Centres Canada
- ECHO Foundation

Thanks to all of our community allies who made our 10th 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.

# Board of Directors

### Chair

Sheila Wilmot

### Vice-Chair

Stacey Papernick

### Secretary/Treasurer

Anjula Gogia

### Members at Large

Tania Das Gupta

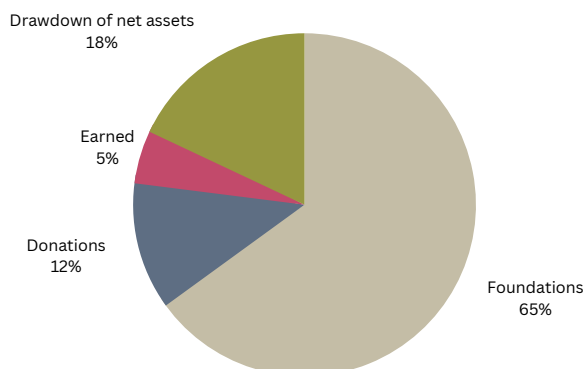
Lynn Spink



# Financials

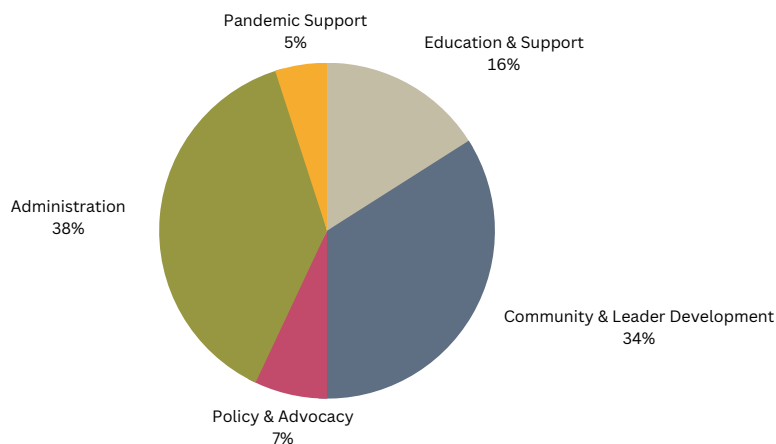
## Revenue

1,944,916.00



## Expenses

1,944,916.00



720 Spadina Avenue, Suite 223  
Toronto, ON M5S 2T9

416-531-1226 | www.oeerc.org

Charitable Registration #85447 5365 RR0001