



ACORN Canada

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ACORN Canada 2010

Uniting Communities for Justice

Year End Report





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In 2010 ACORN Canada engaged 560 new full members and 4709 members in total. To date we have 35,000 members across the country. These are people committed to creating positive social, economic and ecological justice in their community. Across the country we held 206 events turning out 1501 people. That's 4 events every week, where we focused on building community leaders and strengthening community capacity to lobby for change in many different areas.

Campaign Highlights

Affordable Housing

The March 20th Housing Forum in Toronto involved both municipal and provincial politicians and attracted 100 participants; it produced two recommendations: for the provincial government to amend sections of the Residential Tenancy Act to include stronger enforcement on landlords, amendments to the Planning Act to allow for mandatory inclusionary zoning; and for municipal improvements to the MRAB-AEP program.

On May 6th, members from Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton joined in Toronto for a provincial lobby day at Queen's Park asking the province to keep special diet, support inclusionary zoning, landlord licensing, more affordable housing, and increase social assistance rates by 50%.

BC ACORN held a successful action on July 8th as a part of ACORN Canada's National Day of Action in support of Bill C-304 (National Housing Strategy). 40 members and allies picketed outside of - and shortly were in occupation of - North Surrey MP Dona Cadman's constituency office.

21 Ottawa ACORN members from Britannia held a press event at MP John Baird's office in support of Bill C-304 for a National Housing Strategy, receiving city wide press coverage.

On August 12th, Toronto ACORN members held a large Tenants Vote assembly in St. Jamestown, to bring housing concerns (including changes to the MRAB) to the attention of the Toronto mayoral candidates. There were 80 participants as well as several Mayoral and Council candidates.

On September 10th ACORN in New Westminster (BC) held an action to stop the 'reno-viction' of some ACORN members. The main demands were calling on the Provincial Government to change the Residential Tenancy Act to prevent landlords from doing this form of eviction and demanding the primary target stop all evictions.

Marching from Parliament to City Hall, Ottawa ACORN members joined several allies in the National Day of Action for Bill C-304 for a National Housing Strategy on October 20th. They received excellent media coverage and build strong partnerships with other national organizations.



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Guildford ACORN Tenants Association held a rally on Nov 30th outside of Wall Financial Corporations Maple Place Apartments where many ACORN members live. The rally was demanding repairs be made inside of units and in common areas of the complex as well as an immediate stop to all harassment by management.

Living Wage

Throughout the start of 2010 BC ACORN focused on spearheading, planning, and co-sponsoring New Westminster's Living Wage Forum. Over 80 people came out to hear speakers from ACORN Canada, Councillor Jamie McEvoy, the CCPA, and Living Wage for Families.

In January, Ottawa ACORN members and other community allies held delegations at the city's Community and Protective Services committee which passed a vote to send our living wage campaign as part of the city's proposed Poverty Reduction Strategy to council in February. Over 30 members attended.

On June 28th ACORN Canada and Vancity held the Each One Teach One Financial Literacy course, at the Whalley Public Library (BC). This was a major engagement cornerstone, along with the Living Wage Campaign, of ACORN's Free Income Tax Site.

In September, Ottawa ACORN members held a Living Wage Forum at City Hall, with over 100 people in attendance.

Mechanicsville members and members from across Ottawa hosted a press event at Cycle Logik in December, asking business owners to sign onto the living wage campaign. Owner Ian Fraser signed onto the campaign and encouraged other business owners, regardless of how big or small, to support the campaign and hang our sign that says "I Pay a Living Wage".

Community Safety and Improvement

In June, over 60 members rallied at City Hall in Ottawa to present the Ottawa ACORN Municipal Platform in an effort to kick off our "get out the vote" campaign, encouraging voter turnout in low income communities.

In June, Ottawa ACORN won a tenant hotline for the community to escalate calls to by-law infringements in the area, ensuring faster and quicker enforcement from the city. Our members received national press coverage on the victory.



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Victories

ACORN Canada Free Income Tax Sites

The FITS Project is not simply a tax preparation program, but a strategy to create a storefront and a community presence for ACORN's economic justice efforts. We prepare taxes for low and moderate income families and linking them with unrealized benefits and underutilized services such as the GST credit, CCTB, the Canadian Employment Credit, and financial literacy classes.

The cornerstone of this work is our targeted outreach campaign. ACORN outreach staff and trained community leaders go door-to-door talking with families and asking a series of questions to determine whether families filed taxes, meet the criteria for other benefits eligibility, and/or used a commercial tax preparation service or a rapid refund loan, and at what cost.

This year ACORN did over 2000 tax returns for low income families.

Disability Rights Group

The DRG is a member-driven initiative, founded by BC ACORN on February 18th. This year they have gained headway on the Community Volunteer Supplement campaign, which won the support of the provincial NDP.

National Housing Strategy

On October 20th, ACORN members across Canada took part in a National Day of Action on Bill C-304 for a National Housing Strategy. Members held marches and rallies, and built coalitions with other organizations across the country.

Improving MRAB-AEP

This year Toronto ACORN members took on the Multi-Residential Apartment Building and Audit Enforcement Program, and won a number of victories, including \$100 million worth of improvements to Toronto's low-income rental housing stock, and restructuring the program to prioritize building inspections in high priority areas.

Living Wage

On April 26th, thanks in part to the hard work and lobbying efforts of ACORN members, New Westminster Council voted unanimously to pass Canada's First Living Wage Policy.