In 2019, ACORN Canada engaged 605 new full members, and 12,000 new members in total. ACORN Canada now comprises 140,000+ members across Canada, in 20+ neighbourhood chapters in New Westminster, Burnaby, Surrey, Coquitlam, Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Brampton, Mississauga, Gatineau, Montreal, Halifax and Dartmouth.

Nationally, we held 419 events, turning out 5,451 people – an average of over eight events every week – including leadership workshops, chapter meetings, public forums and actions. 2019 was a year of change and growth for ACORN Canada. Our Toronto and National offices moved together to a bigger space in East York, as we continue to grow and accommodate a robust field organizer training centre. New field organizers hit the doors in Metro Vancouver and Montreal, building our membership in those areas – including the launch of a new tenants’ union in the Lasalle neighbourhood of Montreal. And our Hamilton office continues to grow, now boasting three chapters; this year Hamilton ACORN proudly hosted our fifth National Convention in June.

Plans continue for expansion of field staff in areas where we have built a small but mighty membership base, including Peel Region and Halifax. ACORN members closed out the decade stronger than ever, continuing to embody true community organizing with grassroots campaigns such as Healthy Homes and Landlord Licensing, Fair Fees, Disability Rights and many other local, regional, and national issues.
ACORN Canada is an independent national organization of low- and moderate-income families. We believe that social and economic justice can best be achieved with a national active membership who are invested in their organization and focused on building power for change! We are a tenant UNION and a Community UNION using our collective power to win results.
CAMPAIGNS
2019 was a BIG year for ACORN organizing around housing issues – including tenant rights, inclusionary zoning, ending demovictions, resisting renovictions, and landlord licensing.

In Ottawa, we partnered with ally organizations to run a campaign on affordable housing near rapid transit and succeeded in winning a huge victory: $15 million in the 2019 budget! Highlights included a 200 person rally at Ottawa City Hall, spearheaded by ACORN.

Hamilton ACORN members also fought to RESIST RENOVICTIONS throughout the year, including holding monthly “resist renoviction” workshops. In 2019, new ACORN members from across the city were reporting that their landlord was harassing them to accept money to move out or being given eviction forms. In meetings with Councillors, members shared municipal demands to protect Hamilton’s affordable housing stock from predatory displacement practices. In June, our demand around ensuring no city grants lead to tenant displacement passed with unanimous support at City Hall. Hamilton ACORN has built a robust campaign around introducing a RentSafe-type program; the motion for by-law review will go to the Planning Committee in early 2020.
New Westminster ACORN members also faced renoviction battles, leading to working with City Council to pass a series of policies and laws that prevent landlords from displacing tenants through renovictions. The policies include a Landlord Licensing regime and a tenant relocation policy that all but bans the practice of renovictions.

In Burnaby, BC ACORN members achieved a major victory with the Tenant Assistance Policy - the best municipal tenant protections in Canada. The juxtaposition of the demoviction crisis in Metrotown as we entered 2018 compared to where we are at the end of 2019, is a startling success.

BC ACORN members across the lower mainland also launched a campaign for Vacancy Rent Control, which is seen as a key solution to the rising rents and mass evictions that are taking place.

Ottawa ACORN members also fought hard for a RentSafe program, and while city council was dissuaded by the Mayor from implementing it, we did win a pest control by-law; promised exploration of creating a searchable online database of property standards violations; two additional by-law officers for targeted proactive enforcement; and a rental management by-law.
In Toronto this year the focus was on Healthy Homes in many different local campaigns. In Weston and Etobicoke, tenants came together to speak out against pest infestations and maintenance delays; across the city, the demand was to make improvements to RentSafe and crack down on slumlords. Toronto ACORN also worked in solidarity with tenants displaced by fire, in 235 Gosford and 650 Parliament, to demand stable housing during repairs/cleanup, and clear communication from property managers and the city.

In Mississauga, with the help of council allies we were able to support the passage of a pilot registration program for landlords, based on RentSafe TO. City staff will be reporting back on the project, and what a citywide program would look like, in May 2020.
ACORN members continue to push for regulations around predatory lenders, including payday and installment lenders.

In Ottawa, City Council unanimously passed new regulations to restrict the number of payday lenders in Ottawa. The new rules include minimum distance between lenders and from schools and gambling institutions; mandatory licensing; and removal of zoning permissions to limit the land they can develop on. Over time, this will cap the number of payday lenders to fewer than one per ward! The campaign included a memorable action – a city-wide tour of predatory lenders, making stops in Vanier, Centretown and South Ottawa.

In BC, the NDP government announced plans to license instalment lenders, which enables capping and lowering interest rates in the province. This will be the first of its kind in Canada, and ACORN is a key stakeholder in the development of this law.

Another victory, in Toronto – ACORN members won a cap on licenses for lenders as part of our municipal Fair Banking campaign. Members held an action in Weston to highlight the issue of the three big banks (TD, BMO, and Scotiabank) moving out of the neighborhood and predatory lenders moving in their place. Ultimately, the campaign led to winning the vote at City Hall, for the license cap and to no longer advertise payday lenders on City property.
Ottawa ACORN members’ work in Herongate fighting for a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) has sparked discussion of CBAs in other parts of Ottawa, and in other ACORN offices as well. Herongate ACORN members fought against displacement and for affordable housing commitments from Timbercreek and the local Councillor. 80 members on their way back from the National Convention in Hamilton made a pitstop at Timbercreek’s HQ in Toronto demanding a meeting on the spot! The fight continues. Hamilton ACORN is also working on CBAs, as part of a coalition of unions of community organizations called Hamilton Community Benefits Network. The network is focused on pushing for a CBA with Metrolinx and the city for the Light Rail Transit project planned for downtown Hamilton.
ACORN members in Ontario faced many challenges this year, thanks to Doug Ford's provincial government. Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, and Peel offices held monthly actions with allies under the banner of #FordFightBack – a multi-issue campaign including social assistance, saving Legal Aid, affordable housing, among others. Highlights include Hamilton ACORN members crashing the funding announcement of local MPP Donna Skelly and Minister of Housing Steve Clark, changing the headlines of all the local press coverage and securing a meeting with MPP Skelly; and in Ottawa, an ODSP On Life Support #FordFightBack Action, attended by 50 people outside the ODSP office.
ACORN Canada held its fifth National Convention in June 2019, at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

It was an extremely productive and exciting weekend, with roughly 270 members present from all across Canada. This convention, ACORN Canada sent a strong message to the City of Hamilton that tenants are sick of talk from politicians. Instead, we want real action to protect tenants' rights, and for banks to stop issuing displacement loans to big developers. This year, ACORN Canada hosted many unique workshops such as Ford Fight Back, Disability Justice, along with Healthy Homes and Tenant Organizing. Other highlights included a powerful member speakout; exciting speeches from labour and political leaders; and the member favourite: door-knocking in the neighbourhoods! Of course the convention culminated in a huge action, shutting down Hamilton’s downtown with red ACORN shirts. First members marched on Malluem’s Head Office to present them the “Displacer of the Year Award”. Next stop was the RBC, where our members flooded their halls to protest their practice of lending to housing developers who displace tenants. Finally, we took our message to the steps of Hamilton’s City Hall. It was without a doubt our biggest and best convention yet!
ACORN Canada’s Income Tax Sites and Benefits Clinics continue to successfully boost financial literacy in low income communities, drawing thousands of people into ACORN offices in Ontario and British Columbia each year.

In addition to tax preparation, the program connects low and moderate income families year-round with unrealized benefits, including the Ontario Electricity Support Program, and the Canada Learning Bond. In 2019, ACORN offices filed 552 tax returns in our Ottawa site, and 1,427 tax returns in our Metro Vancouver site. Since 2007, our tax sites have filed over 41,000 tax returns across the country, returning over $50 million back into our neighbourhoods!
HIGHLIGHTS & VICTORIES

ACORN CANADA NATIONAL

Our fifth National Convention brought 250+ ACORN members to Hamilton ON for the first time, with our Homes Over Profit action taking the city by storm!

BC ACORN

Tenant Assistance Policy in Burnaby - the best municipal tenant protections in Canada.

PEEL ACORN

RentSafe pilot program (registration of landlords) passed in Mississauga.
TORONTO ACORN

Won a cap on licenses for payday lenders as part of our Municipal Fair Banking Campaign.

OTTAWA ACORN

Won a huge victory: $15 million in the 2019 budget for housing! Trivial Beersuit fundraiser turned out 200 allies and raised $22,700!

MONTREAL ACORN

Montreal LaSalle Tenant Union Launch: ACORN members formed a tenant union in November 2019.

HAMILTON ACORN

In June, our demand around ensuring no city grants lead to tenant displacement passed with unanimous support at City Hall.
AS WE SAY GOODBYE TO 2019, WE LEAVE YOU WITH A FEW GLIMPSES OF OUR NATIONAL CONVENTION