

ACORN CANADA

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



**NO EVICTIONS/ RESIST
RENOVICTIONS
AFFORDABLE
HOUSING/HEALTHY HOMES
INTERNET FOR ALL
STOP PREDATORY LENDING
DISABILITY RIGHTS
MODERNIZE EI**

HIGHLIGHTS:

- More than 140,000 members nationally
- 800 events in 2020
- 8700 people turned out to events in 2020 - double from 2019!
- 263 Press Hits
- New ACORN chapters in Alberta, New Brunswick, London (Ontario)

ACORN Canada is an independent national organization of low-and-moderate income people with 140,000+ members in 20+ neighbourhood chapters across 9 cities. We are a multi-issue, membership-based community union of low-and-moderate income people. We believe that social and economic justice can best be achieved by building community power for change.



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

This year the pandemic impacted us in many ways. What this meant for ACORN was an overwhelming support for as well as active engagement by communities to fight for changes we have always needed to see - internet for all, end to 2 tier banking, affordable and healthy homes, no evictions, no renoventions and much more!

We did tons of zoom zaps, phone calls, socially distanced actions, flyering, petitioning, meetings with policy makers - everything we could to take direct action on targets and bringing the attention of policy makers on what they need to do so that all low-and-moderate income people are able to live a life with dignity.

As we worked together tirelessly from coast to coast, we won some of the strongest tenant protections from Nova Scotia to BC, strong bylaws for healthy homes in Ottawa and Hamilton and the first ever rent grant program in Toronto. We also produced new evidence on how predatory landlords or REITs are eating away our affordable housing stock and the immediate steps that the federal government must take if it's serious to tackle the issue of affordable housing.

As we now enter into the third wave of the pandemic, we know that we need to fight harder, but we also know that it is the power of the people which will turn the tide. The people united will never be defeated!

Marva Burnett



Our Victories Jan 2020 - March 2021

ACORN members won:

- Rent Control in Nova Scotia
- Update to Hamilton's Property Standards Bylaw
- New Pest Control Bylaw in Ottawa
- \$3 million Rent Grant Program in Toronto
- \$300 covid assistance benefit and \$175 permanent increase for people on assistance in BC
- Review of rent licensing by-law in London
- Forced Landlords to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars invested into maintenance repairs across the country
- Stopped evictions across the country!

OUR FIGHT CONTINUES....

A Snapshot of Our National Campaigns and Workshops

Internet for All

Access to the internet was already crucial to full participation in many facets of our lives; since the pandemic started, ACORN's Internet for All campaign has become even more urgent. Thousands of low income people still cannot afford high speed internet at home. In fact, many low income people are paying their internet bill at the expense of other basic necessities like food and rent.

We did several national Zooms Zaps in 2020 with 50 -100 members participating each time.

Our demands:

ACORN Canada is leading the fight for affordable access to high speed internet for all residents of Canada! We are demanding:

- \$50 off current plans for low income people during the pandemic and 6 months after.
- \$10/month product for high speed (50 megabits/second) for all individuals and families who are below the Low Income Measure.
- Plus subsidized computers.

We are also fighting for a National initiative focused on municipal government or community controlled broadband. The city of Toronto has moved forward, other cities are starting to follow, like Ottawa, Hamilton and more.



ACORN leader from Ottawa, Ray Noyes, appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. (This accompanied a formal submission to the committee)



The Federal Affordable Broadband budget money we helped win in 2017 was used to build a database to qualify people who can access a new benefit. In 2018 we, as a leading group, helped win the federal Connecting Families program - \$10/month internet for low income parents. Recent improvements to this benefit in 2020 include TELUS expanding it to people on disability and some seniors. In 2018, we valued this at \$80 million / year.



Ending Predatory Lending

During the pandemic, the banks got \$750 billion in liquidity support from the Federal Government! We ramped up our campaign in 2020/2021 demanding that the Federal Government stops **2 Tier Banking** by releasing a new report that highlights massive growth in installment loans. The report was released virtually and with on the ground actions in Hamilton, Dartmouth, Peel, London, Ottawa, Metro Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto.

Our demands:

ACORN members Demand an amendment of the Criminal Code to lower the maximum interest rate from 60% to 30%. ACORN also strongly supports other alternatives to predatory lenders from the Banks, postal banking and credit union credit products geared toward low and moderate income families.



ACORN leader from Toronto, Donna Borden, spoke to CBC The National about ACORN's campaign.

The NDP introduced a Bill to end predatory lending. We got wide media coverage including CBC National talking to our national leaders two times.

We also moved forward in winning stronger protections in two provinces - Ontario and BC. After winning a lowered rate of payday lending interest to \$15 on \$100 for payday loans (still 400% APR), the industry started to more rapidly shift to installment loans. After years of pressure from ACORN members, the province of Ontario recently launched a consultation on bringing stronger regulations on installment lenders. BC introduced enabling regulations saying that the province can lower the interest rate, although they have not done this yet.



Affordable & Liveable Housing

COVID reinforced the need for stronger protections for people, especially tenants.

We conducted a "State of the Renters Survey" which showed that while 70% of people were financially impacted by COVID-19, 42% still did not qualify for EI or the CERB. Worse still, almost 15% of people were facing a threat of eviction due to non-payment of rent. We are fighting at the local, provincial and federal levels for governments to provide urgent assistance to help tenants stay in their homes and prevent rent debt.

We started with our campaign for rent relief since the start of the pandemic to get 6% of tenants nationally out of Rent Debt. The feds came out with a rent subsidy program for businesses ignoring residential tenants?

ACORN members also released the "Rein in the REITs" Report with a national day of action. This launched our REIT Tenant Union. Our study showed that we lost 1.2 billion dollars in the last 10 years by giving tax subsidies to Real Estate Investment trusts or REITs who are Canada's big corporate landlords.

Our demands:

- Feds need to stop predatory landlords, not subsidize them by re-evaluating the tax loophole and make the tax rate for REITs based on how much affordable housing they are providing / or destroying.
- Also ACORN members are calling for a National Acquisition Strategy to help support cities and non-profits buy new apartments before the large REITs do so when rental apartments are for sale.
- When building or financing or subsidizing "affordable" housing, ACORN members want to ensure that it targets the people at the bottom 1/5th of the income ladder in Canada.



ACORN Actions - Provincial

Ontario

Ontario ACORN members started the year with a province-wide rally demanding FULL rent control in Toronto. More than 200 members gathered and marched to the Queen's Park, the office of Premier Doug Ford.

As the pandemic unfolded, members from Hamilton, Toronto, Peel, Ottawa, Sudbury and London got together to discuss and promote tenant protection policy recommendations. We have been pushing Doug Ford to:

- Shutdown the Landlord and Tenant Board and ban all evictions during COVID19.
- Bring in a Rent Relief Program
- Expand the Rent Freeze to include Above the Guideline Rent Increases or AGIs

ACORN members organized #NoCOVIDevictions actions at the Landlord and Tenant Board to prevent evictions during the pandemic, while also holding petitioning and outreach days so that tenants know their rights and get organized to fight back. We occupied the LTB in Ottawa and delivered demand letters across several cities.



#KillBill184 – Over 10 ACORN members spoke at the Hearing on Bill 184 as it fast tracks evictions in many ways. We held several events and Zooms Zaps. We also made a formal submission to the government.

Raise the ODSP and OW Rates, Stop the Clawbacks:

We started an online action to demand that the government raises the ODSP and OW rates and also stops the CERB/CRB clawbacks. We are also asking the government to provide amnesty to people on social assistance who applied got CERB payments but were later found ineligible.



BC

BC ACORN members in won a temporary Rent Relief program for tenants who needed financial assistance.

The most exciting news was the COVID Emergency Benefit which was announced in April 2020, and extended until the end of 2020. It gives \$300 extra to people on disability allowance and welfare to pay for the added costs that the pandemic brings. ACORN members constantly pushed to make this change permanent. The government finally increased the assistance amounts permanently by \$175-a-month but we will not stop till we get livable allowances.

Burnaby ACORN's hard work on the **Stop Demovictions campaign** resulted in Burnaby's **Tenant Assistance Policy**, which is now the best municipal housing policy in Canada. If developers want to demolish our members' homes to make way for development, they must provide tenants with a unit at the same rent in the new building, as well as pay a rental top-up to cover any added rent the tenant will pay during the construction of the new development.



ChronicleHerald

NOVA SCOTIA

A member of the SaltWire Network

COVID-19

Premier 'concerned' as numbers rise

THE CHRONICLE HERALD

As the number of COVID-19 cases in Nova Scotia rises, Premier Stephen McNeil is reminding people to be vigilant about public health protocols.

The Nova Scotia Health Authority reported three new cases of coronavirus in the province Sunday.

The new cases are all in the Central zone and are under investigation, the health au-

thority said in a news release. Four new cases were reported Saturday, also in the Central zone. Two are related to travel outside the Atlantic bubble, and the other two are those contacts of previously reported cases.

The province now has 20 active cases. Public health issued notices on the weekend about at least 11 potential exposures.

In the release, McNeil said

he is "concerned" about the increase in the number of cases and public exposure adviso-

"We cannot become complacent about this virus," the premier said.

"That means we all must continue to follow public health protocols, including social distancing, wearing a

mask, proper hand hygiene and limiting social contacts,"

Dr. Robert Strang, Nova

Scotia's chief medical officer of health, said context trac-

ing and testing are important components of public health during the pandemic.

"As positive cases are investigated, public health may

issue a person-specific notice in community settings, like a restaurant, while infectious or potentially infectious," Strang

said in the release.

CONTINUED ON A5

Chain pickerel found in Cornwallis River

IAN FAIRCLOUGH

THE CHRONICLE HERALD

Ed Coleman and Lacie Galt last week started fishing the Cornwallis River in Kings County more than five decades ago, enjoying the beauty of large brown trout, salmon and other species.

And they both have the same assessment of the appearance in the river of chain pickerel — an invasive, toothy and voracious fish.

"I'm not surprised some fish or about these fish in there," Coleman said.

"There's lots of them, right?" said Galt, in a separate interview.

"I've caught a few," Galt said of the chain pickerel. "I know they're in there... and I've seen a couple dead on the bank."

He said the fish started showing up about four years ago.

The pickerel were first introduced in the southwestern part of the province in the 1940s, but in the past decade or two, people have been increasingly moving them elsewhere in the province.

It's illegal to transport any live fish from one body of water to another in Nova Scotia.

CONTINUED ON A5

HOUSING CRISIS



More than 200 people took part in a demonstration Saturday on the Grand Parade in Halifax in support of rent control. There were also signs and many Nova Scotians are being impacted by the shortage of affordable housing, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. TIM KROCHAK • THE CHRONICLE HERALD

Hundreds rally for rent control

BY STEPHEN ROBERTS

Nova Scotia tenants who feel vulnerable due to the prospect of skyrocketing rent increases found strength in numbers

Saturday at a Rent Control Now rally in front of Halifax City Hall.

Roughly 200 protesters and residents, the group featured the region's low vacancy rate and ever-increasing housing costs gathered in Grand Parade to share their stories and later marched to Premier House to call on the government to reinstate rent control and curb the housing crunch faced by Nova Scotians.

The rally was one of two in the province organized for Saturday by ACORN.

ore, stories of neglect and rent-gouging by landlords, and calls for change from NDP MLA and housing spokesman Lisa Roberts and provincial NDP Leader Gary Boutilier.

"It is the job of government to protect people who are vulnerable," said Roberts, whose party pushed rent control legislation in 2017.

"What Premier Stephen McNeil (Housing Minister) Chuck Porter say the rent control doesn't work, the right question to ask them is, 'For whom does it not work?'"

Roberts and Boutilier cited the effectiveness of rent control in other provinces like British Columbia and Manitoba.

MORE INSIDE

CANADA

Seaport host

Timeline set at 10

A7

WORLD

High prices for oil

Source: Reuters U.S.

A12

OBITUARIES

Local notices

In memoriam

A8

SPORTS

MLB, soccer

Local sports

B1

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia ACORN is more organized than ever. Since the pandemic, ACORN members have been working tirelessly to fight for a freeze on rents and more protections for tenants across Nova Scotia.

NS ACORN, after persistent campaigning and organizing, **won the new Rent Control regulations**. NS ACORN members secured a huge victory when the Province announced a temporary 2% cap on rent increases through February 2022 or the end of the state of emergency, as well as a temporary ban on renovations. However, next steps are to policy recommendations real, rent control and a real eviction ban!

Members also successfully pressured the province into providing hotel rooms for people living in shelters. We've formed an eviction defence team with members and community leaders to support tenants facing eviction, stop in-process evictions, and train tenants on their legal rights - successfully stopping illegal and unfair evictions across the city.

Municipal Updates

Toronto

City broadband infrastructure for affordable internet:

Toronto ACORN members are working to ensure that policy makers and ConnectTO expand the local infrastructure to provide affordable high speed internet to Toronto residents. We are recommending that the program includes affordable rates for low-income residents in Toronto, the city controls the program and leaders are involved in the program design and execution.

Rent Safe report: Toronto ACORN members released a report on the implementation of the RentSafe program which highlights issues in the program as well as recommendations that will make the program work better for tenants - including colour coded signs on the building to expose landlords who are not doing repairs and more.

Ban on evictions in social housing: Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) is one of the largest landlords in North America! ACORN members had several meetings and events around their recommended an eviction ban. At the council meeting in December 2020, ally councillors moved a motion to force TCHC to stop evicting tenants.

Rent grant: Toronto ACORN members won a rent grant by the city of Toronto. Members have been demanding a grant and not a loan from the Toronto Rent Bank as evictions hit an all-time high. The city is implementing this on a pilot basis for one year with an additional funding of \$3 million.



Renoviction in Etobicoke And Demoviction in Scarborough:

ACORN members and Rexdale tenants are facing renoviction. Tenants of 20 townhomes at 2 Torbolton Dr. and 25 Leduc Dr. are fighting company 2 Torbolton Ltd.'s eviction effective March 31 2021 to undertake renovations of their homes. Toronto ACORN is working closely with tenants who have received letters from the owner, but not an official eviction order yet. With support from the FMTA, members won a **\$10,000 Tenant Defense Grant to fight it.**

Scarborough ACORN members are also fighting a demoviction in south Scarborough.



Ottawa

First mobile COVID testing site

Ottawa ACORN helped organize the city's very first mobile testing clinic for COVID19. We also did an Online Action demanding the city to bring mobile testing sites to low-income neighbourhoods. 119 adults and children were able to get tested at 4 different stations out of a medical van, paramedic bus and testing booth. ACORN members were joined by the Mayor, health officials and Councillors.

Healthy homes campaign

Ottawa ACORN won a new bylaw on rental housing property management and pest control. It will mandate strict timelines for repairs based on urgency, that landlords have capital maintenance and integrated pest management plans and MORE! In addition to these new bylaws, the City will be creating a new tenant resource portal and a searchable online database of property standards violations.

LeBreton flats report

Members from ACORN's Central Ottawa chapter delivered their LeBreton Flats Report sharing their recommendations for the new development directly to the National Capital Commission (NCC), surrounded by a show of community solidarity with fellow ACORN members, and community allies.

Gatineau ACORN stops illegal eviction

ACORN members were able to stop the illegal eviction of one of our members while he was stuck overseas in Nigeria during the pandemic. ACORN members were able to defend Columbus' home and ensured he was able to safely return to his apartment when he arrived back in Canada.



Manor Village displacement

Ottawa ACORN has been organizing in the Nepean neighbourhood of Manor Village as the city is recommending that the Knoxdale LRT Station and track be built on the west side of Woodroffe Avenue which will displace hundreds of tenants and demolish 120 townhomes. Many tenants have lived there for decades and will not be able to afford to move. Families living in multigenerational homes are now facing potential mass eviction to make way for the LRT.

New Central Ottawa chapter!

This summer ACORN members living in neighbourhoods like Centretown, Lowertown and Mechanicsville formed the city's newest ACORN chapter. Congratulations to the newly elected neighbourhood board!



Hamilton

Hamilton ACORN has been fighting for healthy homes and stronger tenant protections for tenants in case of renovations. Thousands of tenants are being asked to move out because the landlord wants to evict them in the guise of doing renovations and repairs. Hamilton ACORN members have also been actively working on bringing the issues relating to the present Employment Insurance system and the changes that need to be made so that no one is left behind.

Healthy homes campaign: We won update to Hamilton's property standards by-law to include more health and safety issues. Since 2020, ACORN has been working with city staff and Councillors to bring forward amendments to the city's apartment property standards to include more health and safety issues tenants face. ACORN applauds this effort as a vital step forward to ensure tenants are not forced to live in substandard housing conditions.

Campaign to restrict renovictions in Hamilton

In December 2020, ACORN won a motion at City Hall for Hamilton to look into what other jurisdictions were doing on renoviction and report back on recommendations for Hamilton. ACORN members have been holding actions, workshops, meeting with Council & city staff. In February 2021, ACORN held a 80 person forum on the issue of renoviction and how the city has the power to save Hamilton's existing affordable housing stock from renoviction & substandard housing.



London

London is the newest chapter in Ontario where our landlord licensing campaign is gathering steam. The two city councillors Arielle Kayabaga and Mo. Salih introduced a motion calling for a review of the landlord licensing bylaw in London based on the demands we have been raising. The motion was passed by the city council.



Halifax

NS ACORN members are recommending for landlord licensing in Halifax. We've been building tenants unions across the HRM. Starting at Nivens Ave. in Dartmouth, where 30 tenants and ACORN members unionized for better conditions in the buildings in their apartment complex - and won much needed repairs and pest treatment. Now we are launching the Defend our Homes campaign along with our Halifax Peninsula Chapter to fight gentrification and the rising cost of housing, and to demand the city step in and license landlords to prevent homes from falling into disrepair.



Surrey

Surrey ACORN launched a new policy recommendation and report called Stand Up for Housing. Stand Up for Housing, is all about recommending the City of Surrey to use the powers it does have to end the housing crisis.



Montreal

We created a new French website:
<https://acorn.quebec>

Members have been forcing on Local Housing issues in La Salle in Montreal.

ACORN met with the Planning, Permits and Inspection Division Manager to discuss the sanitation issues in LaSalle, social housing issues in Montreal and to propose solutions.

ACORN members got a discussion with the owner Wiseview Realities to take care of the problems of cleanliness and infestation in the buildings (mice, cockroaches, bedbugs) lasting for years.





JOIN US TO FIGHT BACK!

Contact us:

ACORN Canada National
715B Danforth Ave. Toronto, ON M4J 1L2
Phone: 416-461-5322



canadaacorn@acorncanada.org



<https://www.facebook.com/acorncanada>



[@ACORNCanada](https://twitter.com/ACORNCanada)



[acorncanada](https://www.instagram.com/acorncanada)

