

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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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.



# WHAT IS ACORN?

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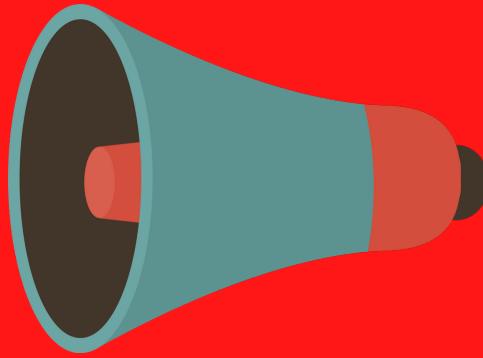


ACORN Canada is an independent national organization of low- and moderate-income families. We believe that social and economic justice can best be achieved with a national active membership who are invested in their organization and focused on building power for change! We are a tenant UNION and a Community 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 RENOVITIONS throughout the year, including holding monthly “resist renovation” 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.



# ACORN TENANT UNION

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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.

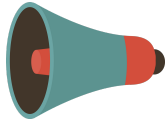
BC ACORN members across the lower mainland also launched a campaign for Vacancy Rent Control, which is seen as a key solution to the rising rents and mass evictions that are taking place.

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.





# ACORN TENANT UNION



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.

A screenshot of a digital display showing the results of a ballot for Toronto City Council. The display is titled "Toronto City Council - Ballot Results" and shows the date and time as "11/27/2019 11:51:00 AM". The ballot item is "PH10.4 - Adopt the item as amended" with a result of "24 yea+0 nay, 2/3 maj. quorum". The results are listed in a table with two columns of names and their corresponding votes (Yes or No).

Toronto City Council - Ballot Results	
11/27/2019 11:51:00 AM "PH10.4 - Adopt the item as amended"	
24 yea+0 nay, 2/3 maj. quorum	
Ainslie	Yes
Bailão	Yes
Bradford	Yes
Carroll	Yes
Colle	Yes
Crawford	Yes
Cressy	Yes
Filion	Yes
Fletcher	Yes
Ford	Yes
Grimes	
Holyday	Yes
Karygiannis	Yes
Lai	Yes
Layton	Yes
Matlow	Yes
McKelvie	Yes
Minnan-Wong	Yes
Nunziata [Chair]	Yes
Pasternak	Yes
Perks	Yes
Perruzza	Yes
Robinson	
Thompson	Yes
Tory	Yes
Wong-Tam	Yes





# FAIR BANKING

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.



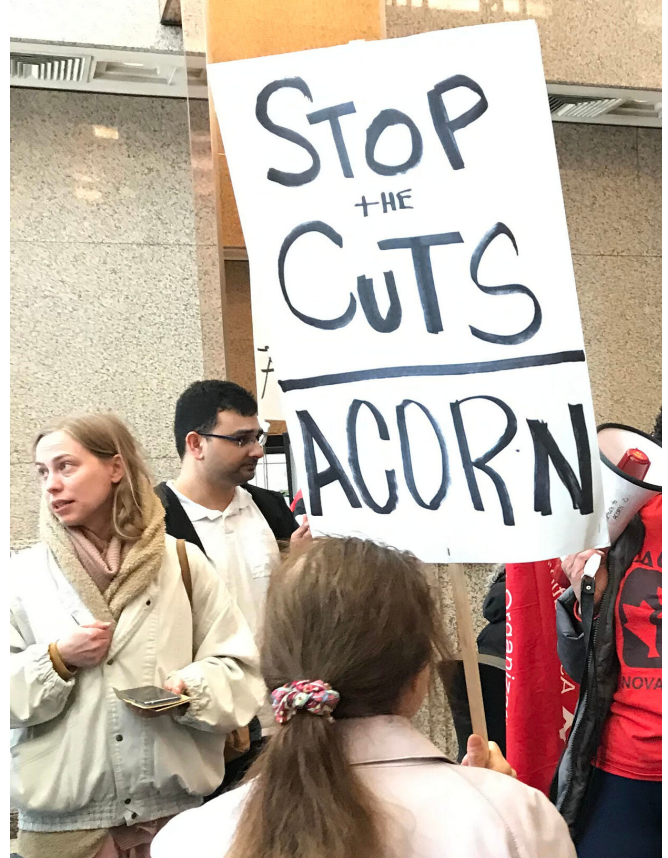
# COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENTS

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.





# ONTARIO #FORDFIGHTBACK



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.







# NATIONAL CONVENTION

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!

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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

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## 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

## **MONTREAL ACORN**

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

## **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!

## **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

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