

# S.W.E.A.C SHOUT OUT!

MAY 2016

The Sudbury Workers Education and Advocacy Centre is a community & worker based, non-profit organization committed to improving the lives and working conditions of people in low-wage and unstable employment.

## International Workers Day – May 1st



“May Day,” a name used interchangeably with “International Workers Day,” originated as a result of events that took place in the United States near the end of the 19th century when workers were struggling to achieve the eight-hour day. On May 1st, 1886 the wheels of production in Chicago came to a standstill, as a procession of fifty thousand workers marched peacefully through Chicago’s business district. The demonstration passed without incident, however two days later violence erupted and the blood flowed on the streets of Chicago’s South side which led to the prosecution of several labour leaders known today as the *Haymarket Martyrs*. May Day continues to symbolize the fight for worker’s rights and the remembrance of those who fought, including the Haymarket Martyrs.

## Right of the Month: Reprisals

Martha is a single mother of three who has been working at the same restaurant for the past two years. One day at work, she is told by her boss that she will not be getting her break today as it is too busy. Martha has already been working 6 hours straight and expresses to her boss that she is tired and would really like to sit down and eat. Her boss states that Martha is to continue on working and points to the door if she has any problems with it. Martha knows she is entitled to a 30 minute unpaid break for every five hours worked but continues to work through it anyways as she cannot afford to miss pay, and find a new job.



This scenario is one many workers face. Employers are prohibited from penalizing or threatening to penalize an employee under the following circumstances: asking the employer to comply with the Employment Standards Act (ESA), asking questions about their rights under the ESA, filing a complaint with the Ministry of Labour, and taking, planning on taking, being eligible or becoming eligible for any protected leave, such as pregnancy or family caregiver leave.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a workplace reprisal please contact SWEAC!



## SWEAC is looking for Living Wage Employers!

A living wage is not the same as the minimum wage, which is the legal minimum all employers must pay. The living wage sets a higher standard - a living wage reflects what earners in a family need to bring home based on the actual costs of living in a specific community, and is a call to private and public sector employers to pay wages to both direct and contract

employees that are sufficient to meet the basic needs for local families. The living wage is calculated as the hourly rate at which a household can meet its basic needs, once government transfers have been added to the family's income and deductions have been subtracted. The living wage gets families out of severe financial stress by lifting them out of poverty and providing a basic level of economic security. In Sudbury, the Living Wage has been calculated at \$16.18/hour.

### What Effects Does Supporting a Living Wage Have on Employers?

#### 1. Decreased employee turnover; cost savings for staff hiring and training

- A study of employers in Los Angeles found lower rates of labour turnover, absenteeism and overtime rates and lower rates of training amongst 75 living wage contractors when compared to 210 similar non-living wage firms. Staff turnover rates at firms covered by living wage polices averaged 17% lower than at firms that were not. (Fairris and Reich 2005)

#### 2. Improved job quality, productivity and service delivery; lower absenteeism

- More than 80% of employers involved in the London Living Wage Program (LLW) believed that the LLW had enhanced the quality of the work of their staff. Employees (almost 75%) also reported increases in work quality as a result of receiving the LLW. (London Economics, 2009)

#### 3. Benefits the broader economy by stimulating consumer spending

- A 2009 Goldman Sachs report confirms that increasing the income of people with lower wages has a proportionately larger stimulating effect on the economy than increasing the income of those on high incomes. Low earners tend to spend more of their increased income than those on much higher incomes, because those on low-incomes have more essential spending needs to be met by any income increases. (Goldman Sachs 2009)

#### 4. Greater corporate social responsibility and firm reputation

- 70% of employers involved in the London Living Wage Program (LLW) felt that being publicly recognized as paying a Living Wage had increased consumer awareness of their organization's commitment to be an ethical employer, which contributed to an increase in annual sales.

Contact Jenny Fortin (Outreach and Campaign Organizer) for more information about the

**PERKS** of becoming a Living Wage Employer!

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