

Attention: Finance and Administration Committee

Currently in Sudbury there is no place for precarious and vulnerable workers to turn to if they are faced with unfair working conditions. The Sudbury Workers Education and Advocacy Center is striving to develop a worker based organization committed to improving the working conditions and lives of the citizens of Greater Sudbury by ensuring that precarious and vulnerable workers have a voice at work and are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

In June 2012, a committee of concerned citizens including individuals from the United Way, Labour Council, Social Planning Council and Laurentian University Labour Studies Program organized a focus group session to help identify the issues and the gaps for workers in our community. Representatives from l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, Sudbury Community Legal Clinic, Sudbury Coalition Against Poverty, Sudbury Action Centre for Youth, and Workforce Planning Sudbury and Manitoulin attended the session. Together we were able to discuss and piece together an outline of the issues faced by precarious workers, the groups most vulnerable, and the gaps in services to meet their needs. All the participants agreed that there were serious gaps in our community in terms of worker rights education and advocacy. We also identified several groups of workers most vulnerable in our community including youth, women, aboriginal, elder and francophone. Issues faced by these workers ranged from basic employment standards violations, to workplace safety concerns, to exploitation. Everyone was very receptive to the idea of exploring the creation of a Worker's Education and Advocacy Center.

In the winter of 2013, with the assistance of a placement student from Laurentian University's Labour Studies Program, the Center began to survey workers to assess their needs. The results reinforced what we had learned in the focus group. Only half of the workers surveyed were working full-time and almost half were earning less than \$12.50 per hour. Over 50% of the workers surveyed had experienced a violation of their rights in the workplace including working too many hours, working overtime without proper compensation and not getting required breaks. One key finding was that almost half of the workers surveyed had never heard of the Ontario Employment Standards Act.

In May, with the help of the United Way, the Center held another meeting with our community partners to get their feedback on the results of the survey and engage them in the development of the Center. As a result of this meeting we will be holding a town hall forum on October 9th to engage the community in the planning for the Center and to recruit volunteers.

We are seeking \$10,000 in funding from the City to assist in the establishment and operation of the Center. The funds would be used to complete an application for incorporation as a non-profit, purchase furnishings and equipment for a safe place where marginalized workers could come and find information and support, continue the distribution of the survey, and reach beyond downtown Sudbury to all of the communities that make up the City of Greater Sudbury. We appreciate your consideration of our submission as this Center would benefit many working people in Sudbury.

Sincerely, The Sudbury Workers Education and Advocacy Center Organizing Group