

ISARC

Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition



2017 ANNUAL REPORT FAITH COMMUNITIES IN ACTION AGAINST POVERTY

2017 was a year of energetic activity and major successes, particularly in the area of employment policy. ISARC's Religious Leaders' Forum at Queen's Park on November 2, 2017 was one of the most successful ever, attended by over 120 people from across the province.

Premier Kathleen Wynne, Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath, Monte McNaughton, MPP and Mike Schreiner addressed the Forum respectively on behalf of the Liberal government, and the provincial New Democratic Party, Progressive Conservative Party and Green parties. Also in attendance was the Minister of Community and Social Services, Helena Jaczek. The main issues discussed in the Forum were Income Security and Bill 148: The Fair Workplaces - Better Jobs Act.

Dr. Gary Bloch from the Income Security Working Group delivered the keynote address concerning the launch of the new Income Security Road Map for Change, a bold vision for the transformation of Ontario's income security system. The Road Map sees housing, health, employment support, support for children and a strong safety net, as key elements of social and economic inclusion. It calls for the establishment of a minimum income standard, the transformation of social assistance toward a culture of trust, collaboration and problem-solving, and respect for First Nations' jurisdiction and self-governance over their own social service programs.

In the afternoon, the Forum heard from Deena Ladd and Nil Sendil, of the Workers' Action Centre. They spoke about the need to confront the pushback against the provisions of Bill 148 so that every job is a pathway out of poverty. Nadira Begum and Navi Aujla, two organizers with the Fight for \$15 and Fairness, spoke from personal experience of working in multiple part-time and temporary positions without decent hours, appropriate scheduling, or access to the same benefits as regular full-time workers. The Forum concluded with a panel of representatives from four different faith traditions - Aminah Sheik (Muslim), Rabbi Shalom Schachter (Jewish), the Rev. Andrea Budgey (Christian) and Zenji Nio Acharya (Buddhist).

The panelists were asked how their respective faith communities were engaging their membership around poverty reduction and the campaign for fair wages and decent work, and how ISARC could support their communities in those efforts. It is clear from the conversations at the Forum that faith communities appreciate ISARC's leadership in raising awareness of poverty issues and would welcome resources to help guide conversations around poverty Reduction in preparation for the June 2018 election.

In regard to The Fair Workplaces - Better Jobs Act, ISARC played a major role in consultation over its content and in galvanizing support for its passage. ISARC's efforts were enhanced through a grant from the Atkinson Foundation it received to participate in the Feet on the Ground project of the Worker Action Centre.



2017 Faith Leaders' Forum, From left to right: Minister Helena Jaczek, Jack Panozzo, Elin Goulden, Ryan Freedman, Premier Kathleen Wynne, Rev. Dr. Susan Eagle, Rabbi Shalom Schachter, Rev. Alex Wilson



2017 Faith Leaders' Forum, From left to right: Ryan Freemdan, Jack Panozzo, Elin Goulden, Andrea Horwath, Leader of the NDP, Rev. Alex Wilson, Rev. Dr. Susan Eagle, Rabbi Shalom Schachter

The grant was used to pay for an animator, Aaron Rotenberg, who worked to educate populations within faith communities about issues addressed by the Campaign for \$15 and Fairness. (His report is included on page 2.) ISARC took a leadership role in drafting the text of the Faith Leaders Statement in support of the Campaign for \$15 and Fairness and in recruiting over 230 clergy in signing on, due in large part to Rabbi Schachter and Mr. Rotenberg's work.

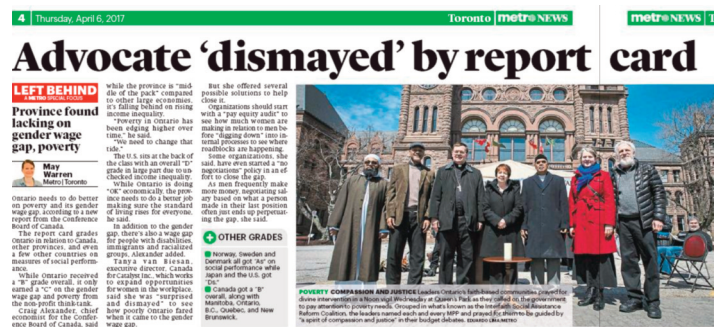
ISARC's Chair, the Rev. Susan Eagle, and ISARC's Employment Policy Working Group Lead, Rabbi Shalom Schachter, participated in the public release of the Faith Leader's Statement at Queen's Park on May 30, 2017. Rev. Eagle and Rabbi Schachter were invited to attend the Government's announcement on May 30 of its intention to table the Fair Workplaces Better Jobs Act (Bill 148) and in response to our question in the Q & A session, gave a commitment to pass the Bill before the end of the calendar year. When the government commenced the process to review the employment legislation, they indicated that no improvements from the review would increase the minimum wage. As a result of work by ISARC in partnership with other community groups, the Government was convinced to include in Bill 148 an increase in the minimum wage from \$11.60 to \$14 an hour effective January 1, 2018 and with a further increase to \$15 scheduled for January 1, 2019.

ISARC made written submissions to the Finance and Economic Affairs Committee of the Legislature during its hearings following both first reading and second reading of Bill 148 and in both locations was invited to make an oral deputation to the Committee.

ISARC also participated in the community media conference at Queen's Park on the last day of public hearings calling on the Committee to strengthen The Bill. The Committee did adopt a number of improvements during their deliberations. In addition, ISARC contributed to the review of the Government's Fair Wage Policy and participated in the two public consultations organized by the Ministry of Labour in November. ISARC received coverage in both the Toronto Star and in religious media for its stand on Bill 148.



Release of the Faith Leaders' Statement in support of Campaign \$15 & Fairness. From left to right: Rev. Alex Wilson, Rabbi Shalom Schachter, Bhopinder Singh Ubbi, Rev. Dr. Susan Eagle, Imam Ibrahim Hindy



ISARC's 2017 Prayer Vigil, coverage in MetroNEWS

Throughout 2017, ISARC continued its practice of convening meetings of faith leaders at Queen's Park to pray, learn, and advocate for the most vulnerable in our province.

On April 5, 2017, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Christian faith leaders gathered with MPPs in front of Queen's Park for a Prayer Vigil in anticipation of the upcoming provincial budget. We joined our voices to pray for provincial politicians and to call for measures in the bud-get that would bring hope and dignity to those living in poverty, so that All in Ontario can flourish.

"As faith leaders, we are inspired toward justice by our faith"

Rev. Susan Eagle, Imam Abukar Mohamed, Rabbi Shalom Schachter, Bhopinder Singh Ubbi

Faith leaders see how minimum wage hike will improve lives

Op-ed Toronto Star, August 25, 2017

EMPLOYMENT POLICY ANIMATOR'S REPORT

This past year I had the honour of working as an animator with the Fight for \$15 and Fairness, focussing on organizing for workers' rights within faith communities. I received ongoing training and support from ISARC and the Workers' Action Centre to connect with leaders of different faith backgrounds and make their support for moral treatment of workers visible.

Accomplishments during my time as animator included: increasing the number of signatories to the Faith Leaders' Statement to over 200 faith leaders across the province, helping organize the public release of the Faith Leaders' Statement at Queen's Park, facilitating Faith Caucus meetings, and keeping in regular touch with faith leaders and activists via email and regular meeting opportunities.

To come together around this issue and see change happen with the historic passage of Bill 148, has been deeply encouraging and inspiring for successful faith-based organizing. I look forward to continue to grow support for improved and dignified employment conditions for workers across the province.

Aaron Rotenberg

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

The ISARC Religious Leaders Forum held at Queen's Park in November was the highlight of 2017. Premier Kathleen Wynne; NDP leader, Andrea Horwath; Green Party leader, Mike Schreiner and PC representative Monte McNaughton were among the speakers at the annual Forum.

A large group of people representing faith communities from across Ontario also heard Dr. Gary Bloch speak about the impact of the Income Security: A Roadmap for Change, which had been issued that day. Dr. Bloch is one of the authors of the report.

With a provincial election in sight, ISARC began in 2017 to focus on budget and policy that could be implemented before the disruption of an election. It has been our experience that whether there is a return of the existing government, or the election of a new government, there is usually a post-election delay in moving forward on poverty and affordable housing initiatives. This experience fostered a sense of urgency in our pre-election work.

ISARC advocated for the implementation of the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, Bill 148, and the raising of the minimum wage. ISARC also participated in 2017 in provincial budget hearings; Ministry consultations on fair wage policy and deputations at public hearings on Bill 148: the "Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act".

As well, we have, with financial assistance from the Atkinson Foundation and the staffing help of Aaron Rotenberg, participated

in gathering faith leader signatures for a Faith Leaders Statement supporting labour reform. The public release of the letter with more than 200 signatures as well as distribution of the \$15 and Fairness Campaign lawn signs provided momentum throughout faith communities.

During the year, we said farewell to staff member Chris Pullenayegem as he took up a new job with the United Church, and welcomed Marcia Gilbert as our program coordinator. Marcia has been kept busy this year with all her work for the coalition. Many thanks to her and to Chris!

ISARC, the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition wants to have all our faith partners at the table, both to build bridges between faith communities and to work for the common good expressed by the ISARC values of human dignity, mutual responsibility, social and economic equity, fiscal fairness and ecological sustainability.

It is a tall order, and each year we discover new partners and more opportunities to strengthen ties with the community we are called to serve. We invite you to join our network. A word of gratitude to all those who have supported the work of ISARC this past year. It has, once again, been a very busy and productive year.

Rev. Susan Eagle
Chair

ISARC VALUES



Human Dignity.

The right of all people and their communities to be treated with justice, love, compassion, and respect, and their responsibility to treat others likewise.

Mutual Responsibility.

The obligation of communities to care and share with their people, ensuring that basic needs are met.

Social Equity.

The right of all people to adequate access to basic resources, to full participation in life and decision-making of their communities.

Economic Equity.

The right of all people and communities to adequate access to the resources necessary for full lives, including access to worthwhile work, fair employment considerations, and our communal responsibilities to use such resources responsibly.

Fiscal Fairness.

The right of all people, communities, and institutions to fair fiscal treatment and the responsibility of all to contribute fairly for the well-being of all.

Ecological Sustainability.

The obligation of communities to practice responsible stewardship of the earth and its environment, so that creation might be preserved for generations to come.



ISARC MEMBER FAITH GROUPS

The Anglican Diocese of Toronto
 The Anglican Diocese of Niagara
 The Anglican Provincial Synod of Ontario
 The Association of Catholic Bishops of Ontario
 The Canadian Unitarian Council
 Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto
 Congregation Darchei Noam
 Congregation of Sisters of St Joseph
 Dicle Islamic Society
 The Council of Imams
 The Council of Canadian Hindus
 The Eastern Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
 Western Ontario District, Pentecostal
 Assemblies of Canada
 Islamic Humanitarian Service
 Mennonite Central Committee Ontario
 North American Muslim Foundation
 The Presbyterian Church in Canada
 The Redemptorists in Canada
 The Sisters of Providence of St Vincent de Paul
 The Society of St Vincent de Paul
 The Toronto Board of Rabbis
 The United Church of Canada

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Jan 1, 2017 - Dec 31, 2017

Revenue

Member Fees and Donations	\$ 9,082.50	
Grants	23,730.00	
GST/HST	1,673.96	
Registration Fees and Sales	2,520.00	
Revenue Total 2017		\$ 37,006.46

Expenses

Programme Support	\$ 22,279.00	
Programmes	9,642.60	
HST	2,408.77	
Office expenses	1,951.00	
Expense Total 2017		\$ 36,281.00

Net Operating Surplus	\$	725.06
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HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT ISARC

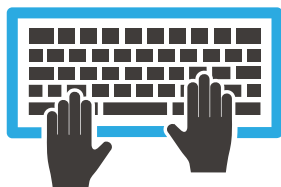


Make a tax-deductible donation

quickly and easily, by clicking on the Donate button of our home page, www.isarc.ca. On the donation page, in the top box where there is a choice of funds, indicate you wish your donation to go to ISARC.

Encourage your faith community to make a donation

or to increase their current donation. Contact ISARC coordinator for assistance: coordinator@isarc.ca



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to find out about upcoming activities, using the form at <http://isarc.ca/contact-us/>

Get involved with one of our committees

Contact ISARC coordinator for details: coordinator@isarc.ca



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ISARC

Faith Communities in Action Against Poverty

c/o United Church of Canada 1250 Bloor Street West, Suite 300, Toronto Ontario M8X 2Y4

(647) 572-7263

coordinator@isarc.ca

<http://isarc.ca>