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NEW RESEARCH CONFIRMS CRIMINALIZING CLIENTS ENDANGERS SEX WORKERS

CONSISTENT WITH EXPERIENCE OF OTTAWA SEX WORKERS

June 3rd 2014, Ottawa, ON—

Local sex worker rights group POWER (Prostitutes of Ottawa-Gatineau Work, Educate and Resist) welcomes the publication of a new study in the prestigious British Medical Journal (BMJ) Open. This research clearly demonstrates the devastating impact that the Swedish Model (where law enforcement is directed at client, instead of sex workers) has on sex workers' safety.

According to Frederique Chabot (member of POWER) "the research findings are consistent with what street-based sex workers in Ottawa are saying about the impact of law enforcement targeting their clients" (see powerottawa.ca/oasis_responses.pdf). She goes on to note "while it is critical to look at the evidence coming out of Sweden and Norway in regards to the negative impacts of this approach on sex workers' safety, major Canadian cities including Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal) have already moved towards targeting clients several years ago. We therefore have reliable information on how it plays out in our country".

Dr. Chris Bruckert, Professor of Criminology at the University of Ottawa said, "this is solid and rigorous research, and its findings clearly demonstrate that criminalizing clients does not reduce sex workers' vulnerability to violence and victimization. Evidence from Sweden, Norway and now Vancouver confirms that criminalizing clients does not eliminate the sex industry but has a significant negative impact sex workers – forcing them into isolated areas and restricting their ability to screen clients. In light of this clear evidence that criminalizing clients would reproduce the harms of the previous legal regime, it is incomprehensible to me that the government could even consider implementing this model."

The report comes as the federal government is poised to introduce new prostitution legislation after three provisions of the Criminal Code were struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada in finding that these provisions contravene the s. 7 security of the person rights of sex workers, and that this violation are not justifiable. Emily Symons, Chair of POWER, is unequivocal "The Swedish approach won't stand up to a constitutional challenge as it reproduces the harms of the current prostitution laws. We call on the Government of Canada to ensure legislation is evidence based and prioritizes the health and well-being of sex workers."

For more information, read the full report as well as the legal analysis:

<http://www.gshi.cfenet.ubc.ca/crimclients>

http://www.pivotlegal.org/my_work

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