

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Canadian and international sex workers denied
leave to intervene in Supreme Court Case on Prostitution Laws**

May 2, 2013 -- Supreme Court Justice Richard Wagner has denied several prominent sex worker groups the opportunity to intervene in the *Bedford v. Canada* appeal, to be heard at the Supreme Court of Canada on June 13th, 2013.

The constitutional challenge to the prostitution laws could strike down laws that have documented direct and negative impact on the lives and working conditions of sex workers, bosses, security people and other third parties as well as the lives of sex workers' clients and partners.

All six sex worker groups seeking to intervene proposed to argue in support of the repeal of the three challenged prostitution laws that criminalize sex workers, our clients and the people we hire, work with and work for, on the grounds that these laws contravene our rights to liberty and security.

The POWER-Maggie's-Stella coalition was the only intervener applicant representing sex workers from all sectors of the sex industry and multiple geographic regions in Canada. Our voices are essential to understanding the full impact of criminalization on both street and indoor sex workers, and particularly the impact of the criminalization of third parties (living on the avails) on all sex workers. Kara Gillies, a sex worker and long-time member of Maggie's reflects that, "When POWER and Maggie's intervened in *Bedford* at the Ontario Court of Appeal, we were able to share sex workers' perspectives and experiences that the Court would otherwise not have heard. It's a shame that this time around, both sex workers and the judiciary will miss out."

Émilie Laliberté, director at Stella and spokesperson for the Canadian sex worker coalition, states "The Supreme Court of Canada's unwillingness to take the voices and perspectives of sex workers into account -- in a hearing on laws with a major impact on their safety and dignity -- is incomprehensible to us."

The International sex worker coalition was made of up three national sex worker organizations from Australia (Scarlet Alliance), Sweden (Rose Alliance), and the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective. "Collectively, we have expertise on a range of legislative frameworks for sex work, both criminal and decriminalized, and are well-positioned to speak to the negative impact of any form of criminalization on the safety and dignity of sex workers, our partners and loved ones, our clients and the third parties involved in sex work", says Catherine Healy, coordinator of the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective and representative of the International Sex Worker Coalition. Sex work was decriminalized in New Zealand in 2003.

Katherine Van Meyl, member of POWER also states, "Sex workers are the real experts on the sex industry and know first-hand the impact of the criminal law on our safety and

human rights. It is extremely concerning to us that the Supreme Court of Canada proposes to examine this case without the input of a broad cross-section of those most affected.”

Also rejected from intervening in the case was a national coalition of women’s anti-violence agencies that provide frontline services to sex workers, the Feminist Coalition.

POWER, Maggie's, Stella, Scarlet Alliance, Rose Alliance and the New Zealand Prostitutes’ Collective will continue to stand in solidarity with those challenging the prostitution laws and to advocate on behalf of sex workers.

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Stella is a community organization created and run by and for sex workers in Montreal. At Stella we provide support and information to sex workers so that we may live and work in safety and with dignity.



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POWER (Prostitutes of Ottawa-Gatineau Work, Educate and Resist) is a sex worker-led group that works for the human and labour rights of sex workers, envisioning a society in which sex work is valued as legitimate work and sex workers can practice their professions free of harassment, discrimination and violence.



Maggie’s is a support and advocacy organization run by and for sex workers based in Toronto with the mandate to support sex workers in their efforts to work and live in safety and dignity.

