



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – JUNE 12, 2013  
RALLY AT THE SUPREME COURT – SEX WORKERS, WE SUPPORT YOU!**

In September 2007, three courageous sex workers launched a Charter challenge against Canada's unjust and harmful prostitution laws. On June 13, 2013, the day the Supreme Court will finally hear arguments in the appeal of *Attorney General of Canada et al v. Terri-Jean Bedford et al*, sex workers and our allies from across Canada and around the world will rally outside the Supreme Court building to support sex worker rights and to call for the full decriminalization of sex work.

"This is the final step in a long journey through the legal system," said **Emily Symons, Chair of POWER's Board of Directors**. "The issue before the courts is not the morality of sex work, but rather the constitutionality of the prostitution laws. At each of the hearings of this case, judges have agreed that the prostitution laws violate human rights and put sex workers at increased risk of violence. Forcing sex workers choose between the risk of arrest and the risk of violence is unacceptable. POWER stands in solidarity with Amy Lebovitch, Terri-Jean Bedford, and Valerie Scott, and will be there on Thursday to add our voices to the many calling for the full decriminalization of sex work."

"Criminalizing sex work forces us to work in locations that are dark and isolated, and makes it difficult to take measures to protect ourselves," added **Anna-Aude Caouette**, a member of **Stella** in Montreal. "Criminalization means that, as sex workers, we have no access to the legal system or police protection. It also contributes to the stigma and discrimination we face, making it more difficult for us to find social support and to access health services in our communities."

"Criminalizing sex work directly or indirectly, by criminalizing clients and third parties as they've done in Sweden, does nothing to stop it from happening, but rather puts sex workers in harm's way," noted **Catherine Healy**, national coordinator and founding member of the **New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective**. "In contrast, ten years ago, New Zealand opted to prioritize the safety of sex workers by decriminalizing prostitution. This allowed sex workers to access police and human rights protection, gave us more control over our working conditions, and allowed us to access the same occupational health and safety laws as anyone else."

Allies also spoke out in support of decriminalization. "The criminalization of sex work feeds stigma and constructs sex workers as being unlawful and unworthy of being in society," noted **Colleen Cardinal of Families of Sisters in Spirit**. "This perpetuates an already harmful stereotype that Indigenous women are disposable human beings. That mentality causes great harm to Indigenous women and certainly leads to violence against Indigenous sex workers. Media, anti sex work laws, and racist colonial policy are responsible for Indigenous women going missing and getting murdered with impunity - NOT sex work. We stand in solidarity with our sisters in the sex industry."

"We join Canada's sex workers in demanding that their work be decriminalized," added **Dawn Moore of the Mother and Child Coalition for Justice**. "Many sex workers are also mothers. Decriminalizing sex work will help to keep working mothers safe on the job. It will also help to keep them out of prison, preserving their relationships with their children and their ability to provide for their families."

"Women's shelters, rape crisis centres and equality seeking groups from across Canada support full decriminalization and the human and labour rights of sex workers," said **Jane Doe, coordinator of the Feminist Coalition**. "We understand *Bedford* to be a case about women's equality rights to be free from violence in our lives or livelihoods. Current legislation denies sex workers that right and contributes to the violence they face - especially those from Aboriginal, Transgendered and other marginalized communities. We stand in solidarity with our sisters."

"We'd like to invite sex workers, our allies and members of the public to join us on Thursday to hear how Canada's prostitution laws put sex workers at risk, and to support sex workers' right to work in safety and in dignity" concluded **Fred Chabot, a member of POWER's Board of Directors**.

**(Continued)**



**Event Details**

Rally: Sex Workers, We Support You!

12 p.m., steps of the Supreme Court of Canada, 301 Wellington Street.

**For further information**

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