



Prostitutes of Ottawa/Gatineau Work, Educate and Resist | Prostitu -es d'Ottawa/Gatineau travaillent,  duquent et r sistent

**DECEMBER 20, 2013
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SUPREME COURT OF CANADA UPHOLDS SEX WORKER RIGHTS**

Earlier today, the Supreme Court of Canada released a landmark decision in the appeal of *Attorney General of Canada et al v. Terri-Jean Bedford et al*, upholding the Charter rights of sex workers and striking down the outdated and stigmatizing laws criminalizing sex work.

“This is a wonderful day for sex workers!” said Emily Symons, Chair of the Board of Directors of Prostitutes of Ottawa-Gatineau Work, Educate and Resist (POWER). “We have reached the end of a very long journey through the legal system that started back in 2007 when three courageous sex workers launched a Charter challenge against Canada’s unjust and harmful prostitution laws. Today’s decision opens the door for sex workers to finally be able to work in safety and dignity.”

POWER would like to congratulate all of the many sex workers, allies and organizations that have played a part in achieving today’s tremendous victory. Not least, we would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to Valerie Scott, Amy Lebovitch and Terri-Jean Bedford for their courage and determination in standing up against injustice.

“Today Canada joins other jurisdictions including New Zealand and New South Wales in prioritizing the safety and security of those engaged in sex work,” added Dr. Chris Bruckert, a member of POWER’s Board of Directors and a noted expert on sex work at the University of Ottawa’s Department of Criminology. “With sex work decriminalized, sex workers will no longer be forced to choose between risking arrest and risking violence at the hands of predators. Those working out of their homes or in shared work spaces will no longer have to fear losing them, nor will they fear having their partners, friends or family criminally charged [for](#) “living on the avails” of their work. This ruling positions us to start working towards reducing stigma and ensuring the human, social and labour rights of sex workers across sectors are protected. .

“While today is a day to celebrate, our work doesn’t end here,” said Fred Chabot, Vice-Chair of POWER’s Board of Directors. “The Supreme Court made a powerful statement today by upholding the human and labour rights of sex workers. However, to fully realize the right to work in safety and dignity, we recognize that we now need to work with federal, provincial and municipal lawmakers who will be seeking to regulate our newly decriminalized industry in a way that makes sense for everyone.”

At this historic moment, POWER call upon lawmakers at all levels to ensure that the voices, perspectives and needs of sex workers are heard and considered as a part of all legislative and policy development processes affecting our work. For too long, decisions about us have been made without us at the table, with tragic consequences. Let’s not repeat the mistakes of the past!

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