



December 16, 2014

ONE YEAR AFTER BEDFORD – SEX WORKERS MARK INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX WORKERS, MOURN AS NEW PROSTITUTION LAWS COME INTO EFFECT

On Wednesday December 17th 2014, Ottawa-area sex workers and their allies will stand in solidarity with sex workers around the world to call for an end to violence against sex workers. The annual *International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers* highlights the global epidemic of violence against sex workers. “On December 17,” said Frederique Chabot, a member of Prostitutes of Ottawa-Gatineau Work, Educate and Resist (POWER) “we bear witness to the ongoing violence against sex workers everywhere, celebrate the resilience of sex workers who are fighting for their rights and add our voices to the many calling for an end to violence against sex workers.”

This year’s event takes place a few days short of the first anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court *Bedford* decision, which ruled Canada’s prostitution laws unconstitutional considering how they contributed to the risk of violence faced by sex workers. The federal government’s *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*, which replicates and worsens the problematic aspects of the previous prostitution laws, was introduced shortly afterwards and came into effect on December 6th.

“This December 17th, we will remember those we lost and renew our commitment in the on-going struggle to end violence against sex workers” said Emily Symons, Chair of POWER’s Board of Directors. “The new prostitution laws continue to force sex workers to choose between the risk of arrest and the risk of violence. This is especially true for the most marginalized of sex workers who will bear the brunt of these new laws.”

In light of this, POWER welcomes the political courage of Ontario Premier, Kathleen Wynne who has asked the province’s attorney general to review the constitutionality of the new laws. The organization also urges Queen’s Park to call for the new laws to not be enforced as their constitutionality is examined.

This year, to mark the International Day to End Violence Against Sex workers, POWER is partnering with PROUD (Participatory Research Ottawa – Understanding Drugs), a community-based research project that examines HIV risk among people who use drugs in Ottawa, to highlight the vulnerability created by the criminalization of marginalized communities and to continue to address criminalization as a barrier to important public health services.

PROUD will be releasing data from its participatory research with people who use drugs in Ottawa. The data will focus on survey participants who had engaged in sex work and the impact of the lack of stable housing and criminalization. POWER will be speaking about the recent passage of Bill C-36 and how it will impact sex workers who live and work in our region.



Join us on December 17th to call for an end to violence against sex workers
216 Murray Street in the Byward Market - Door opens at 12:00 (noon). Food and drinks provided

Media are requested not to take photos of participants without their permission

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