

SUBJECT : INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX WORKERS

We are writing today on the occasion of the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers. You are certainly aware that people who sell or trade sexual services currently suffer many forms of violence in Canada and elsewhere in the world.

On this day, we wish to remind you that sex workers have a voice that should be heard and that we, as a society, must allow them to define their own experiences and identities. The labels imposed on them such as "victim" or "undesirable" are a stigma and a form of violence. Instead of attempting to save sex workers, we should give them rights !

Indeed, sex workers do not have the same rights as workers in other economic sectors. Giving them rights is an urgent matter and will help achieve self-determination and fight against exploitation. Canadian laws participate in this ongoing violence as they result in the isolation of sex workers and pose major obstacles to the access to the justice system.

Furthermore, the stigma around sex workers leads to discrimination, namely in child custody, access to housing, employment, or health and social services. Sex workers, especially racialized and trans workers, suffer systemic violence and, among other things, more police brutality, which comes in the form of physical violence as well as verbal abuse.

This year, and partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic, laws criminalizing many activities linked to sex work put people who sell sexual services in a highly precarious situation. As organizations providing psychosocial services for sex workers in Montreal, we can testify that many could not have access to financial support programs such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) because declaring their income would pose risks. Confinement periods are therefore particularly hard for sex workers, leading to more risk-taking behaviour in order to work.

TIOHTIÀ:KE - MONTRÉAL

The city of Montreal could significantly contribute to the elimination of violence against sex workers.

We are concerned by the brutality, discriminatory and humiliating attitudes the SPVM inflicts on sex workers. Police surveillance isolates sex workers and there is a definite lack of trustworthy institutions they could seek support from. The SPVM's practices stigmatize sex workers and demonstrate a lack of sensitivity to the challenges and situations they experience.

The Defund the police Coalition is largely constituted of members of racialized, Indigenous, LGBTQ+ and sex worker communities, as well as organisations connected to these communities. We firmly believe that defunding the SPVM and reinvesting - following the Coalition's recommendations - could help meet the needs of the communities we are connected to. We truly hope these recommendations will be implemented.

Additionally, our organisations support many people in situations of precarity and homelessness. These people are particularly affected by the fact that public spaces are increasingly less welcoming due to police surveillance and urban planning, a blatant lack of social housing, a lack of access to drinking water and public toilets, and finally, the dismantling of campsites that allow them to acquire more autonomy. We call on you to listen to their needs and to offer them suitable living environments that meet their basic needs.

On this International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, we invite you to take action and to listen to the voices of sex workers and put an end to the perpetuation of violence against them.

SIGNATORY ORGANIZATIONS



Action Santé Travesti(e)s et Transsexuel(le)s du Québec (ASTT(e)Q) - CACTUS



Passages



RÉZO (santé et mieux-être des hommes gais et bisexuels)



Les 3 sex*



Club Sexu



BRAS Outaouais



AQPSUD



Projet d'Intervention auprès des MineurEs ProstituÉEs (PIaMP)



Jeunesse Lambda



Table des organismes communautaires montréalais de lutte contre le sida (TOMS)



Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois de lutte contre le sida (COCQ-SIDA)



Id-est



PACT de rue



Project 10



Travailleuses et Travailleurs Progressistes de l'Éducation (TTPÉ)



Association Étudiante Modulaire en Sexologie



En Marge 12-17



TransEstrie



AlterHéros



Action Jeunesse de l'Ouest-de-l'île (AJOI)



AIDS Community Care Montreal (ACCM)



Action LGBTQ avec les ImmigrantEs et RéfugiéEs - AGIR



Groupe d'action trans de l'Université de Montréal