



## **Announcement Letter**

### **COVID-19, Social Safety Nets, and Sex Work in the Capital 2021 Survey**

**June 4 2021**

COVID-19 ushered in an unprecedented global health and economic crisis. The federal government of Canada addressed the rise in unemployment through the creation of programs including the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the expansion of Employment Insurance (EI). There was confusion amongst sex workers and their allies if these benefits would include sex workers due to their marginal legal status.

In response to the pandemic, Ottawa-Gatineau, Prostitutes of Ottawa-Gatineau Work, Educate, and Resist (POWER) launched an emergency mutual aid fund in April 2020. POWER distributed funds through both micro grants directly to sex workers and fund transfers to other sex worker-serving organizations who could disburse funds directly to their own members. The emergency fund concluded by the end of the summer 2020 after distributing more than \$12,000.

Two activist academics involved with POWER and other grassroots sex worker organizations that distributed emergency funds have received Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funding to support a small study of how sex workers' navigated the financial struggles of COVID-19. In collaboration with POWER, the research team is now embarking on a survey of sex workers in the capital region to better understand the economic impact of COVID-19 on sex workers and how they navigated social benefit programs created in its wake.

Leading the research project is Ryan Conrad, a member of POWER's Research Committee and the media spokesperson for POWER's emergency mutual-aid fund, and Emma McKenna, who was a volunteer board member with Sex Workers Action Program (SWAP) Hamilton while they implemented a similar emergency mutual aid fund. Other members of the research team include current and former POWER board members. For more information about the research project please visit us online at [www.powerottawa.ca/covid19](http://www.powerottawa.ca/covid19).

Next week, beginning Monday June 7, we will be asking sex workers in the capital region to participate in a confidential 10-20 minute online survey. The survey will be entirely online and does not require you to disclose personal identifying information such as name and address. A

\$50 honorarium will be provided to any survey participant. For this reason, an email address to which an e-transfer can be sent is required to receive the honorarium. The email address will be deleted from all records at the closure of the survey June 30, 2021. At any point during the survey, you may choose not to answer questions or to exit the survey.

A publication of findings will be available in a bilingual report that will be published fall 2021 and made freely available through POWER's website and Research Repository.

The survey can be completed in French or English. More information is available online [here](#).

Sincerely,

Emma McKenna & Ryan Conrad

**More about the investigators:**

Dr. Emma McKenna is a SSHRC postdoctoral fellow in Criminology at the University of Ottawa. She has worked for intersectional social justice in the feminist, labour, and queer movements as an artist, activist, and educator.

Dr. Ryan Conrad is a SSHRC postdoctoral fellow in Cinema and Media Arts at York University and a part-time professor of Women and Gender Studies at Carleton University. He is an active member of POWER's Research Committee and was instrumental in launching POWER's Research Repository in 2019.

**CONTACT**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, or you experience any adverse effects as a result of participating in this study you may contact the primary investigators, Dr. Emma McKenna, at [emckenna@uottawa.ca](mailto:emckenna@uottawa.ca) or [emmajmckenna@gmail.com](mailto:emmajmckenna@gmail.com), or Dr. Ryan Conrad, [conradr@yorku.ca](mailto:conradr@yorku.ca) or [conradryanconrad@gmail.com](mailto:conradryanconrad@gmail.com)

This project has been reviewed and has received ethics approval from the University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5. Tel.: (613) 562-5387  
Email: [ethics@uottawa.ca](mailto:ethics@uottawa.ca).