

Sample Letters

re: Sex Workers and Canada's Economic and Safety Supports

Instructions	1
Links cited in templates	1
Contact info (Premier of BC, Victoria MP & MLA's, Mayor & Council of Victoria, Twitter)	2
Premier	2
Victoria MP	2
MLA's	2
Victoria City Council	3
Twitter	4
Sample #1: Long format	5
Sample #2: Short format	9

Instructions

You are welcome to use the sample letters below to form the letters you send! Please change up some of the words, especially in the first few sentences. It is more likely that the letters will be read as more are sent if they are different; especially in the beginning of the letters.

There is a small variety of short and long letter templates to choose from.

Links cited in templates

- <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report>
- https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2014_25/page-1.html
- <https://secure.actioncanadashr.org/solidarity-sex-workers-rights>

- https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2020/april/20200408_sex-workers-covid-19
- <https://migrantrights.ca/covid19/>

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Sample #1: Long format

Hello _____ ,

I am writing to you during this pandemic out of a deep concern for the safety and wellbeing of some of the most marginalized people in our communities: sex workers. Despite being one of the oldest labour professions sex workers are consistently excluded from societal and institutional supports; a pattern which this government is continuing during this global pandemic. Sex workers are not being included in important decision making regarding the pandemic, or even thought of as people who need and deserve assistance in this crisis. The stigmas that surrounds sex work, including those perpetuated by not including sex work as valid labour under Canadian law, directly contribute to violence enacted against sex workers and puts lives at risk. Those who have experiential knowledge are experts in their fields. I implore you to listen to the needs of your communities – because yes, sex workers are a part of your communities!

When I talk about supporting the sex worker community that means all sex workers. Sex workers' multiple facets of identities often lead them to experience further exclusion from insitutiounal and societal supports. Sex workers often live at the intersection of multiple marganzilied identities: lgbtq2sia+, disabled and/or neurodivergent, indigenous/black/people of colour, poor, fat, immigrant/migrant/refugee, substance user, survivor, old, homeless, etc. Indigenous, inuit, and métis, people experience disproportionate amounts of violence. Released June 3rd, 2019, the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls cites violences against indigenous sex workers and calls upon governments for supports and services to promote their "safety and security":

- 4.1 We call upon all governments to support programs and services for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people in the sex industry to promote their safety and security. These programs must be designed and delivered in partnership with people who have lived experience in the sex industry. We call for stable and long term funding for these programs and services.¹

I implore the government to honour its commitment to reconciliation and listen to the recommendations made in the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murderted Indigenous Women and Girls and by indigenous, inuit, and metis sex workers and sex worker rights organizariions working with communities.

The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA)² treats sex work as "sexual exploitation", leaving workers employed in the industry excluded from Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan. Sex workers are not forced into monetizing their labour any more than any other labor worker, yet PCEPA exists under the criminal code to eliminate "prostitution". Through the inclusion of sex work under the criminal code as

¹ <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

² https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2014_25/page-1.html

something undesirable that should be eliminated PCEPA promotes stigma and puts workers in precarious working and financial situations. It criminalizes anyone accessing sexual services, prohibits advertising sexual services of another person (targeting places of employment like strip clubs, brothels, agencies, and erotic massage parlors), and conflates sexual exploitation and sex trafficking with sex work; all of which limit sex workers' safety and security.

The Liberal government made a commitment to re-evaluate the PCEPA at the end of 2019 and to support service providers through re-imaging the PCEPA to follow the recommendations supported by lead sex worker organizations and advocates put forward by Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights:

- We call upon the government of Canada for the total decriminalization of sex work as a first step to protecting and respecting the human rights of all sex workers—this begins with the removal of criminal and immigration laws that criminalize sex work.
- We call for the recognition of sex work as meaningful and valuable work that provides economic opportunity for people selling and trading sex.
- We call for equal and non-discriminatory access to health, education, occupation, housing, and economic opportunities and rights.³

Had these commitments been fulfilled at the end of 2019 as promised sex workers could have had better access to supports through this current pandemic.

Sex work supports the Canadian economy, just like any other labour work, yet sex work is excluded from Canada's Economic Response Plan (CERB) and Employment Insurance (EI). With the limits already imposed by PCEPA and without the funds to financially support themselves through this global health crisis, workers are left struggling to practice the guidelines provided by Health Canada and putting both themselves and their communities at greater risk COVID-19 exposure.

On April 8th, 2020 UNAIDS released a press statement calling on countries to include protections to the health and rights of sex workers in their COVID-19 response plans. They recommended the following measures be taken to support sex workers and minimize community risk during this pandemic:

- Access to national social protection schemes for sex workers, including income support schemes.

³ <https://secure.actioncanadashr.org/solidarity-sex-workers-rights>

- An immediate firewall between health services and immigration authorities in order to ensure that migrant sex workers can access health services.
- Emergency financial support for sex workers facing destitution, particularly migrants who are unable to access residency-based financial support.
- An immediate end to evictions and access to appropriate emergency housing for homeless sex workers.
- Stopping raids on sex workers' homes and sex work premises and ensuring that all measures to protect public health are proportionate.
- An immediate halt to arrests and prosecutions for sex work-related activity, moving away from punitive measures and criminalization towards reaching and serving those most in need.
- An immediate end to the use of criminal law to enforce COVID-19-related restrictions, including forced COVID-19 testing and related prosecutions.
- Automatic extensions on visas due to expire as travel restrictions tighten. Immigration detention systems must support detainees in safe accommodation.
- The engagement of sex worker communities in responses—the meaningful involvement of sex worker-led organizations in emergency public health planning groups.⁴

The UNAIDS press statement specifically speaks to the unique experiences of migrant sex workers. This is important because xenophobia and racism - which are ongoing issues - are on the rise because of how the coronavirus COVID-19 and information about it is being portrayed in the media. Migrant Rights Network also released a joint statement with their local chapters and other migrant and sex worker rights groups calling for “collective responses that leave no one behind, including migrant workers, undocumented people, low-waged students, poor people, and refugees”.⁵

The Canadian government is responsible for creating safe working environments in Canada, a need which is amplified in this world wide pandemic. The Canadian Government must acknowledge and remedy the harm being caused by the gaps in services and the impact its having on people. Now more than ever I urge you to support all people and fight for supports and services for sex workers as valid members of the workforce. To build strong communities we need to be sure no one gets left behind!

4

https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2020/april/20200408_sex-workers-covid-19

⁵ <https://migrantrights.ca/covid19/>

Sincerely,

Sample #2: Short format

Hello _____ ,

I am writing you today because of the lack of support for sex workers during the world wide COVID-19 public health pandemic. The Canadian government needs to do more to support sex workers; especially multiply marginalized sex workers.

The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA) provides a foundation for violence against sex workers by fostering a stigmatizing culture and teaching people that sex workers are victims and clients are bad. These laws pave the way for the ongoing harm sex workers experience, including the exclusion from financial supports and labour laws. The lack of support for sex workers means that they are in precarious financial situations and are less likely to be able to effectively practice Health Canada guidelines and more likely to need to endure dangerous work situations in order to afford their living expenses.

I am writing you to urge you to consider listening to sex workers and their advocates. Please take the time to read through the following statements and suggestions made by community advocates during this global pandemic. Fight for the rights of all people, especially those neglected by government aid. To build strong communities we need to make sure that no one gets left behind!

- https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2020/april/20200408_sex-workers-covid-19
- <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report>
- <https://secure.actioncanadashr.org/solidarity-sex-workers-rights>
- <https://migrantrights.ca/covid19/>

Sincerely, _____