

Chinese Canadian Collective
OPSB Statement
May 31, 2021

There are two components to our statement. The first will cover the treatment of Asian sex workers at the hands of police in Ottawa, relevant even more following Atlanta and the extremely disrespectful response for increased local policing. The second will cover the larger scope of policing in Chinatown and the Ottawa area during the pandemic in response to Sinophobia.

Butterfly, an Asian and Migrant Sex Worker Support Network says “migrant sex workers are concerned about the abuse and investigation of police and the concern about the violence they face, (for example) robbery, sexual assault and murder. Instead of protection, the police and law enforcement are the major sources of violence of sex workers.”

Jamie Liew, an Immigration & Refugee Lawyer and professor at the University of Ottawa, has been speaking out about these issues for years. One instance Liew spoke to, was in 2015 when OPS conducted massive massage parlour raids which led to the deportation of asian women they were so-called “saving.” Here is what Liew says on the matter:

Migrant sex workers face risks because of the laws that criminalize their work. The Criminal Code has given the police immense power to survey, investigate, arrest and detain migrant sex workers. The law allows this under the guise of protecting women from sex trafficking but sex trafficking is not the same as sex work and should not be conflated with trafficking.

Further, women who have temporary or precarious immigration status are at risk of detention, identification to CBSA and proceedings that can lead to deportation. Sex work is not recognized as work that can be done with a work permit and being criminalized in the course of doing sex work can render someone inadmissible and therefore deportable. The way the law is crafted allows people to look at migrant sex workers not only as fetishized disposable objects, but as immoral, illegal and foreign.

We support organizations like Butterfly that calls to:

- Halt practices of raids or inspections of sex work places of employment and massage parlours
- Fully decriminalize sex work
- Rights not Rescue - Stop using criminal rescue models and No Cops at Workplaces

Stop Policing in Chinatown

The COVID-19 pandemic has created the most recent wave of Sinophobia in Ottawa. But local policing is not the answer.

Since last year, policing has been heralded as the solution towards addressing incidents of racism and harassment towards the asian diaspora in Ottawa.

But it hasn't worked, nor has it for several decades. Not only due to the harm and death at the hands of police such as that of the tragic and senseless death of Abdirahman Abdi in Hintonburg just 2 km away. But also simply due to the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the police. It is long-due for change and alternative solutions.

For over 15 years, funding towards the police has caused harm with surveillance, ticketing and fear centred in the Chinatown area and of racialized and low-income residents. The Chinatown BIA worked hand-in-hand with the police in 2007 to create a \$10,000 mural in the area featuring a police officer. Even then, this [partnership was criticized](#).

Ottawa Police [has disrespectfully used events](#) such as the murder of six Asian women in Atlanta and Carl's tragic death in Chinatown to continue to [add increased police presence](#) at every instance without proper "consultation." Publicly, mainstream news has documented that police have added increased presence at least 3 times in Ottawa this year "for the asian community.". The sole organization that OPS has "consulted" with is a singular BIA "representative" who echoes their own agenda and has done so for 14+ years.

Police do not make us safer and OPS has ignored asian folks that have spoken out against it [since the start of the pandemic](#). This also, considering that [asian sex workers](#) have said that "instead of protection, the police and law enforcement are the major sources of violence" and that Ottawa Police [raids have led to the deportation and dehumanization of Asian women](#).

We will not be used as a wedge for the Ottawa Police Services to try and "protect" us in opposition to Black individuals and allies calling to defund and dismantle the police. We will not be used as shields for the OPS and have them play their games.

We call on redirecting funds to asian-run organizations and to city departments and grassroots organizations like Overdose Prevention Ottawa in the area targeting poverty alleviation and working with those who use drugs in order to create actionable solutions and support communities that can take care of each other themselves.

By continuously ignoring these demands from the "community" for over a year, the Ottawa Police Services Board continues to show they are ignoring the people they say they are so-called serving and protecting while adhering to their own agenda. Why does the OPSB want to be on the wrong side of history once again? We will not be used as pawns.