

Summary of Guide for Churches to End Sexual Exploitation in Canadian Body Rub Centres- 09/03/2020

Background Information

In cities across Canada, there are businesses that are actually brothels, where men go to buy sex. The church's response can take many avenues including education and awareness, advocacy to our elected officials, working to decrease demand, and helping women.

Prostitution is a form of sexual exploitation, the selling of sex is legal, but the purchasing of sex is illegal in all circumstances.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance is committed to abolishing prostitution, and you can be a part of this endeavor through:

1. Raising awareness and public education about the reality of sexual exploitation in body rub centres.
 - a. This video was created to dispel the myths around body rub centres:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5rZon5hgwE&t>
2. Advocating for stronger legal and social deterrents to eliminate the demand for sex and thereby the selling of sexual services.
3. Aiding the women to exit prostitution from body rub centres through the Survivor Support Fund of Defend Dignity. <https://defenddignity.ca/survivor-support-fund/>

Awareness and Education

These brothels can go by various names in different cities. Some examples include Body Rub Centres (Edmonton), "Rub and Tugs" (Vancouver), Body Rub Parlours (Toronto, Regina), Holistic Spas or Centres (Toronto and area), or Massage Parlours.

There are generally four methods cities use to regulate body rub centres, namely:

1. Licensing bylaws - Bylaws are used to regulate body rub centres to provide a set of qualifications or rules that need to be followed to operate. Licensing is used to allow the police to obtain information about the owners/operators/workers to assess problems such as human trafficking, underage workers, etc. and to gather intelligence. The bylaws can also be used as the tools/reason to audit/raid the body rub centres, with the goal of shutting them down.
2. Zoning- Zoning is used to allow them to operate only in certain areas (i.e. industrial zones, commercial zones, etc.), as well as to impose restrictions on operating within a certain distance from locations that are more sensitive in nature, or where there are a larger amount of children/families. These separation distances can typically range from 0-1000 m. Some of the more common things body rub centres have separation distances from include parks, schools, residential zones, churches, daycares, and other body rub centres

3. Banning- There are only two cities that we know of to have implemented bans on body rub centres using very clear and outright wording – Steinbach, MB and Dauphin, MB.
4. No regulation

Advocacy

When advocating with Police or City Council it is important to first learn the facts, but then to be patient and persistent in advocacy. It can take many years to change the minds and hearts of elected representatives. It is important to be polite and respectful. It is also essential to stick to the issues at hand and where possible, suggest solutions.

Prior to any advocacy, it is imperative to pray for those who will be listening and who have the power to effect change.

A. Police Service

Ideas for advocating to the Police include:

1. Check the city's police website and ask to have it updated on the legalities of prostitution that are in line with PCEPA (Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act), if it has not been done yet.
2. Connect with the Staff Sergeant of the department handling prostitution.
3. Ask your police sergeant to run ads on billboards, buses, and online on the legalities of sex buying. (see example from Edmonton Police Service)
4. Request that a "Report a John" online option be implemented. This is a great tool that allows the public to safely, quickly, and anonymously report illegal activity being performed by the buyers. The police then take these reports, and if the report warrants it, will send a registered letter to the owner of the reported vehicle stating that they were reported. The letter explains that buying sex is illegal, and it discusses and informs the reasons why it is illegal. The simple fact that an online "Report a John" exists, can be a deterrent for customers attending body rub centres. The fact that a registered letter could be sent to them by the police (and their wife, work business owner (if using a company vehicle), or others could read the letter) can also be a major deterrent. Also specifically ask to add, "Attending a Body Rub Centre" to the "Report a John" website.
5. If there is any newspaper that continues to advertise body rub centres, ask police to charge the owners for advertising the sexual services of another. If they won't comply, ask the newspaper to stop carrying the ads.
6. Encourage the police to charge men buying sex. Reference the current prostitution legislation. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/protect/protect.pdf>

B. City Council

1. Attend City Council meetings on body rub centres.
2. Visit your own councilor.
3. Write a letter to all councilors and mayor.

4. Create a Petition. Both online and paper petitions can be effectively used to engage the public and show City Council the public's desire. It is recommended to contact your municipality to determine what is required for an acceptable petition. Churches can be contacted to see if they are open to having a paper petition available to sign after Sunday services. Christian retail stores can also be contacted to see if they are open to have a paper copy at their checkout for customers to sign

Tips to keep in mind for the meeting or letter or petition:

- Ask City Council for a moratorium on the body rub centre applications if they are licensed.
- Ask Councilors to earmark money for awareness campaigns along the lines of those described in the police section.
- If the city is following a licensed, harm reduction model and unwilling to stop this practice but are serious about reducing the harm and the demand, legislate that all men visiting a body rub centre must first scan ID as is required in some bars. The loss of anonymity would greatly reduce body rub centre visits by men.
- Ask for stringent rules regarding distances between body rub centres and schools, playgrounds and daycares thereby limiting the number and proximity to buyers.
- Ask to delicense and close down the body rub centres. Ask councilors to earmark more money for services to women exiting.
- If there is an anti-trafficking organization in your city, they may have to be contacted as the body rub centres may have women there who are trafficked. The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline # is 1-833-900-1010.

C. Get Various Other People Groups Involved

Youth

Make sure to talk to the youth leaders to ensure parents are aware of what is being discussed due to the sensitive nature of the topic. The topic is only suitable for discussion with mature groups of youth.

Here are some effective ways to rally the youth:

- Ask to speak in an assembly to high school students and to youth groups.
- Try to find leaders within the youth community that are willing and wanting to take on the challenge of rallying the youth – mentor and guide them through the process as needed

Churches

Communication to/through churches is a great way to rally people to get involved. This can include:

- Asking the pastor to speak on the matter
- Volunteering to speak yourself (sermon or during announcements)
- Asking them to send out an email to their email list

Find local Christian organizations that have a wide reach to the Christian community as a whole (example: Evangelical Ministerial Associations, etc.), as opposed to individual churches.

Survivors

One voice that is critical for City Councilors to hear is survivors. They understand the details of the industry from actual experience. Direct conversations (in person or on the phone) with City Councilors with survivors can have some of the greatest impact. Contact Defend Dignity for names in your area.

Lawyers

A common argument/concern that City Councilors or City Administration bring forth is related to legal concerns of restricting, banning, or regulating body rub parlours. If the City's legal arguments lean toward the pro-body rub/prostitution side, it is imperative to counter this with other professional legal opinion.

Social Media

Social media is one of the most effective means to inform and engage the public. The following are ideas that can be used:

- Connect with relevant organizations or people that have a large social media following, to send out updates and inform the public. Defend Dignity would be pleased to do social media posts for your organization or church.
- Join relevant Facebook groups (i.e. anti-human trafficking, etc.) in your area and share the information on the group's pages. Ask them to share the information on their page since that is usually seen by more people.
- Join other national or international relevant Facebook groups to be informed on this topic.

Retired or Ex-Police

Try to find retired or ex-police officers who are able and willing to speak publicly. They are the ones that can have a tremendous impact on helping Councilors understand what is happening in body rub centres.

Other Advocacy Groups

Determine if there are anti-human trafficking advocacy groups in your area, province, or even nationally that are willing to help and partner with you. Not all sex trade related organizations will likely have the same stance or desire. Defend Dignity can provide you with a list in your area.

General Public

City Councilors have a general mandate to represent the general public and do what is in the public's general interest. As a result, it is critical that the general public speaks up on this. Encourage as many members of the general public to get involved as possible to create "critical mass", to let the Councilors know where change is needed.