

June 15th, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister:

Thank you for your service on behalf of Canadians.

As a group of 52 survivors of sexual exploitation and 158 stakeholders from Canada and 11 other countries, we are writing to ask you to support the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA)*. As you are likely aware, on March 30, 2021, a constitutional challenge of six key provisions of *PCEPA* was filed. The laws being challenged, including laws that prohibit sex buying, pimping, recruitment, brothel keeping and advertising the sale of another person's sexual services, are aimed at those whose behaviour is predatory in nature.

Paid sexual access to women's bodies is not legitimate business. Prostitution is inherently violent and exploitative. It is a system that profits from the abuse of women, girls and boys.

PCEPA recognizes that prostitution is a form of exploitation and systemic violence against women, and a significant barrier to equality between the sexes. It recognizes that most individuals in prostitution are not there by way of freely given choice, but rather as a result of poverty, marginalization, racialization, abuse, coercion, or other systemic issues.

We support *PCEPA's* approach, which makes the purchase of sex illegal in Canada, while those who are being prostituted are not subject to criminal charges.

Buying sex is not and should not be inevitable in our society. There is no right to buy sex, but women do have a right to equality, and to live free from violence and exploitation. Research shows the most effective way to curb sexual exploitation is to target the demand for paid sex. *PCEPA* is an effective and essential tool in fighting sexual exploitation and human trafficking. It also helps to create a safer country for all girls and women.

We urge you to defend the law, because it is an essential step forward in the fight against commercial sexual exploitation, and to ensure that *PCEPA* is upheld and enforced across the country.

It is also essential that those who are prostituted be provided with viable options and alternatives. Prostitution must never be accepted as a solution to female poverty. Canada must address the social conditions that drive individuals to prostitution or make them vulnerable to it. One of these conditions is economic vulnerability – which has been heightened during the current pandemic. As such, we urge the government to consider strengthening support services to assist individuals at risk of being exploited by the sex industry.

We must also ensure renewed and ongoing support for programs and services to assist individuals exiting prostitution. Please commit to long-term sustained federal funding so that every individual who wants to exit prostitution has access to the resources and supports they need.

Article 9.5 of the Palermo Protocol, which Canada ratified in 2002, obligates countries to “adopt or strengthen legislative or other measures ... to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking.”¹ With *PCEPA*, Canada has shown leadership in addressing the demand that drives sexual exploitation. Justice demands that we not move backwards.

Sincerely,

52 survivors of sexual exploitation and 158 stakeholders from 12 countries

C.C.:

The Hon. David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

The Hon. Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

The Hon. Erin O’Toole, Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party

Mr. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet, Leader of the Bloc Québécois

Ms. Annamie Paul, Leader of the Green Party

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/protocoltraffickinginpersons.aspx>

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