

Formerly Prostituted Women & Trafficking survivors say: Prostitution is neither a choice nor empowerment.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE STEPS OF THE ONTARIO COURT OF APPEAL:

June 17 10h00

June 16, 2010 – Toronto | Formerly prostituted women, human trafficking survivors and allies from across Canada will hold a press conference on the steps of the Ontario Court of Appeal on Friday, June 17 at 10am. We will be addressing the arguments made by the interveners and how they do not reflect our lived realities.

Coercion, Not Choice

“From our experiences, we know that the lived realities of women in prostitution are not being accurately portrayed by the theatrics of the women behind this court challenge,” says Trisha Baptie of EVE (Formerly Exploited Voices Now Educating). “Prostitution is the end result of a myriad of systemic gender inequalities, including racism, poverty and addiction.”

It is no real choice when any person has to choose between either hunger or prostitution. It’s no real choice when prostitution is the only means to escape a bleak existence on a rural reserve or when the social safety nets have been clawed back through thousands of little cuts to the point of being unable to provide any meaningful help.

Ontario Anishnawbek, and in fact all Aboriginal Women in Canada are disproportionately represented in prostitution. The average ages for First Nations females to enter into prostitution are between 11-16 years old . First Nations women are more likely to be victims of violence and abuse, thanks to a legacy of poverty, colonialism and residential schools. Removing the prostitution laws will further assist in the racial genocide that Canadian First Nations Women struggle with.

In fact on Wednesday, June 15 Allan Young went on record in the Bedford case as saying: “This case has nothing to do with making street prostitutes safer. It is not going to help the women on the street.” He also admitted that most women are coerced into prostitution, but this case is for the few who were not forced.

Who benefits?

In prostitution the only people with true and free choice are the men who demand paid sexual access to women and children’s bodies. We include children--not to infantilize women, but rather

because a large number of women, including two of the women in this charter challenge, were sexually exploited through prostitution under age.

The root problem that allows prostitution and human trafficking to thrive in Canada is the unaddressed male-driven demand for paid sexual access to bodies.

Male demand does not ask if women are there willingly, if she is of age, or if she is the victim of trafficking. Male demand does not ask if she has other options or suffered abuse. The only thing men who pay for sex care about, is sexual access to a body for their own sexual pleasure.

Laws need to Change

For Canada to be a truly progressive country with laws rooted in equality that further the dignity of ALL women, our groups are saying that Canadian laws DO have to change. Parliament MUST criminalize the demand, as well as the pimping and procuring of women & children, while decriminalizing the prostituted person.

Prostitution is not the oldest profession, but the oldest OPPRESSION. We must stand up to the patriarchal belief that men must have access to sex on their terms at all times. We will talk frankly and honestly about how the setting aside of these laws is the complete abandonment of marginalized women, particularly aboriginal women and we'll address how the removal of all laws is a gift to pimps and traffickers. We will talk from our experience as friends of the women murdered by Robert Pickton.

While there are three women in Ontario who are happy they won the charter challenge, our question is: "If Canada does not deal with the unchecked male driven demand for paid sex, whose daughter will take their place?"

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