

Joy Smith, M.P.
Kildonan-St. Paul



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MP Joy Smith Applauds Alberta for Upholding Prostitution Related Charges

Urges Ontario and New Brunswick to reverse their position

February 7, 2014 (WINNIPEG, MB) – Today, Joy Smith, leading Canadian anti-human trafficking advocate and Member of Parliament for Kildonan – St. Paul, congratulated Alberta’s Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Jonathan Denis, for his leadership in upholding prostitution related charges.

“I commend Minister Denis and Alberta for the decision to continue prosecuting prostitution offences to the full extent of the law and targeting pimps and johns and not prostituted women,” said MP Smith. “This reflects the shifting approach by law enforcement across Canada and I urge other provinces to follow suit.”

Federal Minister of Justice Peter Mackay also made a clear statement on Wed. Jan. 29, 2014 that:

“While the administration of justice is a matter of provincial jurisdiction, Canadians expect criminal laws in this country to be properly enforced so long as they remain in force. The Supreme Court of Canada made very clear in its decision that the current laws with respect to prostitution were to remain in force for twelve months. This gives Parliament the chance to respond.”

Regrettably, Attorney Generals from Ontario and New Brunswick have decided to take the opposite approach. Ontario announced Wed. February 5 it will not be pursuing cases involving the bawdy house, living on the avails of prostitution or communication offences. Similarly, New Brunswick police were advised to not lay charges for the same offences.

“It is shocking that Ontario and New Brunswick’s Attorney Generals, unilaterally and without consultation, have decided to stop prosecuting these offences, putting the most vulnerable at risk,” said MP Smith. “Counter exploitation and vice units across Ontario and New Brunswick rely on these offences as important tools to tackle traffickers and predators,” added MP Smith. “Just last week, an inter-agency operation rescued

underage girls from prostitution and arrested eight traffickers through the 30 city 'Operation Northern Spotlight'".

"It is unfortunate that Ontario's announcement came on the heels of a national anti-sex trafficking advocacy campaign launched by survivor support organizations, including two from Ontario," said MP Smith. "Survivors of sex trafficking are calling for governments to tackle pimps and sex buyers; not give them free reign to target women."

"Any province still deciding on their approach to prostitution offences should consider carefully and respect the Supreme Court ruling that Canada's prostitution laws remain in effect until December 19, 2014, or risk putting the lives of victims of sexual exploitation in danger," said MP Smith.

"I call on all Canadians in their respective provinces to contact their provincial Attorney General to ensure Canadian laws continue to be enforced and that the most vulnerable are protected," said MP Smith.

"To set a precedent that arbitrarily applies the laws unequally across our nation, as Ontario and New Brunswick have done, is a reckless move," said MP Smith.

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Canadians who would like to take part in a national anti-sex trafficking advocacy campaign can find more information here: <http://lawc.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Release-NATIONAL-POSTCARD-CAMPAIGN-LAUNCHED-TO-ADVOCATE-THE-NORDIC-MODEL.pdf>

To arrange an interview with MP Joy Smith, contact:
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Statements by Ontario Victim Advocacy Organizations

"Prostitution is inherently violent. Any action to decriminalize buyers and pimps supports a view that women are no more than commodities to be bought and sold. Ontario's decision places the most vulnerable women in Ontario at an even greater risk of exploitation and violence."

Megan Walker
Executive Director
London Abused Women's Centre

"Ontario has a responsibility to uphold the law, and further display leadership to law enforcement within the province to do the same. The Crowns cannot predict what the outcome will be in Parliament in response to the Supreme Court Ruling and therefore foolish and dangerous to be overthrowing the precedent that has been set at a Federal level by Justice Minister MacKay. The Crown is to enforce and uphold the law, not to decide to dismiss it. The police in Ontario want to find and help young girls and women who are be exploited, and prosecute their exploiters. The law should be supporting police efforts and not dismissing them. Ontario we need to do better."

Shae Invidiata
Founder
[free-them]

"As a Survivor of Human Trafficking, as a Canadian Citizen, and as a Front Line worker who faces victims of sexual exploitation on a daily basis, Ontario's decision to abandon prostitution offenses is alarming. This decision will have an immediate impact. As a result, pimps who traffick Canadian girls as young as 15, will have impunity to continue to exploit and profit. As a victim service agency, it is important to Walk With Me that police and crowns continue to have access to the full range of legal tools available to apprehend and prosecute the abusers of the victims we assist."

Timea Eva Nagy
Founder
Walk With Me Canada Victim Services