



15 April 2014

The Honourable Peter MacKay
Minister of Justice / Attorney General of Canada
Member of Parliament for Central Nova
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Fax: +1 613 992 2337
Email: Peter.MacKay@parl.gc.ca

Re: Prostitution Laws in Canada

Dear Minister MacKay,

Since 2008 The Canadian Council of Churches – representing 85% of Christians in Canada through its 25 member churches – has been hosting the Human Trafficking in Canada Working Group. Together we have been educating one another, reflecting on our values and faith commitments, and advocating together to end human trafficking in Canada. Today I am writing to you regarding the development of new prostitution legislation in Canada.

The Chair of the Human Trafficking in Canada Working Group, Jennifer Lucking, and members of the working group have identified the links between prostitution and human trafficking and believe that legalizing or decriminalizing prostitution will further harm the majority of individuals in the sex trade who are exploited or desire to exit. We believe that we need to stop viewing prostitution as a vocation of choice and instead view it as an affront to gender equality and violence against women, children and marginalized populations. Please see the attached Canadian Council of Churches background paper, *Recommendations for Prostitution Laws in Canada*, for details.

Today I would like to draw your attention to these modified recommendations drawn from the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's report "Out of Business" (attached). Will you support these recommendations for Canada?

1. Parliament must be clear and unambiguous in the definition of prostitution as a form of violence, abuse and control of vulnerable children, women, and men.
2. Invest strongly in exit programs and support for prostituted persons along with restorative programs for perpetrators; with federal social funding commitment towards provincial governments for these purposes.
3. Criminalize the purchase and attempted purchase of sex.
4. Amend our laws to reflect the current non-criminal nature of individuals who are being prostituted. For example, removing the prohibition on communicating for the purposes of prostitution [section 213(c) of the *Criminal Code*] or restricting its application to the intended purchaser.
5. Maintain prohibitions against profiting from sexual exploitation; i.e. pimping.
6. Support strict crime diversion programs upon sentencing such as John's schools.
7. Engage the provincial governments, territorial governments, municipal governments, nongovernmental organizations and other public and private partners in the development of a comprehensive national plan or strategy with the objective of ending prostitution. This can happen when demand for prostitution is reduced, which also means addressing poverty and inequality. Incarceration will likely only postpone the issue.
8. Initiate a public awareness campaign to accompany such a change in the law, educating the public that paying for sex is both illegal and unacceptable; that it is violence against the victim and contrary to equality between the sexes. These need to include education on violence against women as well as violence against children as boys and young men are also victimized.

I look forward to receiving your response to these modified recommendations drawn from one of the organizations participating in the Human Trafficking in Canada Working Group, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Members of the Human Trafficking in Canada Working Group, including representatives from the 25 member denominations of The Canadian Council of Churches, would also be pleased to meet with you and engage with you and your policy advisors on this topic.

Please be assured of our continued prayers for you and for the Government of Canada as you carry out your responsibilities.



The Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton
General Secretary

Attachments: *Recommendations for Prostitution Laws in Canada*, Background Paper, Human Trafficking in Canada Working Group, The Canadian Council of Churches *Out of Business: Prostitution in Canada – Putting an End to Demand*, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Cc: Françoise Boivin, Justice Critic, New Democratic Party of Canada
Sean Casey, Justice Critic, Liberal Party of Canada
Maria Mourani, Justice Critic, Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, Green Party of Canada
Major Jim Champ, President, The Canadian Council of Churches

The Canadian Council of Churches is the largest ecumenical body in Canada, now representing 25 churches of Anglican, Eastern and Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Free Church, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, and Historic Protestant traditions. We are one of the few ecumenical bodies in the world that includes such a range of Christian churches. The Canadian Council of Churches was founded in 1944.