

October 13, 2015

Ms. Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada
Mr. Thomas Mulcair, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada
Mr. Justin Trudeau, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Dear Madam and Sirs,

Re: Repealing the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*

We, the undersigned, are organizations and individuals deeply committed to the health, safety, and human rights of sex workers.

We would like to express our appreciation and support for your parties' commitment, if elected, to repeal the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA)*.

As you are aware, the *PCEPA* will replicate the harms identified by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Canada (AG) v Bedford*. The *PCEPA* prevents safety enhancing measures in the same manner as the laws that the Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional. It is our view that the *PCEPA* is, therefore, inconsistent with the sex workers' constitutional rights to safety, health, equality, and freedom of expression and association.

By imposing more criminalization, this law creates barriers for sex workers to implement safety-enhancing measures and access police protection. A large body of scientific evidence from countries that have, like Canada, criminalized clients and third parties clearly demonstrates that criminal laws targeting the sex industry have overwhelmingly negative social, health, and human rights consequences for sex workers, including increased violence and abuse, stigma, greater exposure to HIV, and inability to access critical social, health and legal protections. These laws disproportionately impact sex workers who are women, Indigenous, migrant, poor, and/or street-involved, along with other particularly marginalized groups.

By supporting evidence-based law reform, your policies are aligned with international experts including the World Health Organization, UNAIDS, the International Labour Organization, the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women, the Global Network of Sex Work Projects, the Global Commission on HIV and the Law, Human Rights Watch, the Open Society Foundations, Anti-Slavery International, and, most recently, Amnesty International.

All have recognized the overwhelming body of evidence demonstrating that criminalization of sex work not only harms sex workers, it also pushes trafficking further underground and makes it harder to detect. Anti-trafficking measures and so-called rescue measures often expose sex workers to intrusive and damaging enforcement efforts, and make migrant workers vulnerable to deportation and harsh treatment from law enforcement.

If elected, we call on you to honour your promise to repeal the *PCEPA* and to replace this

law with a model that is proven to protect sex workers – one that removes criminal laws that specifically target adult sex work, is developed alongside sex workers, and prioritizes safety, equality, and human rights.

Thank you for your commitment to evidence-based law reform that prioritizes the health and safety of sex workers in Canada.

Signed,

Janice Abbott, Atira Women's Resource Society

Dr. Julio Montaner, Director, BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE)

Dr. Kate Shannon, Director, Gender and Sexual Health Initiative, BC-CfE

Big Susie's

Butterfly (Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network)

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

FIRST Decriminalize Sex Work

Migrant Sex Workers Project

Jean McDonald, Executive Director, Maggie's – Toronto Sex Work Action Project

Laura Dilley, Executive Director, PACE Society

Leah Shumka, Interim Executive Director, PEERS Victoria Resources Society

PIECE Edmonton

Brenda Belak, Lawyer, Pivot Legal Society

Katrina Pacey, Executive Director, Pivot Legal Society

POWER (Prostitutes of Ottawa-Gatineau Work, Educate and Resist)

SHOP (Safe Harbour Outreach Project)

Amy Lebovitch, Executive Director, Sex Professionals of Canada (SPOC)

SWUAV (Sex Workers United Against Violence)

South Western Ontario Sex Workers

Stella, l'amie de Maimie (Montréal, QC)

SWAN Vancouver Society

The Naked Truth

The Stepping Stone Association, Halifax

Triple-X Workers' Solidarity Association of British Columbia

Mebrat Beyene, Executive Director, WISH Drop-In Centre Society

Margaret Alexander

Joyce Arthur

Sheri Kiselbach

Jody Paterson

Kerry Porth

Esther Shannon

Velvet Steele

Michael Wheatley

Cc: Federal candidates for Green Party of Canada, Liberal Party of Canada, and New Democratic Party of Canada