

Letter in Support of Abolition and the Nordic Model of Law

Date: _____

Dear, _____

I write with regard to the recent decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal in *Bedford v. Canada (Attorney General)*. I strongly urge you, as my representative in Ottawa, to work with your colleagues to enact new laws addressing prostitution based on the legal and social framework of the Nordic model of law implemented in Sweden in 1999. This model of law, often called the Nordic Model, is based on the recognition that prostitution is a form of sexual exploitation and violence. It penalizes the buyers of sex (johns, pimps), while decriminalizing those who are being sold.

I ask you to follow the lead of Sweden, Norway and Iceland (nations with stable democratic traditions) who have put legislation into place that follows this model. Each country has seen a reduction in prostitution and sex trafficking and an increase in the stigma of buying and selling of people for sexual acts since enacting this legislation.

The Ontario court decision is based on a misguided notion that allowing for bawdy houses will provide protection to prostitutes. Rather, we must take a firm stand against the demand for paid sexual access to women and children.

Countries that have legalized or decriminalized prostitution (New Zealand, Australia, Netherlands, etc.) have seen an dramatic increase in human trafficking, illegal brothels and organized criminal activity. The former mayor of Amsterdam called the experiment with legalization “an abysmal failure” due to the increase in organized crime, human trafficking and drug trafficking. The city of Amsterdam has already closed one third of the Red Light Districts in hopes of curbing criminal activity. In New Zealand the Legal Brothel Owners Association has complained of Chinese women being trafficked into the country, undercutting their prices, and being coerced to offer riskier sex acts. These are just two current examples that demonstrate the fact that any time prostitution has been legalized there is an expansion of both the legal and illegal industry, an increase in human trafficking and a normalization of sexual exploitation.

Prostitution is a form of systemic violence against women and children and a

major deterrent to women's equality. As a world leader, Canada has the opportunity model sexual equality by clearly naming prostitution as a violation of women and children's right to safety. The Government of Canada must rewrite our laws to reflect this fact.

In the vast majority of cases, prostitution cannot be viewed as a choice but rather a lack of choice due to systemic issues including - but not limited to – gender inequality, poverty and racial discrimination. The laws of Canada must protect victims of exploitation rather than reinforcing their marginalization.

Aboriginal women and children are disproportionately overrepresented in street prostitution as a result of far reaching systemic injustices. These same injustices have also resulted in the hundreds of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls that have recently been brought to international attention. In criminalizing the demand for prostitution and decriminalizing the prostituted, Canada has an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to addressing the systemic injustices that so profoundly affect all Aboriginal peoples, but Aboriginal women and children in particular. National and local Aboriginal women's groups loudly oppose the Ontario Court of Appeal ruling in the Bedford vs. Canada case, and I ask you to do the same.

As a constituent, I strongly urge you to speak out and act to protect the vulnerable (especially women and children) by rewriting the Criminal Code to criminalize the purchasing of sex and decriminalize the person being sold. Please advise me as to the action you choose to take in bringing this to pass.

Signed: _____