

23 June 2014

The Honourable Peter MacKay
Minister of Justice / Attorney General of Canada
Member of Parliament for Central Nova
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
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Email: Peter.MacKay@parl.gc.ca

Re: Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act

Dear Minister MacKay,

We are writing to welcome the recent efforts of the Department of Justice to strengthen the protection of the rights of children, women, and men to be free from violence and exploitation, specifically sexual exploitation, and to criminalize those who profit from and exploit others for their own benefit. We affirm the steps your government has taken towards framing prostitution as a form of violence against women and are encouraged that you do not accept prostitution as inevitable; these are important contributions to affirming the full equality and dignity of girls, boys, women and men. Likewise, we welcome the announcement regarding \$20 million in new funding to support grassroots organizations dealing with the most vulnerable who assist those who want to exit prostitution.

We believe human beings – women, men and children – are created equal and all are promised abundant life, each of us a glittering strand in the shimmering web of life. Therefore, all have a fundamental right to the necessities of life, including safety and protection from exploitation. Accordingly, we support efforts to address the systemic objectification and commodification of children's, women's and men's bodies for sexual services.

As we wrote in our earlier letter to you (15 April 2014), we believe sex work is inherently violent and dangerous. We are concerned when "consent" is used to describe transactional sex when the dynamics of power are not equal; that is when one of the persons involved feels a sense of

obligation or has limited choices. We also know from experience that poverty is a major factor in individuals entering prostitution. Therefore we want to encourage further efforts to address the safety of those who are exploited, and to do more to end the conditions that lead to poverty, prostitution and violence. The Canadian Council of Churches has a long history of supporting all-party efforts at developing and implementing a National Anti-Poverty Action Plan with appropriate public accountability mechanisms, and this provides us an opportunity to reiterate the need for action on that initiative. This new legislation may also be helpfully accompanied by a high profile and important public education and awareness campaign to ensure that the spirit and intent of the proposed legislation is achieved.

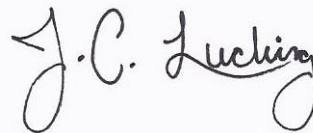
In that spirit, we would welcome an opportunity to speak with you and your advisors further regarding these efforts, and to appear before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights during its review of the Act.

Please be assured, Minister MacKay, of our ongoing prayers for wisdom for you and your colleagues in the Government of Canada.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton
General Secretary



Ms. Jennifer Lucking
Chair, Human Trafficking in Canada Working Group

Cc: Françoise Boivin, Justice Critic, New Democratic Party of Canada
Sean Casey, Justice Critic, Liberal Party of Canada
Jean-Francois Fortin, Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, Green Party of Canada
Howard Anglin, Senior Advisor, Legal Affairs and Policy, Prime Minister's Office
Ken Bednarek, Senior Litigation Advisor, Office of the Minister of Justice
Major Jim Champ, President, The Canadian Council of Churches

The Canadian Council of Churches is the largest ecumenical body in Canada, now representing 25 denominations 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.