



Council Member Motion

For the Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting of August 28, 2014

Date: August 22, 2014 **From:** Councillors Alto and Thornton-Joe
Subject: Urging the Federal Government to Cease Further Action on Bill C36 -
'Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act'

Resolution

WHEREAS in December 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down some sections of the Canadian Criminal Code related to prostitution, ruling those provisions to be in violation of Section 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, indicating that those provisions made it almost impossible to safely work in the sex trade, and providing the federal government with one year to legislate a legal framework that protects the safety of sex workers,

WHEREAS, in response to that Supreme Court decision, the Parliament of Canada has approved the above noted Bill and has referred it for further consideration to the Senate's Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights,

WHEREAS in so doing, the federal government has proposed changes to applicable Criminal Code provisions that would effectively re-criminalize prostitution and thus recreate unsafe working conditions that endanger sex workers,

WHEREAS this federal legislation will directly and negatively affect Victoria residents currently engaged in the sex industry,

WHEREAS the City of Victoria supports the right of all its residents to safe working conditions,

WHEREAS the City of Victoria Mayor and Council commend their colleagues at the City of Vancouver, who have expressed their commitment to increasing the safety of women involved in the sex trade by putting in place Vancouver's first-ever strategy to address neighbourhood impacts of the sex trade and to prevent the exploitation of children and youth, including recommendations ranging from increased housing and support services to expanding opportunities for exiting the sex trade,

BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Victoria send the attached letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Victoria MP Murray Rankin, and members of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, urging the Senate to reject Bill C36.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Abraham Alto'.

Councillor Alto

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chalyn Thornton-Joe'.

Councillor Thornton-Joe

Dear Prime Minister Harper and Honourable Members of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

The City of Victoria Mayor and Council supports the Senate submission provided to you by PEERS Victoria Resources Society.

PEERS Victoria Resources Society has provided crime prevention and social and health support services to sex workers in Greater Victoria since 1995. PEERS continues to make a valuable contribution to our community through services that meet the diverse needs of sex workers, while also working to dispel common myths about the sex industry. PEERS also works hard to diminish discrimination and inequality, and provides leadership opportunities for sex workers both in the industry and programs to assist workers in transition from the industry.

The City of Victoria Mayor and Council shares PEERS' commitment to broad-based harm reduction approaches (including all aspects of the prevention, treatment and care continuum), and strategies for supporting the health and safety of people in the sex industry. We also support PEERS' efforts to prevent crimes against sex workers, call community attention to violence against sex workers, and work with Victoria Police Department to increase reporting and investigation of sex-work related crimes.

In recent years, the City of Victoria has worked with PEERS, the Victoria Police Department, the Vancouver Island Health Authority and researchers at the University of Victoria, to consider and address factors that promote the health and safety of people involved in the industry.

The City of Victoria Mayor and Council shares PEERS' concern that Bill C36, as proposed by the current federal government, will cause harm to sex workers by discouraging collaborative relationships with police, health providers and social service organizations. The City of Victoria has worked with local escort agencies for many years to ensure a regulated approach to the adult industry that includes close connections with the police department to minimize the risks of violence, coercion, exploitation or involvement of children and youth.

Community and elected leaders in our region have spoken out against the sexual exploitation of children and youth, and against violence against adult sex workers. Criminalizing the industry further, as envisaged by Bill C36, will increase the dangers for sex workers and exploited youth by forcing the industry deeper into the shadows and destroying the positive, collaborative connections built among sex workers, the City and the Victoria Police Department.

City of Victoria Mayor and Council urge the Senate Committee to consider the concerns of sex worker-led organizations like PEERS regarding how prostitution law affects the lives of sex workers. We support the constitutional rights of sex workers, as we would any other Victoria residents, and champion community approaches that promote equal and full access to justice, harm reduction and health prevention resources.

Yours truly,

Mayor Dean Fortin

cc.

Honourable Bob Runciman
Honourable George Baker
Honourable Mobina S.B. Jaffer
Honourable Pierre Hugues Boivenu
Committee Clerk Shaila Anwar