

SEX WORK on the HILL

Part III:
Hot on
the Campaign
Tail!

**A Guide to Getting Involved in
Legislative Processes
that Impact on Our Lives**

Canadian Alliance for
Sex Work Law Reform

Sex Work on the Hill: A Guide to Getting Involved
in Legislative Processes that Impact on Our Lives
Part 3: Hot on the Campaign Trail!

© June 2015

Canadian Alliance for
Sex Work Law Reform

Alliance Canadienne pour
la Réforme des Lois sur
le Travail du Sexe

www.sexworklawreform.com
contact@sexworklawreform.com
Twitter: @CDNSWAlliance

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Alliance canadienne pour la réforme des lois sur le travail du sexe

Design Layout: Pulp & Pixel Creative
www.pulpandpixel.ca

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This guide is made possible thanks to the financial support of the
Open Society Foundations (OSF). The opinions expressed here are
those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position
of the foundations.

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Sex workers Sex workers are experts at consent

are a part of our communities

Victimization reproduces harm

Even if you don't know it, you know a sex worker

I'm not the sex worker you think I am

Criminalization harms communities

Sex workers' rights are human rights
Sex workers are experts at consent

Introduction

While sex work and people who work in the sex industry are often at the centre of debate for elected officials and decision makers in parliament, sex workers are rarely asked to centrally and meaningfully inform policy and laws that impact us. We have very few venues to have our communities' needs meet the ears, pens and papers of people who write and enforce laws against our communities and against us. This is why it's important for us to take part in processes that elect people into positions of power—people who will write and enact policy that impact marginalized communities such as ours.

Municipal, provincial and federal elections are a few moments among many where we can influence policy and power in our communities. Whether we vote or not in elections, these are moments when education and visibility will impact on who will make decisions about our lives.

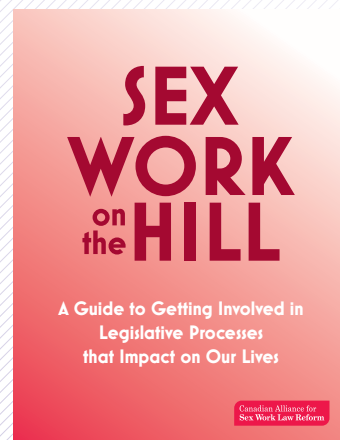
A Federal Election is scheduled in Canada for October 2015. Now is the time to research and be aware of the people who want to hold power positions in your region. It is also a good time to educate these people on the needs of our community—they are listening now more than they ever have, so get their attention!

This guide is intended for sex workers, people who exchange sex for goods, our close allies and communities, and anyone that wants to impact how governments engage the Rights of Sex Workers in policy and practice.

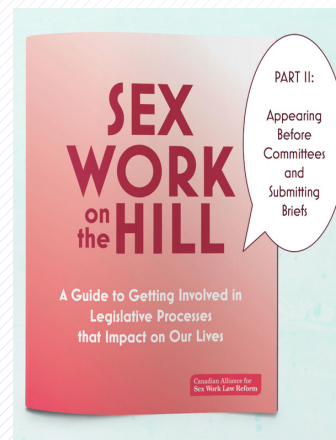
While elected officials and candidates gear up for the campaign trail in 2015, sex workers are hot on campaigners' tail!

This is the 3rd in a series of guides that help us to mobilize our communities for change by educating ourselves about the legislative processes that impact on our lives. This guide can be used and adapted by sex workers, allies, and those advocating for sex work law reform in Canada and across the globe.

OTHER GUIDES IN THIS SERIES:



May 2014. Sex Work on the Hill: A Guide to Getting Involved in Legislative Processes that Impact on Our Lives (v.f.) Le travail du sexe sur la colline Parlementaire: Un guide pour commencer à s'impliquer dans les processus législatifs qui affectent nos vies.



June 2014. Sex Work on the Hill: A Guide to Getting Involved in Legislative Processes that Impact on Our Lives PART II: Appearing Before Committees and Submitting Briefs (v.f.) Le travail du sexe sur la colline parlementaire: Un guide pour commencer à s'impliquer dans les processus législatifs qui affectent nos vies Partie II: Comparaitre devant un comité et soumettre un mémoire.

Special Thanks:

A huge and heartfelt thank you goes to Lindsay Doyle of Summa Strategies and the Canadian Advocacy Network <http://can-rcp.ca>, and Dafna Strauss from One Degree GR www.onedegreegr.com for lending their time and expertise to the creation of this guide.

*Criminali
harms cor*

Why Vote?

a) Why vote?

Voting serves two functions:

It puts people into power, and the more we vote, the more likely it is that our elected representatives will actually act in our interests.

AND

It expresses our will publicly. Even if the candidate you want isn't elected, you've demonstrated support for their platform and that you share their values. Indirectly, this tells politicians what the public wants or rejects. When an interest group, such as sex workers, mobilize their members and allies it can send a message about where the votes are.

b) Voting? Pfft. No way!

Communities organize and mobilize in many ways. Not interfacing with politicians, institutions and the state is political for many of us. For those of us who don't want to vote, there is still plenty we can do—this is where mobilizing and public education is important. The Advocacy Guides created last year helped us and the public learn about what is happening to the policies that impact sex worker's lives. They are also useful to mobilize people who are going to vote. To change law, at some point and on some level, we need to engage with the people who write and re-write law. If we don't engage with law and policy makers, we can alternatively mobilize other people, inform ourselves about the process, or educate the people who vote for those who make policies that harm our lives. Even though elections may turn some of us off, we can still work in so many ways to make the process or the result better serve our interests.

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mmunities

c) What kind of voter am I?

Whether you actually vote or not, you impact on the voting process. When you don't vote you impact as much on the voting process as when you do vote. Governments rely on the different kinds of voters to strategize for their campaign. What kind of voter are you? Thinking about this helps us prepare for the elections, and the research we need to do on MPs and candidates before voting day.

The apathetic voter

You don't care for any of the candidates and you're doubtful that change will happen, but you'll hold your nose and vote for the least lousy one, based on their platforms or track record.

The strategic voter

You vote where you think you'll make the most impact, after weighing various likely outcomes. You sometimes vote to defeat a candidate/party rather than to support your preferred candidate/party.

The ideological/driven/idealistic voter

You care a lot about elections and you'll vote for the candidate whose campaign speaks to you, who seems trustworthy and espouses your values, whether or not they have a chance of winning a seat.

The habitual/dutiful voter

You vote because it's your civic duty and you approach each election differently depending on circumstances. You might be any other type of voter at any given election, but you always make sure to participate in government at least in this simple way.

The gut-feeling voter

Your vote goes to the candidate whose values and personality reassures you of their good character and judgment. You pay more attention to behaviour on the campaign than to what's in the platforms.

The devil-may-care voter

You vote on whim more than strategy/ideology. Similar to the gut-feeling voter but less serious, you might vote for a fringe candidate or joke party just for the fun of it. Or that may be a political statement.

The identity voter

You prefer a candidate who shares a similar background to you, maybe life experiences, socio economic background, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, or religion. You trust them more to act in your best interests and expect them to share your values.

The non-voter

Your political statement is to refuse to validate any of the candidates. Or you destroy/invalidate your ballot to actively refuse participation.

The future voter

Although you may not be eligible to vote now, you are a powerful voice to educate your family, friends and other communities and help them understand the importance of their vote and the impact on your community.

A short guide to voting

A) A glossary of terms

Guide to Abbreviations and Terms for Canadian Parliament

MP Member of Parliament. A Member of Parliament is the elected representative of the voters to the Canadian (federal) parliament.

MLA Member of the Legislative Assembly. These are representatives elected by voters of a constituency to the Legislative Assembly. This is the legislative body in all provinces and territories except those listed below.

MPP Member of Provincial Parliament. This is an elected member of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario. Ontario is the only province that uses the designation “MPP”.

MHA Member of the House of Assembly. The House of Assembly is the legislative body in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

MNA Member of the National Assembly. The National Assembly is the legislative body for the Province of Quebec.

Stakeholder A person or non-government group that’s affected by/has an interest in a decision or circumstance. When a power plant is built, the neighbours, energy consumers, environmental groups are all stakeholders.

Incumbent The person who held a political position until the election was called. The most recent “current” MP or MLA.

Critics Each opposition party has a Shadow Cabinet to monitor and comment on the work of the government’s Cabinet (collection of Ministers). The shadow cabinet has critics that are in charge of each policy area similar to the Ministers. For example, if there’s a Ministry/ Department of Justice, there’ll be a Justice critic in the opposition.

Caucus The members of a party, as a collective. All party members working in Parliament form the party’s caucus. A broader meaning of “caucus” includes all members of a political party (all the citizens who have party memberships).

Key riding or “battleground” or “swing” ridings are ridings where votes are usually close or where a new situation has emerged and no party can be sure of a win. Some ridings vote the same way all the time. But sometimes there’s flux and the parties focus a lot of resources on winning votes in a key riding. These are opportunities to promote our issues because candidates are listening hard for anything that can get them more support. On the other hand, candidates in key ridings may be extra cautious around controversial issues—it depends on their approach to campaigning.

Platform The promises and positions that a candidate declares during an election. The things they tell us about how they will govern if elected. During elections, the platform is a written document put together by the party leadership. A few weeks or months before the election date, all parties will have their platforms published on their websites.

Constituent Being a voting member of a community or organization and having the power to elect or to appoint. Constituents are the audience for politicians, and in a sense their bosses/clients/ customers.

b) How to Vote

Your go-to website during an election period is: <http://elections.ca>

To see if you're on the voter's list: <https://ereg.elections.ca/CWelcome.aspx>

You can find out where to vote by entering in your postal code at:
<http://elections.ca/home.aspx>

Closer to elections, your voting location will be indicated here:
<http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=vote&document=index&lang=e>

CAN I VOTE IF I DON'T HAVE A FIXED ADDRESS?

You have the right to vote if you are homeless, at risk of homelessness or without a fixed address. The process is long and complicated, but as people without a fixed address are rarely represented in parliament, it is particularly important that your voice is represented. Speak with or be accompanied by any social service that you may attend in order to prove your identity. You can also ask different social service providers if their address can be used for you in your voting process. Community organizations can also use their address and organize people who use their services to vote.

Here are some of the ways you can prove your identity and address at the polls:

1. To prove your identity (name), you can show a piece of ID with your name on it, like a fishing license, library card, social insurance card (SIN card), birth certificate or Veterans Affairs Canada Health Identification Card. If you don't have a piece of ID, there are ID clinics at social service agencies in many communities that can help you get one.
2. To prove your address, you can show an official letter called a "Letter of Confirmation of Residence." If you have gone to a shelter for food or lodging, you can ask the shelter administrator for this letter.
3. If you don't have documents to prove your identity and address, you can swear a written oath of residence, attested to by another elector. That person has to be an eligible elector in the same polling division as you, and he or she must show authorized documents that prove his or her identity and address.

Taken from:

<http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=faq&document=faqvoting&lang=e#a4>

CAN I VOTE IF I LIVE ON RESERVE?

Some reserves have polling stations or have them close by, depending on the size. People who are registered voters will receive correspondence from Elections Canada letting them know where to go. If your Band Council permits a polling station on reserve, you can vote there. If there's no polling station on reserve, there is one nearby where you're eligible to vote if you've been enumerated (added to the voters' roster).

CAN I VOTE IF I AM MIGRANT OR ON A TEMPORARY VISA?

You cannot vote in a federal election unless the government considers you a "Canadian citizen". There are municipalities across Canada currently changing their policy so that those with Permanent Residency can vote in municipal elections. Whether or not you are able to vote you can still influence people running in your region.

Political candidates and MPs seem to agree to anything asked in private by a constituent during an election period. How do we ensure that these are not just empty words?

Ask for something realistic, and know that the highest value-add is to educate the candidate and turn them into a supporter or local champion for your cause. Local candidates are at the whim of the voter. You hold the power. You may ask a local candidate to pass a resolution, but don't let him bring you somewhere far from your goal. During the pre-election, only numbers matter. Political platforms are a must on a national level as it is important to know what is the agenda of each party to better invest your advocacy efforts, but getting back to numbers is essential.

Don't go after something unattainable, such as a weak or "in-words-only" resolution, instead make yourself known as a stakeholder and follow up with them after they get elected. If you take time to make them understand the issues, you have created a champion—they can inform their colleagues what the issue is all about. In some of these parties, few people know about the issues. Your objective is to help more decision-makers understand the issue from your perspective.

For example, you may list concrete demands to them with actions that they can take. You can ask them to do something, or ask them to stop doing something. For example, "We would like you to revisit the new criminalizations against prostitution within your political party." Or, "We would like you to not enforce the new sex-work related laws." Be simple and clear and try to get a formal commitment from them so you can monitor them in the future.

Do public polls tell me anything about who is going to win an election?

Polls can be complicated. As we know, only certain perspectives are represented in polls and they aren't usually minority perspectives. However, they often do represent the majority views of the people that go out to vote, which often do not include minorities. Also, depending on media reports, polls and other factors, you cannot trust polls until the very end. A lot of people change their mind in the voting booth—people's minds might change over time as they get a better understanding of the candidates and what changes they do and don't stand for. Nonetheless, polls can be a good indicator of where the public stands at a given moment. If a poll comes out today, however, it's telling you where people stood one week ago.

What about strategic voting like vote splitting?

Vote splitting is when someone decides to vote for a party that may be gaining favour, in order to ensure another party gaining favour does not win. For example, some people will suggest who to vote for in a particular region, simply to defeat Conservatives. This alone is not strategic. Instead, you need to be in constant contact with politicians to inform them of what is going on—party members are not useful to us unless they understand our issues. Getting rid of Conservatives and replacing with Liberals or NDP members who don't know your issue doesn't benefit you. Take 10 minutes a day to reach out to politicians and inform them about what's going on in your communities. In the end, some people will vote strategically, others will not. This depends on where you live, something we can look at from some of the vulnerable target ridings. For example, some ridings are decided by a slim margin of votes, so you may want to look to the polls for a vague picture of how to vote strategically before you cast your vote.

What if I want to put energy into someone's campaign? How can I help my local champions win?

You can help your local champion by campaigning with them, or if your local champion is popular in the polls and a sure bet to win, then you may want to put your energy into someone else's campaign to build more champions for our cause. This can include campaigning door-to-door, canvassing to speak with undecided voters, phoning people on behalf of the candidate to remind them on voting day, volunteering to arrange/staff fundraisers, asking people to put up lawn signs, organizing transportation on voting day—all of this is arranged through the campaign office.

How do political parties develop their position and strategy (platform) on particular issues? Is there a way to input on these platforms?

Each party has various thematic committees—there are about 10 people on each committee, and only 4 of those people and the party leader actually make decisions based on talking to the party and caucus. Behind the scenes, critics are tasked with meeting stakeholders, making recommendations, and they are part of developing the platform—the pen lies with senior staff. You can write a letter to political parties requesting that our issue be a part of their platform. Each platform comes down to 3-4 themes. Try and fit our issue within one of these themes.

Can I gather a list of influential MPs who have the ear of the party leaders?

Absolutely. Making a list of MPs that have the most influence within their party is a good strategy to help prioritize your advocacy efforts. You may want to start by approaching critics within each party as they are in a better position to influence each thematic committee.

What does it mean if there is a minority government?

A minority government is one that wins the most seats in the House of Commons, but not a majority of them. For example, there are currently 308 seats in the House of Commons—if the seats are split 140-100-68, the party with 140 seats is a minority government.

That means if the opposition's parties disagree with the minority government, they can together win a vote against them. People often talk about "no confidence" votes with a minority government—certain votes, if lost by a minority government, can trigger an election.

For example, if the Conservative Government wins a minority election, this means that Liberal, Green and NDP parties could pass legislation through the House of Commons with balance of power to get rid of, say, parts of the new sex work related laws. If there is a minority government, there will likely be another federal election in 2017-18, because the opposition parties can topple a minority and force an election.

What is a coalition government? What are the implications of this?

A Coalition government is created when two parties combine themselves to change the balance of power. For example, an opposition party joining a minority government to create a majority so that they can win all the battles, or two opposition parties getting together to make a majority, to take control from a minority government.

Depending on how the votes divide up, each party will do whatever it can to maximize power while staying relatively ideologically consistent (you won't see NDP and Conservatives teaming up). In theory, progressive coalitions are great.

In the event of a Conservative minority, there's also a slim chance the Liberals and NDP would join forces and create a coalition government. This could mean, for instance, that these two parties could work together around repealing sex work related laws. Constant conversations and education with politicians is important in this sense.

Should sex workers approach candidates in the area that they live, or the area that they work?

You could do both; it depends on your capacity. A lot of people work and live in different ridings. This could be a huge resource for a lot of the candidates. You can either approach them as an individual, or you can create a small collective in your area—as a group you will be influential to them.

d) Finding your electoral candidates

To find your MP using your Postal Code:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseofCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu-HOC>

To find your Postal Code:

<http://www.canadapost.ca/cpo/mc/personal/postalcode/fpc.jsf>

Chatting Up Electoral Candidates and MPs Before and During an Election

a) What are the parties saying about Sex Workers' Rights?

Political party official positions on sex work shift over time and depending on the political context. However, they usually maintain a way of thinking about sex work issues.

In 2006, the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws that was represented by each of the 4 major political parties of the time, released a report called "The Challenge of Change: A Study of Canada's Criminal Prostitution Laws." In this report the Liberal, NDP and Bloc Quebecois committee members all viewed prostitution as "a public health issue" and supported harm reduction for sex workers (including sex education, condom distribution, and our Bad Trick and Aggressors lists). They also stated that: "sexual activities between consenting adults that do not harm others, whether or not payment is involved, should not be prohibited by the state." - See more at: <http://www.theinterim.com/issues/marriage-family/political-parties-positions-prostitution/#sthash.2BtFELvd.dpuf>

Since that time some of the parties have refined their positions.



CONSERVATIVE RESOLUTION ON SEX WORK, AS OF 2014

- i) The Conservative Party rejects the concept of legalizing the purchase of sex;
- ii) The Conservative Party declares that human beings are not objects to be enslaved, bought or sold; and
- iii) The Conservative Party of Canada shall develop a Canada specific plan to target the purchasers of sex and human trafficking markets through criminalizing the purchase of sex as well as the acts of any third party attempting to profit from the purchase of sex.

RESOLUTION ON SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS FROM NDP, NOVEMBER 2012

WHEREAS Canadian values include respect for Human and Labour Rights of all persons, including the right to life, liberty, security, equality and freedom of expression and association as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;

WHEREAS an unacceptable number of sex workers in Canada have experienced extreme violence, murder or have become 'missing persons';

WHEREAS the current legal framework has caused many Canadian communities and neighbourhoods to experience tensions, conflicts and disruptions—often pitting neighbour against neighbour;

WHEREAS adult sex workers have the right to live and work in conditions that are safe, healthy and free from violence and discrimination;

WHEREAS social science and public health research in Canada has found that criminalization of adult sex work endangers sex workers and deprive them of the means of preventing coercion and violence, as well as constituting a barrier to sex workers' ability to protect their safety and health;

WHEREAS Canadian courts, the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws and the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry each concluded that criminalization of sex workers increases the violence perpetrated against them.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the federal NDP will:

- Advocate for the Rights and safety of sex workers;
- Work with all stakeholders to end exploitation and violence;
- Condemn the countless number of assaults, murders and 'missing-persons' disappearances continuing to be perpetrated on Canadian sex workers;
- Recognize that the current legal framework places sex workers in unacceptably dangerous situations;
- Within the above framework, oppose the enactment of legislation that prohibits the purchase or sale of adult sexual services given that evidence shows such laws increase the risk of violence and other harms to sex workers;
- Work, in consultation with sex workers, affected communities, police, justice officials and other stakeholders to identify and repeal those sections of the Criminal Code of Canada pertaining to adult activities involving sex work that undermine the rights to life, liberty, security, health, equality and freedom of expression and association of sex workers; and carry out this work through an evidenced-based, human rights, and labour rights approach.
- Call for a federal strategy that encompasses prevention, education, harm reduction, and safety for sex workers and affected local communities, including safe exit strategies, addressing critical issues that affect the freedom to choose one's work, including conditions of poverty, discrimination, inequality, poor housing and under/un-employment.

* Take note of the Supreme Court of Canada decision of Bedford vs Canada pertaining to this issue.



GREEN PARTY POSITION 2015

4.11.2 Protecting rights of sex trade workers

In a landmark ruling in the Bedford case in December 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Canada's current prostitution laws violated the Charter rights of sex trade workers. The horror of the serial killing of prostitutes on Vancouver's streets, with a trail leading to the Pickton pig farm that should have been found years earlier, woke up many Canadians to the severity of the problem.

Canada's laws drove sex trade workers into the shadows. Prostitution was not illegal but living on the avails of prostitution was. That strange formula meant it was not legal for sex trade workers to set up screening for clients through others, nor to have security or to operate a safe and health-conscious brothel. The Supreme Court ruled that the laws undermined the rights of sex trade workers to be secure from violence, and it gave Parliament one year to find a solution before striking down the status quo laws.

The War on Drugs has been a failure; current laws with respect to prostitution and those proposed by the Conservatives are also guaranteed to fail. While the Green Party does not promote prostitution, we seek to find a solution of 'minimum harm'.

Too many women and men become involved in the sex trade due to human trafficking and we are also systematically failing the most marginal in our society who are drawn into the sex trade due to poverty. But when arguments about prostitution become conflated with issues of human trafficking the result is to fail both issues. Human trafficking is already illegal. Finding and liberating those held under conditions of indentured servitude, whether in sweat shops or by pimps, is a priority. More resources are needed. But attempting to make prostitution illegal will not help find and protect those victim to human trafficking.

It is recognized that a Basic Income, as recommended under our poverty elimination program, would provide an economic alternative to those being lured into the sex trade. We also recognize that some people have chosen, absent coercion or disadvantage, to be sex trade workers. There is a reason it is called the 'world's oldest profession.' Stamping out prostitution through harsher laws is a recipe for disaster. It is also unlikely to survive a Charter challenge.

Forcing sex work further into the shadows is not a solution.

We need to undertake legal reform in Canada with a focus on harm reduction, and we can learn a lot, both positive and negative, from countries that have decriminalized prostitution so that the safety of sex trade workers is improved.

The Green Party of Canada has advocated for comprehensive Criminal Code reform that removes criminal sanctions and develops regulations for legal prostitution between consenting adults.

Green Party MPs will:

- Repeal C-36 (the so-called 'Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act') and pass legislation that makes sense based on the New Zealand model;
- Protect the rights of sex trade workers and ensure their safety;
- Enhance the fight against human trafficking;
- Provide greater investment in addiction counseling;
- Provide more robust funding for social services to help those driven to prostitution by economic deprivation;
- Provide enhanced counseling and educational services to assist people trapped in the sex trade through poverty or addiction;
- Provide financial assistance for sex trade workers who want to find different employment.



BRITISH COLUMBIA YOUNG LIBERALS, POSITION ON SEX WORK AS OF 2013

In 2013, the British Columbia Young Liberals passed a resolution:

“Protecting the Rights of Sex Trade Workers” demanding that the Liberal Party introduce a bill to permit “sex trade workers” to “secure all materials and spaces required to run a safe and successful business.” The resolution was adopted by the federal party’s B.C. branch so that it could be debated in the February 2014 policy convention. When asked about the resolution in January, Liberal leader Justin Trudeau expressed reservations, stating that “we need to make sure that we are finding a way to keep vulnerable Canadians protected from violence that surrounds prostitution but also is intrinsic to prostitution.” The resolution was withdrawn before the convention to amend it to realities. For more see: <http://www.theinterim.com/issues/marriage-family/political-parties-positions-prostitution/#sthash.zBtFELvd.dpuf>



QUÉBEC SOLIDAIRE (PROVINCIAL PARTY IN QUEBEC), MAY 2015.

Dignity and respect of prostitutes/sex workers

Québec Solidaire: a) recognizes that prostitution / sex work is in several respects a social problem; b) considers that the search for solutions must be done in a non-partisan environment; c) intends to establish the favourable conditions for obtaining a social consensus on the measures to be introduced in this area; d) participates actively in seeking consensus on the basis of its progressive and feminist values.

Québec Solidaire will ensure that all measures, legislative or otherwise, designed to regulate prostitution/sex work, prioritize the human rights of prostitutes/sex workers (which is to life, safety, dignity, and freedom) and ensure the consequences of these measures are not human rights violations.

Regarding such rights, we must:

- a) recognize and support prostitutes / sex workers and workers as the main actors of social, political, and legislative change that concerns them;
- b) decriminalize prostitutes and sex workers, as well as third parties who play a security role, and denounce all forms of harassment and profiling by police services;
- c) fight in order to eliminate violence, exploitation (in particular by pimps) and the lack of full consent that may be present in prostitution/sex work;
- d) establish and promote social support and economic alternatives to entry into prostitution/sex work as well as for people who wish to leave;
- e) raise awareness and educate people, and men in particular, on: i. the stigma that prostitutes/sex workers live with; ii. the risk of violence against these people and the harassment they may suffer; iii. the risk of violence and harassment against others who are not prostitutes/sex workers, for example, women who are approached for sexual services on the streets of some neighbourhoods;
- f) encourage and support initiatives to establish harmonious coexistence between prostitutes/sex workers and citizens residing in the neighbourhoods where these activities take place;
- g) promote action research on the situation for prostitutes/sex workers;
- h) support for prostitutes/sex workers who want to organize and define their needs.

b) Making links with other issues

It's important to make links with other issues, particularly as sex work will not be an election issue in 2015. This is a good opportunity to not force parties to take a position on things if they aren't ready, but to demonstrate the current way law and order agendas are playing out and how law and order agendas move through many of the bills put forward by current government. This is particularly a good way to demonstrate how the current government is not respecting the health and Human Rights of Canadians.

For example in 2014 and 2015 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled on many other Human Rights issues, besides striking down three of Canada's major prostitution provisions in *Bedford*. In addition, there are other Human Rights issues that are currently on the political table because of Bills that the Conservative government is trying to push through parliament. Some of these Human Rights issues demonstrate or lend insight into party views on Human Rights in general. Study and research those views and talk with party members about all of these important Human Rights issues. They intersect with each other and represent party perspectives.

These are some examples of Human Rights issues that have come before both the Supreme Court of Canada and parliament. Making links with these issues demonstrates the importance of Human Rights issues and the role of law and order agendas for marginalized communities. They also demonstrate the impact of law and order agendas and how they intersect with the Human Rights of communities.

CREATE LINKS WITH OTHER BILLS:

- "Trans Rights Bill". An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (Gender Identity): Bill C279: <https://openparliament.ca/bills/41-1/C-279/>
- Zero Tolerance for Barbaric and Cultural Practices Act: Bill S7 <http://openparliament.ca/bills/41-2/S-7/>
- "Supervised Injection Sites Bill": An Act to Amend the Controlled Drug and Substances Act. Bill C-2. <http://openparliament.ca/bills/41-2/C-2/>
- The *Carter v. Canada* Supreme Court decision on the "Right to die with dignity" struck down Section 241 of the Criminal Code that made it illegal for people to aid or abet a person committing suicide. Like *Bedford*, the Supreme Court gave parliament one year to respond. Government is likely to create legislation and this will be a hot issue with the next ruling government. <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/14637/index.do>
- Anti-Terrorism Act. Bill C-51. <http://openparliament.ca/bills/41-2/C-51/>

c) Things to keep in mind when talking about sex work to MPs

- 1 How does the issue fit their world view/framework—philosophical and political? Tailor your message and strategy to fit what you know about their general positioning. E.g., are they generally against government interference in people's lives? Do they have a business perspective? Do they talk about Rights/equality/marginalized groups/feminism frequently?
- 2 How does the issue fit the facts, as they know them? Either work within those facts or, if possible, present new facts. However, they must trust the source of these new facts if they are going to believe them—and the source must compare favourably with the source of the old facts. Don't discount your first-hand experience just because it's not a published study. You're a primary resource.

- 3 How does the issue fit with their electoral riding/constituent group? There is always a political consideration. Someone could be personally pro-choice but represent a riding with a strong anti-choice (“pro-life”) presence. Show how it fits their electoral riding/constituent base. Produce surveys, polls. What’s right for their constituents? Getting an opinion leader from their riding is a great tactic—local high school principal, head of a business association, etc.
- 4 How does the issue fit with his/her own ambition? How will the position they take on this issue impact where they want to be/go with their political (or other) career and how they want to get there? E.g., someone who wants to position themselves or who identifies as a maverick/indie relative to their party might want to take a bolder or even oppositional position to their party; or someone who is interested in running for party leadership might be more likely to avoid controversial or divisive issues, or change their former position to be mainstream, etc.
- 5 How does the issue fit with what their colleagues are thinking/doing? Affinity is often a big decider. They want to be doing what like-minded colleagues are doing.
- 6 How does the issue fit with what elite persuaders/opinion drivers are saying? What do other people they know and/or trust say about this? Especially those perceived to have certain political/moral/social standing.
- 7 How does the issue fit with their past voting/position/campaign promise record? They value consistency for political and rational reasons. This can be specific to the issue at hand or more general in regards to similar issues or types of issues. When sex work is such a central political issue at times, some legislators will have a position on this and have made it public, so they are unlikely to shift their (public) stance, at least not in a significant way. But they might be persuaded to take a softer position on a small, well-defined issue, especially if it meshes with some of their other known positions.
- 8 How does the issue fit with personal experience (as they perceive it)? Their personal experiences and those of the people close to them can have a huge impact.
- 9 How does the issue fit with the bigger political context? E.g., not voting a certain way if it will bring down the government, or if they have agreed to vote a certain way in exchange for a colleague’s vote on another issue.
- 10 Who’s been informing their perspective so far? Are they in close touch with anti-sex work organizations? Or are they close to grassroots community groups that support our positions?
- 11 How do you make your perspective seem rational to them? Be a good, active listener. What are they really saying? If you understand that, you can find a way to work with it. Create the conditions in which the decision to support you is the rational one. Make voting with you the easiest path for the candidate.
- 12 Provide them with statistics and research to help them understand our issue.
- 13 Be clear in your demands from them—provide short and long term goals while explaining how their support will benefit them in the long run.

Taking Action in an Election Year: Create Advocacy Opportunities!

a) Drawing attention to your community's needs

- ✓ Make our issue a conversation while taking regional differences into consideration—what matters in Toronto won't matter in Kelowna etc., issues are not likely to resonate in rural Canada as much as in DTES (Vancouver). For example, the *Bedford* case gave a much-needed visibility to the needs of people currently working in the sex industry, and sex work became part of the national conversation. Feed on the momentum and continue to make our national issue a local issue.
- ✓ Go to debates amongst candidates; make use of the opportunities to ask questions. Being there, involved in the process, you can get up and ask questions about where they stand on our issues, to highlight that the issue is important and gather info on what candidates are thinking.
- ✓ Volunteer on a candidate's campaign. It's a good way to learn and to be heard.
- ✓ Develop relationships with all local candidates: Talk to and educate ALL the candidates, not just the incumbent MPs. You can do this by calling or emailing the campaign office to ask for a meeting or by walking into the campaign office and asking to speak with them.
- ✓ Find champions: Anyone from local city councilors, local celebrities/media personalities, and heads of organizations, whoever is a recognizable Canadian, locally, provincially. Who are people who have "louder" voices that people are going to listen to, that they can use to get people to listen to our issues? If we work in lock step with those who get more mention in the media, our issues will also get more mention in the media.
- ✓ Mobilize your community and demonstrate to politicians that you are organized! You may be the important sway vote that will influence the results of an election, particularly when the margin of win between candidates is so slim.
- ✓ Ask politicians if they need your help drafting policy around sex work. Often parties will be open to this, as they know very little about the issue. All they have to do is sign on!

b) Writing Legislative Letters

- ✓ Make sure you address your letter with the appropriate salutation (e.g., Honorable, Mayor, etc.)
- ✓ Write a distinct letter for each party, even if the demands are the same. Every party has its own language so justification and reasoning for your demand may be different.
- ✓ Research the party policy in advance so that you know where the party interests lie. For example, are they concerned about a free market or freedom of sexuality? Protecting the “vulnerable”? Relate your demands to the party’s interests. Demonstrate to them where their fundamental values or positions are in line with your demands, and that anything contrary demonstrates a contradiction in their politics.
- ✓ Identify clear short and long term goals and demands for policy around sex work. Try to make short-term goals measurable and achievable so that you can monitor the party’s progress and how they support you.
- ✓ Use statistics and research in your letter to support what you are saying.
- ✓ Follow up after sending your letter and arrange a meeting.

Action Example: Letter to Prime Minister of Canada:

http://www.aidslaw.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/PM_jt-ltr_C36-7Jul2014.pdf

Action Example: Letter from the legal community to Ontario Premier and Attorney General re: Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act:

http://www.aidslaw.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Letter-from-legal-profession-to-Ont-Premier-and-AG_final-DEC17.pdf

Action Example: The Street Nurses’ Network wrote to their Mayor of Toronto John Tory to oppose new laws after they were enacted in December:

<http://twitdoc.com/view.asp?id=167484&sid=3L8C&ext=PDF&lcl=SNN-C-36.pdf&usr=EmmaFFerguson&doc=249987043&key=key-aVIdmvf5ouCWlvj5nDPK>

Canadian Alliance for
Sex Work Law Reform

Alliance Canadienne pour
la Réforme des Lois sur
le Travail du Sexe

*This is what a
sample letter may
look like*

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT/CANDIDATE NAME
RIDING NAME
ADDRESS
CITY/PROVINCE
EMAIL ADDRESS

Dear MINISTER/MP/CANDIDATE,

I am contacting you as a constituent to discuss ISSUE as it is of great importance to me and my ASSOCIATION NAME *(if applicable)*.

(if applicable) As you may know, ASSOCIATION NAME advocates for.....

We were deeply concerned over the new prostitution laws (Bill C-36) and their implications on the local sex work community and constituents within this riding.

We are contacting you today to ask that.....

Specifically, our organization is looking for you to do the following:

- 1) ...
- 2) ...
- 3) ...

I would like to emphasize that C-36 does not address the goal of....

In fact, it does the following....

In our experience to date with local police, authorities etc....

We hope to hear directly from you about your position on this and what you hope to do should you be elected/re-elected as our Member of Parliament.

We would also like to invite you to visit us, have a phone conversation, or a meeting at your office to engage in a broader discussion around OUTLINE ISSUES.

Should you have any immediate questions, please contact us [HERE](#).

On behalf of ASSOCIATION, we wish you the best of luck in the upcoming election.

NAME
ASSOCIATION

Sex Workers, Organizations and Individuals Advocating for Sex Workers' Rights and Community Well-Being
Travailleuses(rs) du Sexe, Organismes, et Individus pour les droits des Travailleuses(rs) du sexe et Bien-être de la Communauté

www.sexworklawreform.com



Sex work is not just about sex

Stop criminalization of sex work

Criminalization prevents reporting

Decriminalize sex work

What's best for sex workers?
Ask a sex worker!

Canadians want to be champions in Human Rights, not losers

