

# DefendDignity

December 4, 2015

The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Justice

House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario

K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

First of all, congratulations on your appointment as Justice Minister, Attorney General of Canada.

Defend Dignity works to end all forms of sexual exploitation in Canada. [www.defenddignity.ca](http://www.defenddignity.ca) We were privileged to appear before the Justice and Human Rights Committee in July, 2014, as they deliberated the proposed prostitution legislation.

I am writing this just ahead of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. In recognition of this day, I am writing to encourage "Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act" (PCEPA) be upheld. Defend Dignity believes that this legislation recognizes that prostitution is violence against women. To ensure the safety of women, all buyers, profiteers, pimps, and advertisers must be held accountable.

PCEPA acknowledges that the purchasing of sexual services drives prostitution. Male violence towards prostituted women is well documented. The only way to stop this violence is to change the behaviours and thinking of men. Normalizing and condoning prostitution will not do that. Therefore, we believe this legislation addresses violence by criminalizing the purchase of sex. To ensure the full implementation of the law, we encourage crown attorneys and police across Canada be given clear direction and training on PCEPA and the realities of prostitution.

Defend Dignity also asks that the criminal records of prostituted women be fully expunged so that they do not experience any barriers in seeking employment or housing. In our experience with survivors, criminal records serve as road blocks for leaving prostitution and entering main stream society.

Defend Dignity would be open to dialoguing with you about the removal of sub-section 213 (1.1). "Communicating for the purposes of offering or providing sexual services for consideration in public places that are or are next to school grounds, playgrounds or daycare centres." In general, prostituted people offering sexual services near these locations are among the most marginalized and vulnerable. PCEPA recognizes that the vast majority of individuals in prostitution are not there by way of choice, but rather as a result of poverty, economic constraint, marginalization, racialization, abuse or coercion. Charging them further stigmatizes and places barriers in their path to leave prostitution.

In order for PCEPA to be most successful, those who are prostituted must be provided with viable options and alternatives. We need to address the social conditions that drive individuals to prostitution or make them vulnerable to it, and we need to help those who are in to get out.

When the legislation was introduced, the previous government made an initial commitment of \$20 million to support programs and services assisting individuals in exiting prostitution. I hope you will consider not only renewing this commitment to financial support for exit supports and services, but also translating it to increased, long-term sustained federal funding to help ensure that every individual who wants to exit prostitution has access to the resources and supports they need.

Thank you for recognizing the violence and harms of prostitution by upholding Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act. Thank you in advance for providing long-term funding to those exiting prostitution.

I look forward to working with this government. I would also be pleased to receive a response from you.

Sincerely,

Director of Defend Dignity