



PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Women are not for Sale

Ottawa, ON, (March 24th 2014) In December 2013 the Supreme Court of Canada found portions of the criminal laws relating to prostitution unconstitutional and held that the declaration of invalidity was suspended for 12 months to give Parliament an opportunity to put new laws in place. Parliament must respond to this decision in 2014 in a manner consistent with its constitutional and international obligations to protect and promote the equality of women.

We are organizations with decades of experience advocating for the rights of women in Canada. Our member organizations (listed below) provide front line crisis and anti-violence services, representation and advocacy for women and girls who are or have been prostituted, who are criminalized and incarcerated in relation to prostitution, who are trying to escape prostitution, who are targeted for prostitution, and who have been subject to male violence, including prostitution.

Our organizations came together as the Women's Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution to intervene in the constitutional challenge and to assert publicly, based on our knowledge and experience, that prostitution is a system of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, poverty and Indigeneity, and a practice of violence against women.

We are deeply concerned that the Supreme Court's decision, while recognizing that women in prostitution face severe danger and limited choices, has the effect of decriminalizing the very johns and profiteers who are the source of the harms and exploitation. We believe that is contrary to the human rights of all women to allow the buying of women's bodies with impunity and the ability of third parties to profit from that sale. Experience tells us that decriminalizing the demand for prostitution will increase that demand substantially. To meet that demand, the most vulnerable are targeted, including youth, Aboriginal women and girls, and trafficked women.

The Women's Coalition endorses a legal and public policy approach to prostitution that has the following three essential components:

- strategies to discourage the demand for prostitution, including public education;
- decriminalization of prostituted persons and criminalization of johns and pimps (with a range of possible sentences); and
- comprehensive supports to provide women with real alternatives to prostitution including funding for exit programs.

The following members of the Women's Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution and allies will be present to speak with the members of the media:

Members of the Women's Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution:

Native Women's Association of Canada

Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies

Action ontarienne contre la violence faites aux femmes

Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter

Regroupement québécois des centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel

Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle

Sextrade 101

Indigenous Women Against the Sex Industry

Asian Women Coalition Ending Prostitution

EVE – Formerly exploited voices now educating

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of First Nations and Métis women within First Nation, Métis and Canadian societies. As a national organization representing Aboriginal women since 1974, NWAC's mandate is to achieve equality for all Aboriginal women in Canada.

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For additional information please contact:

Kim Pate, Executive Director, CAEFS

Tel.: 1-800-637-4606

kpate@web.ca

Claudette Dumont-Smith, NWAC Executive Director

Tel.: 1-800-461-4043

cdumontsmith@nwac.ca

www.nwac.ca

