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Not Up to the Challenge of Change: An analysis of the report of the Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws

■ Introduction

“The Challenge of Change,” the December 2006 report of the House of Commons Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws, was aptly named — the Subcommittee failed to meet the challenge of recommending legislative changes that are urgently needed to protect and fulfill the health, safety and human rights of adult sex workers in Canada.

The Subcommittee was mandated by Parliament to review and recommend changes to the prostitution-related sections of Canada’s *Criminal Code* in order to improve the safety of sex workers, and reduce the exploitation and violence they experience. Sadly, the Subcommittee missed its mark — its final report does not address how certain *Criminal Code* provisions, and the way in which they are enforced, push sex workers into situations that put their health and safety at risk and leave them open to stigma and discrimination, violence, and possible exposure to HIV. Instead, the report focuses too much attention on the sexual exploitation of children and human trafficking — problems that are already adequately addressed by the *Criminal Code* and that have little to do with the murders and disappearances of sex workers in Canada or the relentless day-to-day abuses they face.

The Subcommittee’s devaluation of human rights is unacceptable and undermines the idea that all people in Canada are deserving of equal respect and dignity. Rather than seeing the fulfillment of human rights as a baseline standard to be met by all Canadian laws, the report characterizes human rights — particularly those of sex workers — as just one “philosophy” of sex work.

This paper critiques the Subcommittee’s report in detail. It also summarizes the Legal Network’s analysis of the

criminal law’s impact on sex workers and calls on federal politicians to show real leadership by standing up for the human rights of sex workers in Canada.

Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws

In February 2003, in response to scores of brutal killings and disappearances of sex workers in Vancouver and Edmonton, the House of Commons resolved unanimously to review Canada’s criminal laws related to sex work. The Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws was created “to review the solicitation laws in order to improve the safety of sex-trade workers and communities overall, and to recommend changes that will reduce the exploitation and violence against sex-trade workers.”¹ The Subcommittee was composed of six members of Parliament: two from the Conservative Party, two from the Liberal Party, and one each from the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Québécois.

The Subcommittee was charged with

- understanding the ways in which the prostitution-related sections of the *Criminal Code* fail to prevent — or even contribute to — human rights abuses against sex workers; and
- recommending ways to address these abuses.

The Subcommittee’s mandate was nothing less than a matter of life and death for sex workers. By the Subcommittee’s own reckoning, the deaths and disappearances of sex workers were only the most heinous

manifestation of the violence and abuse that remain part of sex workers' daily reality and increase their risk of HIV infection.

The Subcommittee was also charged with looking at ways to improve the safety of communities in which prostitution takes place.

The Subcommittee reviewed published literature, heard testimony from about 300 witnesses in public hearings in

- problem of trafficking in persons remains a priority.
3. That the Government of Canada “recognize that the status quo with respect to Canada’s laws dealing with prostitution is unacceptable, and that the laws that exist are unequally applied.”
 4. That the Government of Canada establish and develop education campaigns to prevent people from entering prostitution, and “develop exit strategies to assist those involved in prostitution who wish to leave in regaining control of their lives.”

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Ottawa, Toronto, Montréal, Halifax, Vancouver, Edmonton and Winnipeg, and met in camera to debate its report. Witnesses included sex workers, academic and legal researchers, policy experts, social service and health workers, police officers, and private citizens.

Report of the Subcommittee

The Subcommittee’s report presents evidence related to

- sex workers’ experience of violence;
- the demographics of prostitution in Canada;
- sex trafficking;
- the impact of sex work on communities;
- the historical evolution and enforcement of prostitution law in Canada; and
- the experiences of some other countries.

The report underlines that prostitution — exchanging sex for money — is legal in Canada, but virtually every activity required to do this work is illegal.² As a result, it is impossible to be a sex worker in Canada without breaking the law and risking arrest and criminal prosecution.

Throughout its report, the Subcommittee presents two “philosophies” of sex work into which it says most witnesses divided themselves: “sex work as victimization” and “sex work as work.”³ The Subcommittee members admit that they failed to bridge the irreconcilable “philosophical” differences between these philosophies. Nonetheless, the report includes six unanimous recommendations, one majority recommendation (supported by all but the Conservative members), and a Conservative dissent to the majority recommendation, all of which are summarized below.

Unanimous recommendations

1. That the Government of Canada ensure that the commercial sexual exploitation of minors “remains a serious crime subject to severe penalties.”
2. That the Government of Canada ensure that the

5. That the Government of Canada fund research on sex work “to obtain a clearer picture of prostitution activities in the country, the associated problems, and the needs of people involved in those activities,” and that it conduct a legal analysis of the *Criminal Code* provisions related to sex work.
6. That the Department of Justice “coordinate research on prostitution on a priority basis with other levels of government, institutions, and non-governmental organizations, as well as persons selling sexual services.”

Majority recommendation

The Liberal, New Democratic and Bloc Québécois members of the Subcommittee “strongly believe that prostitution is above all a public health issue, and not only a criminal law issue” (p. 89). They propose a “pragmatic approach” that would include services for those who wish to exit prostitution, as well as “harm reduction measure[s] to address the underlying concerns of poverty and social inequality and to meet the needs of individuals engaged in prostitution with respect to their health and safety (including sex education, distribution of condoms, bad date list, etc.)” Their recommendation (no. 7 in the report)

calls for concrete efforts to be made immediately to improve the safety of individuals selling sexual services and assist them in exiting prostitution if they are not there by choice. In addition, the federal government should consider increasing transfer payments to the provinces to enable them to provide significant resources for income support, education and training, poverty alleviation and treatment for addictions, while respecting provincial areas of jurisdiction (p. 89).

The majority members assert that the current legal framework for sex work in Canada is contradictory, as sex work is legal but impossible to practise without breaking the law. They say “the Canadian government must come to terms with this contradiction and the inefficiency of the law, and engage in a process of law reform that will consider changes to laws pertaining to prostitution” (p. 89), but they

do not make concrete recommendations in this regard. They conclude that “sexual activities between consenting adults that do not harm others ... should not be prohibited by the state” (p. 90). General provisions of the *Criminal Code* should be relied on to target “exploitation and violence in the context of prostitution, rather than criminalizing consenting adults who engage in sexual activities for money” (p. 90).

Minority dissent

The Conservative members of the Subcommittee essentially asserted their agreement with the paradigm of “sex work as victimization” described above, noting that “the most realistic, compassionate and responsible approach to dealing with prostitution begins by viewing most prostitutes as victims” (p. 90). They question whether there is real consent to sex work — that is “how often ‘consent’ is truly given out of choice, and not necessity” (p. 90). Moreover, they assert that “because of the negative elements it attracts, prostitution is unacceptable in any location” (p. 90), whether on the street or in a home or massage parlour.

the ways in which the “communicating” provision of the *Criminal Code* (s. 213, see analysis on pp. 52–55) puts sex workers under constant threat of arrest, meaning they often do not have time to assess the risk of taking a particular client or to negotiate terms. Significantly, the Subcommittee report recognizes that “witnesses nearly universally stated that section 213 is not an effective tool for achieving the Subcommittee’s mandate relating to the safety of prostitutes and communities” (p. 52).

The Subcommittee, however, failed to respond meaningfully in its report to the pervasive harassment and violence experienced by sex workers. In its only recommendation on this subject (no. 3) — barely a recommendation at all — the Subcommittee unanimously urged the federal government simply to “recognize” the inadequacy of the status quo. The majority urged the government to “come to terms” with the contradictory and counterproductive nature of the law and to reform it. But the report does not contain a single proposal for concrete legislative reforms, even though this was the core of the Subcommittee’s job.

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They regard the *Criminal Code* provisions on sex work as imperfect but “believe that marginalization [of prostitutes] is not a function of the laws themselves but of attempts to circumvent them” (p. 91). They call for reforms that would criminalize the “abusers (johns and pimps)” and “improve the ability of those engaged in prostitution — the victims — to quit” (p. 91). They reject the majority recommendation (no. 7) on the grounds that “it enables prostitutes to remain in a dangerous and degrading lifestyle” (p. 91).

Critique of the report

The report fails to discharge the Subcommittee’s mandate with respect to the safety of sex workers. Our concerns are summarized below.

Failing to recommend necessary *Criminal Code* reforms

The Subcommittee’s report summarizes some of the compelling evidence, including voluminous peer-reviewed academic research, of the dangers faced by sex workers in Canada, and the way in which the *Criminal Code* and its enforcement contribute to those dangers.

Researchers and sex workers testified that the combined effect of several *Criminal Code* provisions force sex workers to work in dangerous situations with increased risk to their health and safety, including the threat of HIV infection. For example, evidence presented to the Subcommittee detailed

The Subcommittee’s failure to recommend *Criminal Code* reforms is a travesty. Falling back on empty calls for more research (recommendations no. 5 and no. 6) when such research already exists serves only to perpetuate the deadly status quo.

Hiding behind ideology rather than responding to evidence

Throughout its report the Subcommittee pays lip service to the diverse opinions of witnesses, all the while grounding its analysis in two “philosophies” of sex work:

- **Sex work as victimization:** Sex work is inherently victimizing, particularly for women, so no rational adult would consent to engaging in sex work. Therefore, sex work must be eradicated by ensuring that no one enters sex work and by achieving the rescue or exit of sex workers to the greatest degree possible. Those who take this view generally support criminal prohibitions on sex work in order to achieve these ends. Some of those supporting criminal prohibitions believe that eliminating the ‘demand’ side of the industry will eliminate the industry. They therefore believe that the clients of sex workers should be harshly criminalized, but that sex workers themselves, as “victims” of crime, should not.
- **Sex work as work:** Sex work is a legitimate means of generating income. Sex workers deserve the

same legal protections that are enjoyed by people in other trades. The *Criminal Code* provisions on sex work and the way that they are enforced often leave sex workers with little choice but to work on the margins of society where they are vulnerable to violence, exploitation and other threats to their health and safety. Those who take this view see decriminalization of sex work as a necessary step to ending these dangers and abuses and to ensuring that sex workers' human rights are protected.

As a result of relying on this simplistic dichotomy as the foundation of the report, the Subcommittee got caught up in an ultimately unproductive debate. The Subcommittee's report goes to great lengths to give equal consideration to each philosophy and the evidence presented by the putative proponents of each philosophy. Peer-reviewed academic research showing the ways in which criminalization contributes to the abuse of sex workers' human rights is given the same weight as ideologically based testimony that prostitution is the victimization of women that must be combated through criminal prohibition and prosecution. Even as the report presents overwhelming evidence of the harmful effects of the criminal law, it implicitly endorses the view of sex workers as victims and reduces them to people who need to be "protected" by the state, without regard for their right to make their own choices.

This ideological debate may make for interesting discussion but it does not reflect the reality of sex workers' lives. Sex workers presented evidence to the Subcommittee stressing their realities in sex work, not a philosophy about sex work. The Subcommittee fundamentally failed to recognize that

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the core of the "sex work as work" position is an argument for the human rights of sex workers. Sex work is a means of generating income, and sex workers are entitled to work in safe conditions. Sex workers have the same human rights entitlements as everyone else. But instead of seeing this as an unequivocal cornerstone of Canadian law, the Subcommittee's report dismisses the human rights of sex workers as though they were a matter of opinion.

Driven by the fatal results of human rights abuses against sex workers, the Subcommittee was asked to undertake a clearly defined task — weigh evidence and develop policy alternatives to what the Subcommittee itself recognized as the unacceptable status quo. The Subcommittee did not deliver.

Silencing sex workers

Over 100 current and former sex workers testified before the Subcommittee, but their voices and experiences are absent

from the report's recommendations. Among the first-hand accounts heard by the Subcommittee were several from sex workers who attested to having been beaten by police or ignored by police when they sought protection from violent clients. Even so, the report includes no recommendations to reform the *Criminal Code* sections that police sometimes use as licence to harass sex workers on the one hand and to ignore them on the other.

The report embodies the marginalization and discrimination that sex workers face daily — they are seen as part of an "issue" requiring further study, rather than people whose human rights are routinely violated due in part to current laws on prostitution.

Missing the mark

The most unambiguous recommendations in the report are also the most puzzling, since they concern the sexual exploitation of minors and the trafficking of persons — neither of which is included in the Subcommittee's mandate and both of which are already illegal in Canada under the *Criminal Code*.

More to the point, there is no evidence that these were the concerns underlying Parliament's unanimous mandate to the Subcommittee to recommend legal changes to protect the safety of sex workers. Making grand, morally charged pronouncements about sexual exploitation of minors and trafficking of persons was perhaps politically easier for the Subcommittee than confronting the complex and difficult matter of protecting, promoting and fulfilling the human rights of the vast majority of sex workers.



Targeting street-based sex workers

The report clearly recognizes that political attention and police enforcement usually target street-based sex workers, while turning a blind eye to those who work as escorts or in massage parlours. Nevertheless, the report falls into the same trap — it focuses too much on the "nuisances" associated with street-based sex work without grappling seriously with the way in which the *Criminal Code* facilitates this two-tier sex trade and leaves many sex workers with little choice but to work on the streets.

For example, if sex workers want to work from home or in a massage parlour, places where they have more control over their own safety, they risk being charged under the bawdy-house laws (s. 210). But if they choose to work in locations such as clients' hotel rooms or homes, this usually means giving up control over their working situation — and in the

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case of working on the street, they risk being charged with “communicating in public for the purposes of prostitution” (s. 213). This in turn leads sex workers to move to darker, more remote areas, like industrial areas or parks, where there are few people to turn to for help if a client or predator becomes aggressive or violent. None of the recommendations deals with these realities.

Only recommendation no. 3 acknowledges that the existing laws are unequally applied — but it is not clear what the Subcommittee is recommending. Is it recommending further criminalization of indoor sex workers? That the police lay more charges against sex workers working as escorts and in massage parlours, with the predictable result of forcing them from the relative safety of indoor venues to more dangerous venues outdoors on the streets?

Repealing the prostitution-related sections of the *Criminal Code* could permit forms of indoor sex work, thereby providing a safer alternative to working on the street — but the report does not consider this solution. Nor does it examine how the relative impunity accorded by police to indoor sex workers has allowed sex workers to exert greater control over the safety of their working conditions, or how true decriminalization could make this possible for more sex workers.

Targeting clients: the Swedish experience

Though the Conservative members of the Subcommittee endorsed it in their minority opinion, there are relatively few studies of the Swedish law on sex work, which criminalizes those who seek to purchase sexual services rather than those who sell them. The Swedish model is based on the presumption that all sex workers are victims and don't deserve to be punished criminally.

The Subcommittee's report notes the difficulty of discerning the impact of the Swedish law, while downplaying the one extensive report (by the Government of Norway⁴) that shows that the law has had a number of unintended negative consequences, especially for those sex workers who have no indoor place to work. Since the law was passed, street-based sex work has become less visible in some Swedish cities, but sex workers unable to work anywhere except the streets testified that they face more dangerous clients and, because of the law, had less time or leverage to assess the danger⁵ — the same problems now faced by sex workers in Canada. In addition, those sex workers remaining on the street have reportedly become more reliant on pimps to warn them of police presence.

The police in Sweden also reported that prosecuting clients turned out to be extremely difficult. The Subcommittee

itself cited similar evidence (also noted in a December 1998 report by Justice Canada's Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Prostitution): police usually conduct sting operations against sex workers because it is easier for them to pose as clients (p. 54). The Norwegian study of the Swedish experience also concluded that the sex work law gave rise to a new category of crime: women thieves posing as sex workers rob clients, who are hesitant to report the robbery for fear of being prosecuted for purchasing sexual services.⁶

Clearly, the Swedish experience requires more rigorous research and scrutiny before it can be held up as an effective legislative model that protects women in the way suggested by the Subcommittee's minority view.

Hypocrisy on women's rights

The Conservative dissent to the majority recommendation (no. 7, aimed at improving the safety of persons selling sex and assisting those who wish to exit prostitution) is based partly on the conclusion that decriminalizing prostitution “violates the dignity of women” by “signalling that the commodification and invasive exploitation of a woman's body is [*sic*] acceptable” (p. 90).

Yet it is difficult to reconcile the Conservatives' stated concern for women's rights with their \$5 million cut to the budget of Status of Women Canada and its announcement that non-governmental organizations would no longer be eligible for funding for advocacy or research on equal rights of women, a move protested strongly by the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women,⁷ among others. As the Standing Committee noted, these changes to Status of Women Canada undermine “the very basis of our democracy — the ability to advocate on behalf of vulnerable groups.”⁸ To provide one striking example of this, the Subcommittee report recommends that the Government of Canada fund further research on prostitution-related issues in the country (no. 5). The Conservatives' decision to abolish Status of Women Canada's policy research branch eliminates one such opportunity. A research report examining the impact of the procuring law (s. 212) cannot be published by Status of Women Canada due to these funding cuts.⁹

Plus ça change: unacceptable status quo remains

The report states that there have been no detailed legal analyses of the *Criminal Code* provisions related to sex work and their importance for the human rights and safety of sex workers (p. 88) — even though three such analyses

were prepared by organizations that appeared before the Subcommittee.

In 2004, Pivot Legal Society released a report with numerous recommendations for reform to Canada's laws related to the sex trade.¹⁰ In 2005, the Legal Network published a detailed analysis, *Sex, work, rights: reforming Canadian criminal laws on prostitution*, which was presented to the Subcommittee and is cited in its report.¹¹ In 2006, the Sex Trade Advocacy and Research group submitted to the Subcommittee a report analyzing the impact of laws (federal, provincial and municipal) on the health, safety and well-being of sex workers.¹² The main conclusions of *Sex, work, rights*, which are summarized below, resulted from legal and policy analysis of the kind that the Subcommittee was mandated to take on, but failed to undertake:

- Even though sex work per se is not illegal in Canada, criminalization of the activities covered in sections 210 to 213 of the *Criminal Code* reinforces stigma associated with prostitution and pushes sex workers to the margins of society. It dehumanizes sex workers by taking away their fundamental rights to equal benefit and protection of the law, reinforcing the attitude that sex workers “deserve what they get” when they are violently abused or murdered and making it more difficult for them to seek the
- Section 212 of the *Criminal Code* prohibits “procuring” and “living on the avails of prostitution” and was meant to target pimping and other exploitation in sex work. “Procuring” makes it difficult for sex workers to work together (should they wish to do so for their own safety) and “living on the avails” casts the shadow of possible criminal charges over anyone who regularly spends time with a sex worker, including a sex worker’s spouse or partner, family members, roommates or

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protective services of police. It hobbles sex workers with criminal records that make it hard for them to get other work (or housing or other basic needs), and it traps them in a vicious cycle of working more (or working more riskily for more money) to pay fines associated with arrests.

- As discussed above, sections 210 and 211 of the *Criminal Code* (on keeping or transporting a person to a bawdy-house) leave sex workers with no place to work. They can't work in a public place and they can't even work in a private one without risking arrest, because the overly broad definition of “common bawdy-house” includes any place that someone keeps or occupies for the purpose of prostitution (e.g., sex workers’ homes, hotels, massage parlours, or even parking lots and cars).
- Section 213 of the *Criminal Code* makes it illegal to “communicate in a public place for the purpose of prostitution.” This means it is illegal for a sex worker to talk with (or even to make gestures to) a client or prospective client in any public place to negotiate services. As for “common bawdy-house,” the overly broad definition of “public place” includes the street, parks, bars and even the inside of a vehicle.
- The outcomes of criminal prosecutions for “communicating” seem to discriminate against women. While roughly equal numbers of sex workers and clients are charged, sex workers (the vast majority of whom are women) are sentenced to prison more often than clients (the vast majority of whom are men), get longer sentences than clients, are less likely than clients to get probation, and are not offered diversion programs as often as clients (who may avoid criminal liability by participating in “john school”).

friends. This section is also characterized by an unconstitutional “reverse onus” — instead of being presumed innocent until proven guilty, the person charged must prove that he or she is not living “parasitically” off the money the sex worker makes.

Because of these effects, these four sections of the *Criminal Code* violate the Charter rights of sex workers, particularly their rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association, security of the person (i.e., protection of their physical and mental integrity), presumption of innocence, and, especially for women engaged in sex work, equality under the law.

Conclusion

The Subcommittee's report was not the first to study sex work and the law in Canada. In 1983, the federal government created a Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution ("the Fraser Committee") to recommend effective policy approaches to what was then seen as expanding street-based sex work. In 1985, that committee concluded that the "contradictory and often self-defeating nature of the various *Criminal Code* sections relating to prostitution" contributed to an increase in street-based sex work. Unfortunately, one misguided response was to enact the current "communicating" provision of the *Criminal Code*, which has since been shown to undermine the safety and human rights of sex workers.

Now, after three years of work and over 300 witnesses, the Subcommittee has failed to learn from the experiences of past committees or to confront the day-to-day realities faced by sex workers because of Canada's outdated laws. The resulting report has missed its mark and deserves a failing grade for leaving sex workers open to continued human rights abuses — stigma, discrimination, violence and possible exposure to HIV.

The evidence was and remains clear: Canada's criminal laws related to prostitution fail to protect sex workers' health, safety and human rights. In fact, these laws are part of the problem. Law reform related to sex work is urgently needed, but the Subcommittee's report is no guide. Instead, Parliament must enact the following legislative reforms:

- Protect sex workers' rights under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and international human rights law by repealing the four *Criminal Code* sections that make "communicating," "bawdy-houses" and "living on the avails" illegal; and
- Include sex workers in the policy and law reform process. Sex workers must have a say in modernizing the laws and policies that affect them.

These outcomes will go a long way to enabling sex workers to share the health, safety and human rights to which all people in Canada are entitled.

References

- ¹ *House of Commons Debates*, 055 (7 February 2003) at 1425, on-line via www.parl.gc.ca.
- ² The Subcommittee's report, *The Challenge of Change: A Study of Canada's Criminal Prostitution Laws*, is available at www.parl.gc.ca/sslr. All page numbers cited are from this report unless otherwise noted.
- ³ See the characterization of these two views as a philosophical difference on p. 92 of the Subcommittee report, and the juxtaposition of these views in the report at pp. 29, 31, 34, 76–77, among other references.
- ⁴ As part of its own discussion about appropriate legal approaches to sex work, the Norwegian government undertook an assessment of neighbouring Sweden's legislation: Government of Norway, Ministry of Justice and the Police. Working Group on the Legal Regulation of the Purchase of Sexual Services (abbreviated English version). Oslo, October 2004. Available via <http://odin.dep.no/jd/english/bn.html>.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- ⁷ House of Commons. Standing Committee on the Status of Women. *Tenth report* (including section on Cuts to Status of Women Canada). October 2006. Available via www.parl.gc.ca/fewo.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ N. Currie & K. Kara Gillies, *Bound By Law: How Canada's Protectionist Public Policies in the Areas of Both Rape and Prostitution Limit Women's Choices, Agency and Activities* (2007) [unpublished]. This project was funded by Status of Women Canada, Policy Research Directorate. Available via karagillies@rogers.com.
- ¹⁰ Pivot Legal Society. *Voices for Dignity: A Call to End the Harms Caused by Canada's Sex Trade Laws*. Vancouver, 2004, on-line via www.pivotlegal.org.
- ¹¹ Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. *Sex, work, rights: reforming Canadian criminal laws on prostitution*. Montréal, July 2005. This report, as well as a concise plain-language version of its findings and information sheets on sex work and the law, are available via www.aidslaw.ca/sexwork.
- ¹² Sex Trade Research and Advocacy. *Safety, security and the well-being of sex workers: A report submitted to the House of Commons Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws (SSLR)*. 2006, on-line via www.uwindsor.ca/star.

■ About the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network (www.aidslaw.ca) promotes the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, in Canada and internationally, through research, legal and policy analysis, education, and community mobilization. The Legal Network is Canada's leading advocacy organization working on the legal and human rights issues raised by HIV/AIDS.

■ About Stella

Stella is a community group created and run by sex workers in Montréal. Since 1995, sex workers involved at Stella struggle to better sex workers' lives and working conditions and to promote the health and human rights of sex workers. Stella is for women, transvestites and transsexuals, and assures a constant presence in the diverse sex working milieus: on the street, escort agencies, massage parlours, strip clubs, etc. Over the years, Stella has developed an important practice of defending human rights while fighting against the criminalization of sex workers' lives and work.

■ About Maggie's

Maggie's is a Toronto-based organization run by and for sex workers. Since its inception in 1986, Maggie's has worked to promote the health, rights and well-being of women, men and trans people working in all sectors of the sex trade. Maggie's provides direct support (health promotion, legal advocacy, educational material) for workers on the street and in massage parlours and other indoor venues while fighting stigma and legislation that deny sex workers' rights and worth.

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