Press Release

For Immediate Release  

28/09/2010

Women’s Groups Outraged at Courts Granting Men the Constitutional Right to the Prostitution of Women

(Vancouver) It is with stupefaction and anger that feminists have learned of the ruling of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. The Court ruled in favor of the Constitutional Challenge aimed at decriminalizing prostitution today. The criminal codes sections: keeping a bawdy house, living off the avails and communicating for the purposes of prostitution will be struck.

This judgment impedes on the work that women’s groups committed to ending violence against women have been working for over the past decade. The ruling has failed to meet the equality needs of women across Canada and Québec.

Spokeswoman from Concertation des luttes contre l’exploitation sexuelle (CLES) “We must go back to the fundamental question, which is the legitimacy of the purchase of sexual services. The premise of the Nordic model, developed in Sweden, Norway and Iceland, is that to achieve sexual equality we must challenge the merchandising of women's bodies and sexuality. A society that defends the human rights to dignity, freedom and equality must confront the sex industry, which is rooted in exploitation, domination and profits made at the expense of those who are most vulnerable.”

The vast majority of prostituted women want to get out of prostitution, so clearly it cannot be qualified as a genuine choice or job. Jeanette Corbiere Lavell, President of the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) “Aboriginal women are overrepresented and victimized in the sex industry, which testifies to the link between racism and misogyny in prostitution. Decriminalizing the prostitution industry will only expand the illegal and legal trade of buying and selling women”. Organized crime, pimps and traffickers will be legitimate businessmen in this context.

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Frye Societies (CAEFS) Kim Pate: "While we deplore the circumstances that result in too many women and girls being prostituted or trafficked, we reject any and all attempts to vilify, criminalize, or otherwise punish women for any prostitution-related activities."

The Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centers (CASAC) demands that the Canadian government act quickly to bring the issue of equality back to the forefront of the discussion about the changes that must be made to the Criminal Code of Canada. CASAC spokeswoman Daisy Kler: “Women must not be criminalized because they have been prostituted; services must be developed and funded to help women leave the sordid conditions of the sex industry; emphasis should be placed on prevention; and all these measures should convey a very clear message: the purchase of sexual services is incompatible with the safeguarding of human rights, especially equality between women and men”.

Women’s Groups across Canada deeply concerned by the Ontario Superior Court ruling, but are even more determined to win the battle against commercial sexual exploitation.

-30-

Media Contacts:

CASAC:  Daisy Kler  (604) 876-2622  
CLES:  Diane Matte  (514) 750-4535