



**Press Release**

**March 11, 2011**

**Pan Canadian Coalition of Seven Women's Groups Granted Leave to Intervene in Bedford Case**

**For Immediate Release**

(Vancouver) Today, in the Ontario Court of Appeal, a pan Canadian coalition of seven equality-seeking women's groups, was granted leave to intervene in the Bedford case. The coalition using the comprehensive, experience and expertise of its members has committed to an alternative. Together they argue an alternative both to the prostitution laws that criminalize the poorest and most disadvantaged women while rejecting the proposal to legitimate pimps, johns and bawdy house owners at the cost of women's constitutional rights.

The coalition claims that under the Charter, Canada has an obligation to protect the security and equality of women and should therefore decriminalize those who are channeled to prostitution including by their sex, poverty and race; that is by their disadvantage.

"Aboriginal women are over represented and victimized in the sex industry, which testifies to the link between racism and misogyny in prostitution," says Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada. On the other hand she says, "Decriminalizing the industry will only expand the illegal and legal trade of buying and selling women. It would make life worse for the most disadvantaged women."

The women's equality seeking coalition argues that law should continue to criminalize those that exploit others. The law does not now grant a right to buy sex or to prostitute women and girls, (or the few boys and men) in the sex industry. If it did, we would see an increase in trafficking for the purposes of prostitution, an increase in the illegal street prostitution and an increased risk to children especially girl children.

It is against the law in Canada for men to approach women to buy sex and against the law for men to prostitute others. "To get rid of these laws would be to commercialize the exploitation of women and to further entrench the inequality of women. It is against the law of Canada and in contradiction to international law to do so," says Lee Lakeman of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centers speaking for the coalition.

The coalition is comprised of:

1. CASAC – Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres
2. NWAC – Native Women's Association of Canada
3. CAEFS – Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies
4. RQCALACS - Le Regroupement Québécois des Centres d'Aide et de Lutte contre les Agressions à Caractère Sexuel
5. la CLES – la Concertation des Lutttes contre l'Exploitation Sexuelle
6. Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter,
7. AOcVF - Action Ontarienne contre la Violence faite aux Femmes

**Media Contact:** Lee Lakeman, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centers (604) 876-2622