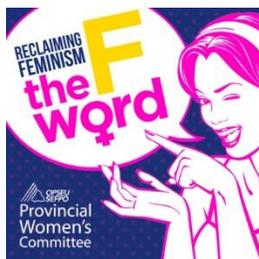


The F-Word: Reclaiming Feminism
OPSEU Women's Conference 2015



To the Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould,
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

We wish to congratulate you on your recent appointment to the post of Minister of Justice and Attorney-General in Canada.

With your appointment, we are hopeful that you will urgently address the realities and concerns of violence in the lives of Indigenous women and girls and the harms brought about by the criminalization of indigenous communities, especially the criminalization of sex work.

We stand with organizations like Amnesty International, the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization and the Global Network of Sex Work projects in calling for the immediate de-criminalization of sex work.

We believe firmly that the criminalization of sex work has never protected women from violence. In fact, in Indigenous communities, the evidence is clear that the opposite is true.

Criminalization of sex work often leads to arbitrary arrest, detention and even deportation of Indigenous women and girls. It increases the threat of violence to sex workers, increases medical and welfare intervention, and reduces access to medical care and social services. The evidence, like that gathered by Amnesty International in its *Consultation to develop a policy to protect the human rights of sex workers*, demonstrates that criminalization of sex work only exacerbates women's already existing marginalization and the discrimination that they face.

Further, the prevailing view that Indigenous women engaged in sex work have been exploited, coerced or trafficked continues the legacy of colonial violence and the historical harms caused by residential schools and the sixties scoop. Where Indigenous women are viewed merely as "victims," the justice system and untold social, health and welfare authorities are sanctioned to forcibly remove women and girls from their homes and detain them in the name of their protection.

We call on you to not only support the de-criminalization of sex work, but to recognize and respect the history of sex-worker led initiatives and the voices of sex workers in developing future policy goals and legislation. We believe that sex workers are best able to articulate their own experiences and define the most appropriate solutions that will ensure their own well-being, welfare and safety.