JOY SMITH FOUNDATION

June 16, 2021

Good morning,

Mayor Bowman and Members of the Executive Policy Committee for the City of Winnipeg.

Thank you for the time you are giving me to speak on behalf of the
many victims of human trafficking who have been impacted by Adult Oriented Businesses in our City.

I know that the Members of this Committee are committed to the health and safety of Winnipeggers. That is why I felt it prudent to shed a light on what happens behind the walls of these establishments to allow you an inside view of things that I am sure you would not endorse.

I am hopeful that real change can happen.

Licensing of Adult Oriented Businesses has been something our City has done for many years. The time has come for this to change. I am strongly against the continuing of licensing of Body Rub Parlours, Escorts and Escort Services here in our City of Winnipeg.

The licensing of Body Rub Parlours, Escorts, Escort Services and other illicit "Adult Businesses" are often used as fronts for human trafficking, insurance fraud, drug trafficking and money laundering. Licensing these "places of business" gives the impression that our City of Winnipeg sanctions the abuse of women and girls. This abuse has remained under the public radar screen for far too long. Everyone knows what happens behind these walls, but no City has had the courage to shut it down.

WE now have an opportunity to do just that.

I have worked with many victims of human trafficking who have told me countless stories of their experiences in licensed Body Rub Parlours and so called "Adult Business" places.

Casandra Diamond, a young, trafficked victim I worked with and supported over the years was abused and victimized for 10 years in a licensed massage parlour.

She is a beautiful and smart young woman who was lured into the world of licensed massage and body rub parlours as a teenager. Casandra was trafficked. Her trafficker started out as her boyfriend, and he eventually forced her to provide sexual services to a dozen men every night through the licensed adult businesses. Her trafficker controlled her and cut her off from family and friends, while keeping all the money she made. She recalls the many times she was spit on, punched, kicked and slapped.

By licensing these Body Rub parlours and other Adult Oriented Businesses, our City is sanctioning the abuse of women and keeping the door wide open for human traffickers to earn a significant amount of money.

Many victims, including Casandra said, “the fact that this happens inside a licensed system means that we are enshrining a man’s right to buy a living breathing, human being.”

Cassandra said it felt like everybody knew what was going on, and it seemed to be perfectly okay with them. She perceived and stated that “These people know about what is going on, because they are licensing this.” Casandra said she thought that Municipal Licensing and Standards understood that men were spitting on her, punching her and slapping her. She said that “it’s like they knew these requests were being made and it was okay.”

She went on to say that many know about this problem, yet no one is taking the lead to solve it.

This is a typical story I hear far too often from survivors of human trafficking.

Although our City has removed the word “Massage” from parlours, it does not hide or take away from the fact that Body Rub Parlours, Escort Services and other “Adult Businesses” are still being licensed and are conduits to the horrific abuse of women and girls.

The unintended consequences of licensing Body Rub Parlours and “Adult Businesses” (as they are referred to in the report), increases the sexual harm to legitimate Massage Therapists who have gone through extensive education to provide healthcare to countless patients suffering from chronic pain.

It is recorded that 48% of Massage Therapists reported experiencing inappropriate sexual behaviour while administering a treatment.

Many registered Massage Therapists have a degree in Kinesiology and are required to take an additional two years of training in their profession. They are also required to update their knowledge every year.

Licensing any one of these so called Body Rub Parlours sends a message that any legitimate massage therapist should provide “happy endings” for any man requesting it during his treatment.

The Body Rub Parlours, Strip Clubs and Escort Agencies who are licensed in this City are also in conflict with the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (Bill C-36).
Licensing these businesses involving the purchase of illegal sexual services violates the “purchases offence in section 286.1 of the criminal code, which was passed in December 2014. This leaves our City open to legal implications.

The executive policy states that it intends to focus on workers safety. The practitioners, who are the workers, are often victims of human trafficking and are controlled by human traffickers. They will not let anyone know what is happening to them behind closed doors. If they do, serious consequences are inflicted upon them. However, today more victims are speaking out and it will only take one like Casandra Diamond to seek justice through legal action.

The proposed changes to the City's policy shows a lack of understanding about how human traffickers operate and with the licensing of Body Rub Parlours, the doors are open for countless women and girls to be exploited and victimized.

Traffickers earn in excess of $268,000 per victim per year and they do not want to lose their money (Criminal Intelligence Service Canada).

The lowering of fees and the elimination of criminal checks does not ensure the safety of these practitioners. Nor does the installation of cameras or panic buttons. Rather, it allows the appearance of it being a legitimate business while sexual exploitation and violence are perpetrated on victims behind closed doors.

Now is the time for our City to take a strong stand against the human trafficking and violence against women and girls.

Recommendations:

1. The Adult Oriented Business section be struck from this Executive Summary on business practises in Winnipeg. The "Adult Oriented Businesses" are not businesses, they are gateways for human trafficking and criminal activity.
2. A fulsome study be implemented on the issue with the extensive involvement and consultation of the community who work with exploited and trafficked victims. The study should have a timeline and be reported back for review.
3. To encourage the City of Winnipeg to partner with the Province of Manitoba to complete the regulation process and give licenses only to those who are Registered Massage Therapists. The completion of this regulation will then recognize professional massage therapists as legitimate healthcare providers.

Regards,



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Former Member of Parliament
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