SEX WORK ≠ EXPLOITATION

Exploitation is exploitation. Sex work is work. Prohibition is harmful.

Prioritizing anti-trafficking voices over sex workers is harmful

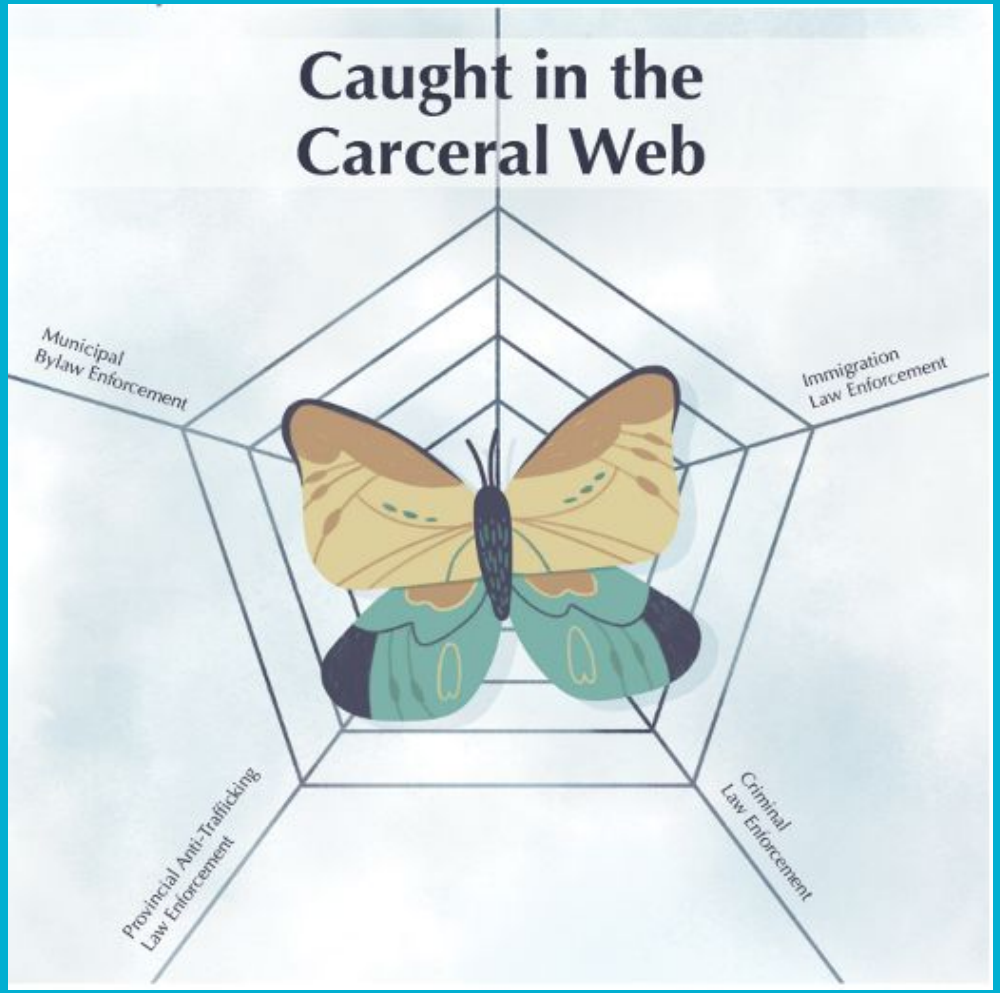
Sex workers are experts on what keeps them safe – sex workers were not listened to or consulted in a meaningful way.

The report and recommendations are written with the assumption that sex work is exploitation and violence agaisnt women. The report overwhelmingly favours this narrative, which removes agency from sex workers - who are consenting adults.

The Canadian Women's Foundation now recognizes that the term trafficking is primarily used by organizations when applying for funding through organizations like the CWF and government agencies and is not the language most agencies use with people who are most affected by the sex work enforcement. (Mackenzie, K., & Clancey, A. (2020)

Harms of partnering with Anti-Trafficking organizations and the police

- No evidence that “anti-trafficking” campaigns reduce instances of actual human trafficking
- Anti-trafficking campaigns do not protect people; they actually threaten sex workers’ safety
- These campaigns are often rooted in a rigid conception of sexuality and gender
- WPS denies sex workers their autnomy and refers to all clients as “exploiters”



Bad research makes bad policy

- “12-14 years average age of entry into the sex trade”?

FALSE - the research this references was done on a small group of sexually-exploited youth under the age of 18.

- 24 years is a more accurate statistic

Benoit et al. conducted interviews with 218 Canadian sex workers. The mean age of first sale of a sexual service was 24.

Evidence based research is key to safety

- We have attached a list of references to this presentation and will provide a PDF copy to all members of the EPC.

- Prohibition does not make sex work safer, and does not make it go away. In fact, quite the opposite happens - and the violence and harms are mostly borne by marginalized populations (BIPOC, 2SLGBTQI* folks).

- Most sex workers do not feel exploited and most sex buyers are not oppressors… tensions involving sellers, buyers and managers occur in the sex industry, but they are not endemic. (Benoit, 2014)

- Using evidence-based research keeps us from falling prey to individual concepts of morality that, while very important to an individual, would be harmful to an entire population. See: WRHA Position Statement on Harm Reduction

WRHA calls for decriminalization of sex work

“Conflating sex work with [sexual exploitation and trafficking] can lead to an overreaching of criminal justice solutions to social problems.”

“With respect to sex work, [harm reduction] means: … Supporting the decriminalization of sex work, and the extension of labour regulations and protections governing workplace safety and health to sex work.”

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority - Position Statement on Harm Reduction, December 2016

Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act

- PCEPA may be our set of federal sex work laws at the moment, but the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform is currently challenging the constitutionality of sections of these laws. To rely on them as a meaningful way to create municipal policy is not advisable.

- PCEPA was implemented in 2014 with a specific provision that the effectiveness of the laws be reviewed both 12 months and 5 years following their implementation. As of today, no such reviews have been conducted.

- PCEPA claims to have made sex work legal for the first time in Canadian histroy, which is not the truth. The purchase of sex is still illegal, perpetuating the harms associated with criminalization (needing to operate in hiding, surveillance, etc)

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