

My name is Monica Valiquette and I have been a sex worker since 1978. I've worked on the street, offered incall from my home, worked in a brothel and offered an outcall escort service as an independent provider. At every level, I have suffered abuse from people who clearly felt they had the right to insult me. On the street, pennies were tossed at my feet. On the phone, anonymous voices called me and hurled various insulting names at me without any provocation. These were not clients. These were members of the public who felt they were better than me and that their actions were somehow justified because society has labeled me as a lesser human because of my choice of profession.

Bill C-36 mirrors the stricken laws that put sex workers in harm's way since 1985. The Supreme Court of Canada in Bedford vs. Canada deemed the laws unconstitutional because our health and security of person were impeded, time and again, with disastrous results.

Bill C-36 will criminalize the customer while claiming sex is legal to sell. The truth is, sex workers will be "accessories to the crime" each and every time they transact with the criminal purchaser. This type of marginalization will push the workers into the shadows just as surely as the prior laws have done.

This systemic devaluation of sex workers fueled police apathy, which in turn allowed Pickton (who was known to police) to reign as a serial killer for two decades without consequence. One woman who survived a disembowelment by Pickton had her witness statement dismissed "because she was an addict" and charges were never laid. Only when there was public outcry as the families of the murdered and missing prostitutes spoke out about their worst nightmares, did the police form a task force that finally exposed Pickton.

The apathy was so palpable and so inexcusable that the RCMP and the Vancouver Police Department both settled out of court with the children of Pickton's murdered victims.

Apathy toward any sector of society should be condemned and discouraged. The constitution should apply to every person, regardless of their vocational choices. Laws should be created with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in mind; and should not be the brainchild of moralistic fear mongers.

Human trafficking and child prostitution should not be conflated with adult consensual sex work. The former are despicable and Canadian Law already punishes violators of these laws. There are many good laws in place already that deal with procuring, aiding, abetting and directing. These laws do not harm sex workers and should remain in place.

I implore you to allow Bill C-36 to die on the floor so that we, as a society, can come together to educate Canadians until one day, sex workers are treated with the same dignity and respect afforded all other workers in Canada.

I thank you for your time and your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Monica Valiquette  
PIECE Edmonton