

On Monday, May 5th 2014 the City of Calgary launched an online survey to receive feedback from local citizens about how they are impacted by prostitution. This survey also provides Calgarians with an opportunity to provide feedback on several strategies employed in other cities to address the community-identified impacts of prostitution.

The survey is available until Friday, May 16th and can be found here along with a complete description:

<http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Pages/Engagement/Federal-legislation-prostitution.aspx>

The Shift program of HIV Community Link provides support services to adults of all genders who have worked in the sex industry. Shift provides services to sex workers across the continuum of choice. We support sex workers who choose this work to work safely and to maintain their choice. We also support sex workers to leave the industry and/or exploitative situations when this is an identified need or goal. For more information about the Shift program at HIV Community Link go to www.shiftcalgary.org.

The following is our response to the City of Calgary survey. We have chosen to post our responses publicly with the aim of increasing discussion around the strategies proposed to address the impacts of prostitution. We believe that any new strategies to address the impacts of sex work in Calgary must be done in close consultation with sex workers and those most directly affected by the issues surrounding the industry.

Survey questions are randomized and may be ordered differently on each survey copy.

Please share your thoughts on the impacts of prostitution in the following areas:

	Your thoughts:	No impact	Not Applicable
Impact of prostitution on Calgary as a whole:	Your thoughts: <input type="text" value="See below"/>	No impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Impact of prostitution to your neighborhood:	Your thoughts: <input type="text" value="Type here"/>	No impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Impact of	Your thoughts:	No impact	Not Applicable

Your thoughts:	<input type="checkbox"/> No impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
prostitution to you and/or your family:	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; min-height: 80px;"> Type here </div>
Your thoughts:	<input type="checkbox"/> No impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
Impact of prostitution to your business:	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; min-height: 80px;"> Type here </div>

Comments on Impact of prostitution on Calgary as a whole:

Calgary has a large and thriving sex industry which remains largely hidden and unknown to those outside of it. Many misconceptions about the industry and those working in it exist and stigma is significant and pervasive. The local sex industry has had a dramatic shift from street-based sex work to online work while the information, services, and local bylaws have not followed this trend. The result of this is a disconnection between sex workers, the community, law enforcement, and social service providers. The most significant impacts of this disconnect are the potential for decreased health and safety of sex workers. There is a lack of awareness of the needs of sex workers and high levels of fear and stigma which prevent sex workers from becoming more engaged with the larger community to effect or call for change.

Research and Ongoing Building of Knowledge Approach

This approach helps governments and non-profit organizations understand prostitution and learn the most effective ways to protect the health and safety of all Calgarians. Examples could include supporting partnerships between community organizations and universities to learn how to increase the health and safety of all of our community members.

Do you support or oppose this approach in response to prostitution?

Please choose only one response.

- Strongly Support
- Somewhat Support

- Neither Support nor Oppose
- Somewhat Oppose
- Strongly Oppose
- Don't Know

Comments:



Comments:

There is a significant knowledge gap in understanding the needs and experiences of indoor sex workers (escorts, body rub practitioners, dancers), and in understanding the experiences of male and Trans sex workers. Additional knowledge is needed to help support the health and safety of sex workers; however it must be obtained with the direct inclusion and participation of the communities being studied. There must be established trust, safety, and confidentiality for research participants in order to establish an accurate representation of the community being studied. There is also a responsibility for any new research to come back to the sex worker community to address their collective needs and help support identified problems.

Community Development Approach

The approach looks at ways of working with individuals and/or groups to make positive changes in their communities. Examples could include setting up meetings between residents and others involved in prostitution to work on creating a safe environment for all.

Do you support or oppose this approach in response to prostitution?

Please choose only one response.

- Strongly Support
- Somewhat Support
- Neither Support nor Oppose
- Somewhat Oppose

- Strongly Oppose
- Don't Know

Comments:

See Below

Comments:

Sex workers experience high rates of stigma and marginalization from the public and the community. There are significant challenges and numerous barriers to creating an environment where sex workers would feel safe to “out” themselves and attend meetings with local residents. Community groups such as the Calgary Network on Prostitution, the Street Level Working Group, and several other anti-trafficking/exploitation groups already exist as one way for community to come together around issues of prostitution.

Intervention Approach

This approach aims to help community members, including those working in prostitution, to remain safe and healthy and respectful of others’ rights and needs. Examples could include contraceptive support and establishment of a community safety network.

Do you support or oppose this approach in response to prostitution?

Please choose only one response.

- Strongly Support
- Somewhat Support
- Neither Support nor Oppose
- Somewhat Oppose
- Strongly Oppose
- Don't Know

Comments:

See below

Comments:

The safety, health, and rights of sex workers must always be the key focus of any intervention. Sex worker rights and safety needs can be achieved while meeting the needs of the larger Calgary community. This is the most inclusive approach provided in this survey. Programs which directly support and promote sex worker rights and safety, exit based programs, supports to prevent and address sexual exploitation, and sex-worker friendly community and health resources are all necessary. There is also the need to create increased dialogue between the sex worker community, the City of Calgary, and local citizens to create bylaws, business licensing, and other community responses which are inclusive of the needs and rights of all parties.

Prevention/Education Approach

This approach focuses on public education and awareness of issues and risks associated with prostitution. Examples could include developing a public education campaign to raise awareness about how individuals get involved in prostitution activities, and/or develop a campaign to change public attitudes and behaviour toward buying sex.

Do you support or oppose this approach in response to prostitution?

Please choose only one response.

- Strongly Support
- Somewhat Support
- Neither Support nor Oppose
- Somewhat Oppose
- Strongly Oppose
- Don't Know

Comments:

See below

Comments:

Selling and purchasing sex is not inherently harmful. The risks associated with sex work are most directly related to the impacts of criminalization and the stigma experienced by sex workers. There are significant challenges with educating the public about how individuals get into the sex industry, and how they experience sex work: The experiences of sex workers are widely diverse. There is more evidence to support the harms caused to sex workers as a result of stigmatizing public attitudes than there is to support that selling and purchasing sex is harmful. Public campaigns would be more effective if they were directed at supporting sex worker rights, safety, and reducing stigma.

Exiting Approach

This approach focuses on assisting individuals in leaving prostitution once they are ready to do so. Examples could include programs to help workers leave prostitution, such as education and life skills development, and employment counseling.

Do you support or oppose this approach in response to prostitution?

Please choose only one response.

- Strongly Support
- Somewhat Support
- Neither Support nor Oppose
- Somewhat Oppose
- Strongly Oppose
- Don't Know

Comments:

See below

Comments:

Any sex worker who wishes to leave the sex industry should be provided with all of the supports needed to do so. Sex workers who do not want to leave the sex industry also need access to programs that support them to work safely. Many sex workers who leave the industry transition out slowly – they do so over a period of several years while they obtain education, retraining, or explore new career options. Programs that focus specifically on “exiting” rarely provide the flexibility for sex workers to transition out of the industry at their own pace, or build other employment skills while continuing to work in the sex industry.

Taking into consideration the five approaches previously described used by other cities, please rank which approaches you most strongly support using a scale from 1 to 5 (1 having the least support and 5 the highest).

5 - Intervention

This approach aims to help community members, including those working in prostitution, to remain safe and healthy and respectful of others’ rights and needs. Examples could include contraceptive support and establishment of a community safety network.

4 – Exiting (*See comments)

This approach focuses on assisting individuals in leaving prostitution once they are ready to do so. Examples could include programs to help workers leave prostitution, such as education and life skills development, and employment counseling.

3 - Research and Ongoing Building of Knowledge

This approach helps governments and non-profit organizations understand prostitution and learn the most effective ways to protect the health and safety of all Calgarians. Examples could include supporting partnerships between community organizations and universities to learn how to increase the health and safety of all of our community members.

2 - Community Development

This approach looks at ways of working with individuals and/or groups to make positive changes in their communities. Examples could include setting up meetings between residents and others involved in prostitution to work on creating a safe environment for all.

1 - Prevention/Education

This approach focuses on public education and awareness of issues and risks associated with prostitution. Examples could include developing a public education campaign to raise awareness about how individuals get involved in prostitution activities, and/or develop a campaign to change public attitudes and behaviour toward buying sex.

Comments:

Please note with special attention that “4 – Exiting” is ranked as such with a caveat that exiting programs exist in conjunction with other support services for sex workers who wish to continue to work in the sex industry. These programs must provide flexibility for sex workers who wish to slowly transition out of the industry, or obtain non-industry employment in addition to sex work.

Which quadrant of the city do you live in?

- NW
- SW
- NE
- SE

What is the name of your neighbourhood?

Please provide any additional comments you would like to make:

Comments:

It is important for the City of Calgary to consult directly with the existing agencies and programs which support and work with sex workers, as well as consult with sex workers directly. In recognition of the stigma surrounding the sex industry, special efforts must be made to reach out to sex workers and provide anonymous, confidential, and safe ways to encourage meaningful participation. The issues around prostitution most



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(prevention + support + advocacy)

significantly impact those involved in sex work and their needs and experiences must be well understood in order to respond effectively.
