

April 8, 2026

To: Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Nina Krieger

Cc: RCMP 'E' Division

Subject: Open Letter: Adopt more effective anti-trafficking approaches

We, the undersigned, are individuals and organizations deeply committed to the health, safety, and human rights of individuals involved in the sex industry.

In 2024, the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (PSSG) informed community-based organizations about the creation of a 12-member [BC RCMP Counter Human Trafficking Unit](#) (CHTU). Immediately, there was deep concern among community-based organizations about what types of operations would be carried out by this unit and what impact it might have on marginalized communities. The unit was formed within the context of a fraught relationship between sex workers and law enforcement following years of [police failures](#), particularly during and after the period of the serial killer. It also follows a long history of law enforcement targeting the sex industry under the guise of human trafficking “raid and rescue” operations, such as the [2006 raids on 18 massage parlours](#) in the Lower Mainland, Richmond RCMP’s participation in [Operation Northern Spotlight](#) in 2015, and numerous other harmful enforcement actions.

Publicly and in conversations directly with community organizations, the CHTU and PSSG have repeatedly said that sex work would not be targeted by this unit. Despite these reassurances, a joint CHTU and Richmond [RCMP operation](#) on March 12, 2026, proved that the community’s fears and concerns were well-founded. The CHTU and Richmond RCMP went undercover to target more than 100 people attempting to purchase sexual services. While the operation did not target sex workers directly, it targeted their work, which puts sex workers at greater risk of violence and harm.

[Evidence shows](#) that criminalization of clients leads to situations where it is difficult for a sex worker to implement safety strategies, such as adequately screening clients, working in safe spaces, and being able to negotiate terms of the service. When sex work laws are actively enforced, sex workers are pushed into riskier environments and isolated situations, which increases their vulnerability to exploitation and human trafficking. In other words, punitive enforcement does not protect sex workers—it can create the very conditions that traffickers exploit.

This operation also directly contradicts the [B.C. Association of Chiefs of Police Sex Work Enforcement & Principles](#), which was developed following [Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry](#). This guideline emphasizes the need to build trust with sex workers and their support organizations to encourage them to report to police when they become a victim of a crime. It also states that police agencies should promote “evidence-based decision-making to reduce exploitation and abuse within the sex industry.” Enforcement like the RCMP’s recent operation lead sex workers to fear police—discouraging them from reporting when they’re a victim of a crime, including exploitation or trafficking.

Because this sex work-targeted operation does not fall under the stated mandate of the RCMP's CHTU, it leads us to ask—what's next? What other enforcement can sex workers expect when reassurances were not upheld, *Forsaken* has been forgotten, and the police's own enforcement policies have been ignored?

Along with this problematic enforcement, the RCMP's [news release](#) detailing the operation makes it very clear where they stand on sex work. They state that their intention is "to disrupt demand for sexual services" and "raise awareness about the harms associated with the sex trade," revealing the sex work abolitionist beliefs driving this counter-trafficking unit. Given the history of policing the sex industry in British Columbia and its documented shortcomings, we had hoped that by 2026, we would have moved beyond morality-based enforcement toward evidence-informed approaches.

It is concerning that, despite millions of dollars in funding and a 12-person unit purportedly dedicated to addressing human trafficking, the primary enforcement strategy remains narrowly focused on policing the sex industry. The Richmond operation mirrors the work of previous counter-exploitation units, relying on an undercover vice sting—a tactic that research and community-based knowledge have shown is largely ineffective at addressing human trafficking. This time, however, the RCMP labelled it a human trafficking operation, marking a worrying shift in public messaging designed to garner support for enforcement against the sex industry. While these operations do not meaningfully address trafficking, they do allow the RCMP to publicly conflate sex work with trafficking, justifying resources and enforcement actions under a misleading narrative.

We call for the BC RCMP Counter Human Trafficking Unit and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General to cease ineffective counter trafficking operations that target the sex industry. Addressing human trafficking and upholding the safety, dignity, and human rights of those engaged in the sex industry need not be mutually exclusive. We urge PSSG and CHTU to identify alternative ways to fight human trafficking that do not endanger sex workers or compromise their human rights.

Signed,

- Pivot Legal Society
- SWAN Vancouver
- Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women Canada
- Peers Victoria Resources Society
- BC Civil Liberties Association
- West Coast LEAF
- Ending Violence Association of BC
- WISH Drop-In Centre Society
- Living in Community
- PACE Society
- BC BDAR

- Vancouver Sex Work Community Alliance
- Health Initiative for Men
- Salal Sexual Violence Support Centre
- The AESHA Project (An Evaluation of Sex Workers' Health Access)
- Sanctuary Health
- Nabat Health Center Corp
- International Migrants Alliance - Coast Salish Territories (BC)
- Migrant Students United Vancouver
- P.O.W.E.R.
- Ribbon Community Society (previously known as AIDS Vancouver)
- HIV Legal Network
- RainCity Housing and Support Services
- SAGAH (Society for Advocacy for Gender-Affirming Healthcare)
- Kamloops Sexual Assault Counselling Centre
- Yukon Status of Women Council
- Dr. Bronwyn McBride, Research Associate, University of British Columbia
- Dr. Vicky Bungay, University of British Columbia
- Dr. Jennie Pearson, Simon Fraser University
- Genevieve Fuji Johnson, Professor, Simon Fraser University
- Jenn McDermid, RSW/PhD candidate in Interdisciplinary Studies, University of British Columbia
- Melody Wise, Master's Candidate in Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia
- Ran Hu, Assistant Professor, The Ohio State University
- Yao Xiao, Sessional Lecturer, Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice, University of British Columbia
- Diane Huang, Masters of Community and Regional Planning Student, University of British Columbia
- Dominique Lennox, Now Canada