

FIRST Keynote Forum: Sex Work in New Zealand: “Eleven Years of Decriminalisation: The Sky's Still Blue.”

Vancouver, BC

Wednesday, September 10, 2014 - 00:00

Following right on the heels of the [Special Senate Committee hearings into Bill C-36](#) this week in Ottawa (the anti-prostitution bill), advocacy groups for sex workers will host a keynote forum on September 17 in Vancouver, with a special keynote speaker from New Zealand: [Catherine Healy](#) of the [New Zealand Prostitutes Collective](#).

Ms. Healy will describe how New Zealand has been successfully fostering a safer working environment for sex workers for 11 years, without increases in trafficking, underage workers, or overall number of sex workers. The country was the first to decriminalize sex work in 2003 with its historic passage of the Prostitution Reform Act.

“In Canada, the Conservative government’s proposed prostitution law, [Bill C-36](#) is strongly opposed by sex worker groups and active sex workers, because they know it will replicate the same kinds of harms as under the previous laws struck down by the Supreme Court last December,” said [Joyce Arthur](#), founding member of FIRST Decriminalize Sex Work (a national feminist sex worker advocacy organization based in Vancouver that lobbies for the decriminalization of prostitution in Canada).

“The experience of New Zealand that Catherine will speak about should send a strong message to Ottawa that there is a proven, better way to protect both communities and sex workers from harm,” said Arthur. “Bill C-36 criminalizes consensual adult sex on moral and ideological grounds, which only serves to put people at risk, isolate them from health and social services, and violate their constitutional rights.”

Media are cordially invited to attend.

Catherine Healy will also be available for media interviews during

daytime hours on Tues Sept 16 and Wed Sept 17

(Please contact Katrina Caudle to arrange – see below for Contacts.)

Keynote Forum Details:

Date/Time: Wednesday, September 17, 2014, 7 to 9 pm

Location: [Rickshaw Theatre, 254 East Hastings St., Vancouver](#)

Moderator: [Kerry Porth, PIVOT Legal Society](#) (and Senate Committee witness against Bill C-36).

Opening Performance by [The Unstoppable Conni Smudge](#).

Introduction by [Joyce Arthur](#), FIRST Decriminalize Sex Work: “*Government in our bedrooms: The parallels between prostitution laws and abortion laws.*” (Joyce is a founding member of FIRST. She is also founder and Executive Director of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada, a national pro-choice group.)

Keynote Speaker: Catherine Healy, New Zealand Prostitutes Collective. Ms. Healy will be speaking on how New Zealand law recognises sex work as a legitimate form of work. Her talk is entitled: “*Eleven Years of Decriminalisation: the Sky is Still Blue.*”

Catherine Healy is a founding member and now the National Coordinator of the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (<http://www.nzpc.org.nz/>). She is also a former member of the government appointed Prostitution Law Review Committee, and co-editor of "Taking The Crime out of Sex Work". Catherine has played a key role in the design and implementation of the laws that decriminalised sex work in New Zealand in 2003, and is a former sex worker herself.

Q&A with the audience to follow Catherine Healy's presentation.

The forum is sponsored by FIRST Decriminalize Sex Work, BC Civil Liberties Association, PACE Society, and Spaces (A Sex Industry Study, UBC).

Katrina Caudle, Organizer, crownofviolets@gmail.com

Joyce Arthur, FIRST, joycearthur@shaw.ca

604-349-4495

604-351-0867

info@firstadvocates.org

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