



The following letter was written by Esther Shannon, founder of FIRST. This letter signals the very beginning of FIRST. The 70 signers became the founding FIRST members.

Many feminists want the sex trade decriminalized

Sep 19, 2007, Georgia Straight

<http://www.straight.com/article-110511/many-feminists-want-the-sex-trade-decriminalized>

One letter [Sept. 6-13] in response to your recent cover story on prostitution suggested that the story did not "seriously consider feminist perspectives on prostitution", suggesting perhaps that all feminists are opposed to decriminalization of prostitution.

The undersigned feminists, many of whom have worked for women's rights for decades, state our full support for the decriminalization of prostitution as one critical element in a harm-reduction and human-rights strategy that would actually address the dangerous realities that sex workers confront on a daily basis. The problems with Canada's current law are legion and well documented, with the most critical being that the fear of arrest coupled with court-enforced no-go orders forces sex workers to work in isolated areas, where they are highly vulnerable to violent predators.

In British Columbia, 11 prostitutes were murdered in the 25-year period before the introduction of the communicating law, as compared with approximately 100 in the 15-year period immediately after its passage in 1986.

We also recognize that, like many other women, sex workers are vulnerable to a wide range of hardships, including persistently high levels of poverty, homelessness, and serious health problems. We call for the immediate implementation of services for those sex workers who face acute needs with respect to housing, poverty, health, and violence issues, including services dedicated to assisting those workers seeking to exit sex work. A key aspect of the decriminalization process must be the inclusion of sex-trade workers in planning and organizing services and safe working conditions.

> *Melanie Conn + 70 others /*