

# FIRST

## Decriminalize Sex Work

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For immediate release

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### National Forum “*Why Decriminalize Sex Work?*”

*You are cordially invited to a FIRST Public Forum, Wed., June 11, 2008*

VANCOUVER — Adult sex work should be fully decriminalized in Canada to advance women’s equality and protect their safety, according to FIRST, a new national coalition of feminists. FIRST is inviting the public to learn more about decriminalization and the health and safety of sex workers at an open forum.

Keynote speaker Dr. Frances Shaver of Concordia University is a national authority on the present-day harms of Canada's prostitution laws. "All of the research I have conducted since appearing before the Fraser Committee over 20 years ago has served to strengthen my original position on the need for social and legal reform based on decriminalization," says Dr. Shaver.

FIRST says that by decriminalizing sex work, many of the harms associated with the current sex industry can be reduced or eliminated, including the abuse and violence. As highlighted by one of the speakers, Kate Shannon of the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, "Our recent research findings highlight the negative impacts of Canada’s prostitution laws on the ability of street-based sex workers to safely negotiate condom use, or access health and support services."

“This forum is an opportunity for FIRST to bring the experts together and tell the public the true story of the negative effects of the law,” says Tamara O’Doherty, spokesperson for FIRST.

#### Speakers:

- Dr. Frances Shaver, Chair, Sociology and Anthropology, Concordia University, Montreal; and long-time sex industry researcher
- Tamara O’Doherty, FIRST representative, Criminologist, SFU/UFV
- Susan Davis, BC Coalition of Experiential Communities, and sex worker with 22 years experience
- Kate Shannon, BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS/ School of Population and Public Health, UBC
- Shari Allinott, Sex Workers United Against Violence
- Karen Mirsky, PIVOT Legal Society

**Date:** Wednesday, June 11, 2008

**Time:** Doors open: 6:30 p.m. Forum from: 7 – 9 pm

**Location:** Vancouver Public Library, 350 W. Georgia, Alma Van Dusen & Peter Kay rooms

#### Contacts:

Joyce Arthur: 604-351-0867; [jharthur@shaw.ca](mailto:jharthur@shaw.ca) • Tamara O’Doherty: 604-534-4450.

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FIRST is a national coalition of feminists who work to support the rights of sex industry workers and advocate for the decriminalization of adult sex work. For further information on FIRST, visit our webpage at: <http://first.vcn.bc.ca/home>