



peers

VICTORIA RESOURCE SOCIETY
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November 12, 2014

Dear Justice Minister Peter MacKay,

Please find attached some personal narratives written by people who come to Peers Victoria Resources Society, an organization located in Victoria, British Columbia. Since our founding in 1995, Peers has provided health and social supports to those with experience working in the sex industry.

The idea for this writing workshop emerged from a conversation between Senator Denise Batters and lawyer Alan Young during the pre-study of Bill C-36 by the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, where it was debated how those in the sex industry characterize their experiences. Aiming to offer a quick insight into the wide diversity of perspectives of people in the sex industry, we invited members of the Peers community to share their personal narratives as part of a writing workshop we were planning.

As a social service organization primarily working with street based sex workers who require supports with housing, food security, and health care access, we share these narratives with the understanding that they largely reflect the perspectives of that group. However, Peers strives to work with those in all sectors of the sex industry, and thus some of the narratives also reflect the experiences of those with more secure access to social resources. While the perspectives are quite varied, one overarching theme is that whether their experiences in the sex industry were street-based or indoor, none of these participants saw criminalization as a solution to any of the forms of marginalization or violence they face in their lives.

Peers Victoria entered briefs for consideration to both the Justice Committee and the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs committee. Those briefs outlined more extensively our concerns that the legal reforms contained in Bill C36 will have negative consequences for the health and safety of people in the sex industry. While we understand the bill has achieved royal assent and will become law, we respectfully submit these stories to honour the voices of those who use our services.

Sincerely,

Rachel Phillips, PhD. Executive Director, Peers Victoria Resources Society
cc. Randal Garrison, MP, Esquimalt- Juan De Fuca

Personal Accounts of Working in the Sex Industry - Collected by PEERS in October 2014

Details:

PEERS held writing workshops at their drop-in facility in October 2014. Current and former sex workers were invited to write about their personal experiences with working in the sex industry. Eleven people participated in the writing workshops and gave a copy of their writing to PEERS. A small honorarium was provided. An additional four narratives were collected via a social group for independent and agency based escorts organized by PEERS. These narratives add to data collected during focus group held in the spring and summer of 2014 with 25 program participants regarding views on prostitution law reform and Bill C36.

These accounts have been edited to remove names and identifying details. Some accounts have been lightly edited for spelling, punctuation and clarity.

Personal Account 1

I've been a hooker in Victoria on and off since I was 16. When times were tough and money was tight all I had to do was stand on a corner and next thing you know I'd be getting high once again, maybe if I was lucky even get enough to eat sometimes. I dreaded the corner on earlier mornings when it was still dark and gloomy.

Over time I got a few good clients (regulars) and when times were tough I could just call on them so that eventually I had enough regulars that I could afford not to hook anymore. After about a year my drug habit got more costly and I started ditching my clients to the point where I lost them all. So, back to the corner I went. By this time, rates had gone down. No more bj's for \$100 - it was down to \$40 if you were lucky. Some days it was so slow I'd take a slimy old man up on his \$20 offer. I've been doing it for 6 months straight now, working almost every night and making anywhere from \$300-\$500 each night, but it all goes up in smoke.

Luckily for me, I haven't had to stand on the corner recently. About a month ago a tragic accident happened to my friend. She got jumped, beaten, raped, and robbed. At this point I don't want to find myself on a corner again, but who knows what the future brings. Who knows when I'll need dope again or money to pay a bill.

Personal Account 2

I got into the sex trade when I was 16 years old, and stopped when I was around 29 years old. I want to give two examples of being in trouble with customers and the police. First I am going to start with the police. Whenever they see someone pick me up, they pull me over and I lose the money that I would have been able to make - the money that would have supported me.

As for my customers, some are really sweet but others can be assholes. I really try not to go with the ones that are assholes or that are really demanding, but when business is really slow, sometimes I have no choice. I usually have someone out there with me to help me. That way if I am not back at the time I said I would be back, they can call the cops. If I know I won't be back on time, I will get the customer to pull over to whoever I have watching me and let her know. Otherwise I try my best to be back on time.

Some of the customers are and can be rough. For example, I have been raped a couple of times and didn't have anyone watching me at that time. I have called the police a couple of times and they came and took a little of information down but didn't proceed on it at all. I have given them information about bad dates, but all they do is pull me over when I'm with a good customer and ruin my date.

Personal Account 3

I am a male to female transsexual. I first got into the sex trade in 2005. It all started around the time I began my transition. I remember working in a beauty salon in and thinking “how am I going to pay my rent?” Around the same time, I began attending the club-scene. This is when I got the idea to start selling sex. I began by placing an ad in the local paper and from there things blew up immediately. I went from being broke on welfare to earning twelve thousand dollars in my first month. However being a recovering addict, I relapsed. I found myself going from \$200 or \$250 for a date to \$20 or \$25 for a date, and doing so on a street corner (which made it illegal). All of a sudden I was dealing with police almost on a daily basis. Last year I lived in [a city in Saskatchewan] and was charged with communication for the purpose of solicitation and running a common bawdy house.

Today my relationship with local police is like night and day. During the day, the police hassle me. But at night, they approach me and ask if there are any creeps out and about. They ask if the girls are safe, and they let me know if there is a vehicle that I should look out for [participant is referring to interactions with police who are part of a local initiative to build supportive communication with sex workers to reduce violence and increase sex workers’ reporting of concerns].

Personal Account 4

My human rights should not be selectively applied based on whether or not I love my job. Really think about how absurd that is. When I worked all night at a sandwich shop making subs for drunks, I hated my job. I felt degraded, devalued, and regularly taken advantage of. Yet no one suggested an all-out ban on fast food restaurants, or that no healthy young woman would freely consent to making sandwiches all night long for minimum wage. Labouring under capitalism, our choices are always constrained. I had to pay my rent, had to eat. Life isn’t free. It was understood that I needed that lousy job. And when my boss tried to tell me I wasn’t allowed to mark down the overtime I worked, I understood that was wrong, that I had rights as a worker under the law. I had recourse. Think about that.

I began my career as an escort at 26, when my then- boyfriend spent all the rent money and I faced being evicted if I couldn’t come up with \$800 in a little less than a week. Although my initial choice to escort was out of dire financial necessity, and was intended to be a short term stopgap, I found I loved the work. The boyfriend was history and nearly a decade later I’m still loving my job. I love my co-workers, a powerful sisterhood of strong, funny women. I love my clients, most of the time. No one ever comes to me upset and cranky, resentful. People are happy when they have sex, when they can open themselves, makes themselves vulnerable to another human being who will cherish them for an hour or two. Happy people have good energy and I love to be surrounded by that all day. I love the good money and the flexible hours, the freedom to pursue my passions on the side and still be able to pay my bills. I’m still laboring under capitalism, after all.

I choose to work at an escort agency, the kind of “commercial enterprise” under C36 that is also known as a bawdy house under the old laws. I’m neither the high class call girl, star of cable shows, nor the poor streetwalker whose death propels an episode of CSI. Like most Canadians, I’m just working, just trying to pay my bills and put a little away.

C36 will decidedly not improve my life or the lives of my coworkers at the escort agency. Some critics may assume that we are being exploited, as though every employer is not exploiting her employees’

labour for wages. Hello, capitalism. We all choose to be there for one reason or another. For most of us, that reason is we need a job. One that pays a living wage, thank you very much. Under C36 a sex worker can work independently, out of her own home. Sure. That works if someone can afford to live without roommates, doesn't have a nosy landlord, and is not raising children. This is a tenable option only for the most privileged sex workers. For the rest of us, we need a safe place to work, with phone staff to schedule appointments, drivers and security, and each other. What happens to the women employed at escort agencies if their workplaces are forced out of business? These women who are currently employed and supporting themselves will then struggle to make ends meet for themselves and their families. Demand for social services will increase. Many will not leave sex work but will be forced to work outside on the street- because not only will our safe workplace have been shut down, but we will be prohibited from advertising to find clients. That leaves only the most dangerous options left for those who will choose to pursue sex work.

We do not need paternalistic, moralistic legislation that further constrains women's choices. What we need is recognition that sex work is work, and we demand our goddamn rights. I demand the same labour rights as any other citizen working in this country. If necessary you may hear from me again, as a plaintiff in yet another expensive challenge to unconstitutional legislation that is doomed to fail. What a waste.

Personal Account 5

I do this work because I am addicted to money and sex and crack. I love guys playing with me. Then I realize how they are treating me. Some guys hurt me. It happens on most of the dates. I try to stay focused on every date. I try to remember where I go with them. That should protect me.

My goal is to be filthy rich and to have some fun with these guys. I'm sad always. I look for more dope, more sex. It's never enough for me. I'm scared always about life and about death.

Sick men should be gone from my life. Honestly, from being hooker for half my life, there never been one nice man out there. They have always turned on me. Sad but true.

Personal Account 6

I believe your family past or history is at some point all about a certain "pattern" or "cycle" that just gets passed down generation to generation. I believe this truly because of my own personal experiences starting with my father way before I was ever born...he owned a strip club back in the 1960s it ended up being shut down and with him getting fined for having his ladies dancing up against windows facing the street, which resulted in a massive traffic accident.

Moving forward to when he met my mother...at the time he was married, and managing a hotel. While he was on vacation, my mother was hired to work at that hotel. When my father got back from vacation, he looked at her and that was literally the beginning of his infidelity to his wife. My father and mother had a love affair that somehow lasted 10 years. During that time my father divorced his and left her and left his two children to be with my mother. My mother and father are 15 years apart in age. It appalls me that my mother maintained a love affair for 10 years before my father cut his previous marriage ties. I was born[], and to this day they still call me their "love child."

Now let's move forward to my adulthood. I met a nice gentleman who lavished me with gifts at work, took me to fancy restaurants, etcetera. We were dating and everything was good until I got a funny feeling that he wasn't being totally honest about his marital status. I asked him and he said " oh, don't

be silly, of course I'm not married!" I take it for what it's worth, but when I went in to work the next day, I pulled up his deed of trust for the home he was living in and saw not only his signature but also his wife's signature. Not only did I feel betrayed, I felt like a "home wrecker" to say the least. To sum it up, I tried to end it because he was married, but he insisted he wanted to continue what we had. It's true that what we had was absolutely wonderful and it was the time of my life. However, since he wanted to his cake and eat it too, I told him he would have to pay me. We agreed on \$500 per month in cash. He paid me \$500 a month on the first of the month for 2 years no problem. He also took me along with him on trips, and took me to concerts, and all kinds of other fun stuff where money was no object. So, there's my once in a lifetime story about a "pattern" or "cycle."

Personal Account 7

My experiences in the sex trade fall under what I have just learned is called "survival sex." I never worked on the street, and money was never exchanged. However, I had a severe addiction to cocaine, and this is where "my" version of prostitution came in.

I had a friend who was also my dealer. This friend always wanted me. He was always hitting on me and trying to seduce me. I never gave into him until early 2013, when I finally didn't have a boyfriend that "got" in the way of my addiction.

The first time happened innocently enough. I had acquired about \$100 worth of coke from my dealer earlier on. He dropped it off at my house and told me to "give him a call later." I bought wine and smokes earlier, so now, I was ready to get high.

I snorted through the \$100 in no time at all, so I texted my dealer. He must have been very horny because he offered to pay for a cab so I could go to his place. I agreed and headed that way.

When I arrived, I offered to buy some more coke, but he said no. I noticed that he was cooking some up on the stove, something I had seen before but had never actually done. Thus, my first experience with crack was introduced.

We smoked quite a bit all the while drinking a lot of booze. By this time I was very high and extremely messed up. The crack made me just want to get higher and higher. I guess the crack made him horny because he started kissing my neck and grabbing my breasts. In spite of myself, I responded to his touch.

I asked him if I could have some more drugs. He said he wanted to [have sex] first. I thought nothing of this. I performed oral sex on him, and then I allowed him to have his way. Afterwards, he gave me more crack, and he even gave me money for a cab ride home.

This was not an isolated experience. This happened at least 5 more times in a 2 month period. Same scenario, same outcome. []

Looking back now, hindsight is 20/20. My perception of what I was doing was very skewed. I figured I was just having fun, being adventurous. At the time, I felt sexy and beautiful. I confused the situation with all the other bullshit that was going on in my life.

Long story short, I not only cheated on my boyfriend, but I basically sold my soul for a drug. I allowed all my morals and priorities to fall by the wayside so I could get high. I allowed a man to have his way with me because he knew I so desperately wanted my "fix."

I know now he knew what he was doing, and this angers me, because he was my friend. But I think I am more angry with myself. I allowed my addiction to override any sense I had left. I hurt others around me, but, I hurt myself the most.

Personal Account 8

I was raised in a middle class family. My father was an alcoholic, which really affected my life. I was also sexually abused at various points in my life, and this affected my whole life.

When I was 16 years old, I left home to be with my boyfriend who was 10 years older than me. I had my first baby when I was 17 years old. I got pregnant again and had my second baby when I was 19 years old. I left that relationship when I was about 21 years old. It was physically, emotionally, and verbally abusive. I got my own place with my 2 kids, and we were on welfare. I also started back at [] College.

My cousin, who was about my age, introduced me to the sex work industry. I worked for approximately two years at an agency in Victoria. Life got financially better for me and the kids. Sometimes I would make \$500 a night. Then I met my husband and I stopped doing sex work. I had my third child [].

So, I was married, had three kids, and I went back to school. I earned 4 diplomas and became a LPN (nurse) for a number of years. My husband had a good job and we made good money. We owned a house, boat, car, and truck. Our marriage lasted for 17 years

When I was 35 years old I began to dwell on past memories of abuse and I became deeply depressed. I then went on long term disability from work. I started using morphine as a way to self-medicate to cover my pain and depression. My husband found out and he made many attempts to get me off morphine, but it just didn't work. At the end of our marriage I tried to commit suicide, so he tried for separation, then divorce.

By then I was really depressed. I lost everything, even my kids. I signed over my house that was worth \$400,000 for \$50,000. I used all that money on drugs. I tried to commit suicide again.

Then when I was 40 years old I lived in a house with a roommate who was never there, and I decided to put an ad in Monday Magazine so that I could start doing sex work again. I would work from my house and also had a driver to drive me to places where I could meet clients (like their homes or hotel rooms). I used the money I made to buy drugs.

Finally I went to PEERS and started to attend the drop-in centre at times, but I still used drugs. Eventually I went to PEERS more and more and used drugs less and less until I stopped. Because I stopped using drugs, I stopped being in the sex trade.

When I look back on my time in sex work, I found it to be much safer working for agencies rather than working on the street, as agencies are monitored more. I feel working in the sex trade helped me out while I needed the money.

My hope is for all people working in the sex trade to be safe at all times.

I found through my experience that coming to PEERS has been my place that has saved me. The people/staff/volunteers have showed me time and time again that they truly care about me especially when I thought that no one did. PEERS has helped me with increasing my self-esteem and also taught

me that I have rights in my life. I love coming to PEERS because I can be myself without judgement. The clients at PEERS have become my friends and we all stick together. PEERS is a much needed place for sex workers as sex workers have feelings and are people too.

Thank you.

Personal Account 9

I was eighteen years old when I first stood on a street corner and solicited. Before that first time, I used to take down license plate #'s for girlfriends who were in the business, and I did that for a while before I took a chance to make some good money for myself. It was very scary the first time I did get out and got picked up by a john. I had no place to take him, so I knew I would have to do the date in the car. We would have to park somewhere very secluded so that nobody would see us. I would always have somebody take their license plate #s down, just to be and feel safe.

There was one time when I was out on the corner and my back was sore. This guy picked me up, took me to a parking lot, and insisted I do the date without a condom. He also told me that he wasn't going to pay me. I said "that's not happening" and I argued with him.

He ended up pushing me out of the car, and I fell to the ground and it was hard to move, because my back had already been sore. It's not a good idea to work when you're sore.

When he pushed me out of the car, I had a condom in one hand and my purse in the other. There were some tassels on my purse, and I lost my purse when he grabbed it out of my hand. All I had was tassels between my fingers.

I ended up walking back to where I was standing with only my tassels in on hand and that condom in the other. Oh boy, was I mad, and a little shaken up. I lost all my stuff from my purse. That sucked real bad.

There was this other guy driving around who was supposedly raping girls by knife point. I was told he was known as the Topaz Park Rapist, and that he drove a blue car. I was picked up by a guy in a silver car. The guy in the silver car drove me to Topaz Park. He parked in this area where there were bushes all around the parking lot. Then he said to me, "We just have to walk through this dark park." I said "yeah right!" and put my hand on the car door handle so that I could open it, and I put my foot by the door so that I could kick it open.

All of a sudden he grabbed me by my ears and pulled my head down to his crotch. I grabbed his balls and twisted really hard. I also started to scream. He covered my mouth with his hand, and because I had my mouth open, his finger went into my mouth. I chomped down as hard as I could, and I heard a crunch from where I was biting down on his finger. He let go of me and I pushed the car door open and jumped out of the car. All of a sudden he was standing in front of me, and then he pushed me into the small trees that were lined around the parking lot.

I fell and rolled down the hill, and immediately got up and ran to the street and waved down a car. Some lady picked me up and we went back to town and reported him to the police right away.

Personal Account 10

There is one experience that I think about a lot. I think someone was being hurt by one of my clients. This was many years ago. I feel bad because if my relationship with the police was one where I did not

fear them, and if I was not worried about the consequences of being a sex worker, I could have reported that bad client to the police.

I did not report him to the police because I feared the police, and because of this, that creepy man is still out there in the community. I know this is wrong but my fear of the police prevented me from going to them. This was so long ago I don't remember who he was or where he lives, so it is way too late now. The relationship between sex workers and police has to change so that incidents like this will be reported.

Because sex work is a crime, it is not something that anyone is going to want to report. With the new laws that they are trying to put in place it is going to be even harder to report violence because clients will be more agitated and less likely to give personal information about themselves. Without knowing any of their personal information, it will make reporting incidents like this one even harder.

Personal Account 11

I was employed as a cashier in a corner store, at minimum wage (\$7/hr at the time) trying to put money aside to pay for my college tuition. And that's where I renewed my friendship with an old friend.

After a while of getting close and reviving our friendship, she confided in me that she worked as a "luxury escort" and told me she was making a mint. In a 3 day weekend she could make two thousand dollars.

A hold-up at closing time and the low pay gave me the nerve to try to work in the oldest trade ever known.

The first 2-3 weekends were quite unnerving. But like any other job, a routine takes place and you become comfortable in your role. Because in my case, I had to become someone else to perform.

Based in a different hotel every week, and with a receptionist/security next door, I felt quite safe taking the appointments.

As a child and young adult I was intimidated and afraid of men because of past abuse. But this line of work totally changed that and I developed a new perception of men. I thought that they were weak for been controlled by their needs, unable to resist the urge for novelty in their sex lives. I felt that "I" had the power, the control, and the last word. I became confident and sure of myself. I was able to stand my ground in front of anybody.

Not only did being a sex worker help me develop my personality and self-esteem, but I made a lot of good contacts for future business projects, and I learned a lot about human nature.

I acquired an eye for beauty when looking at another body. There is no ugliness on the exterior, only perfection. The real ugliness is inside.

I wish to thank all of those good and gentle lovers who were mainly coming to me for comfort and real physical love.

Personal Account 12

Life in the fast lane as a working girl began about 10 years ago. I remember the night I stepped out into the cold rainy night. I decided that tonight I was going to work! Tonight I'm going to make me some money. Because being broke with an alcohol and drug addiction just wasn't cutting it.

I remember the big white truck pulling up and because there were two of us girls, we asked which one do you want? He pointed at me. So I stepped up into this huge truck feeling a bit nervous...replaying what I learned from my spotter (a spotter is another lady who is taking down the description of the vehicle and waiting for you to make sure you return from your date).

So I asked the man if he is looking for company and he replies yes. So I ask what he is looking for, and the conversation goes on. He is looking for a BJ. I was taken for about a 7 minute drive to a dark spot in a familiar area. This is where a money transaction was made. I jumped into the back of his truck and that's where it all began...

The life as a working girl interested me and fed my alcohol and drug habit, and I felt like I was in control.

Then there are days (more often than not) that choosing to be a working girl feels like it's taking my soul, or my happiness and sense of self-worth. I worry that one day it will take my health...

Being in and out of the industry for this long, my own story blows me away...

I often live by the motto that desperate times call for desperate measures, as I strive to look at things a different way.

I'm now looking for work. I now speak to my family and my two kids. My only concern is how long will this last?

Personal Account 13

I would like to share my opinions on sex work and stigma, based on my own personal experience of being an escort for several years. I would also like to share some revelations on how much money escorts actually make, and how difficult it is when clients don't treat us with dignity and kindness.

Choosing to be a sex worker involves taking on the stigma that is attached to sex work. Dealing with this stigma is one of the biggest drawbacks of my profession, although there are other significant burdens as well.

When clients complain about "high" rates – and often they are complaining about rates as low as \$200 for an hour of sex – it breaks my heart. It really does. They don't understand the sacrifices we make in order to do this job. Complaining about our rates is like the kick in the face to top it all off.

I've had men respond to my Internet ads with really rude emails. They say things like "Do you think your pussy is made of gold? Your prices are outrageous." I just hit the delete button because I know I won't be able to change their point of view. They are looking for the best experience possible for the lowest price possible. I understand this mentality. Every commercial transaction in our culture is governed by this attitude – we want value for dollar. That's fair.

What I wish I could explain to the men who complain about rates is that it's not just an hour of my time they are paying for. It's every minute of every day that I am a sex worker. The work extends into my entire life, and every aspect of my life is affected by being a sex worker.

I never thought I would sell sex for \$300. Are you kidding? I would have slapped someone in the face if they had even suggested that amount to me. I remember sitting around with my friends when we were teenagers and playing this game where we were asking each other titillating questions. One that I remember very clearly was "How much would it take for you to have sex with someone for money?" The girl sitting next to me said "a million dollars!" Another one declared "no amount of money. I would never do that." I mused for a while before speaking up, and then I said "I don't know. Fifty thousand?" My friends exclaimed at my low price. I responded, "well, fifty thousand dollars is a lot of money! You'd really turn that down?"

To top it all off, complaints about rates aren't even based on a real understanding of how much we actually take home. For all the sacrifices we make, most escorts I know earn around \$3,000 a month. For some reason a lot of clients think we're all rolling in cash, like our lives are an episode of the TV show *Secret Diary of a Callgirl*. No, most of us are not being flown all over the world and being paid to drink Champagne and have fun sex with billionaires. Most of us are just working a tough job and making a middle class income. Many of us make a legitimate choice to do this work, but it doesn't mean we love it every minute of every day or that it's easy.

In return for our modest salaries, we get to expose ourselves to health risks, dangerous clients, legal trouble, and unpleasant working conditions. We get the pleasure of awkwardly fumbling for a response whenever someone asks, "so, what do you do?"

If we want to leave the sex trade, we are burdened with the ever-terrifying resume gap. What have you been doing for the past five years? Where are your references? What are your skills?

The work also affects our ability to date. Many partners can't or won't handle what we do for money. It also affects our friendships. Some people who are "friends" judge us for what we do, and can't understand our choices. Even when friends are not judgemental, they often just can't relate, which can result in sex workers feeling isolated and alone. We cope with the guilt of lying to our families about what we do.

The stigma is really, really difficult to cope with. I wish people treated us with more respect and compassion. We are human beings, we are workers, and we are just trying to make the best of things, like everyone else on the planet.

Personal Account 14

I have several safety measures in place when I work, and these measures are meant to act as deterrents against potential "bad dates". Because it is not illegal to purchase sex, 99% percent of clients are fine with these protocols.

If C36 passes and the purchase of sex is criminalized, clients will no longer feel comfortable giving out personal information or being recorded on camera.

If clients are no longer willing to provide personal information or to come to an incall location with a camera, I will have to change my safety protocols in order to stay in business. I will have to start taking appointments via anonymous email addresses, payphones, and untraceable VOIP services such as

Google Talk, and I will likely have to move my incall location to a more discreet building that does not have security cameras.

With this kind of anonymity on the clients' part, there will be no means of tracking down "bad dates" after the fact. Men will be well aware of the fact that this anonymity makes them immune to repercussions. They will know that they can commit a violent act or a robbery and that I will be no record of who they are or how to find them. If C36 passes, violent men can book dates with me because they know they have anonymity on their side.

This actually puts the power in the hands of the sex buyers, rather than in the hands of the sex-trade workers. I believe this is exactly the opposite of what the government should be doing.

Operating without proper safety protocols will have negative effects on my mental health. Whereas I currently feel safe and confident when I open the door to a stranger, I will feel scared, anxious and paranoid under C36.

Instead of being able to use strict security protocols to PREVENT robberies, assaults, and other violent encounters, C36 will force me to take "after the fact" measures - in other words, I will have to deal with a violent situation once they have arisen, instead of just deterring them in the first place.

I have already spoken to two Victoria Police Department members about the legality of keeping tasers or pepper spray close at hand while meeting new clients. As you may know, this is NOT legal, but if C36 passes, I am willing to overlook that fact just to have a sense of security while I am working. As you may also know, weapons can easily be turned against the person who is trying to use them, especially if that person is a small female. I should not have to resort to illegal and dangerous methods to protect myself.

To recap: Under bill C36, men are not going to be willing to give out their personal information. I will be forced to change my security protocols in order to help clients remain anonymous. I will be sacrificing my sense of security to stay in business. Men will be immune to repercussions. I will lose the upper hand in the transaction and be susceptible to violence.

Personal Account 15 (By Lisa Ordell *Identity shared by request)

I am a 49-year-old Metis mother of two daughters. In 1990 I graduated from a two-year program in massage therapy from Sutherland-Chan School of Massage Therapy in Toronto, Ontario. I practiced as a Registered Massage Therapist in Toronto from 1990 - 2000. During that time I worked with Dr. Bryan Sher at his Rosedale Chiropractic Clinic, at the Four Seasons Hotel in Yorkville, in my home and, with my portable massage table, in the homes of some of my clients. My work was highly regarded, respected and praised. When I moved from Toronto to Victoria, BC, in 2000, I began working Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort and Spa. Again, my work was praised and appreciated. I loved my work and found my career to be not only lucrative but also deeply rewarding. Unfortunately, irreconcilable conflict between my supervisor and I resulted in an untoward termination from my post in February 2004. Eager to not only earn a decent wage in order to support myself and my daughters, but also to work with people's bodies and to explore my own sexuality, I embarked upon a private, independent, indoor sex work practice. I write about the seriousness with which I approached this endeavor in my Sociology undergraduate Honours thesis <http://tinyurl.com/kfsbupp>

It was always my intention to be public about my decision to become a sex worker. I was aware that some people would have a hard time understanding and accepting my decision but I was not prepared for the onslaught of humiliation and punishment that ensued once people were informed of the way in

which I chose to make a living. The trauma that I incurred is documented in my thesis. I was shocked and dismayed at the violence, both verbal and physical, that resulted when people discovered that I was doing sex work. I attribute this violence directly to the stigma that is associated with sex work, with prostitution in particular. And I attribute the stigma that goes along with prostitution directly to the criminalization of prostitution.

I am the same person, the same trained and skilled bodyworker, whether I am working with people's genitals or not. Why is it that in one capacity I am privileged with education, hands-on training, supervision, licensing, regulation, and a regulating body while in the other capacity my work is criminalized, or my clients are criminalized, or those who work with me or who are supported by the income that I make are criminalized?

The harms and losses that have been experienced by me and by my daughters, as a result of the vilification of sex work and sex workers, are irrevocable. All that I can hope for, and work towards, is the re-education of those who have been indoctrinated into thinking that sex work is inherently violent, bad, disgusting, harmful, evil, and any other adjective that may be used to invoke fear, loathing and/or pity towards those involved in the world of sex work. I have just received notification that my application to transfer from my Masters into an Interdisciplinary PhD program at the University of Victoria has been accepted. I begin in January 2015. I will continue to take a stand for the importance and necessity of sex work, as a healthcare modality akin to massage therapy and as a viable means to earn a living.