SEX WORK on the HILL

A Guide to Getting Involved in Legislative Processes that Impact on Our Lives

Canadian Alliance for
Sex Work Law Reform

Sex Work on the Hill:
A Guide to Getting Involved in Legislative Processes that Impact on Our Lives

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Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform
Alliance Canadienne pour la Réforme des Lois sur le Travail du Sexe

Big Susie's (Hamilton, ON) • BC Coalition and WCCSIP (Vancouver, BC) • Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network • Downtown Eastside Sex Workers United Against Violence (SWUAV) (Vancouver, BC) • FIRST (Vancouver, BC) • Émilie Laliberté, Sex Worker Rights Activist • Kara Gillies, Community Organizer (Toronto, ON) • Maggie's (Toronto, ON) • PIECE (Edmonton, AB) • Pivot Legal Society (Vancouver, BC) • POWER (Ottawa, ON) • Sex Workers Action Group (Kingston, ON) • South Western Ontario Sex Workers (London, ON) • Sex Professionals Of Canada (Toronto, ON) • Stop the Arrests! (Sault Sainte Marie, ON) • Winnipeg Working Group (Winnipeg, MB) • Stella, l'amie de Maimie (Montreal, Quebec) • Stepping Stone (Halifax, NS)

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Introduction:

Canadian sex workers and allies have witnessed and engaged in discussions on law reform with lawmakers to varying degrees over the past 30+ years. Many studies and parliamentary committees have reviewed prostitution laws during this time – the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution in 1985 (Fraser Committee), the Federal/Provincial/ Territorial (F/P/T) Working Group in 1998 (F/P/T 1998) and the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws between 2002 and 2006 (SSLR 2006), to name a few. Between 2007 and 2013, many sex workers and allies across the country contributed to the process of law reform in the courts through *SWUAV v. Canada* [1] and *Bedford v. Canada* [2].

Decriminalization can happen in one of two ways in Canada: through the courts that can analyze, strike down or change laws, or through parliament that can also write and rebuild laws. Throughout this process we can do advocacy that puts sex workers' experiences at the forefront of law and policy reform.

This guide is intended for sex workers and allies. It helps us to advocate for law reform while educating us about the systems that make and unmake law and policy. It can be used and adapted by sex workers, allies, and those advocating for sex work law reform in Canada and across the globe.

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1 http://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/10006/index.do
2 http://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/13389/index.do

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Part I:

Getting to Know the Lay of the Land

To create change within the system, it's important to know the people and organizations who make the relevant decisions and by what processes.

The people who make decisions from within government deal with many different issues and rarely have the opportunity to become experts on any one subject – while we think about and live the realities of sex work law all the time, many people in government have very little information about sex work. They need to be informed about what's happening "on the ground" around the country from stakeholders like us. This is where advocacy is key.

Advocacy can be effective to influence the people involved in decisions that affect us. At the very least, it gives them a more complete set of facts. Advocating can seem daunting when we think about getting through to "The Government", but the government is just a lot of individual people bound by their roles and rules. The trick is to find the roles (Minister, Committee Chair, Critic, etc.) that are relevant to us, and approach them with an understanding of the context they're in.

As sex workers and allies we are expert advocates for sex workers' rights. Advocates are different than lobbyists. Your participation in a "Lobby Day" is understood as grassroots advocacy rather than lobbying because you're not being paid to attend. Lobbying is recognized as a legitimate activity in Canada that is clearly delineated by the Lobbying Act. Lobbyists are people who are paid to advocate (either external to an organization, or sometimes internally, as an Executive Director or Director of Public Affairs for example). Active lobbyists must register their activities with the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada.

A) STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT OF CANADIAN GOVERNMENT

Who are the people in power?

THE GOVERNMENT IS COMPRISED OF:

HOUSE OF COMMONS
where laws are debated and created by our elected officials

DEPARTMENTS
where the research, planning, and drafting is done by non-political staff

SENATE
where the House of Commons' decisions are given "sober second thought"

COMMITTEES
where the House of Commons and the Senate each have committees to review issues in depth

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (MPS):

MPs are elected by their constituents. They provide political leadership in both the House of Commons and the government's Departments. Their "bosses" are their constituents and the party leadership. They want to support things that make their constituents happy, but they're required to vote in Parliament according to their party's positions. There are 308 MPs in Canada.

You can find your MP using your postal code through this handy tool: www.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseofCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC

MPs sit in the House of Commons and discuss policy – they bring forward current policy issues, state their positions, and ask questions of each other, introduce bills and debate them, and they pass some of those bills as laws. The House debates and discussions are mostly theatre – a party's positions are decided in private, through formal and informal conversations and meetings within the party.

MINISTERS AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES:

The party that is in power appoints some of its MPs to be Ministers for different areas of policy. Each Minister heads a Department (for example Parks Canada, or the Department of Justice) and has a Parliamentary Secretary, a sort of Junior Minister. Usually these are the two most influential people in a policy area.

Ministers decide the direction of policy. They do so in consultation with their appointed staff of policy advisors, colleagues within their party and to some extent they consult with the Opposition parties as well. Parliamentary Secretaries are also involved in policy discussions and are usually on committees relevant to their role.

OPPOSITION/SHADOW CABINET:

The parties that were not elected to run the government, but won seats in Parliament, are called the Opposition. They have a Shadow Cabinet made up of Critics who "shadow" the Ministries. They are experts in each Ministry area and they monitor the government's Minister. For example, there's a Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in the government who makes the decisions, and a critic from each of the Opposition parties who are the experts on Aboriginal issues, watching the Minister closely.

Stakeholders can mobilize the Critics to pressure the ruling government, bringing attention to an issue and sometimes questioning what Ministers are doing. The Opposition can slow down a bill's progress in the House, bring attention to its flaws, and suggest solutions.

SENATORS:

Senators are not elected MPs – they're appointed for life by the Prime Minister when a vacancy comes up. The Senate is a separate body from the House of Commons, intended to provide a "check" on the House's power – left over from the days when the upper classes didn't quite trust democracy to turn out good decisions. The Senate is traditionally called the House of Sober Second Thought – "Sober" as in serious.

The role of the senate is to review bills that have been approved by Parliament before they pass into law. Senators are free to vote independently because they're not bound by party politics or elections. However, they tend to be elderly politicians with party allegiances. The Senate also sends some bills to be reviewed by Senate Committees, which operate similarly to House of Commons Committees. Canada has 105 senators.

COMMITTEES:

There are different types of Committees where MPs (or senators) get together to explore a topic in depth.

When the Prime Minister is elected, s/he creates **Cabinet Committees**, comprised only of MPs from his/her party, to discuss ongoing government business. For example, the Priorities and Planning Committees and the Foreign Affairs Committee. The Cabinet Commitees help define the government's policy directions.

House Committees are comprised of MPs from all parties brought together to examine a particular issue. There are **Standing Committees** for major policy areas (for example Justice or Finance) as well as **Special Committees** that are initiated by the House of Commons to look in depth into a policy area or question.

The House of Commons sends proposed bills to these committees for review. Committees hear testimony from experts (academics, advocacy groups, professional organizations, concerned citizens, etc.) and write up a recommendation on the bill, and send it back to the House.

It can be particularly valuable to speak with Committee Chairs and members individually before the Committee hears an issue that's important to you. They may speak more freely one-on-one than they would before the whole committee and you have an opportunity to inform their first impression of the matter.

All members of the Federal government can be found through the Government Electronic Directory Services (GEDS) online. Positions and phone numbers are listed.

Who's in charge of what?

Canada's Constitution – the highest law of the land – lays out the division of powers within government. So, depending on what you are advocating for, you will be addressing different levels of government. A first step for decriminalization is the removal of criminal laws – which are federal – so in this context you will be engaging with people who influence and write federal policy. Other laws that continue to punish sex workers, clients and third parties will be provincial or municipal, so we need to also engage our provincial and municipal government electives. Decriminalization – and any campaign for law reform – means that we need to send a message to all levels of government that they need to move away from punitive measures against sex workers.

The Federal, Provincial, and Municipal governments are mandated to deal with different issues, with some overlap. Generally, these are the government bodies you would address for some of the different issues related to sex work:

FEDERAL LAWS	PROVINCIAL LAWS	MUNICIPAL LAWS
Criminal	Labour and Employment (except for federal entities)	Licensing
Immigration	Child Protection	Zoning
Indigenous Peoples	Housing	Local police
Taxation	Education	
Employment Insurance	Social Assistance Programs (welfare, social programming)	
	Health (somewhat shared with federal)	

Other levels of government aren't allowed to create laws that look like criminal law; divisions are clear in Canada's Constitution: immigration; Indigenous peoples; taxation; employment insurance fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

Note: Federal government writes criminal laws, but provinces often prosecute them (exception: drug laws).

B) MAKING LAW

In the Federal and Provincial governments, bills are introduced in draft form. They are then debated and rewritten with input from the House and its committees, and the Senate and its committees. Once they have reached a final version, the Governor General signs it into law. In the Provincial government, a bill goes through a similar process but the Lieutenant Governor gives final approval.

Each party relies on its experts (Ministers and Critics, and Committee members) to guide their position. These are the influential people to target with your message so that it reaches into the government while decisions are being made.

This is the legislative process in detail:

ROYAL ASSENT:	If the Senate approves, the bill is sent to the Governor General for Royal Assent and then becomes law.
SENATE:	The Senate and its committees (if applicable) review the bill. If they want to see changes, they send it back to the House for approval.
THIRD READING:	The House takes into account the Committee's report and debates the bill. It is passed or defeated.
REPORT:	The Committee shares its findings and recommendations with the House.
COMMITTEE:	The bill is referred to a Committee for examination/fine tuning. Committees take testimony from stakeholders.
SECOND READING:	MPs in the House discuss and debate the bill. It can either be defeated or sent to Committee.
FIRST READING:	The bill is read in draft form in the House. It may be referred to a Committee for further development and discussion, and then come back to the House for Second Reading, or it may go straight to Second Reading.
NOTICE:	An MP gives notice that a bill is being drafted by his/her staff, or requests that a Committee draft it.

How can we be a part of the law making process?

There are a few points when you, as a stakeholder/expert, may be able to have input on this process.

You can contact the clerk of a committee and request to give testimony at one of the Committee meetings, or get invited by a Committee member. The window for Special Committees may be small – get in touch as soon as the Committee is struck (check in with a supportive MP/Senator to find out when that happens). Standing Committees are ongoing and have regular meetings – find out when they're reviewing topics relevant to you. Don't rely on the Committees website – by the time that info is updated, it's often too late. Be in touch with the clerk or with an MP/Senator on the Committee.

You also can contact MPs at any time during the year to discuss an issue that's relevant to them. That means your local MP who is concerned with his constituents' issues, a Minister, Parliamentary Assistant, or Critic who is concerned with Departmental issues relevant to you, or Committee Chairs, Vice-Chairs, and members as individuals. It's part of these officials' jobs to hear from the public.

When it's too late: if a Committee has already decided its roster of stakeholders and who will be testifying, you can try to wiggle your way in. But once testimony has been heard, your only hope is to meet with Committee members individually to try to influence their recommendations. And clearly after the Committee reports to the House/Senate, it's too late to make an impact through the Committee, but each party will still rely on its experts (Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, Critics) and it's wise to meet with them as soon as possible. You may be influential right up until the Third Reading, but that doesn't leave much time for diffusion of your views through the party.

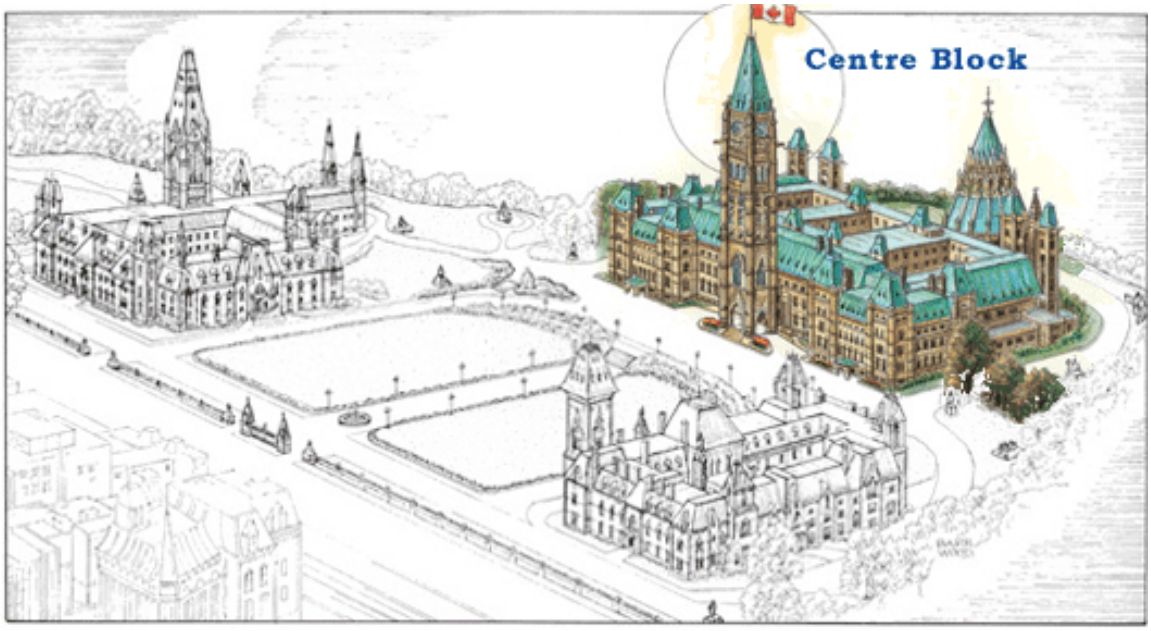
C) PARLIAMENT HILL: A MAP

There are 5 parliamentary buildings where your meetings may be located:

1. Centre Block
2. East Block and West Block
3. Confederation Building
4. Justice Building
5. La Promenade

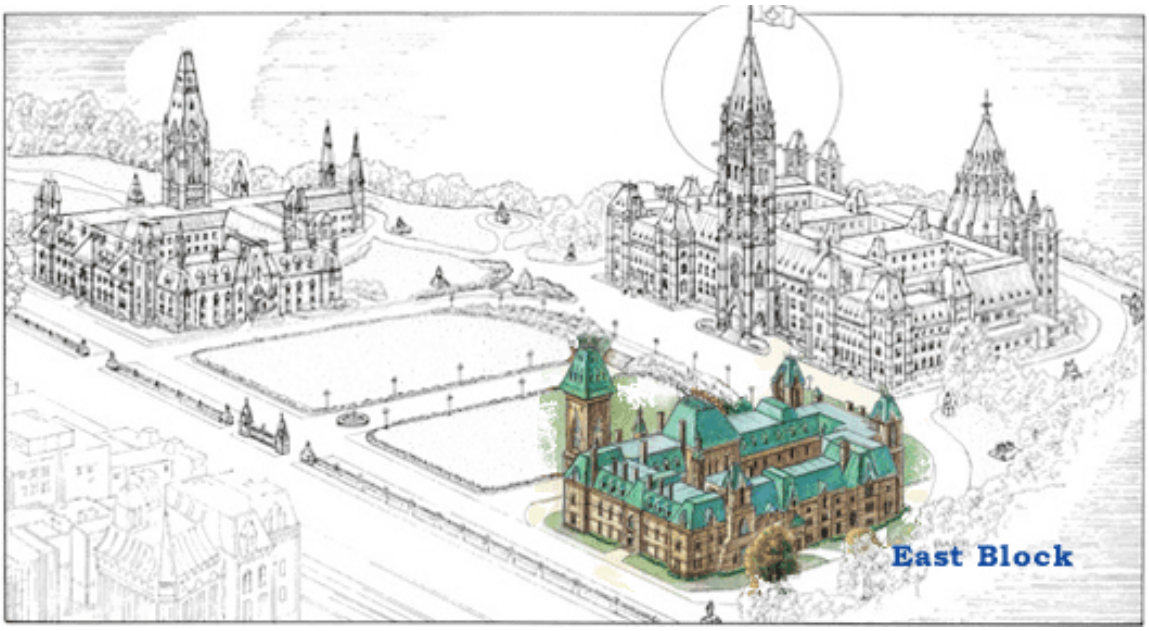
WHERE IS CENTRE BLOCK?

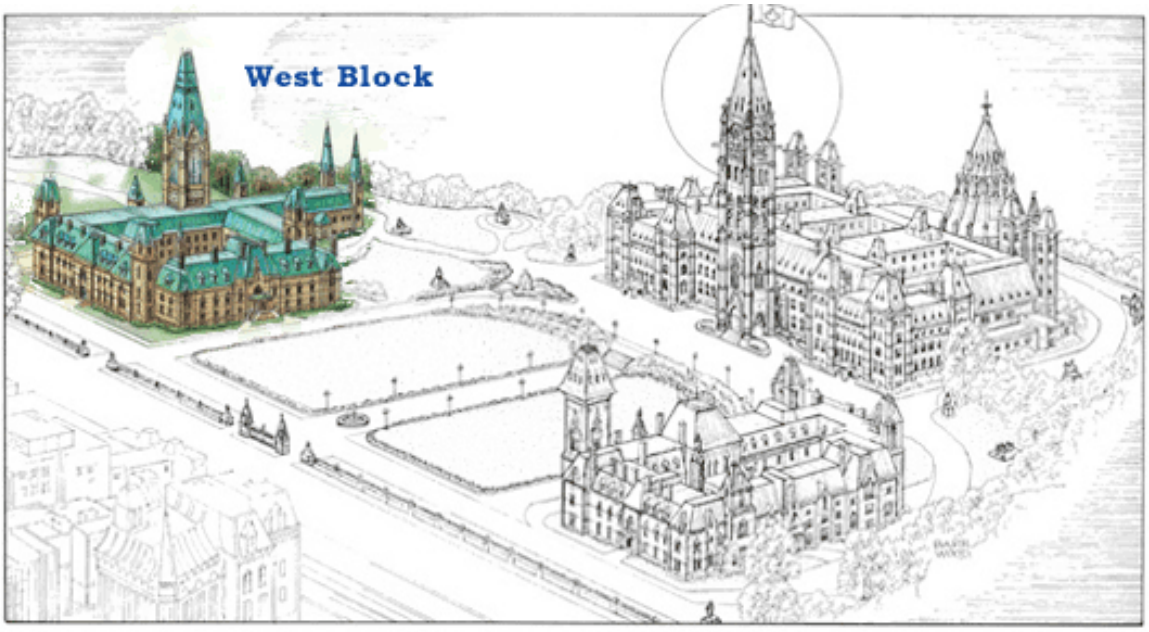
Centre Block is the building with the tall Peace Tower at the front.



WHERE ARE EAST BLOCK AND WEST BLOCK?

East Block and West Block are East and West of Centre Block.





WHERE IS THE CONFEDERATION BUILDING AND THE JUSTICE BUILDING?

These buildings are located on the other side of the Supreme Court of Canada building, West of West Block. They are located at the corner of Bank and Wellington.

WHERE IS LA PROMENADE?

This building is located directly across from Centre Block.

Part 2:

Making Change Happen: Setting Up and Meeting with Members of Parliament

A) SETTING UP A MEETING WITH AN MP

The quickest way to meet with any MP is to be in direct contact and be very clear. Emails and phone calls should be directed to the Ottawa office/department or the constituency office, depending on whether you're contacting them in their Ministerial role, or as your local MP. It's best to first call the MP and then to send a follow up email.

When you contact an MP be sure to say:

- Your name.
- What organization you're affiliated with, if any.
- You'd like to meet with your MP/the Minister/the appropriate policy advisor.
- What you'd like to discuss – you want the MP to be prepared. Don't make your full argument on the phone, you want the interaction to be with the MP in person.
- Don't ask for more than an hour of their time.
- Suggest some dates that work for you, a week or two out.
- Your phone number – your first call will often be a voicemail.

Your information will be taken in and processed. Most of these offices receive a high volume of calls, so you should follow up after a few days to show that yours is a genuine request. Keep calling, be understanding and polite, and you'll usually have a meeting within a few weeks.

For email and postal requests:

- If you have credentials, be sure to include them after your name.
- Use an email address that is less likely to go to junk mail.
- E-mail addresses should contain at least your first name and or last name.

Example:

firstname.lastname@gmail.com
firstname.lastname@workplace.com

This is what a sample invitation may look like

Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform
Alliance Canadienne pour la Réforme des Lois sur le Travail du Sexe

Big Susie's (Hamilton, ON) • **BC Coalition and WCCSIP** (Vancouver, BC) • **Cana**
Downtown Eastside Sex Workers United Against Violence (SWUAV) (Vancou
• **Émilie Laliberté**, Sex Worker Rights Activist • **Kara Gillies**, Community Org
(Toronto, ON) • **PIECE** (Edmonton, AB) • **Pivot Legal Society** (Vancouver,
Sex Workers Action Group (Kingston, ON) • **South Western Ontario Sex**
Professionals Of Canada (Toronto, ON) • **Stop the Arrests!** (Sault Sainte Ma
Group (Winnipeg, MB) • **Stella, l'amie de Maimie** (Montreal, Quebec) • **Stepping St**

May 18, 2012

Libby Davies (NDP)
542-N Centre Block, House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6 Canada

Dear Ms. Davies:

We are writing on behalf of the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform, a team of sex workers, organizations and individuals -- including academics, lawyers and social workers -- advocating for sex workers' rights and community well being.

We would like to meet with you to discuss sex work, the law, and the creation of safer communities.

As you are probably aware, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered a decision on *Bedford v. Canada* around prostitution laws on December 20, 2013. They declared three of the major prostitution provisions as unconstitutional. This has raised many important and pressing issues for sex workers and communities.

To this end, we would like to offer you our expertise regarding prostitution, including the current legal context.

We hope to discuss the impact of current and future prostitution legislation on both sex workers and communities. We trust that this will better equip you to speak with your constituents about their concerns.

Are you available to meet us in Ottawa on May 15th 2014?

We look forward to hearing from your office regarding our request.

Warm Regards,

Alice Academic, PhD
My University, City, Canada

Sally Sex Worker, MA, LLB
City, Canada

Sample

B) RESEARCHING MPS

Think about the person you're meeting with and what their professional interests and personal biases might be.

Depending on the party line and their personal experiences, they may have pre-existing perspectives on your issue. Some research into their previous activities (news searches, their official bios) may help you anticipate and respond to their particular interests. For example, an MP whose constituents are concerned about human trafficking may be willing to hear that decriminalization will enable more cooperation with police. Another example is talking to Caroline Bennett, who is the Aboriginal Affairs critic and a doctor who specialized in women's health: these are two areas of shared interest with sex workers. Or, an MP who is concerned about public nuisance may be able to hear that decriminalization will help create safer communities.

1. Google the name of your MP.
2. Search for MPs on the www.parl.gc.ca website to research their interests.
3. Check in with local experts and use your sources.
4. Use this information to help cater your discussion during your meeting.

Also see Part 4: 10 Things to Know When Talking to MPs.

C) CHOOSING AN ADVOCACY TEAM OR PARTNER

> *"Enlist a sympathetic ally or friend from the MP's constituency to go with you for moral support. Even if they don't speak much during the meeting, they could help make small talk to build rapport, or take notes and be in charge of the handouts, etc."*

(Quote from a sex worker advocate)

There will be times when you will visit with an MP alone, and others where it is beneficial to bring someone with you. It is always beneficial for MPs to meet with sex workers directly and also with people with experience advocating for sex workers' rights. Both sex workers and allies have important things to bring to these meetings, which is why it is suggested that you go in pairs where possible – a sex worker with an ally. More than two people in meetings can be overwhelming for the MP and may make it difficult to coordinate messaging between advocates. Special meetings with a committee or caucus are an exception and a moment where numerous advocates would be good.

- Find a team or person that works well for you and find time to prepare together.
- Choose a partner based on skill, positioning and experience that can compliment your own.
- Work with your teammate to identify an area where you are particularly knowledgeable and can be very persuasive.
- Identify each other's strengths and weaknesses so you can support each other during a meeting.
- Practice your ask and messaging together in advance.
- If possible, advocate in pairs throughout the year so that MPs get to know you and start to identify you as experts on sex work issues. In addition, organize one or two big advocacy days on Parliament Hill during the year – the big advocacy day is not only an optimal moment to visit as many MPs as possible, but it is a great community building exercise where sex workers and allies can learn from each other to see what works and what doesn't for future advocacy efforts.

Part 3:

What to Expect at a Meeting

A) PRACTICAL TIPS ON SELF-PRESENTATION

When meeting with MPs we want to bring less attention to ourselves and more attention to what we have to say. We want them to relate to us on a personal level and to take us seriously. Keep this in mind when choosing your outfit for the day. Keep it simple! Business casual is great if you have it! Most importantly, be comfortable with what you choose to wear, it will put you at ease during the meeting.

B) WHAT TO BRING TO A MEETING

- Government Issued Identification if your meeting is on Parliament Hill (same rules as at the airport) – you will need to sign in when entering Parliament and are likely to have your bags searched.
- Bring a notepad, two pens and a camera (for meetings with allies).
- Advocacy materials pre-printed and ready in a binder with easy-to-flip-to-tabs.
- Books, briefings and additional materials a policy advisor or assistant might need.
- Laptop or iPad optional for your PowerPoint slides (deck presentation) or to show images.

** Each person will have to go through security so give yourself enough time.*

C) HOW WILL THE MEETING UNFOLD?

- Introduce yourself and thank them for taking the time to meet with you – at the beginning, and when you wrap up.
- A few minutes of small-talk puts people at ease, before plunging directly into the issue – take your cue from the MP you're meeting with.
- Come with a plan for what you want to communicate, but try to keep it conversational rather than formal – you want to foster a discussion.
- Approach everyone as a potential ally. You can never know someone's position until you talk about it with him or her.
- Don't criticize their party's position or past actions – that makes people defensive and they stop listening. But do be honest about your disagreements, without hostility.

- Ask how familiar they are with the issue and try to bring them up to speed in 1-3 minutes in your opening. Leave the rest of the time for their response and discussion, that's where you get the most value, a sense of where they stand, a sense of how to respond, and sometimes commitments from the MP to take action on your behalf.

- Note ANY promises from the MP to do something for you, and follow up on those later. It will be your reason to contact the MP again in 2 weeks and will keep your issue in their mind.

- If possible, invite them to your home turf to show them your world, make them feel welcome among the people they're representing and making decisions for. MPs know they can learn a lot by leaving their offices.

Part 4:

Strategic Messaging

A) WHAT IS STRATEGIC MESSAGING? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

There are great differences in perspectives for prostitution law reform within and across political parties in Canada. No political party has been unanimous about the need for full decriminalization of prostitution. Strategic messaging is about adapting our message to the different political parties. It means using appropriate language, concepts and causes they champion to help them understand our needs.

B) TEN THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN TALKING ABOUT SEX WORK TO MPS

1. How does the issue fit their world view/framework – philosophical and political? Tailor your message and strategy to fit what you know about their general positioning. E.g., are they generally against government interference in people's lives? Do they have a business perspective?

2. How does the issue fit the facts, as they know them? Either work within those facts or, if possible, present new facts. However, they must trust the source of these new facts if they are going to believe them – and the source must compare favourably with the source of the old facts.

3. How does the issue fit with their electoral riding/constituent group? There is always a political consideration. Someone could be personally pro-choice but represent a riding with a strong anti-choice presence. Show how it fits with their electoral riding/constituent base. Produce surveys and polls. What's right for their constituents? Getting an opinion leader from their riding is a great tactic – local high school principal, head of a business association, etc.

4. How does the issue fit with his/her own ambition? How will the position they take on this issue impact where they want to be/go with their political (or other) career and how they want to get there? E.g., someone who wants to position themselves or who identifies as a maverick/indie relative to their party might want to take a bolder or even oppositional position to their party; or someone who is interested in running for party leadership might be more likely to avoid controversial or divisive issues, or change their former position to be mainstream, etc.

5. How does the issue fit with what their colleagues are thinking/doing? Affinity is often a big decider. They want to be doing what like-minded colleagues are doing

6. How does the issue fit with what elite persuaders/opinion drivers are saying? What do other people they know and/or trust say about this? Especially those perceived to have certain political/moral/social standing.

7 How does the issue fit with their past voting/position/campaign promise record? They value consistency for political and rational reasons. This can be specific to the issue at hand or more general in regards to similar issues or types of issues. When sex work is such a central political issue at times, some legislators will have a position on this and have made it public, so they are unlikely to shift their (public) stance, at least not in a significant way. But they might be persuaded to take a softer position on a small, well-defined issue, especially if it meshes with some of their other known positions.

8 How does the issue fit with personal experience (as they perceive it)? Their personal experiences and those of the people close to them can have a huge impact.

9 How does the issue fit with the bigger political context? E.g. not voting a certain way if it will bring down the government, or if they have agreed to vote a certain way in exchange for a colleagues vote on another issue.

10 How do you make your perspective and ask seem rational to them? Be a good, active listener. What are they really saying? If you understand that, you can find a way to work with it. Create the conditions in which the decision to support you is the rational one. Make voting with you the path of least resistance for them:

C) WHAT ARE THEY THINKING? ADAPTING MESSAGING TO THE PARTIES

CONSERVATIVE PARTY MEMBERS: WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

Tips for talking to Conservative Members

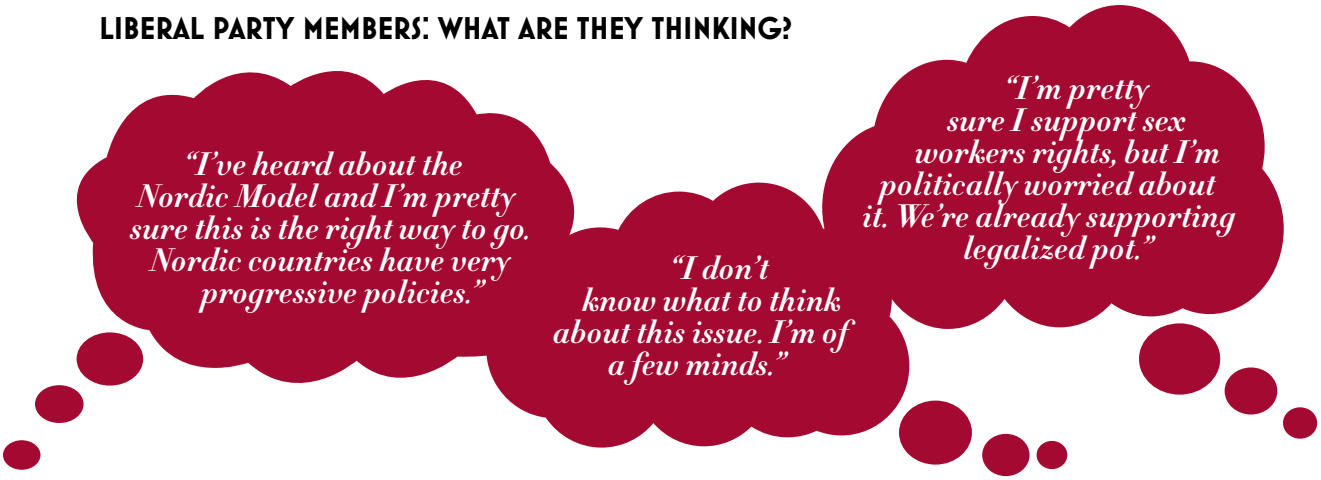
- Never assume the position of the MP, get them talking first. Don't forget to research the MP.
- Know that most are good, kind people who have concerns. Others will, however, be more confrontational.
- Know your facts, but also know they won't always matter. But, speaking truth to power does!
- Let them do the talking.
- Avoid confrontation by not overtly correcting language choices or ideas if it's not substantive to the debate.
- If a mistake is made, seek to gently correct it. Avoid outright debates.
- Ask questions, gauge the responses and look for openings or changes in attitude. Press harder on those areas.
- Conservatives may emphasize "protection" of sex workers as their main objective. Although the approach may be very different, the goal is shared – use this common ground as a basis to develop understanding.

NDP MEMBERS: WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

Tips for Talking to NDP Members:

- Let them do most of the talking and asking of questions.
- Bring all the facts to the table. Bring all the extra material you can find for assistants.
- Know that most will look to the leadership for their position on this issue.
- NDP MPs are more likely to support sex workers rights, but not all understand decriminalization as part of the solution.
- NDP MPs tend to hold more informal meetings than other MPs and will often be very up front with their opinions and positions.

LIBERAL PARTY MEMBERS: WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?



Tips for Talking to Liberal Members:

- The Senate Liberals tend to be reasonable, sober and give second thought.
- It's good to remind them of their progressive history on sexual rights issues: modernizing the divorce laws, same-sex marriage and advocating trans* issues. They are proud of this history.
- Liberals like to see themselves as "defenders of the constitution". Use this to your advantage.
- The best-case scenario might be to ask them to do nothing at all.

D) WHAT YOU CAN REQUEST FROM THE MP: YOUR "ASK"

Most people meet with politicians to ask for some kind of help. MPs will be expecting some kind of request. Here are some things people ask for:

- Information on where the government is headed, who is involved in the decision-making, and help with connecting to those people.
- Conversations with their colleagues who either don't feel strongly about the issue or are in opposition to your goals – sometimes you can turn a government official into an internal advocate.
- An opportunity to testify to a committee, information about when the committee is discussing a topic of interest.
- Money.
- That they read the (hopefully short) report or info sheets you give them.
- To introduce a bill in the House, and maybe draft it in consultation with you.
- If they're a member of the opposition, you can ask them to ask the government a question in Question Period – usually it's a strategically critical question – or to bring forward your message while debating a bill.
- If they're a Minister/Minister's staff, you can ask for help with matters that are decided within the Department/ Ministry (for example, a health program in partnership with the Public Health Agency of Canada, or a change in protocol for the Provincial police).
- It can sometimes be overbearing to ask them directly to vote yes/no on something, but you can let them know what's problematic about a proposed policy direction and what alternatives would be better.
- To keep in mind that meaningful consultation with groups – those that are most affected by the new laws – is crucial and that they can convey that message to their colleagues and to the other parties.

E) TALKING POINTS: SOME TIPS

> *"It helped a lot to prepare for the meeting by knowing in advance the points we wanted to cover, and having some notes to refer to. So even in a 'worst-case' scenario like our meeting, where the MP was an abolitionist who strongly supports the Nordic model, we were able to get all our key points across and remain polite and calm while answering the MP's questions and objections."*
>
> (Quote from a sex worker advocate)

- It's important to have 3 or 4 basic messages. This is where it gets really tight – you need to know what you're focusing on. This does not preclude any further or more complex discussion with MPs.
- Give a presentation, ask a few questions, let them respond and get into a back and forth.
- Key points are also useful to evaluate and debrief with your colleagues after the advocacy day; with a common point, evaluating MP's reactions will be easier.
- Prepare your initial presentation to be no more than 1-3 minutes – what you will be talking about, in what order. This way, you can easily launch yourself into a discussion (there may not be an opportunity to do a "presentation") where you might be interrupted often for questions/comments while still able to go back to your main points.
- At the end, be explicit and say: "This is what we are asking you to do." Don't be afraid to do that! A lot of people are afraid to ask. Its not just about giving information. The worst that can happen is that they will say "no". And in any case, they rarely bluntly say "no".
- You may feel angry at what people say, try to keep your emotions out of it. Your job is to try and educate and bring awareness. If they do say things that are prejudicial or biased then you know the kind of work you've got to do. It's about working through it with logic and reason and encouraging them to understand the realities.
- If possible, the conversation should be about the main messages – be prepared to encounter instances where you would typically speak up, but instead need to model language and reframe a problematic argument without engaging it head on.
- When working in pairs, while one person is talking, the other should take notes. It's important to keep a record because you will forget what people said, and this information is critical for following up and to get the most value from the meeting.
- It's important that you give the MP an opportunity to respond but don't let them take over the whole meeting.

Part 5:

Confronting Stigma

Meeting with MPs is similar to doing education with other populations – we need to tailor our messages depending on whom we are speaking with. Meeting with MPs, policy and lawmakers and others "with power" can be daunting and can also feel bad at times. As a community who so rarely is considered experts in our own lives and work, it can be exhausting trying to be seen and heard by people in power. Confronting this stigma takes its toll. We need to be equipped with strength and courage, and remind ourselves of the knowledge and expertise that we do have, so that we can approach these meetings with confidence.

A) USING YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

There are different types of knowledge that we can use and different ways that we can position ourselves during meetings – knowledge garnered from experience and knowledge from other sources.

Experiential knowledge ("I")

Experiential knowledge is obtained through first-hand involvement in something. Experience in sex work gives you "insider knowledge" that makes you a legitimate source and expert. This positions you to speak confidently and authoritatively.

USING EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE:

- Experiential knowledge is an important resource that you can draw on in an educational moment. Remember that you are the expert about who you are and what you do.
- Remember that your personal experience it is not necessarily generalizable to other sex workers.
- Sharing your personal information can put you in a vulnerable or exposed position and may evoke emotions that you may not be prepared to deal with at that time.
- Think about the personal information you are prepared to disclose beforehand. If you do not establish your personal boundaries in advance you may find yourself spontaneously (or impulsively) disclosing in order to 'prove you are right'.

Collective Knowledge ("we")

Collective knowledge is the shared knowledge of sex workers or of a sex worker rights movement. This knowledge may be obtained from your personal network, your community, and sex worker organizations locally and internationally. Collective knowledge allows you to speak from many different locations and with the authority of many different voices.

USING COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

- Being able to draw on collective knowledge strengthens an individual sex worker's argument because they can then draw on experiences other than their own.
- The collective knowledge of sex workers is a force that lends credibility.
- Drawing on the collective knowledge from different sectors (indoor, street sex work, dancing, etc.) is a powerful antidote to the divisions inherent to stigma.
- When doing public education remember an entire community of sex workers is standing behind you. You are not alone.
- If you are part of an organization or a group, use your team as a resource.

Conventional Knowledge ("they")

Conventional knowledge is knowledge that comes from traditional or institutional sources such as university-based research, parliamentary reports, legal analysis and scholarship. Since these types of data may have legitimacy in the eyes of the general public they can be powerful resources to draw on.

USING CONVENTIONAL KNOWLEDGE:

- Remember that your audience may dismiss sex worker knowledge (experiential or collective) as 'biased'; use their prejudice by drawing on conventional 'official' knowledge that says the same thing sex workers are saying.
- Using statistics and the language of research can be a particularly effective strategy.
- Do not assume that all conventional knowledge is necessarily "outsider knowledge". Sex workers and sex worker allies also do research and reports.

B) WHORE WISDOM

WHORE:

We Honour Ourselves with Respect and Empowerment! [1]

Sex work requires many skills, which can be an invaluable resource in educational moments. Sex work itself can be filled with educational moments. Sex workers acquire and develop technical skills, interpersonal skills, physical capabilities, business skills and coping skills.

1 Robyn Few, SWOP. 2006. in eXXXpressions en direct: Travailleuses du sexe debouttes à Montréal!, Video, col. 10 min.; J Clamen et MN Mensah (dir.), Montreal: Stella.

Whore Wisdom 1:

Thinking of the way you may interact with some clients is useful here. Your job is to provide a service, but you are also in a position to impose your authority, a position of control where you determine what direction the encounter will take. While MPs will often determine the direction a conversation will take, you can pull on your knowledge of how to guide this conversation to eventually arrive at "your ask".

Whore Wisdom 2:

When a client says something you totally disagree with or are offended by you may need to manage your emotions and stay professional. If you start creating a barrier in dialogue, the client will feel he/she are in a situation of confrontation and will block out what you are saying. So, you gently and tactfully lead.

Whore Wisdom 3:

Active listening with clients is very important– debating tends to shut down conversation so we sometimes instead draw on phrases like "Yes, you mention a very important point". In this way the client feels acknowledged. Then you can redirect the situation by saying, "have you thought about...".

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