



Living in
Community

June 8, 2020

Honourable Adrian Dix, MLA for Vancouver Kingsway
5022 Joyce St
Vancouver, BC V5R 4G6

Sent via email: adrian.dix.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Re: Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Funding Stream Name

Dear Mr. Dix,

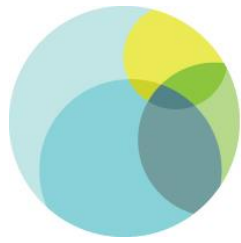
Thank you for your letter dated May 7, 2020 congratulating Living in Community (of Collingwood Neighbourhood House) on receiving funding from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General through the Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant program. We have successfully applied for funding through this program for several years to support our work on increasing sex worker safety across BC.

As you will know, Living in Community is an innovative multi-stakeholder initiative that brings together different groups who are impacted by or have an impact on sex work, including current and former sex workers, sex work support and advocacy organizations, and stakeholders representing businesses, governments, social services, and Indigenous organizations. We work to create greater health and safety through education and training, policy change, and sharing our model of community development using a sex workers' rights-based perspective.

While we appreciate your letter of congratulations, we would like to draw your attention to an error in your letter. You noted we received funding through the "Human Trafficking" stream. The title of the stream through which we received funding is "Human Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation and Vulnerable Women in the Sex Trade." While shortening the title in your letter was likely an unintended oversight, this error has significant consequences we would like to draw your attention to.

From our work over the past 15 years, we know that there are many misunderstandings about sex work which can have a dangerous impact on policy and funding priorities. While we know that your government is committed to funding initiatives to end gender-based violence, trafficking, and sexual assault, little to no funding is available for individuals engaged in sex work who have not been trafficked but who do experience violence. Trafficking and sex work are different, and must be acknowledged and treated as such. Moreover, much of the available funding goes to programs that only support sex workers in exiting sex work. Many individuals are not in a place to or do not want to exit sex work, yet they still have a fundamental right to safety and security.

Referring to this funding stream as "Human Trafficking" reinforces the problematic conflation of sex work with human trafficking that we and others are actively trying to educate against. We have attached an infosheet to this letter which provides more information on the problems of conflating sex work and human trafficking. In April of this year, we noticed that the Ministry of Public Safety's [web](#)



Living in Community

[page about Civil Forfeiture grants](#) had also shortened the title of this funding stream to “Human Trafficking” in their list of recipients of this year’s grants. After sharing our concerns with the Ministry, Ministry staff edited the file to include the full granting stream name, rectifying this issue. We were very pleased to see such quick action and hope that your office will also be able to adjust your language moving forward.

Moreover, we recommend that in your role as a Cabinet Minister you join us in recommending that this government update the name of this funding stream to reflect an explicit focus on sex worker safety in its funding deliverables. For years, the granting stream had no mention of sex work or the sex trade, limited to the title “Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking”. More recently, the title was changed to “Human Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation and Vulnerable Women Engaged in the Sex Trade.” While this change was an improvement, this framing erases the need for support services for male, transgender and non-binary sex workers. Moreover, by naming women as ‘vulnerable’, the title ignores both the perpetrators of violence who prey upon a stigmatized and criminalized population and the systemic reasons that violence and exploitation flourish. As a government, you must ensure you are not inadvertently perpetuating this victim-blaming narrative through problematic framing in funding streams.

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters. While language choices may seem small, it is not just semantics. Conflating sex work and trafficking has very serious consequences both for people who are trafficked and for sex workers.

We would be happy to discuss this further with you and your staff if you have additional questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Halena Seiferling, Director of Community Engagement
Living in Community
director@livingincommunity.ca