

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **SWAN Vancouver Society Urges Inclusion of Critical Perspectives at National Anti-Trafficking Forum**

Vancouver, BC – On March 23-24, a two-day national anti-trafficking forum organized by Public Safety Canada and the Canadian Women’s Foundation will be held in Toronto. The forum will discuss emerging trends, education and awareness, promising practices and policy direction in the area of human trafficking. SWAN Vancouver (“SWAN”) urges forum participants to include critical and ethical perspectives that address the inadvertent harms mainstream human trafficking campaigns have on the marginalized individuals these campaigns purport to help support and rescue.

For over a decade, SWAN has been working with migrant and immigrant women who do indoor sex work, a group of women who are mistakenly labelled as “trafficked”. Over the past several years, SWAN has not encountered cases of trafficking in the sex work sector. What SWAN has encountered are the negative consequences of anti-trafficking measures - most notably detention and deportation carried out under the guise of safety and protection.

“Instead of valorizing punitive anti-trafficking initiatives such as the RCMP’s Operation Northern Spotlight investigation, we encourage forum participants to critically analyze policy directives that are carried out to the detriment of individuals who are not trafficked,” said Dr. Julie Ham, President of SWAN. “Tackling trafficking and ensuring the safety of women in the sex work sector are not mutually exclusive”.

Harms resulting from recent law enforcement crackdowns on Asian sex workers in Alberta and British Columbia have illuminated the need for a more informed national dialogue, especially since none of the women identified were trafficked.

“SWAN spends a significant amount of time managing, resisting and responding to the collateral damage caused by mainstream anti-trafficking campaigns,” said Alison Clancey, Executive Director of SWAN. “We ask forum participants to think deeply about the limitations of the victim narrative that informs misguided anti-trafficking initiatives.”

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