

SWANzine



SWAN Newsletter

Winter 2015

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What is SWANzine?

The SWANzine newsletter is a guide to health, legal, social, employment, and community information for women engaged in indoor sex work in the Lower Mainland. English and Chinese versions are available. If you require SWANzine in another language, please let us know.



If there is a topic you would like to see in SWANzine, please send us your questions or comments.



2015 is year of the Goat.

The Goat is a Yin energy, a symbol of peace, harmonious co-existence and tranquility. That is the primary and fundamental mood for this year.

Happy Chinese New Year!

We just want to take a moment to acknowledge the feedback we have been getting. Here's what a few of you have to say about SWAN:

"I can't believe organizations like yours exist. Since I talked to you on the phone, I have felt so much relief. I am tremendously grateful. I will refer you to other women."

"I am very lonely and I don't know any people here. It's really good to have you here, to have someone to trust and be friends."

"I didn't know services like this existed, this is very good. I asked my friend and she didn't know either!"

"I can't believe you can provide such great and free services. I will refer you to my friends."

"It's so great you are doing this. I really appreciate you listening to me talk so much today too."

"You guys are so good and patient."

If you have any feedback on the services and/or support SWAN provides, we would love to hear from you! You can call, text or email. With your permission, your testimonial could be anonymously featured in our next SWANzine! From our experience over the years, word of mouth referrals are the best way to let others know about the free and confidential services we provide.

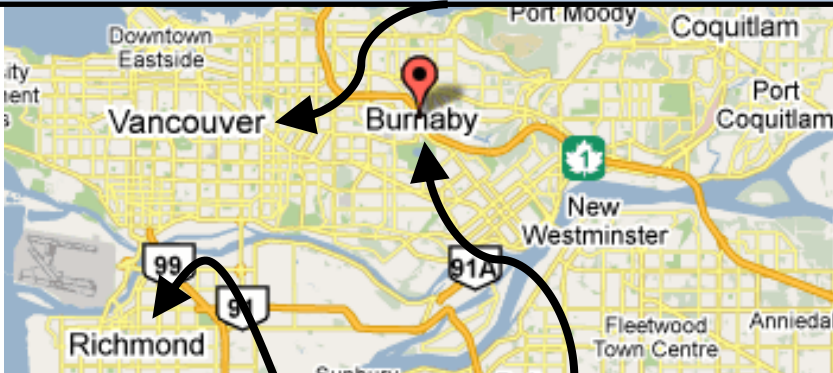


Enforcement of Canada's New Laws

On December 6 2014, Canada passed new prostitution laws under The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act. It is important to remember that is not illegal to *sell* sexual services. You as a sex worker cannot be criminalized for selling a sexual service, unless you are selling sex near a playground, school or daycare on the street. Providing sexual services in a massage shop is *not* a criminal act. For more information on the laws, please visit our website swanvancouver.ca/legal or contact us.

To date, we have not heard of the prostitution new laws being enforced in Vancouver, Richmond or Burnaby. SWAN has received information from the following police departments about their intentions in enforcing the new laws.

The Vancouver Police Department (VPD) has directed its officers to continue following the VPD Sex Work Enforcement Guidelines which state that **“sex work involving consenting adults is not an enforcement priority for the VPD”** which means that they intend to focus their attention on youth and exploitation, not adults having consensual sex. You can find these guidelines in our Bill C36 Legal Package on our website (available in [English](#) and [Chinese](#)). The VPD says it is trying to build trusting relationships with sex workers, so it is currently working with the sex work community on ways to better communicate the Guidelines and their general approach to sex work. Stay tuned for more information.



Provincial RCMP has informed SWAN that the City of Richmond and Richmond RCMP do not wish to shut down massage shops.

Provincial RCMP has informed SWAN that the City of Burnaby and Burnaby RCMP have no intention to shut down massage shops at this time.

If you experience something contrary to the above or know first-hand that the laws are being enforced in your municipality, please contact SWAN if you would like us to follow up and/or advocate on your behalf. We need to know how laws are affecting your work and lives in order to keep fighting to change these laws.

A note on condoms and law enforcement

We have noticed that some massage shop managers and a few women are more reluctant to take condoms since the new laws have passed.

We understand your concern and have inquired about local law enforcement policies on taking condoms.



Both the RCMP and VPD have informed us time and time again that they are not in the practice of taking condoms as evidence of sex work; this is consistent with what is reported to us from your interactions with police. **If police have ever taken condoms from your workplace, please contact SWAN.**

Law enforcement should not affect your ability to work safely.



It's Tax Time!

Not sure if you should file your taxes or not? Here are some frequently asked questions and answers.

Can I face legal consequences for filing my taxes due to the nature of my work?

Being a sex worker is not illegal in Canada. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is not a law enforcement agency and they are only concerned with collecting taxes. If you avoid paying taxes and the CRA finds out you generate income, you could be charged with committing tax fraud. If you are working in a massage shop or spa that is giving you a paycheck and a T4 tax form, the income is being reported to the CRA already. If you generate income through cash tips, some of the benefits of reporting tips are listed below. If you are considering reporting, it might be useful to keep a financial log book and set aside around 15-20% of your income for your return so that you are not stuck with a large unexpected payment.

What are the benefits of filing an Income Tax Return?

- Some government programs are only available to those who file taxes e.g. Universal Child Care Benefit where if you have children under the age of 6 years, you receive installments of \$100 per child per month.
- In filing taxes, you contribute to the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) as a Canadian citizen which will make you eligible to receive a pension upon retirement.
- After filing your taxes, you receive an income tax summary that is often needed to purchase a car or house and to apply for loans, e.g. student loans.
- You can invest your income into a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) to save for the future.
- Any money that you have to spend in order to make your income can be claimed provided you have the receipts (e.g. cosmetics, cosmetic surgery, clothing, condoms, sex toys, computer, advertising, or transportation [taxi, driver, mileage on your own car]).



What are the downsides of filing an Income Tax Return?

The main downside is that you will usually owe money if you do not pay deductions like Income Tax, CPP, or Employment Insurance (EI). Because of this, it is very unlikely you will get a tax refund.

Still unsure? Or you have decided to file but don't know where? The Sex Professionals of Canada (SPOC) recommend Garth. Garth has been doing tax returns for women in the sex work sector for the past decade. SPOC states he is "is sex worker positive and gentlemanly". Garth is located in Ontario but if you would like your taxes prepared over the phone and/or through email, Garth can assist you regardless of the province you reside in. He can be reached at cyberites@hotmail.com. If you require translation in this process, SWAN can provide that service.

Sources:

<http://shiftcalgary.blogspot.ca/2009/06/sex-work-and-canada-revenue.html>

<http://www.spo.ca/resources.html>



Supporting Women's Alternatives Network of Vancouver

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Sex on Your Period – What You Need To Know

There are benefits!

- Hormones released during sex help relieve symptoms associated with premenstrual syndrome, like cramps, depression and irritability.
- Many women report that their period ends sooner when they have intercourse while menstruating. This is probably because the muscle spasms from orgasm allow menstrual flow to come out quicker than usual.
- Due to changes in hormones, it is common for women to feel more desirous for sex during the first few days of their period, which can make the experience more rewarding for both partners!



There are risks!

- You can still get pregnant if you have sex while menstruating. Be sure to use contraception.
- You are at a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections because during menstruation, the cervix expands more than usual to allow blood flow, which makes it easier for bacteria and viruses to enter the uterus and pelvic regions. Using condoms significantly decreases this risk.
- During menstruation, the vagina has a lower acidity, which increases the risk of yeast infections.



Ways to reduce menstrual flow during sex

- **Diaphragm** – small, flexible rubber cup that is inserted into the vagina and fits over the cervix (be sure to clean frequently to reduce risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome)
- **Sponge** – similar to the diaphragm, only smaller, easier to carry and disposable (be sure to change frequently to reduce risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome)
- **Softcup menstrual cup** – flexible cup-shaped device that is placed inside the vagina against the cervix to block menstrual flow. It can be used during intercourse without being felt by either partner. Currently, the Softcup brand is the only type of menstrual cup that that we know of that can be used during intercourse.
**If you have an intrauterine device (IUD) as a form of birth control, you should consult with your doctor before using a menstrual cup

Bottom line: Sexual intercourse during menstruation is a completely natural and safe act and causes no harm to either partner – just make sure proper safer sex precautions are taken!

**Tip: using red condoms can help disguise menstrual blood. If you would like FREE red-colored condoms, please contact us.

Special thanks to Nurse Practitioner Jennifer Beaveridge of Ravensong Community Health Centre for reviewing this piece

Sources: <http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/sexinfo/article/sex-your-period/> / <http://www.uhs.umich.edu/contraception-other>

HEALTH CLINICS

VANCOUVER

Women's Health Collective BC
Women's Nurse Practitioners 29
West Hastings 604-736-5262
www.womenshealthcollective.ca All
ages. Women only. *Check-ups
*Diagnosis and prescriptions
*Specialist referrals *Birth control
*Pap tests *STI & HIV testing.
Monday 9:30am-4:30pm Tuesday-
Thursday 1:00p,-4:30pm Friday
9:30am-1:30pm. Free services. Will
not share results with family doctor if
requested.

BCCDC Clinic Drop-in Clinic 1170 Bute
St. 11-6:30 Mon-Fri. All ages. Offers:
*STI & HIV testing *Birth control
*Hepatitis B vaccine. Free and
confidential. No MSP required.
[www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/a-
z/ s/SexuallyTransmittedInfections/c
inprog/default.htm](http://www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/a-z/s/SexuallyTransmittedInfections/c/inprog/default.htm)

BURNABY

Options for Sexual Health Clinic 4734
Imperial 604-731-4252
[www.optionsforsexualhealth.org/pro
viders/opt-metrotown-formerly-new-
westminster](http://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org/providers/opt-metrotown-formerly-new-westminster)
All ages. Offers: *Birth control
*pregnancy testing and options *STI
& HIV testing. Wednesdays 7pm-9pm

Youth Clinic 4734 Imperial 604-293-
1764. 21 and under.
[www.fraserhealth.ca/find_us/service
s/?program_id=9998](http://www.fraserhealth.ca/find_us/service/s/?program_id=9998) Offers: *STI
testing, treatment & counseling *HIV
counseling, testing and referral
*Pregnancy testing *Emergency
contraception. Monday, Tuesday,
Thursday 1pm-5pm

RICHMOND

Youth Clinic 8100 Granville 604-233-
3204. 21 and under. *STI & HIV
testing *Birth control *Morning after
pill free for all ages. Monday &
Wednesday 3:30pm-5:30pm, Friday
1pm-4pm

For clinics in **other municipalities**,
check SWAN's [Health Page](#) on our
website.



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