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UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA EXPERT ADVISORY  
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Sex industry legislation perpetuates stereotypes: study

University of Victoria researchers have highlighted preliminary findings from the largest and most comprehensive study of the sex industry undertaken in Canada in a brief (pdf attached) to the Justice and Human Rights Committee, which is poised to begin examination of Bill C-36—the proposed legislation governing the sex industry—in Ottawa on July 7.

Faculty members Cecilia Benoit and Chris Atchison are available for comment about the findings of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research-funded study as they relate to specific provisions of the bill. The study is based on coast-to-coast surveys in English and French of buyers and sellers of sex as well as industry managers, spouses and partners, and others involved with the creation, enforcement and regulation of applicable laws. The team expects to release the full report in early September.

One of the key findings states that the “commodification” provision of the proposed legislation—286.1(1)—is based on a false assumption that sellers of sex are weak, without control, and are always victims. Their research shows that over 80 per cent of sellers of sex agree or strongly agree that they feel empowered to set the terms and conditions of the service. Further, it shows that for buyers and sellers, advertising—internet advertising in particular—acts as a safety mechanism. Benoit and Atchison contend that proposed legislation will also make it impossible for either sellers or buyers seek police assistance if they've been victimized.

Benoit is a professor in the Department of Sociology and a scientist at UVic's Centre for Addictions Research of BC. In the past 20 years, Benoit has interviewed over 500 female, male and transgender sellers of sexual services. Her research was referenced in the Bedford case.

Atchison is a research associate in UVic's Department of Sociology. In the past 18 years, Atchison has interviewed close to 3,000 sex trade clients and has extensively researched the physical and virtual communities where sellers and buyers interact.

For more info: [www.understandingsexwork.com](http://www.understandingsexwork.com)

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