



# The Catholic Women's League of Canada

## B.C. & YUKON PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

President: Barbara Dowding

Spiritual Advisor: Rev. Terence Brock

*National Theme: Love One Another*

*Provincial Theme: Walk Humbly With Our God*

April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Mayor Sam Sullivan  
City of Vancouver  
453 West 12th Avenue,  
Vancouver, BC, V5Y 1V4

Your Worship, Mayor Sullivan,

The *dignity of the human person*, created in the image and likeness of God, is the foundation of our Catholic social beliefs. Safeguarded from the tides of spurious opinion and subjective criteria, human dignity extends to all, including those relegated to the "margins" of our society. As a member of the Order of Canada, your personal commitment to people with disabilities is recognized nationally, serving as a powerful witness to this inalienable dignity of each and every human person.

The *option for the poor and vulnerable* is a cornerstone to building the common good and to our Catholic social beliefs. Our obligation to examine the effects of personal decisions and institutional policies from the perspective of the marginalized is rooted in the radical command to love one's neighbour as one's self. Once again, your 2007 "State of the City" address contains an eloquent testament to this, prioritizing our need to develop "compassionate and long-term solutions to our city's most challenging social issues."

Fundamentally, central to each "challenging social issue" is the human person. We are encouraged by your stated commitment to providing accessible, dignified alternatives - "escape" routes - to those citizens wishing to escape the chains of prostitution. We, the BC & Yukon Council of the Catholic Women's' League of Canada, are wholeheartedly committed to working with you to restore the human dignity of our sisters and brothers.

We are deeply troubled, however, by recent media reports which purport that you have moved away from this position to one of "open mindedness" regarding the proposal of legalized brothels. Such a position would be inherently contradictory to providing

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“escape routes” for those in prostitution: If such abuse of our fellow citizens were not unequivocally deemed unacceptable in our city, but rather “under consideration” by our Mayor or even officially sanctioned in specific venues, what specifically would people be requiring “escape” from?

This subject has been of immense concern to our 9,000 members for some time and we are working alongside the more than 10,000 members of the Knights of Columbus who will be writing you in this regard as well. We are fast approaching our annual provincial conventions and recognizing the limitations of media reports, we would like to present your position on this issue, and cordially invite you to respond.

In addition, we ask for your commitment in working to eliminate the “demand” side to this violence. We invite you to consider the multiple strategies available to you as Mayor. Our *Criminal Code* contains provisions, upheld by the highest court in our land, against communicating for the purposes of prostitution. These can be enforced against those on the “demand” side. Thinly-veiled prostitution procurement agencies, many from which the City of Vancouver collects revenue, are advertised in our community newspapers, magazines and telephone directories. We can all work together to uphold human dignity over narrow commercial interests.

Thank you for your commitment to upholding the dignity of all of our citizens, and we look forward to working with you in building upon the very best of humanity to construct a wonderful legacy of the common good of all.

Respectfully yours,

Mrs. Barbara Dowding, President  
BC & Yukon Council  
The Catholic Women’s League of Canada

cc: Mr. B. Dan O’Hara, State Deputy  
Knights of Columbus

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