

## PRESS RELEASE

Vancouver Collective Against Sexual Exploitation (VCASE)

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### **VCASE commends police for proactive enforcement targeting sex-buyers**

The Vancouver Collective Against Sexual Exploitation (VCASE,) a survivor-informed coalition of diverse groups and individuals, applauds the BC Counter Human Trafficking Unit and the Richmond RCMP for their recent joint operation targeting individuals attempting to purchase sexual services online.

According to the RCMP's public statement, undercover officers engaged with more than 100 individuals during a one-day initiative, resulting in multiple arrests and ongoing investigations. These efforts demonstrate a clear commitment to reducing demand for sexual exploitation and protecting vulnerable people in British Columbia.

VCASE strongly supports enforcement strategies that focus on the buyers of sexual services, as consumer demand is the primary driver of both prostitution and human trafficking. When police agencies take action against those seeking to purchase sex, they directly disrupt the market conditions that allow exploitation to flourish.

This approach aligns with Canada's legal framework, which explicitly criminalizes the purchase of sexual services under the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA).

"The RCMP's statement underscores a critical truth: individuals seeking to buy sex have no way of knowing whether they are interacting with a police officer or with a person who is being coerced, trafficked, or otherwise exploited," says VCASE spokesperson Trisha Baptie.

"By choosing to purchase sex, buyers contribute to the very conditions that place vulnerable people at risk."

While VCASE welcomes this operation, we emphasize the need for consistent, province-wide enforcement of the laws that criminalize sex buying and any third-party involvement that exploits persons.

"These laws exist to protect individuals who are exploited in the sex trade and to hold accountable those who create the demand that fuels exploitation," says Baptie.

VCASE urges all police agencies, Crown prosecutors, and municipal leaders across British Columbia to:

- Prioritize investigations targeting sex buyers and third-party profiteers.
- Ensure that charges are pursued wherever evidence supports them.
- Publicly affirm that purchasing sexual services is illegal in Canada, regardless of whether the sex act is consensual.

- Strengthen public-awareness campaigns that communicate the harms associated with prostitution and the legal consequences for buyers.

VCASE also recognizes the importance of trauma-informed supports for individuals who have been exploited in the sex trade. Enforcement must be paired with accessible services, safe exit pathways, and community-based resources that help people rebuild their lives free from exploitation.

“The recent RCMP operation demonstrates that targeted enforcement can reduce demand, deter would-be buyers, and reinforce the message that sexual exploitation is not tolerated in British Columbia,” Baptie said. “We commend the officers involved and encourage continued leadership in this area.”

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*The Vancouver Collective Against Sexual Exploitation (vcase.ca) is a community-based organization dedicated to ending all forms of sexual exploitation through advocacy, education, and survivor-centred support. We work to advance policies that reduce demand, protect vulnerable people, and promote a society where no one is bought or sold.*