

VCASE was disappointed to read the Tyee's biased reporting on the BC Counter Trafficking Unit's much-needed campaign to address human trafficking at the upcoming FIFA World Cup, in your article of April 30, "Experts Critique New RCMP Human Trafficking Campaign."

We do agree with the point that in the long-term, we must "address the root causes of economic and social insecurity, such as access to safe housing and sustainable and equitable work." However, prostitution cannot be seen as a viable economic alternative to provide social safety nets for vulnerable and marginalized persons.

During the FIFA World Cup we know there will be an increase in the demand for paid sex. Those who buy sex have no real consideration that individuals involved in prostitution may have been trafficked and as a result they will suffer lifelong trauma.

Both issues can be addressed; we can look at long-term solutions to the problem of the continued and sustained exploitation through the commercial sex industry, and we can also help those who face immediate danger of exploitation and abuse through trafficking.

There is a pressing need right at this moment to address the real-world problems exacerbated by these kinds of large sporting events, which, as noted by the RCMP, lead to an elevated "risk of human trafficking and exploitation." The experts quoted in your article, state there are underlying factors leading to commercial sexual exploitation, and we must recognize that most victims are girls and women. **The most important contributing factor to this problem is the willingness of the sex buyer to purchase access to the body of another person.**

In Canada, the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA) acknowledges the exploitative nature of the prostitution transaction, making the purchase of sex illegal. The Act recognizes that allowing the purchase of sex reinforces the predatory nature of the commercial sex industry, and that many people trapped in prostitution have been groomed, manipulated or outright trafficked. **It is an inherently unsafe industry that uses and exploits people for the sexual pleasure of some and the profits of others.**

We applaud this campaign by the BC Counter Trafficking Unit to bring light to this problem, to educate the public to be aware of the signs of trafficking and to take action when they suspect exploitation.

As sports fans, players and FIFA staff will be traveling to Vancouver this summer, we must send the message that sexual consent cannot be bought