

Brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women Study on Anti-Feminist Ideology

Anti-Feminist Ideology in Practice:

Exclusion, Conflation, and the Hierarchy of Women in Canada

We are so grateful to be guests on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the Musqueam Nation, Squamish Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

We honour the three great Nations whose land this is.



Who We Are

Since 2002, the **BC Coalition of Experiential Communities (BCCEC)** are a democratic organization of sex workers representing diverse race, gender and genre in sex work across the BC Region.

Our work focuses on law and policy reform being based on evidence and fact and on placing the voices of sex workers at the center of all work that could impact our lives and safety.

1. Introduction

This submission is respectfully provided to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women as part of its study on anti-feminist ideology in Canada.

Prepared by the BC Coalition of Experiential Communities (BCCEC), this brief draws on over two decades of community-based research, policy engagement, and lived experience in the sex industry.

It argues that these approaches produce outcomes that are inconsistent with core feminist principles and contribute to increased vulnerability to violence for a significant population of women in Canada.

The current study on anti-feminist ideology in Canada has focused primarily on explicit forms of misogyny, including online radicalization and incel-related violence.¹

However, anti-feminist ideology does not operate only at the margins. It can also be embedded within institutional, policy, and advocacy frameworks that shape how women are recognized, protected, and included.

This submission identifies two such dynamics:

- (1) the exclusion of sex workers from feminist and policy frameworks, and**
- (2) the conflation of consensual sex work with human trafficking.**

Both operate in ways that undermine core feminist principles and contribute to increased vulnerability to violence.

2. Anti-Feminist Ideology Beyond Extremism

Anti-feminist ideology is commonly understood as hostility toward women's equality, often expressed through explicit misogyny. However, it can also take more subtle forms.²

When frameworks:

- deny women's agency
- exclude certain women from protection

- condition rights on conformity to moral or behavioural expectations

they reproduce the same underlying logic as explicit anti-feminist movements:

that not all women are equal, and not all women are deserving of autonomy or protection.

3. Hierarchies of Victimhood and the “Good vs. Bad Women” Dichotomy

Parliamentary evidence demonstrates that responses to trafficking and gender-based violence operate within a **hierarchy of victimhood**, reflecting an underlying ideological distinction between “deserving” and “undeserving” women.³

In parliamentary discussions, including FEWO Meeting 24 (e.g., Int-13350979), the model of a “legitimate” victim is implicitly defined by:

- coercion
- lack of agency
- alignment with narratives of exploitation⁴

Women who conform to this model are readily recognized and protected. Those who do not—particularly women engaged in sex work—are not consistently included within this category.

This reflects a broader “good versus bad women” dichotomy, where protection is extended to those who meet dominant expectations of victimhood, while others are rendered less visible or excluded entirely.

Submissions to Parliament by the Canadian Women's Foundation explicitly identify this dynamic as a **“hierarchy of victimhood,”** noting that some women—particularly those in the sex industry—are less likely to receive support or recognition despite experiencing significant harm.⁵

4. Conflation of Sex Work and Trafficking as Ideological Practice

The conflation of consensual sex work with human trafficking reflects an ideological rejection of women’s sexual autonomy.

By collapsing all sexual labour into exploitation, these frameworks deny the possibility of agency and reinforce the belief that women’s sexuality must be controlled, regulated, or “rescued.”⁶

This is fundamentally inconsistent with feminist principles of bodily autonomy and self-determination.

Parliamentary and advocacy frameworks frequently collapse consensual sex work into trafficking narratives. This produces several policy effects:

- erasure of women’s agency
- expansion of surveillance and enforcement in sexual labour contexts
- misidentification of victims
- deterrence from reporting violence

Advocacy submissions to FEWO, including those from organizations such as Aura Freedom International, consistently position sexual labour environments as sites of inherent risk and exploitation.⁷

These framings are operationalized through law enforcement practices, including indicator-based models used by agencies such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and municipal police services.⁸

The result is a system in which women in the sex industry are more likely to be subject to investigation and intervention than recognized as victims of violence.

5. Structural Exclusion from Analyses of Gender-Based Violence

Even where violence against women is correctly identified as structural—rooted in inequality, power, and systemic conditions—sex workers are not consistently included in the analysis.⁹

Submissions to FEWO addressing sexual violence and femicide emphasize:

- systemic causes of harm
- barriers to reporting
- the role of stigma and inequality

However, they do not consistently locate sex workers within these frameworks, despite the well-documented role of stigma, criminalization, and institutional neglect in shaping their exposure to violence.¹⁰

This omission creates a critical blind spot in policy development.

6. Mass Violence and the Consequences of Structural Exclusion

Robert Pickton murders

Canada has already experienced large-scale lethal violence targeting women in the sex industry.

The murders committed by Robert Pickton involved dozens of women over an extended period, the majority of whom were engaged in sex work, with Indigenous women significantly overrepresented among the victims.

These killings did not occur in isolation. They were enabled by:

- delayed and inadequate police response
- dismissal of missing persons reports
- systemic assumptions about the credibility and value of the victims

The findings of the Forsaken confirm that institutional failures contributed to the scale and duration of the violence.

This case demonstrates that when a population of women is not fully recognized within systems of protection, the consequences are not theoretical—they are lethal.

Toronto incel-inspired murder case

More recent violence reflects a convergence between explicit misogynistic ideology and the targeting of women in sex work environments.

In 2020, a woman was killed in a Toronto massage spa in an attack prosecuted as terrorism linked to incel ideology. The perpetrator's actions were motivated by misogynistic beliefs associated with entitlement to women's bodies and resentment toward women's sexual autonomy.

The location of the attack is significant. Women working in sex work environments are frequently:

- stigmatized
- subject to increased surveillance
- less likely to be recognized as legitimate victims

This creates conditions in which they are both symbolically and structurally vulnerable to violence.

This case illustrates the intersection between ideological misogyny and structural exclusion.

While incel-related violence is recognized within current analyses of anti-feminist ideology, the specific vulnerabilities of women in sex work contexts are not.

As a result, the conditions that increase risk for women who do sex work remain insufficiently addressed within policy frameworks.

The absence of these realities from national discussions on misogyny and anti-feminist ideology reinforces a broader pattern identified in this submission: that some lives are less visible in policy, and therefore less protected in practice.

7. Translation of Ideology into Policing and Intelligence Practices

These ideological assumptions are not confined to discourse. They are operationalized through enforcement and intelligence practices, where women in the sex industry are more likely to be surveilled and investigated than recognized as victims.

Indicator-based models used in anti-trafficking enforcement frequently rely on characteristics associated with sexual labour environments, resulting in broad categories of women being subject to monitoring and intervention.⁸

This reflects a structural translation of ideology into practice, with direct implications for safety, trust in institutions, and access to protection.

8. Implications for Risk Assessment and Prevention

The exclusion of sex workers from frameworks addressing misogyny, trafficking, and gender-based violence results in:

- incomplete risk assessment
- misallocation of resources
- reduced effectiveness of prevention strategies
- diminished access to protection and services

Empirical research from the Population Project identifies a minimum of **169,000 individuals with lived experience in sex work in Canada over a two-year period**, approximately 83% of whom are women.¹¹

This is not an estimate. It is an empirical count.

This demonstrates that the population affected by these policy gaps is substantial.

When a group of this size is not meaningfully included in national analyses of violence against women, the resulting frameworks cannot be considered comprehensive.

9. Anti-Feminist Effects of Exclusion and Conflation

Frameworks that:

- exclude sex workers from recognition and participation
- condition protection on conformity to narrow models of victimhood
- conflate consensual sex work with trafficking

operate in ways that are inconsistent with core feminist principles.

They undermine:

- equality among women
- bodily autonomy
- the right to safety and protection

and contribute to conditions in which violence is more likely to occur and less likely to be prevented.

When protection is conditional, it ceases to function as a right and becomes instead a form of selective recognition.

10. Conclusion: There Is No Feminism Without Sex Workers

This study has focused on anti-feminist ideology as an external threat. However, the evidence demonstrates that anti-feminist dynamics are also present within institutional and policy frameworks that shape responses to violence against women.

The exclusion of sex workers and the conflation of sex work with trafficking are not neutral policy choices. They reflect ideological assumptions about women's sexuality, agency, and worth.

These assumptions reproduce a hierarchy among women, in which some are fully recognized as deserving of protection and others are not.

Sex workers are not a marginal population. We are a significant number of women whose lives, safety, and rights are directly shaped by the policies being developed in our absence.

A framework that excludes sex workers cannot claim to represent all women.

A framework that denies our agency cannot claim to uphold bodily autonomy.

A framework that leaves us unprotected cannot claim to advance safety.

There is no feminism without sex workers.

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Footnotes

1. Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO), Study on Anti-Feminist Ideology, 45th Parliament, 1st Session.
2. Ibid; see also discussion of online misogyny and radicalization across FEWO Meetings 22–24.
3. FEWO Meeting 24, Evidence, 45-1, including witness testimony on trafficking and victim identification frameworks.
4. Ibid., Int-13350979.
5. Canadian Women's Foundation, Submission to FEWO on Human Trafficking (2023).
6. See FEWO submissions framing sexual exploitation within trafficking narratives, including

advocacy briefs submitted to the Committee.

7. Aura Freedom International, Submission to FEWO (2024).
8. Royal Canadian Mounted Police and related policing frameworks on human trafficking indicators and enforcement models.
9. Ending Sexual Violence Association of Canada, Submission to FEWO (2024).
10. Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan, Submission to FEWO (2024).
11. Population Project, “The Silent Majority” dataset (2014–2016), TCPS2-compliant empirical research.