

From: [Jenny Duffy](#)
To: [Executive Committee](#)
Subject: Executive Committee Submission - Bill 251
Date: Tuesday, June 1, 2021 3:37:06 PM
Attachments: [Executive Committee Submission-Maggies Toronto -Bill 251.pdf](#)

Hi there,

I would like to submit a written submission on behalf of Maggie's Toronto Sex Workers' Action Project to the Executive Committee regarding Bill 251.

I have attached our submission, but please let me know if there's another method by which I should do this!

Thank you,
Jenny

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Jenny Duffy

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Maggie's Toronto Sex Workers Action Project. Maggie's is one of Canada's oldest sex worker justice organizations serving Toronto's downtown east end since 1986. We exist in the heart of our city's housing crisis, serving community living in encampments, our overcrowded shelter system and navigating extreme poverty as well as surveillance + targeted harassment from local law enforcement. We offer weekly supportive programming for sex workers, emergency relief programs, street outreach, and social, political and legal advocacy for our community.

Bill 251 conflates sex work with trafficking, undermining the agency and human rights of sex workers - our organizations and our communities have noted, for decades, that further criminalizing sex work and conflating our work with trafficking only harms our communities and further marginalizes our people.

The bill itself:

Dramatically expands police powers, allowing unfettered access to hotels, potentially spaces like airbnb, people's homes and businesses, as well as access to sensitive information on the mere *suspicion* sex work may be taking place, investing hundreds of millions of dollars into the expansion of policing through a number of different avenues - extending into social service sectors and local businesses,

Facilitates greater cooperation between police and other social service sectors, effectively downloading policing techniques and responsibilities onto social workers themselves (including the ability to detain, seize and remove community members, and force programs on them without consent. We need to stress here that detention and seizure of community members, regardless of whether it's done by police, social service workers, bylaw enforcement officers, is largely experienced as an assault and betrayal)

Invests in the same discriminatory forms of racial profiling

that have historically led to police, social workers, hotels, even flight crew profiling Black and Indigenous communities, racialized communities, poor and working class communities, queer and trans communities, immigrants and other historically marginalized groups.

Allows law enforcement to target both physical and digital platforms

through the introduction of restrictions, sanctions and fines. Many in our community rely on these platforms that allow sex workers to advertise, screen, and engage in work safely on their own terms. This is an extension of the existing hearings happening at the federal level following right-wing religious groups campaigning for the abolition of sex work.

Bill 251 will alienate people from key municipal supports, and other vital public services, and continue to push sex workers into isolated environments.

We also address you as an organization that has supported many community members through police violence and abuse for the better part of four decades. Through the pandemic we've seen an uptick in targeted violence and discrimination against sex workers from the police and local bylaw enforcement, so much so that we've had to establish a legal program through the pandemic to address the complaints from the community. We've also seen political leaders shaming and degrading sex workers in a moment where our industries have shut down and many of our community members were limited from accessing emergency aid.

Last fall the Mayor and the premier made shaming remarks about strippers and their clients -the kinds of degrading remarks that wouldn't be made about any other industry. The city, despite continuing to make money off of clubs and dancers during a pandemic forget that these are workers who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and remarks like these -are part of a long history of labeling sex workers as "vectors of disease" when actually they've been public health leaders. For this reason our organization is not only shifting programs to deal with abuse from law enforcement but the ways in which the city and province has left sex workers behind in this pandemic. This includes our mutual aids funds, emergency food box programs and emergency counselling supports. We've also started a series of vaccine clinics for our community. Our next vaccine clinic is Friday at the strip club Zanzibar.

We are asking that the City finally makes moves to protect sex workers. Our communities have been left behind in the pandemic, we've been subject to increased police powers, and a long history of anti-trafficking initiatives, arrests, assaults, and deportations of sex workers. We need the City to protect sex workers: denounce Bill 251, and push for the decriminalization of sex work to move sex work out of the criminal sector to a labour framework where we are afforded workplace protections.