



COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

Archbishop criticizes B.C.'s sudden prostitution-law void *Calls on government to lay charges; announces committee to assess steps*

VANCOUVER (Feb. 17, 2014) – Archbishop J. Michael Miller is urging the B.C. government to reconsider its decision not to prosecute prostitution-related offences following last year's Supreme Court of Canada ruling that the laws are unconstitutional.

Archbishop Miller also announced a special committee of stakeholders is being formed to assess the legal vacuum. "We cannot ignore the fact that women, men and children are being objectified. It is a shameful state of affairs and it's going on under our very eyes. Any decision not to enforce laws that protect these victims is indefensible."

Archbishop Miller is a past member of the Vatican's Council for Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples. He has made human trafficking a priority and co-authored a pastoral letter on the subject prior to the Olympic Games in Vancouver, when prostitution and trafficking was expected to rise.

[The B.C. and Yukon Catholic Bishops letter](#) urged governments to strengthen their resolve in prosecuting traffickers and called on them "always to serve the integral promotion of the human person both at home and abroad."

Archbishop Miller said it is ironic that B.C. would choose not to lay prostitution-related charges at a time when prostitution is a major issue at sporting events such as the Olympic Games. "Prostitution and human trafficking is the most extensive form of slavery in this 21st century and it's occurring in our own country and in our own city," he said.

Canada is a "source, transit, and destination country for women, men and children, many of them aboriginal, trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation or forced labour," he said.

He noted that Pope Francis, in his recent apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), condemned the horror of human trafficking and prostitution and accused those who look the other way of being complicit.



COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

“I call on the government to work with many organizations in Vancouver that are trying to find ways to prevent the exploitation of human beings. We must find ways to unite our efforts to free the victims of human trafficking and prostitution and stop this crime which threatens not only the human dignity of individuals but also the basic values of Canadian society.”

He announced the Archdiocese of Vancouver is putting together a team of stakeholders to explore the problem of prostitution and human trafficking and how best to respond to the evolving legal frameworks.

The committee, coordinated by the RCAF Office of Service and Justice, will include representatives of the Church’s ministries to women and youth as well as street ministries. It is expected to meet before the end of February.

- 30 -

Paul Schratz, Archdiocese of Vancouver Communications Director
604-683-0281
pschratz@rcav.org