



Mayor John Taylor and Town of Newmarket Council Members

I am writing today to restate the support of the Council of Women Against Sex Trafficking in York Region in the adoption of the Town of Newmarket Licensing Regime for Personal Wellness Establishments as well as to address a number of the opposing claims made during the Committee of the Whole session on June 16.

Once again, I commend your actions to address illicit body rub parlours in the Town of Newmarket. Flynn Scott and his team did an outstanding job of shaping this new bylaw to not only address the issue at hand, but to also protect and encourage legitimate Personal Wellness Establishments while being flexible enough to address those who do not fit into the defined criteria of accreditation and professional association membership. Not an easy task. One that in the early stages of discussion, I wondered how this would be accomplished. In my opinion, they not only did it, they surpassed expectations. Therefore, we strongly encourage its adoption by Council.

Having said that, as we heard on June 16, this is a highly charged, contentious issue. Deputations were made by a number of organizations and women who labeled your efforts as racist, anti-Asian and discriminatory -- led by Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network. And the attacks continue. The lead message on its homepage (butterflysw.org) reads as follows:

We cannot tolerate it anymore!

"Racist attacks being waged by some anti-trafficking organizations against Asian massage parlours and sex workers must end. We need you to take action to sign the statement to condemn racist attacks from pro-carceral and harmful anti-trafficking organizations which foster anti-Asian racial discrimination and anti-sex work hate."

It goes on to say:

"Newmarket is going to shut down all Asian massage parlours despite the opposition from many racial justice, human rights and sex workers rights activists and organizations, and from the massage and sex workers themselves." It encourages the signing and submitting of the form letter they have on their site.

The highly-charged opposing claims as I understand them are as follows:

Language and culture barriers

They claim, as they did in their deputations on Wednesday, that a language / cultural barrier puts Asian Migrant Sex Workers at a disadvantage. It makes it impossible, they say, for them to address the qualifications put in place by the new bylaw. But as we heard on Wednesday, Mayor you were very respectful in giving the women, who had to speak through a translator, more time. And the new Town By-law also allows for the same respect. Section 8.6 (4) talks to the critical importance of utilizing translators throughout the interview process.

Canadian certified professional qualifications / criteria

The new bylaws also provide an alternate standard (8.6(3) (c), for those who don't fit the established criteria, to work with by-law staff to better understand the owner / attendant experience, training and knowledge of the modality of massage they are offering in order to ensure a fair process for all members of the community. If they have the skills, proficiency and knowledge

they claim to have based on training from another country that is not provided here or years of experience, and are operating within the laws of the land, they should be able to articulate that during the interview process.

Flynn Scott also confirmed that they will do all that they can to assist those who may need some additional support, which he believes might be as minimal as taking a few extra courses.

However, the framework also makes it clear that all PWEs must adhere to sound business, ethical, health and safety guidelines such as keeping a record of each alternate massage provided and pre-screening health forms – a practice already in place by legitimate spas and wellness centres today. It instils confidence in residents that the PWE has met and adheres to the highest licensing standards as put forth by the Town of Newmarket. This is for all PWEs regardless of race, culture or ethnic background.

Safety

Those that oppose the passing of the PWE Framework also claim that repressive laws and policies will push these women underground and expose them to police and other violence, including physical violence, sexual violence, exploitation and even murder. However, any number of reports will tell you that sex work is already operating underground and no amount of legislation / legalization of it will make it safe, protect against physical or sexual violence, exploitation and even murder.

There are countless stories of survivors (Casandra Diamond of BridgeNorth) who have suffered horrendous violence and abuse from pimps, BRP owners and from the men who purchase sex. Women, who even though they speak English, could not find a way out, could not protect themselves.

To summarize. The proposed Licensing Regime for Personal Wellness Establishments is not about being anti-Asian, systemic racism or carseral, it is about being pro-women / young girls. It is about their dignity and their rights. It is about sending a clear message that sexual exploitation through Body Rub Parlours is no longer welcomed in Newmarket. It is about upholding the law.

On behalf of the Council of Women Against Sex Trafficking in York Region, I thank you for taking a stand against illicit Body Rub Parlours by voting yes to passing the Licensing Regime for Personal Wellness Establishments.

Thank you.



Marnie Hill
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Council of Women Against Sex Trafficking in York Region

Cc Robert Vallee, PACT Founder, Board Chair & CEO