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Canada's prostitutes are trapped in an X-rated version of the movie Groundhog Day, in which governments keep commissioning and then ignoring studies on how to make their business safe, a court heard Wednesday.

Osgoode Hall law professor Alan Young said the current situation puts the government in an unholy alliance with the underworld, since it perpetuates violence against women and bars sex workers from controlling their workplace and legally hiring people to protect them while on the job.

"The government, either knowingly or unknowingly, has gone into business with the black market," Young said during a constitutional challenge in the Ontario Court of Justice to strike down Canada's prostitution laws.

As Young made his arguments, his client, dominatrix Terri-Jean Bedford, 49, blended in with lawyers in the back of the University Ave. courtroom, dressed in a conservative non-leather business suit.

During a break in proceedings, Bedford said she left behind the riding crop she'd taken to the courthouse when legal arguments began on Tuesday.

"They kept making me leave it downstairs," said Bedford, who ran afoul of York Region police for operating a "dungeon."

In the courtroom, Young argued that the current law makes it impossible for sex workers to conduct business in a safe indoor environment, like sex trade workers in New Zealand, Australia, Germany and Holland.

He dismissed experts called by the Crown as being academically unsound, as well as sometimes amateurish.

Studies cited by the Crown are academically flawed, and driven by ideology rather than evidence, he argued.

"There's no data," he said. "It's all ideology."

He noted that New Zealand hasn't seen a flood of people entering the sex trade, despite decriminalizing indoor prostitution in the early 2000s. At that same time, the New Zealand law has helped take prostitution off the streets.

He said that drug use and the control of pimps drops dramatically when prostitution is moved indoors, into controlled environments where sex workers have the option of refusing customers.

The case was brought by Bedford and prostitutes Valerie Scott, 51, and Amy Lebovitch, 30, who are seeking to invalidate Criminal Code provisions that serve as Canada's policy response to the world's oldest profession.

Laws against keeping a common bawdy house, communicating for the purposes of prostitution and living on the avails of the trade drive sex workers away from the safety of their homes and onto the streets, where the dangers are far higher, they argue.

It's the first time in a generation that the legislation has been attacked.