

OCTOBER 13, 2010, 9:52 AM ET

## Canadian prostitutes proposition federal government — over enforcement

Will Canada's big cities become the next Amsterdams, and will prostitution become Canada's newest legal business?

When an Ontario Superior Court judge struck down Canada's prostitution laws last month, saying they endangered sex-trade workers, there was quite an uproar, both in Canada and abroad.

Now, in an agreement proposed by the sex-trade workers who filed the suit to federal prosecutors, the anti-prostitution laws ruled unconstitutional would continue to be enforced for another four months — “for a price,” as the *Toronto Globe and Mail* slyly noted [in a story on the deal being discussed with the Crown this week](#).

The price proposed by the prostitutes? Getting the Crown's (government's) appeal to Canada's Supreme Court quickly, so the enforcement (or non-enforcement) of prostitution laws can be clarified for local police.

Such an appeal could normally take five years to reach Canada's highest court.

“A case of this significance can't be left to the lower courts,” said the attorney for one of the plaintiffs, a group of prostitutes who got the laws knocked down. There was supposed to be a 30-day moratorium on stopping enforcement of the laws; the judge extended it another 30 days this week, and if the prostitute- plaintiffs' deal is accepted, it will be extended into next year.

### Cool it, Craigslist

In a related story, the province of Ontario is asking Craigslist to stop carrying ads for prostitution in its Canadian websites in a letter to Craigslist CEO Jim Buckmaster. The Adult Services ads were yanked from Craigslist's U.S. websites recently after pressure from attorneys general in several U.S. states. They haven't been removed from Craigslist listings in Canadian cities.

The Ontario cabinet ministers who signed the letter called it “a matter of simple fairness.”

So, is Canada poised to become a mecca for practitioners of the world's oldest profession?

Not likely, judging from what I hear on Canadian radio daily.

To start with, Vancouver is already a permissive city (by U.S. standards) when it comes to “clamping down” on prostitution. Adult-services ads in the long-established Vancouver alternative weekly, the [Georgia Straight](#) (a play on words on the body of water between mainland B.C. and Vancouver Island, the Strait of Georgia) are as racy as any you'd see in San Francisco alternative weeklies, for example. As a matter of fact, when you Google “Georgia Straight,” the Adult Classifieds in that paper appear at the top.

A British expert on legalized prostitution — sorry, I didn't catch his name — was interviewed on [CBC Radio](#) last week, and he said Canadian cities, especially Vancouver, already have a reputation for relaxed attitudes toward prostitution. He said even if Canada does abolish prostitution laws, he didn't expect a “Sin City” reputation to attach to Canadian cities.

“There'll probably be a small increase in sex tourism,” the researcher says, “but that's about it. Toronto is not Amsterdam,

which had a quirky appeal even before prostitution was legalized.”

Toronto may be appealing, but “quirky” it ain’t.

Copyright 2008 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit [www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com)