



Statement of Solidarity from the AESHA Project

The AESHA Project (An Evaluation of Sex Workers' Health Access) is deeply concerned by the ongoing and escalating displacement of our unhoused neighbours in the Downtown Eastside (DTES). The AESHA Project is a longstanding community-based research project housed at the Centre for Gender and Sexual Health Equity at the University of British Columbia that includes over 900 street-based and indoor sex workers, many of whom live and work in the DTES.

AESHA research has unequivocally documented the detrimental effects of criminalization, police-enforced displacement and gentrification among sex workers and those living in the DTES, illustrating how such actions exacerbate experiences of gender-based violence and result in pronounced health inequities by undermining access to health care and harm reductions services. Our work demonstrates a direct link between housing precarity and experiences of violence, highlighting that housing instability and evictions increase the odds of sex workers experiencing violence in community.

The steps taken by the City of Vancouver (COV) and the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) to forcibly displace residents in the DTES will heighten vulnerability and exacerbate experiences of harm among the city's most structurally excluded residents. There is an urgent need to divest resources from policing and scale-up support for community-led safety initiatives and infrastructure, including safe, affordable and dignified housing options.

The AESHA Project stands in solidarity with our unhoused neighbours. Echoing DTES residents, community organizers and a recent [open letter signed by over 1000 academics](#), we call on the Mayor, Council, and city staff to stop the decampment of Hastings Street and to instead redirect public resources to creating additional dignified, non-carceral forms of permanent housing for encampment residents and all precariously housed residents of the DTES. We also echo calls on City Engineering Services workers represented by CUPE Local 1004 to refuse unsafe and unconscionable work in their practice of street sweeps. Likewise, we call on CUPE Local 1004 and CUPE BC Leaders to support their workers in those efforts. Vancouver must do better to uphold the human right to housing and to health for all residents.