

# UPDATES ON BC man charged with human trafficking sentenced to 15 months

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VANCOUVER - A Vancouver man convicted of smuggling women into this country to work as prostitutes was sentenced Wednesday to 15 months in jail.

Michael Wai Chi Ng was charged with 22 counts of human smuggling, prostitution offences and offences against the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. He was the first person in Canada charged under the relatively new human trafficking law but Ng was acquitted of the human smuggling charge last year, and was instead convicted of five lesser charges.

Ng was sentenced to nine months for two counts of falsifying immigration documents and an additional six months for the charges of keeping a common bawdy house and two counts of procuring a person to have illicit sexual intercourse with another. Charges of living off the avails on prostitution were dismissed.

The prostitution ring was uncovered when police were called to the massage parlour for a disturbance.

During Ng's trial, provincial court Judge Malcolm MacLean was told Ng brought women to Canada, promising them jobs as waitresses and then putting them to work as prostitutes in his east Vancouver massage parlour.

One woman, whose identity is protected by court order, told MacLean she had been brought to Canada by Ng to work in what she thought was a restaurant.

Instead of a waitress job, the woman testified she was taken to a Ng's massage parlour and told she was expected to pay him \$11,000 a month by prostituting herself.

But MacLean said there was no evidence the woman was forced or coerced into coming to Canada.

B.C. has been called a hub of human trafficking by the U.S. State Department.

A report by the department said while Canada meets the U.S. government's minimum requirements for preventing and prosecuting human trafficking, it is still a hub for the sex trade, and a popular transit point for smuggling people into the United States.

B.C. also gained a reputation for being a destination of choice for human smugglers after more than 600 Chinese migrants were illegally brought to the province on board Korean cargo ships in 1999.

Had Ng been convicted on the human trafficking charges, he faced a possible life sentence and fine of up to \$1 million.

Federal prosecutor Peter Laprairie had asked for a five-year term for Ng.

Defence counsel Mike Klein was hoping for house arrest and he says Ng may appeal the sentence.