Exchange between Deputy Police Chief Marc Garth Green and council members Teresa Mosqueda on SPD's recent decision to focus on arresting women engaging in sex work in the North Precinct, as reported in Crosscut, 10/2/19. This exchange came during a discussion of whether the city should expand funding for Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD).

Garth Green: There is, I think, a little misinformation that the direction of the change in enforcement in the North Precinct was not due to the inability to get the people into [Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion]. It was due to the fact that we did not believe—I did not believe— that LEAD was a good solution for a lot of those folks up there. We have a prostitution problem in the North Precinct. No good deed goes unpunished, and when law enforcement came together with the community and shut down Backpage and Craigslist ads, it forced a lot of those women who were making their livelihood from the websites, from the phone books, out onto the streets. As well, we have people who are working the streets that aren't necessarily substance abusers. They have homes. Some of them choose to do what they're doing. [From the dais, Teresa Mosqueda can be heard saying, "No."] We need to have some type of intervention with them, whether it be LEAD or something else, but we have to address these types of things. To simply go about doing the same thing over and over again becomes problematic. If it does work for some but not for others—we've had two homicides in the North Precinct on Aurora directly related to prostitution activities and we have to make that population safe as well.

[At this point, Mosqueda tried to speak.] Please, ma'am. I firmly believe in LEAD. We should fund LEAD. All I'm saying is I need a lot of resources to deal with the complex problems that we have up there.

After council member Sally Bagshaw said a few preliminary words about the fact that DC Garth Green's comments were clearly raising hackles, Mosqueda spoke.

Mosqueda: You're talking about people on Aurora making choices? The only people making a choice in terms of prostitution are the johns on Aurora who are stopping to see if people are willing to get in their car. Those folks who are working on the street are not making a daily choice to go out there. They are, in many cases making the last option to sustain—if you read the articles, repeatedly you will see people are sustaining themselves, their families, their kiddos. This is not a choice people are making, as in, they're housed, they have all access to health services, and they feel economically stable. People don't make this choice To me, it underscores the question that you've been asking of these other programs: Where is the data? If you want these organizations to be held accountable to meeting some standard of data, that you're trying to get people to prove their effectiveness, and you're basing referrals for arrests instead of to LEAD based on your assumption or gut or sense that somehow it was better to arrest them than to get them into LEAD, then I want to see the data. I'd also like to see data that shows that people are making this choice, because absolutely, in my 15 years of working on this issue, from human trafficking and labor trafficking and standing up for workers' rights, I have never been so shocked by such an assertion.

Garth Green: I appreciate that, councilwoman. And that comes from my experience of actually working the street up there and talking to a young lady who specifically told me that she was there to make money and enjoyed it and I still believe that that young lady had some problems—

At this point, Council Member Kshama Sawant cut in.

Sawant: This is just unacceptable. Did you just say that that young lady enjoyed it? I mean—

Garth Green: That's her words, not mine, but what I'd like to say—

Sawant: I don't think you should be speaking for women at all, much less in the context of the worldwide statistics that the people who get into sex work primarily get into it because of financial constraints imposed on them by the system.