



Submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights
National Consultation on Human Trafficking in Canada

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We wish to thank this committee for the invitation to speak on behalf of the 4,600 members of the Catholic Women's League in the Vancouver area and the approximately 85,000 members across Canada. While we have been researching, writing a resolution and educating adults and university students on this subject since 2011, our National Executive have been taking members' social justice issues to Ottawa since 1974. Human trafficking has been of concern to us for many years and we have presented resolutions to government on this topic, and the related subject of prostitution as follows;

2004 End Trafficking of Children
2008 Preventing Human Trafficking at the 2010 Olympics
2009 Exit Strategies for Prostituted Persons
2009 Protection and Support Services for Foreign Victims of Human Trafficking
2012 Criminalization of the Purchasing of Sexual Services

These resolutions reflect our belief that the trafficking of human beings is an affront to the dignity of the human person, and a violation of their human rights.

Human trafficking is often referred to as a low-risk, high-profit crime, generating "...annual profits as high as \$36 billion per year" (John Ashe, UN President of General Assembly, July 2014.) In 2017, the International Labour Organization stated that there were 25 million people worldwide enslaved by forced labour. This disproportionately affects women, as they make up 71% of that number. As in any business, it is not supply, but demand that drives the market. The demand for paid sex is what fuels sex trafficking.

You will note that in 2004, we asked the government to take action against the trafficking of our children. It is disappointing to read in a recent Statistics Canada report, that human trafficking is rising at an alarming rate and that 95% of the victims are young women with more than 25% being under the age of 18 (reported in the Globe and Mail, March 2018). These statistics are distressing, but even more shocking are the stories of the girls who have been groomed, recruited from middle or high schools and trafficked to other parts of the country to fill a demand for the sex industry. In 2015, the Toronto Star published a story titled "Beaten Branded Bought and Sold" that told the harrowing stories of girls who were forced into the sex trade, some as young as 13 years old.

We must acknowledge that here in Canada, racism and colonialism also must be seen as factors, particularly in the Vancouver area, where indigenous women make up a disproportionate percentage of prostituted persons. A 2005 study in the journal, "Transcultural Psychiatry," interviewed 100 prostituted women, finding that, although they made up less than 8% of the general population, 52% of the women were indigenous. Its location on the Pacific rim also makes Vancouver an area where Asian women may be trafficked to work in nail salons or massage parlors.

Our goal in this country should be the empowerment and fair treatment of all people, including the trafficked and prostituted person. Legalization of prostitution is the enemy of that goal. A study published in 2013 by the London School of Economics found that in every nation where prostitution has been legalized, trafficking has increased. Der Spiegel reported in 2013 that exploitation is rampant in Germany where prostitution is legal, with many women trafficked from Eastern Europe. A woman named Alina was quoted as saying "I was not allowed to say no to anything."

In 2012, the Catholic Women's League presented a resolution which advocated for changes to our prostitution laws to reflect the Nordic model, which criminalizes the sex buyer. Through our research, we learned of the link between prostitution and sex trafficking and the success of the Nordic model in Sweden, and in the other countries where it has since been enacted, such as Norway and Iceland. We were very pleased to see legislation created by government in 2013, the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act. In a 2017 study by Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Australia, Canada is seen to be a world leader by enacting this law. In addition to countries already mentioned Ireland, Israel, Italy, and Northern Ireland have since enacted such laws. We are keenly disappointed however, in the lack of effective enforcement. The Vancouver Police Department has stated that they will not enforce the law.

This law is the most effective tool we have to combat the demand that fuels sex trafficking.

We feel there are three key areas that must be addressed to combat trafficking in persons.

Recommendations:

- The enforcement of the current laws on prostitution, the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act.

Similar laws have been successful in other countries in stemming the growing incidences of trafficking. The law targets the sex buyer, which has been proven to reduce demand. This approach is being enforced by Valiant Richey, Senior State Deputy Attorney General, King County, Washington State, who reports remarkable success in targeting sex buyers (presentation located at www.thetraffickedhuman.org).

- Exit strategies must be put in place to assist trafficked persons.

Assistance must be offered wherever needed, for support of persons who are attempting to exit a trafficking or prostitution situation, such as counselling, medical assistance, education, job-training, substance abuse counselling, among others. Ample funding must be provided for these services. We requested these strategies be put in place in our 2009 resolution titled "Exit strategies for Prostituted Persons." It is encouraging to note that the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act allocated \$20 million to this purpose. We further support the proposed trafficking hotline, as a good first step in combatting human trafficking. However, in the words of Barbara Gosse, CEO of the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, the agency responsible for the hotline, "What we really need to advocate for is a day when sex traffickers have no market to profit from human trafficking because no one is actually buying."

- Finally, a public education program must be initiated, to educate the public on the problems of human trafficking and the laws that are in place to combat it.