

Parliamentary Briefing

**To the Ethics Committee of the House of Commons
Regarding The Regulation of Online Pornography**

By: Maggie Baratto, Founder, President

**Organization: Fathers Heart Healing Ministries Inc.
Program: Beauty for Ashes Transformation House
(Arthur, ON)**

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government require a mandatory, government approved virtual security system for every online adult entertainment/pornography company/website to help prevent non-consensual and minor exploitation and access to pornography:
 - Uploading pornography: Application process that verifies valid government-issued photo identification which proves they are 19 years of age or older, and proof of signed consent indicating age of majority of all participants.
 - Viewing and Downloading: Verification process that verifies valid government-issued photo identification which proves they are 19 years of age or older.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the government appoint a third party to provide an annual audit of adult entertainment/pornography websites, governance, and enforcement for non-compliance of Recommendation #1.
- **Recommendation 3:** That the government require moderator staff who upload videos onto pornography websites place identification numbers on each video and be mandated to sign and date for accountability. Training to become a moderator should be standardized and monitored by the government.
- **Recommendation 4:** That the government require mandatory identification numbers on all uploaded pornography. Identification numbers to be visible to viewers, aiding in tracking and tracing videos that depict child pornography or non-consensual sexual violence back to the uploading source and moderator violations.
- **Recommendation 5:** That the government implement a centralized website to receive reports of online child pornography and sexual violence with a capacity to trace each video via identification numbers.
- **Recommendation 6:** That the government enforce a no tolerance policy including license revocation and criminal charges against owners and moderators whose pornography websites are found to have videos containing child pornography and non-consensual sexual violence.

BRIEFING:

My name is Maggie Baratto and I am the Founder, and President of Father's Heart Healing Ministries Inc., located in Arthur, Ontario. Our ministry operates several small businesses and outreach ministries and has been a Registered Charity since 2015.

One of our programs is called Beauty for Ashes Transformation House (BATH), which is a safe-house for women exiting human trafficking, the sex trade and addiction.

Our dedicated team has been operating BATH for over 5 years, in rural Ontario. BATH is a 3-month stabilization program, which focuses on the early stages of healing and restoration for our residents. Depending on the woman's need, stabilization can include immediate medical care, assessment of prescribed medication, crisis intervention, psychological support, applying for identification and providing necessities such as nutritious meals, daily routines and their own private bedrooms. BATH is staffed 24 hours a day with a dedicated team, offering a variety of therapeutic and professional programming including an onsite medical clinic, individual psychotherapy, equine therapy, trauma processing group, aqua fit and addictions counselling (group and individual) to name a few. In short, BATH offers residents a tangible opportunity 'for a new beginning'.

We receive our residents from homeless shelters, hospitals, prisons and various social service agencies. Most of our residents arrive at BATH in crisis and are unable to care for themselves properly. Some arrive following drug overdoses, attempted suicides, sexual assaults or from just having escaped a pimp. They arrive scared, emotionally fragile and often malnourished and sleep deprived. The women present with histories of abuse, trauma and sexual exploitation. They arrive needing a safe place to heal.

Their stories are heart breaking. Some common threads we see include childhood sexual abuse, exploitation by boyfriends who become traffickers and the alarming normalization of sexual exploitation at a young age. Some of these women do not even realize they are victims of exploitation and trafficking because they were groomed to believe their only value was in being used as a sex object for the gratification of others. Pornography was consistently used to normalize, reduce inhibitions and desensitize the women to sexual exploitation and sexual violence. Drugs are often used to facilitate compliance. Many of the women have had sexual images of themselves uploaded to internet sites by their pimps for the purposes of trafficking. Our residents have experienced the emotional trauma of being devalued and exploited online that was part of the grooming phase to 'break them down' or recondition their way of thinking, and led to their entry into the sex trade, exploitation and trafficking.

The impact of being exploited through pornography and experiencing sexual exploitation and sex trafficking has devastated the women we work with at BATH. The physical abuse we see include broken bones, untreated STD's, cigarette burns and bruises; this can be treated medically. We can predict a recovery for the physical body but the mind and the emotions can take years to heal from the trauma that results from sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. It involves a rewiring and healing of thoughts, emotions and memories that have been severely altered under the effects of shame, guilt, rejection and self-hatred. Many of these women have a distorted view on love, sexuality and struggle with poor self-image, low self-esteem, addictions and mental health issues as a direct result of the sexual exploitation. They arrive at BATH with little to no sense of their identity, value or purpose. They see themselves through a distorted lens prevalent in pornography that is used for grooming; a lens that is accepting of abusive power and control. The women are programmed to believe they are sexual objects unworthy of love, kindness and basic human dignity. Our role is to help remove that lens so they can begin to see the beauty and significance of their true identity.

As the women start to feel safe, they start to think and feel better about themselves and begin to embrace their personalities, gifts and talents. They discover that they are significant, have value and have a purpose. They have an opportunity to learn what love is and that they are worthy of honour and respect.

We have witnessed miracles as these ladies are set free from painful emotions and memories. Many start a new journey of faith in God, their Creator, and we see the fruit of deep inner healing and peace as they slowly begin to love who they are and start dreaming about their future!

After graduating from BATH, it was apparent that the women were in need of further support. Due to limited resources and availability for second stage housing, we implemented a program called Oil of Joy Transitional Housing. Residents can stay in this residential program for up to two years as they walk out their healing and freedom in a supportive community.

It is wonderful to see these women heal and do well and we celebrate them, but there is another side to this story. There are those ladies who come to our safe house and for various reasons decide to leave and return to their pimps or to the 'game' of prostitution. Tragically, we have received phone calls and emails to inform us of their deaths in the months following. Some might say that they chose to go back to that lifestyle, but I believe it was the deeply imbedded shame, rejection and self-hatred that results from repeated sexual exploitation that drove them to return to old destructive patterns. These

women have deeply impacted our lives and I often think of the incredible talent and potential that they carried but never had a chance to live out.

The trafficking victims we work with consistently described how pornography was used as an effective tool to re-condition their way of thinking. Exposure to underage, violent and controlling sexual acts displayed in the pornographic content desensitized them while demeaning and abusive behaviour was normalized.

Just like walking through a doorway to enter a room, pornography is a gateway that links directly to sex trafficking. We need to close the door completely if we want to help clear the room of sex trafficking; or at the very least, the industry in Canada needs to be held accountable by implementing and enforcing restrictions and regulations.

When we opened our safe house, one of our first measures of protection was to install a high-end security system with third party offsite monitoring. The security includes alarms on every door and window, for the safety of our residents, a vulnerable population.

Similarly, there needs to be a high-end security system developed and installed on every door and window of companies like MindGeek, who operate online pornography. This third party security system would serve as a protection against the distribution and monetization of sexual violence, child pornography and sex trafficking while doing a more effective job restricting access of pornography by minors. Content found on these sites that fail to have consent of the participants or involve minors should result in criminal charges against the site operators, moderators and owners as well as immediate closure of the site.

Sexual violence, child pornography and sex trafficking are criminal acts that have devastating outcomes. MindGeek and similar companies contribute to these criminal acts by allowing this type of content to be viewed on their sites. MindGeek has clearly been identified as unable to govern their content, therefore, it is imperative that governance be provided to ensure accountability.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maggie Baratto". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Maggie Baratto