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**Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws of the
Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights,
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Chair

Mr. John Maloney

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• (0800)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. John Maloney (Welland, Lib.)): I'd like to call the meeting to order.

This is the Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws, a subcommittee of the justice committee.

We have with us Mr. Art Hanger from Calgary, Ms. Libby Davies from Vancouver, and Madame Paule Brunelle from Trois-Rivières, Quebec. I'm John Maloney. I'm the chair of the subcommittee, and we're ready to commence.

The routine is that there will be roughly a five-minute presentation by our witnesses here today, to be followed by rounds of questioning by the members of Parliament. We'll have a seven-minute round first—that's for question and answer—and then go to three-minute rounds.

At this time I'd like to welcome, from the City of Edmonton, Ms. Janice Melnychuk and Mr. Michael Phair. I understand it's going to be a co-presentation. If there is a co-presentation, you don't both get five minutes; it's combined. We don't have much time.

Thank you very much for attending today.

Go ahead, Michael.

Mr. Michael Phair (Councillor, City of Edmonton): Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here.

We have three areas we will very briefly speak to. We are primarily talking about issues relating to solicitation on the streets and people who are on the streets as such.

The first is that we'd like to suggest, in terms of changes to section 13, that there needs to be a distinction between the provider of services and the buyer in terms of the kind of offence, penalties, and available services that would be there.

Second, with respect to section 13, we'd also like to see it made a hybrid offence, where the Crown would decide whether to make the charge a summary conviction or an indictable offence. We think it might be preventable for johns if they had to go to the police station for fingerprinting and mug shots. Perhaps a DNA data bank might be formed as part of that, and there's also the possibility of stronger penalties. We would leave that and we think it might work well if the Crown had that option.

Ms. Janice Melnychuk (Councillor, City of Edmonton): We would like to remind the committee that regardless of what changes are made to this legislation, we as municipalities will be the ones left with the problems that ensue and with the cost of dealing with the social problems and the problems within our communities.

As you probably know, our communities face issues such as increased car traffic and the solicitation of local residents. People are afraid to send their children out to go to the local school or to the bus stop, and they themselves are being solicited and approached by johns looking for women in the places where street prostitution happens in our city. There has been dangerous and aggressive behaviour on both sides that has grown because of this behaviour, and even more importantly, there are the stigma and the sense of desolation and hopelessness we have seen grow and create problems within the communities where street prostitution lives within our city.

We recommend this to the committee. We would like to see funding and support for locally initiated community strategies to end street prostitution. As this is a complex social issue, we believe those strategies should be partnership-based, should be multisectoral in nature, and should be locally based; they also need funding. We also believe the committee could find and mandate a way for local tools to be developed, such as the ability for local enforcement agencies to confiscate automobiles.

We also know no strategy will be complete without the opportunity to help women get off the street in terms of funding and the provision of immediate services such as shelter, housing, and alcohol and drug rehabilitation counselling. These are a variety of services that, to our mind, mirror our community drug strategy in this city. They're based on the four pillars of prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and enforcement.

In our community, enforcement is of course the thing the municipality most noticeably pays for through its very limited property tax base, and it's the one where the citizens are asking us for more and more resources to try to address the impact of street prostitution. We would suggest the other pillars also need to be funded, but the municipality has a very difficult time in doing that.

● (0805)

Mr. Michael Phair: The last item we would like to briefly indicate is that, from our perspective in dealing with what's going on in the streets, the new pimp in fact is drugs. Oftentimes it is not the classic sense of a particular pimp who organizes and deals with women, but in fact it's drug dealers, and particular street workers may deal with a number of different drug dealers. Not only are many of these individuals, unfortunately, involved in turning tricks, but they are also involved in minor theft and other kinds of things in order to raise money for their drug habits.

We would recommend that any effort to reduce street prostitution must address drug abuse and the need for drug rehab and restrictive court orders, at times, and the establishment and funding of drug courts. It's absolutely imperative, we think, that drug rehabilitation be a very significant aspect of trying to move forward in dealing with what is going on in the streets.

Thank you.

Ms. Janice Melnychuk: I would just like to close by reiterating that not only are the sex trade workers victims, in our opinion, in our community, but we also have communities that have now been victimized by street prostitution. And we are very concerned about the way to turn those communities around. Certainly there are substantial costs to the municipality to put in place community development and the variety of measures that go towards that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

From the City of Calgary, Joe Ceci.

I'm not sure you were here, Joe, when we opened, but it's roughly a five-minute presentation, followed by questioning from our members of Parliament.

Please proceed.

Mr. Joe Ceci (Alderman, Calgary City Council, City of Calgary): I've structured mine a little more formally. By that I mean I will be reading it. I hope that's not a problem. I have handed my copies in.

The Chair: It's not a problem, just read at a reasonable pace because our translators sometimes have difficulty when people go lickety-split.

Mr. Joe Ceci: All right.

Good morning, everyone.

I'd like to begin my comments by outlining the context in which we're now having these discussions. Specifically, we've come to a time in our country when Canadians and their governments have recognized the importance of their municipalities to their quality of life. Everyone wants to live in a vibrant, safe, and prosperous municipality.

The federal government's new deal for cities has taken the initial steps to put into action what Canadians want for their cities. However, if the new deal for cities is to be truly a new deal, then it must speak to more than just one issue, such as transportation infrastructure. The new deal must speak to and recognize the

necessity of a real partnership between governments. It is rare to find an issue that does not impact all three orders of government.

Prostitution in Canada is a clear example of an issue requiring the cooperation and coordination of all governments. Similar to that in other major cities in Canada, prostitution in Calgary primarily includes street-level prostitution and the escort/massage industry. The visibility of street prostitution results in high-profile community concerns, from which constituents in my ward ask and expect me to take action. Citizens do not feel the police are doing enough to combat prostitution in their community. Many believe that their elected representatives—local, provincial and federal—are simply letting them down. They feel that their community has been left to fend for itself.

Citizens are angry that their community is being used for public sex acts, drug use, and violent crimes. Needles and condoms littering neighbourhoods, increased traffic, noise issues, as well as both perceived and real concerns for personal safety, compound this anger. Community members are sometimes afraid to leave their homes, to walk to the corner store, or to play with children in their own front yards. Many community members have got to the point where they do not care how it is dealt with, as long as it no longer exists in their neighbourhood. Simply put, citizens want prostitution out of their community.

The Calgary Police Service has been using a consistent enforcement strategy targeting the sex trade worker and customer. In addition, they are working in partnership with social service agencies and community outreach programs. The police service believes that this strategy has led to significant decreases in street prostitution over the past three years. Although this strategy is experiencing some success, and new enforcement tools provided through the passing of Bill C-206 will help a little, it's of little comfort to citizens living in communities that have street prostitution. For them, success is defined by no street prostitution, not just a reduction of street prostitution.

This tension between the enforcement strategies of our police service and the legitimate expectations of citizens places local elected officials in what appears to be a no-win situation, since it is not clear that the elimination of street prostitution is even possible. This tempts us to come up with the quickest and easiest solutions, such as the creation of red-light districts or much heavier punishments for offenders. However, as we know, there are no easy solutions. Our best bet going forward is to ensure that municipal, provincial, and federal governments work together with the community agencies and the NGOs through a real cooperative partnership to tackle prostitution in Canada's communities.

The first step is to define what we're trying to accomplish. Is it the elimination of street prostitution, the creation of red-light districts, the reduction of violence against sex trade workers, or drug rehabilitation for sex trade workers? No government can successfully create a program or change the legislation on its own to achieve a desired goal. A quick round of consultations across the country, followed by a change in the Criminal Code, is not likely to solve much if it's not accompanied by a real concerted effort by all governments to work together. A coordination of our programs, enforcement strategies, and legal mechanisms between all three orders of government, along with support from and for community agencies is the likeliest path to success.

I believe that with this more holistic approach, we can achieve any of the possible goals that either a community, a police service, or an elected official may have with regard to ending street prostitution. It's for this reason that the City of Calgary believes that the new deal for cities is an ideal starting point to discuss a wide range of issues, including street prostitution.

● (0810)

I would urge this subcommittee to include in its report that there's a need for this cooperative new deal approach to resolving the problem of street prostitution in our communities. Our cities cannot tackle this on their own, any more than the federal or provincial governments can address this on their own. We must work together.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the time to present. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Joe.

From Edmonton's Safer Cities Initiative, we have Kate Gunn and Kate Quinn. Are you both going to present, or just one?

● (0815)

Ms. Kate Gunn (Safer Cities Initiative Coordinator, Edmonton's Safer Cities Initiative): Yes, we are.

The Chair: Thank you. Please proceed.

Ms. Kate Gunn: Ladies and gentlemen, Chair Mr. Maloney, and honoured MPs of the subcommittee,

[*Translation*]

welcome to Edmonton. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today of an issue which is so important to our community.

[*English*]

It's my pleasure to be here today on behalf of Safer Cities and share some thoughts on our approach to this issue in our community. I'm pleased to be here today with Kate Quinn, a key citizen member of our Safer Cities Initiatives Advisory Committee, and the executive director of the Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton.

Edmonton's Safer Cities was founded in 1990 by Mayor Jan Reimer as part of a wider movement in North America to decrease what was seen as a growing feeling of insecurity in the large cities. From the very beginning, our safer cities initiatives have focused strongly on building a safe and more caring community. Our safer cities approach to crime prevention has always been very broad, with

a distinct emphasis on social justice issues and on helping the most vulnerable in our community.

Today the safer cities model that I referred to brings together senior-level decision-makers from six city departments—very diverse departments, from waste management to community services to transportation and streets—the Edmonton Police Service; health; education; child and family services; the aboriginal community; justice; and community crime prevention leaders. All of these agencies have very broad mandates, but together share a common interest in working on targeted collaborative initiatives and coordinated efforts. Our role over these past 15 years really has been that of a catalyst to try to mobilize community action when needed, to help create new ways of addressing problems, and to try to facilitate systemic change in our city.

There are four things we have learned from the work we have done.

One is that the community is the focal point of crime prevention. This belief underlines all the work we do.

Number two is that shared efforts are more effective. Bringing together like-minded groups, government agencies and civic departments to tackle issues has become the way we work here in Edmonton.

Number three is that a strategic focus is critical. We can't do everything, and we feel that collaboration on specific issues results in stronger outcomes.

Finally, becoming part of the way we work is important to us, and Safer Cities over the years has been instrumental, as Kate will be showing you, in bringing some key issues forward to our city council and to our senior city administration, and this has resulted in changes to programs and policies.

Ms. Kate Quinn (Member, Edmonton's Safer Cities Advisory Committee, Edmonton's Safer Cities Initiative): Good morning.

Safer Cities has a strong history of action on many of the core issues of prostitution, beginning with the Mayor's Action Group on Prostitution in 1992, which was motivated by intense street prostitution activity in several neighbourhoods in Edmonton. Our mayor and police chief responded to that challenge then and mobilized the community to work on different sectors of this issue.

Then in 1996 Safer Cities played a key role, along with Alberta Justice, the Edmonton Police Service and PAAFE, in the creation of the prostitution offender program or the John School. In 1998 Safer Cities contributed to the design of the protection of children involved in prostitution legislation and services in Edmonton. In 1999 our Edmonton Police Commission had a task force on prostitution, and Safer Cities was pleased to support some of those recommendations and findings, including the need for education at the community level and prevention so that children do not become enmeshed in prostitution and the drug trade at an early age.

There was also a proposal to establish a community initiative to deal with improperly discarded needles, and Safer Cities took up the championship and created a program around that. We're proud to say that today over 14,000 needles have been taken off the street through the use of a yellow box program and thus we have prevented injury and reduced debris in the neighbourhoods.

In 2000 Safer Cities was involved in a revision of the escort services licensing bylaw. One thing we advocated for was that health and safety courses be made available to those applying for licences. Sadly, this has not yet happened in our city.

We also have working groups to address the safe housing standards and derelict housing concerns, which are a part of the face of street prostitution and drug trade activity at the neighbourhood level. In the past 15 years, our city has grown and our social safety net has stretched to meet these needs. New dynamics of exploitation have developed with the advent of the Internet and the cellphone. Poverty, gang involvement, and the drug trade, in particular the scourge of crystal meth, are all factors that have changed the picture, with young women from some of our outlying cities ending up on inner-city streets as a result of crystal meth.

We know, for instance, too that a lack of affordable housing contributes to prostitution. Fifty-three per cent of the women who asked for help from our diversion program had no stable housing at the time of arrest. They are either absolutely homeless, crashing at drug houses, crowding with others into one-bedroom apartments, staying at cheap hotels, or couch surfing. Women are selling their bodies in our city for rent. It's hard to get off the street when you have no place to go. It's impossible to feel safe when you have no safe place to rest and recover.

We need to tackle the issue of homelessness. Approximately 19 neighbourhoods in Edmonton live with the daily reality of prostitution on their streets and in their back alleys and business districts. I live in one of those neighbourhoods.

We continue to struggle to create safety for all, be it the child who was abducted by a man on her way to the store, or the 19-year-old who is our latest murder victim. She was not safe either. We want safety for all. Citizens are looking for ways to make their neighbourhoods safer and they continue to be vocal. The feelings of helplessness that you heard from our city councillors from Calgary and Edmonton are true. The anger is being directed at the johns, at the women, at the police, at the government. We need to pull together to do something. It is further complicated by the equally serious issues of gang violence and the stranglehold of the drug trade. Addictions, the stigmatization of marginalized people in our communities, and the growing gap between the rich and poor also take their toll on our social fabric.

As Safer Cities, we've tried to develop practical, positive tools, both at the neighbourhood level and at the civic level, such as the crime prevention audit guide and our safe needle disposal box program. We're working with neighbourhoods and city council to develop an integrated approach to prostitution so that it doesn't have to be struggled with neighbourhood by neighbourhood, so that we can work at it as a city.

We are also encouraging citizens to advocate for more safe housing and treatment centres to help those who are caught in addictions and in despair. We know it's a complex issue and we think that legislation is only part of an issue. When Alberta brought in legislation for the protection of children involved in prostitution, it was the community that said no law without social services, addictions treatment centres, and safe housing resources. We cannot have laws without services.

● (0820)

The collaborative approach championed by Safer Cities, the innovative work of community and government partners, as well as the related efforts of the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing and our housing trust fund are key to the Edmonton approach to prostitution. Our councillors mentioned that we are working as a city on several strategies, including the Edmonton community drug strategy and the community solution to gang violence. We have a new Edmonton urban aboriginal accord, and we're hopeful that will help us grow as a city, because so many of the individuals, both children and women, on the street are from our aboriginal community.

We also worked together to develop a multi-stakeholder approach to drug treatment court, and we're anxiously waiting to hear from the federal Department of Justice whether Edmonton will be chosen as one of the next cities.

We are also pleased that at the grassroots level, Safer Cities could support the establishment of the Edmonton Regional Crime Prevention Network, which again brings communities and groups together to work on this as a community.

Ms. Kate Gunn: I'd just like to conclude with a couple of points. We would like to urge the committee to explore best practices worldwide, which we know you are doing, and Canada-wide, and share with all of us across the country in various communities what best practices really make a difference to this issue.

The Swedish law, for example, enacted in 1999, names prostitution as a form of violence against women and aims to stop the demand by prohibiting the purchase of sexual services. I think this is one example of the kind of best practice that would be worth further exploring.

Safer Cities and the City of Edmonton also support the suggestion to make section 213 a hybrid offence rather than a summary conviction, with the hope that will make a difference as well.

Safer Cities has essentially taken a community development approach to prostitution issues. We have really placed our emphasis on the root causes of violence in this community. For us at the current time, this is where we see our most effective contribution and approach line. We are not necessarily convinced that regulation of the sex trade and the establishment of red light districts, for example, would address those underlying root causes, increase community safety, or prevent the exploitation of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Due to our Safer Cities experience we also found, as everyone else here has said, that there are no simple solutions or easy answers.

We would like to thank you for your work and for the opportunity to share our ideas today.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Morrissey is next, from the Edmonton Police Service.

Det Jim Morrissey (Detective, Edmonton Police Service): Good morning.

My partner, Jack, is in the back. He's the bald fellow. Between us we have 58 years of police experience in this city. You're right, he is quite a bit older than I am.

What we've learned on the streets in Edmonton and all the western Canadian cities we've travelled to—and the American cities we've learned from in our education—is that almost without exception, the women prostitutes we speak to first turned out at between 12 and 16 years of age. Most of these women came from horrible situations. Many were the victims of sexual assault, often at the hands of trusted family members, especially early on when they started out. They are procured, controlled, and extorted by adult pimps. Many were recruited by their peers, both female and male, although ultimately the money they earn is funnelled to a more established criminal—organized crime, or semi-organized street crime.

Ignoring this fact endangers our children on the street and those who are being turned out for the very first time to trade sex for service—either a place to sleep, something to eat, the drugs they are addicted to, or a ride from one city to another in a big truck.

From the time they are turned out until they retire, they are victims of sexual assault, extortion, robbery, and violence, a single incidence of which would justifiably send any normal person into long-term counselling. They endure this monthly, if not daily. Nobody can explain to me retirement from this life unless it is death by overdose, suicide, murder, or health failure due to the disease process accelerated by drug abuse.

Despite large monetary earnings, they have the poorest living conditions because they are victimized by pimp managers, criminal associates, and johns. The vast majority of women in our federal jail system for serious and often violent crimes have prostitution involvement in their history. If they are willing to endure all of the first things I alluded to, why would they not also be willing to rob and stab?

The current solicitation law regarding customers soliciting prostitutes, paragraph 213(1)(c) of the Criminal Code, is basically satisfactory, and I agree it should be a hybrid offence. However, where solicitation is aggravated by knowingly risking another

person's life through infection by a communicable disease, HIV, or hepatitis, I suggest an indictable offence of solicitation would be appropriate. To my knowledge, certain American jurisdictions have employed this type of legislation, in particular California and Nevada.

In my view, a separate solicitation law is required for prostitutes—male, female, or transgendered. Clearly, it's futile to fine a prostitute. The purpose of the law is to assist police in identifying them so they can be encouraged to exit the lifestyle, which will likely result in their death without outside help, diversion, and rehabilitation. A law allowing police to use decoys, similar to subsection 212(5), which was repealed in 1999, to target johns who request the services of a prostitute under the age of 18, or under 14—those two ages obviously are critical—needs to be enacted. Whether they do it electronically, in person, in a private place, or a public place, pedophiles seeking out our children need to be arrested.

Any suggestion that the legalization of prostitution or pimping would do anything except place this and future generations of our children, especially those who are disadvantaged, at increased risk is at best ill-advised and, at worst, criminal. How can legalized prostitution address the children who learn this trade to fill the ranks of adult prostitutes? How can our system address the health concerns involved in high-risk sex practices like prostitution? It's killing our young men and women.

● (0825)

If prostitution is a viable employment alternative, is it an alternative for everyone—my family, your family, your children, or mine? I suggest that's not appropriate.

In summation, the best way I can think of to address this large problem is through an effort similar to what we did for drunk driving in all the provinces across Canada: address in particular the customers of prostitutes. Then, in addition to laws that have teeth, we will have a social message and an educational message that it is not okay to go out and use women, men, or transgendered people, therefore enslaving those who are already disadvantaged, for the purposes of our sexual pleasure. Our men need to get that message, perhaps on MTV alongside the messages seen every day encouraging those very same activities—pimping, prostitution, and living off young women.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Jim.

From the Calgary Police Service, we have Leonard Dafoe.

Det Leonard Dafoe (Detective, Calgary Police Service): Good morning.

I'd like to begin by thanking the members of the community for having the courage and willingness to become involved in what may become a thankless endeavour. A public debate on prostitution and its collateral effects is long overdue in this country.

My fellow speakers may not all have the same views or wish to have the same outcomes, but they too should be congratulated for stepping up and being heard. For too long this issue has been swept under the carpet by all levels of government. Unfortunately, it has taken the tragic events that are unfolding in Vancouver to bring it to the forefront.

I've been a police officer for 24 years with the city of Calgary. I was a member of the vice unit from 1997 until 2003. I've had the pleasure of working with Jim and with the Kates, as we call them, from Edmonton, and I've had many dealings with Mr. Ceci.

I appear here today not as an official spokesperson for the Calgary Police Service. I'm not even sure that the CPS is aware that these hearings are going on. Rather, I've taken my own vacation and paid my own way here because I take this issue so seriously and I am so passionate in my opposition to any legitimizing or decriminalization of prostitution.

Prostitution is not a profession, it's not a career, it's not part of the service sector; rather, in my experience, prostitution is the sole means of survival and a reaction to a bad set of circumstances. The use of the term "profession" implies choice. Few, if any, of the prostitutes that I have ever dealt with—and that would be in the 500 to 600 range—made an informed choice to become prostitutes. I've yet to meet a man or woman who on career day chose to become a prostitute. The sometimes espoused belief that any sane person would willingly choose this life is patently ludicrous.

Those who advocate for legitimizing prostitution will use some existing mythology to justify their position. The myth that prostitution is the epitome of women controlling their own sexuality and destiny is nonsense. The hooker with the heart of gold, the kindly, wise whorehouse madam—these are all myths. Male fantasies of women enjoying endless anonymous sex acts with predatory strangers is another fallacy used to legitimize the sex trade.

The sad truth is that prostitution is a grim, violent, dreary, soul-killing experience. The sex trade is inseparable from danger and violence. This danger and violence are not caused by the government, the courts, the police, or section 213. Violent, maladjusted males seeking to dominate a victim cause the vast majority of deaths and injuries to prostitutes. Pimps and drug dealers are responsible for the rest.

The mental anatomy of a man who seeks the services of a prostitute is at fault. Misogyny, psychopathy, and deviance are not disorders that will become extinct if section 213 is repealed. There will be no sudden respectability of the sex trade or the dawning of a golden era of healthy prostitution. Unfortunately, what will result is a free-for-all on the streets. A cessation of the legal deterrents will have a terrible effect on communities and individuals, but it will not make the sex trade one bit safer.

Contrary to some of the opinions that I have heard in the run-up to these hearings, I believe Parliament has the moral duty to strengthen section 213 to make it a dual procedure offence.

The strengthening of this legislation is but the first step in what needs to be a national sex trade strategy for law enforcement agencies. Making section 213 a dual procedure has multiple benefits.

First, the ability to fingerprint and photograph those arrested sends a clear message to the communities, courts, and those involved in the sex trade that this is not a nuisance offence.

More importantly, it could act as an effective means of directing prostitutes into effective rehab services. Enforcement alone will not solve this issue. It needs to be the first step in a strategy to reduce the sex trade. Enforcement needs to be benevolent and compassionate and designed to deter prostitutes and assist them in seeking the necessary resources to exit prostitution. Enforcement should not be about trying to impress city hall with numbers of arrests.

I agree with prostitute advocates who say that the sex trade is extremely dangerous. Compassionate enforcement and a national sex trade strategy are the tools needed to save lives. Compassionate enforcement would be but one part of the strategy, the police but one player.

● (0830)

The programs and the agencies that assist prostitutes in exiting the life need to be better funded so that they have the resources needed to realistically address the needs of men and women trapped in prostitution. Addictions, health problems, poverty, lack of skills, education, homelessness, and mental health issues resulting from violence and sexual abuse are but some of the barriers to people leaving the sex trade.

Education needs to take place in our schools that addresses the problems of how males and females interact. Gender issues, healthy relationships, and the avoidance of manipulative and exploitive behaviour, i.e., pimps, need to be the subjects open for discussion in our classrooms.

Despite the best efforts of advertisers, we need to firmly reject the commodification of sex. Legitimizing the sex trade by removing the laws serves only to commodify sex.

It is true that some societies do have different attitudes to prostitution, but these attitudes have evolved in a different social climate. You cannot cherry-pick aspects from other cultures, pop them down in the middle of Canada, and expect success. Legitimizing prostitution within our social context will have untold consequences. Not to sound Victorian or melodramatic, but the removal of laws needed to control prostitution will only serve to corrupt our society as a whole.

I beg you to resist the temptation to take the easy way out. As parliamentarians, it is within your power to eliminate these laws. It would be easy, and you would be easily justified in doing so if you honestly believed it would save lives; but it is the equivalent of throwing your hands up and saying, to hell with it; if you can't beat them, join them. If you yourself would not have sex for money with a total stranger, or if you yourself would be horrified if your child entered into prostitution, then you cannot in good conscience eliminate these laws and condemn those already trapped in the sex trade. The courage, imagination, resources, and political will needed to assist those in prostitution is enormous. It's not an easy task. But as with other things in life, doing the right thing is never easy.

I wish to thank you for your time and attention.

•(0835)

The Chair: Thank you, Leonard.

We'll start the first round with Mr. Hanger, please.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would certainly like to thank all who made presentations today. I think this was one of the most direct approaches our committee has heard so far. I really appreciate it, especially from my former colleagues—Len Dafoe, and a former political colleague in Calgary, Joe Ceci. Thank you fellows for coming. I really appreciate it.

I know that Calgary and Edmonton suffer the same problems when it comes to the effects of street prostitution and its impact in the community. I know, Joe, that you've been trying to deal with it for a while.

How do you see the emphasis within the community itself as far as a red-light district is concerned? Do you see it as a viable option?

Mr. Joe Ceci: I'm kind of caught in the middle, MP Hanger. I did send in some letters from a community group in my area and a personal letter from another person who is part of that group. The people on the streets where the sex trade is happening have little patience with me when I tell them that I don't support red-light districts. They want it—they want it yesterday—and they want it somewhere else, someplace other than their community.

I'm caught in the middle. I'm not going to be promoting red-light districts. I think it means giving up on people. The place they want to send it is still in my ward, so it doesn't help me out. They want to put it in an industrial area, and the people in that area are saying, thank you, that's not a good long-term solution for our businesses, for this city, and so on.

I'm struck by the similarity of the speakers here in terms of what we believe is needed, and it's a comprehensive approach, maybe modelled on the national drug strategy, where we have local communities driving local solutions within a set range of possibilities. But for me, red-light districts are not a part of that strategy.

•(0840)

Mr. Michael Phair: If I can just add to that, I also think the notion of a red-light district would probably not at all be effective with street prostitutes. I think we would still see people on the streets whether there was a red-light district or not. I think we oftentimes are

dealing with a group of individuals who have so many other issues that to function out of a red-light district would not happen. They would not be able to organize and put themselves in that kind of position.

I also think that with the changes we've seen in prostitution, it takes place not in the streets, primarily it's often through cell phones. Cell phones may be a red-light district on their own, in a different kind of fashion these days, a virtual one.

Mr. Art Hanger: I appreciate your analysis, both of you, because evidence before this committee has already clearly indicated that in places like Amsterdam, a jurisdiction that has legalized prostitution and developed these red-light districts and brothels, street prostitution outside the licensed element is worse. As far as the prostitutes are concerned, there are greater numbers than those who are licensed. So it doesn't get rid of the problem. There's still exploitation. In fact, I would suggest that exploitation probably is worse, given what the police could then do with it. They have no laws to enforce any of it. We've heard that before the committee as well.

Other interesting jurisdictions that were brought up are Reno and Las Vegas. They have legal brothels outside the cities, yet street prostitution is rampant where it is illegal. So as far as evidence is concerned, I don't know what one would require in order to say that's not what we want in our cities, but I do agree that there are certainly three levels of cooperation to get anything done and that the community has to be engaged.

Leonard, maybe you can answer this. How might the community be more engaged in this? I don't believe many people understand just how horrific drugs are and how they are so tied to the ugliness of prostitution. What would you suggest as far as greater community involvement is concerned?

Det Leonard Dafoe: Last week, when I was in contact with both Mark and Christine from the committee office regarding some written materials, I had formulated a draft of a document that we used as our guidelines in the vice unit from 2000 to 2003. Mr. Ceci alluded to it. It does contain some measures on how to get the community onside with the strategy of the police and the courts.

One of the big things was the education liaison officer with the vice unit. It was a position that was established, and the sole duty of this officer—in fact, it was me—was to speak with representatives of communities, like CLIC—that's the Community Life Improvement Council, which was previously called CAPE. We interacted with CAPE and Kate and the Edmonton vice unit, because Edmonton has so much in common with Calgary.

The big issue, as you say and as Mr. Ceci alluded, is that many community members in the communities in which prostitution occurs just want it gone. They were blaming the prostitutes for being the problem—and I apologize to my francophone friend for speaking so quickly, but it's like being in court, only worse. So the blame was laid squarely on the shoulders of the prostitutes, but that's not the issue. It was my job, the education liaison officer's job, to liaise with outreach agencies and bring them together with the communities so that a better understanding of prostitution evolved: that it's an issue of abuse, that it's an issue of drug addictions, and that long-term strategies are required.

There's no short-term fix for this. People who want it, and want it by the six o'clock news, are going to be sadly disappointed. It's going to take years. Unfortunately, the heat is immense for people like Mr. Ceci in his position as an elected official. I acknowledge that, but getting a big yellow school bus, picking everybody up, and taking them to the city limits is unfortunately just not realistic, and it's not going to happen.

• (0845)

Mr. Art Hanger: We've had testimony in reference to—

The Chair: Mr. Hanger, I think there was a comment here.

Ms. Kate Quinn: I'd like to respond in two ways. I think community and citizen engagement is absolutely vital in this whole process. One way to do that is to gather citizens together and to listen to their stories and to validate the fears and the frustrations, and then to work with those communities on small, doable actions that show immediate results. That engages people in working for long-term change and being active in creating a healthier, safer society. We need to bring people together. That's been some of our experience in Edmonton.

We need to bring people together with questions. When our small neighbourhood group was struggling back in the early 1990s with the heavy weight of street prostitution activity, we got together and then we said, who else do we need to learn from? We said, we need to learn from the police and we need to learn from the outreach agencies. Parents whose daughters were on the street heard about us, and we invited them to the table. And then women who were survivors of street prostitution started coming to our meetings. Together as a community we educated each other. We became engaged. We talked to our city councillors, to the media. That's how you bring about positive change in a community—by bringing people together.

That's why I'm so thankful you have come across the country. This is one important exercise in democracy. The other is that we absolutely must have our school boards and provincial governments committed to providing age-appropriate education in the schools. Again, this is something we have worked for for a long time in Alberta, and we don't have it yet. We need to educate our children, because some of them will be potential victims of sexual exploitation and some of them will be potential perpetrators of sexual exploitation. We need to do that at our schools and in the at-risk youth communities. We cannot be shy. Our children's lives are at stake. We need more programs such as the DARE program. We need a similar one around sexual exploitation.

We have to be very aggressive, because people's lives—children's lives, adults' lives, families' lives, community lives—are at risk. So we cannot rest.

The Chair: Very quickly, Mr. Hanger, please.

Mr. Art Hanger: Some of the advocates who support the legalization of prostitution feel that once you take the criminal aspect away, then things are going to change. Prostitutes will no longer be put in the position on the street where criminal charges are going to stigmatize them. They'll maybe have an opportunity to move indoors. But they have an opportunity to move indoors now.

What do you think of that, Mr. Morrissey? Will the removal of a criminal law push prostitution inside?

Det Jim Morrissey: The problem with that theory is that the children who are being forced from their homes or are running away and making poor decisions as adolescents aren't availed of a legal prostitution place. We're never going to make it legal for our 12-year-olds, I would hope, to support themselves by sex to support their drug addictions, or to support themselves on the street because they were driven from their home by sexual abuse or perhaps because of psychological or psychiatric problems in their life that are complicated.

So in my view, it just won't work, because that's where the prostitutes come from, for the most part. I've spoken to a couple who started at age 30 and I can remember one who was 18 when she first turned out, but over 90% of them, when I talk to them, started at 12 years old, 14 years old, at some age like that. Most have children. Most have a huge stockpile of health issues and violent criminal records. How are we going to legalize prostitution for people with that background? It's pretty hard to make them fit into an administration.

The Chair: Do you have a comment?

Det Leonard Daffoe: Just a quick comment here.

You also have to be cognizant of dealing with the consumer end of things. The legitimization or legalization of prostitution does not change the stripes on that particular cat. It is still a group of people who are rife with dysfunctions. Whether prostitution is "legitimized" is not going to change the behaviours of men seeking victims, sorry.

• (0850)

The Chair: Madame Brunelle.

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Now that I have been sitting on this committee for some time, I fully agree with those of you who think that legislation is only a part of the solution. We are witnessing a lot of human misery and illiteracy, numerous problems related to poverty, housing and illegal drugs, as well as stigmatization and rejection by part of the population.

It's sad to note that prostitution may only be the visible part of problems affecting our society. Sexuality is increasingly invading everything, from advertising to movies and most commercial activities, though we cannot really be surprised of having to face these problems.

Some say the situation is complex. However we're trying to find solutions. You may have considered some new ways of doing things. Mr. Ceci talked about a strategy targeting the customer and the sex trade worker. I would like to know how this strategy works.

We also have to protect our children. Kate, you've talked a lot about this kind of protection. How is it implemented? Do you have any suggestions for us so we can consider solutions to this far-reaching problem? It's obvious we are not going to fully solve this problem today.

[English]

Mr. Joe Ceci: Maybe I'll just begin, Madame Brunelle.

I wish I could talk to you from Calgary's experience with regard to john programs, but we have none in Calgary. I'm confused about why we don't try to have alternative measures for johns in Calgary. It's not something the Calgary Police Commission has ever supported. I have asked them many times. I have pointed to Edmonton and said that they have them up here, and they tell me they are talking to the councillors and others and that it's one of the tools in the quiver of potential programs that help. But we don't have any. I would like to see them in Calgary, frankly.

We do have diversion programs for sex trade workers in Calgary. A former police officer was the creator of one, and it has been of significant assistance. I can't remember what it is called, but there are two programs for sex trade workers, for the older sex trade workers, and there are some for younger ones in Calgary as well. Those are helpful; they help people—females primarily—address their drug addictions and get retrained and find a life. That's what we need more of.

As a social worker who happens to be a city councillor, I'm not satisfied with the range and number of outreach and diversion programs we have. I think we can do a better job. Communities are telling me that we need to do a lot better in a preventative way to help young people, as a friend down the way was saying, so that youth have some supports instead of being left to the streets and on their own.

Thank you.

Det Jim Morrissey: I'd just like to address john school or the prostitution offender program in Edmonton. It's been in place since 1996 in this city, and our experience with thousands of graduates from our school is that somewhere between 1% and 2% of them repeat offend.

When we go out and run our operations, we intentionally target our graduates, looking for them to see if they are showing up and are just being missed by us. We don't find them in great numbers and we're encouraged by that.

What we find from our experience with these men in the school is that they appreciate this one-day learning experience and almost unanimously tell us that this message needs to be put out to all men

so they can all learn and change their behaviour before they have to be picked up in a police sting for trying to purchase sexual services from a woman on the street.

They're always asking us how we can do that. I would turn that back to say that the effort is so large that it cannot be handled at the city or provincial level. It would have to be a national thing. Take out an ad on MTV and reach our target audience. These are the people who are receiving a message every five minutes on that program—depending on which segment you're listening to, I guess—saying that pimping and violence and gangsterism is okay. But they also need to hear that treating women badly, using people for sex, and allowing them to be enslaved for your selfish financial gain is not okay. We don't need to desensitize them to that.

● (0855)

Ms. Kate Gunn: I would just like to add that we know that in Edmonton, through the Safer Cities Initiatives Advisory Committee and our experiences here, and probably in every city across this country, there's a huge wealth of experience and knowledge and expertise at the grassroots level, working on the street, working with this issue every day.

We have found with many of the groups we speak to that, more than legislation, the challenge is the need for sustainable funding and resources, because they have the expertise, they have the ability, and they have built that network of contacts. Whatever level of government it comes from, we feel strongly that the need for sustainable funding to allow these groups to do the excellent work they're doing.... Whether it's a diversion program or a needle exchange program, like our Streetworks organization here in Edmonton, it's very important that they have that support and that knowledge so their programs can be ongoing and not just picked up one year and dropped the next.

Mr. Michael Phair: Perhaps I can just add to that also. In Edmonton, in fact, we do have an advertising campaign that both the Kates and the police are involved in. We have bus ads currently going on buses indicating that street prostitution is not acceptable and indicating that young people need to be aware of this as an issue and not get involved. That is paid for through money that's raised in the local community through a variety of different sources.

It is very difficult to have the kinds of resources to compete with other types of advertising that goes on. Again, it's back to the issue of resources. I think in this country we know that marketing makes a big difference on a variety of things. And we need to use those tools, just as Nabisco or Ford does to deal with what they wish to get across to the public. We need to use some of those same kinds of tools to move as well. They are costly. They need to be ongoing. Ford doesn't stop advertising. In my entire life I remember them marketing; I don't remember them ever stopping. We need to be thinking about dealing with issues like this in the long term in those ways as well.

The Chair: Leonard.

Det Leonard Dafeo: Mr. Ceci was alluding to Street Teams, I believe, in Calgary. There are Street Teams, Stepping Out, Servants Anonymous Society, Safe Haven, and a number of other not-for-profit agencies. I sit on the board of directors of Servants Anonymous, and I'll tell you right now that all these agencies exist on a shoestring.

Part of our sex trade strategy with the Calgary Police Service was to redirect some of the fines that johns were getting in court to these agencies. Some of these agencies were getting \$15,000 a year extra, over and above what they were able to raise privately. Maybe in the federal government circumstances \$15,000 isn't a lot, but in shoestring operations like Stepping Out or Servants Anonymous, it's huge.

Any sort of financial input, so they can do long-term planning, so it's not year-to-year luck for these agencies, I think, would be vastly appreciated.

The Chair: Thank you.

Kate.

Ms. Kate Quinn: Madame Brunelle, I'd like to respond to your question. I think there are several concrete things we can do, but they require courage and commitment.

One is to recognize that women in our country are marginalized economically. We need to create viable economic alternatives for women so that selling their bodies is not the only option.

Later this afternoon when you come to our office, we'll present one of our reports, but I want to draw your attention to one simple fact: the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Edmonton right now is \$500 in one of our inner-city neighbourhoods. If you were a single parent with one child and you were multi-barriered, meaning you had mental health issues or other challenges, you would be given \$482 for rent. That means you wouldn't have enough for food and other things.

In our organization, every month I write cheques to help with partial payment of rent. We give the vice officers and street officers Safeway gift certificates, bus tickets. We need to address the concrete issues of poverty, and that's a big one.

The other is that we have to face the fact that for many of those involved on the street, family violence is one of the root causes. Often women maintain relationships with men who abuse them, even when they get out of prostitution, and it's that abuse that can then send them back into different forms of prostitution, whether it's street, escort, or massage. So we need to increase programs that strengthen women to become strong enough to name what they need.

We also need programs for those men who are abusers. I know some may never change, but I think, again, if we worked at it as a whole community and worked on healing both the men who abuse and the women who are abused, we can make concrete changes.

Another suggestion is that at the school level we invite peer educators, youth and women who have survived sexual abuse and exploitation and prostitution, and we get them into the schools. One of my colleagues, whom you will meet this afternoon, goes out to grade 8 classes, and they keep asking her back because she puts out the real story. So we get those individuals into our schools, and if we

pay them fair wages we're going to see a turnaround, because it's so much different hearing me speak compared to hearing a woman who survived prostitution. Those youth listen to her.

Those are some immediate things. We do really need to look at the economic marginalization of women.

• (0900)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Brunelle.

Ms. Davies.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for coming here today.

It has been really fascinating to go across the country—I think this is now our fifth city—and see the similarities, which are pretty strong. But there are also different opinions, obviously.

I wanted to say to Leonard that I don't think anybody here is looking for an easy way out. I think everyone is very aware that we're dealing with a very complex subject. In fact, I would say if we were looking for the easy way out, it would be just to say the status quo. The tough thing is looking at the laws, at what needs to change, and at what approach we have. That's the tough part, because that's really where the debate is.

Just to put it on the table in terms of where the debate is going, we've had a couple of witnesses, two or three maybe, calling for red-light districts, but generally most people think that would be a huge problem. Councillor Ceci and Councillor Phair, you've outlined it very well. The idea that you designate one neighbourhood, how is that going to happen? It's very problematic. So people have really stayed away from that.

On the question of legalization, I think we've had maybe one or two witnesses talk about legalization, but the debate has focused a lot more—just to narrow it down—on some of the underlying root causes, which many of you have raised today, and then looking at the approach in terms of law enforcement and whether we should be looking at some form of decriminalization, which is different from legalization. That's really where the discussion is.

On the question of sexually exploited youth, there's been a very strong message that... We're not talking about loosening anything there. If anything, we need stronger legal sanctions there in terms of youth who are sexually exploited.

The other thing I wanted to bring up is that all of you have spoken about street prostitution, and that's certainly the primary focus of what we're doing, but in actual fact it accounts for only about 5% to 20% of the sex trade in Canada. That means there's a huge amount taking place off the street.

One of the things I find very interesting is that we do have this very contradictory approach. When we look at street prostitution, it's visible, it's complaint driven. The cops get a very rough time sometimes. You're being pushed to do things. Councillors get a very rough time. I'm a former councillor, and I know that well. We sort of get into this thing where we have to enforce the law. But when it comes to escort services, massage parlours, and so on, we tend to say, oh well, out of sight, out of mind; we'll just leave it be.

That's why I think part of the debate here is to move away from the judgment and moral questions. It's out there. Whether it's legal or not, the sex trade is happening. In fact, for 80% of it we pretty well say, go ahead; in fact, we'll license you. So there are these contradictions that we're grappling with.

The question I have is, if we're looking at the tools we use, both preventative and harm reducing, what is the role of the law? I really have a serious question in my mind—and I'm from Vancouver East. The primary tool of enforcement has resulted in dead bodies piling up. The communicating law and the bawdy house law have contributed to the very dangerous situation that sex workers face out on the street.

One question I have is, what evidence is there that a continued enforcement approach, if that's seen as a primary thing, has worked? If anything, since we've had the communicating law, for 20 years, things have gotten worse. That's one question that some of you could address.

Second, if we do move to some sort of law reform and we're looking at either full repeal or partial repeal of some of these sections, particularly the communicating law and the bawdy house law, what role should municipalities play?

● (0905)

I would agree that it's critical that municipalities are involved. You are dealing with it at the end of the day, but how do you see your role there? Is it important to have a more uniform approach across the country, or should it be something that's left more to municipal discretion if a municipality wanted to try some sort of informal red-light district? I can't see that happening, but maybe there's a municipality that wants to do that. That would be the second question.

I think ongoing resources do support programs—that's a given—but in terms of how the law is used or in questions of licensing, how do you see municipal involvement in that?

Mr. Michael Phair: You asked a couple of difficult questions, and let me just begin with a couple of areas.

I appreciate the concerns you bring up about the fact that we have seen too many women who have died or been injured, and your concerns about how the law is part of that and how it can be improved. You mentioned the bawdy house laws, and to my knowledge those have not been used except in dealing primarily with gay men, rather than with women, of late. I'm not sure they're very effective at all. I would agree with you. I'm not sure there's any great validity to them whatsoever.

In the area of solicitation, some of what you mentioned is right. We tend to look at it in a somewhat different way if it is the 80% who are not on the street, as opposed to the 20% who may be on the streets. Some of it has to do with their being out of mind. I'm not quite sure how one would legislate such things—and that's probably for you to figure out. But I do think that what we have seen is that when there is the opportunity for cities to develop local strategies, like the drug strategy funded through Health Canada, we do come up with ways to successfully go after different issues at a local level. Yes, they are different from one city to the next, and a variety of things come into play with that.

Second, I don't know whether there is an opportunity to look at underlying causes with legislation, as has been mentioned today, but certainly the issues around abuse leave room perhaps for legislation. I think we all wish we had legislative answers for the issues around drugs, but I'm not sure we do. But again, it would be helpful if we looked for some of the solutions at the local level, if that somehow could be maneuvered within the legislation. If there is some ability to develop local laws and legislation that can fit into a framework helping us at a local level, it might be a useful way to go. I'm going to guess that in other jurisdictions in other parts of the world, one may find examples of how that might occur.

Again, legislatively it's always tough to know this, but some of the barriers to achieving some of the goals are the services and their immediacy. Particularly with street prostitution, oftentimes if the person is also involved with drugs, there is no place for them to go, or they have to wait six months before they can get into some kind of service. Many emergency shelters will not take these people. Again, I appreciate that, and I'm not saying they should. But somehow through legislation we need to connect the mandating of programs that provide some wraparound services when we're going to implement some of this.

Those are just a few thoughts on a very broad subject.

● (0910)

The Chair: Leonard.

Det Leonard Dafoe: I want to speak to the use of enforcement, which came up from Ms. Davies, and its connection with the tragic circumstances in Vancouver. I would only see the use of enforcement as part of an overall strategy in connection with appropriate resources for rehab, drug addictions, poverty remediation, and those sorts of things. As I've said before, useless enforcement is lazy enforcement, which just drives up numbers to impress city hall. Absolutely, I agree with you. It has actually been used in the past, and I reject that entirely. It is not correct.

We need to use enforcement as part of a tool—and that's it. We need to change the focus of agencies that do use enforcement with whatever legislation we're supplied with, as a means of directing people into rehab services and appropriate treatment services. That's it. We would use the same thing, say, with the drug treatment strategy and have people enter into drug treatment court not to punish, but to assist.

Ms. Janice Melnychuk: Perhaps I may reiterate a point that we tried to make in our earlier presentation. The strategy we're developing within the city of Edmonton is really mirroring the community drug strategy, with the four pillars, and saying that enforcement is not enough. But again, as a municipality, enforcement has been the primary tool that we have been using and it has been ineffective.

I'd also point out that we ask in our presentation for the way the law is applied, not only to the supplier of the service but to the purchaser of the service, to be looked at. And that's also in response to the previous question about how the johns fit into this equation. We believe the police have had their hands tied in many ways.

I would also suggest one of the reasons we're doing a lot of education, or trying to use billboards and that kind of thing, is that legislatively there have been some real challenges and difficulties in communities...or the police identifying the men who are driving and trolling through our communities looking for women, who may or may not be standing there at the specific times when the person is driving around.

Thank you.

• (0915)

The Chair: Jim, last word, please.

Det Jim Morrissey: With regards to the changes over the last 20 years, if prostitution is the oldest industry in the world, then being a vice cop is the second oldest, and it's never really come to a great conclusion yet. However, among the men who are driving around those communities are serial sex offenders and serial killers. To suggest that any of our laws or anything we've talked about here will change their behaviour is obviously not right, but we need to be able to identify those men, and we need tools that can help us. Among all the other people who just want to beat the girls up and have sex with them, we need to figure out which ones are violent rapists or serial killers as well. So we need some way to protect them from that.

The other thing that has changed in the last 20 years—because I've been a police officer for all of those 20 years—is technology. We've already alluded to the Internet, chat lines, cell phones, and so on. We used to have a lot more girls working the street in Edmonton. We still have as many women working; they've just moved to different places. To suggest that all five vice officers of Edmonton cover the city like a blanket and know where all of them are, and what they're all doing, and what they're falling victim to is not appropriate either. There's a lot we don't know.

In 2002, we uncovered a cell of 100 teenage girls who were being put out through referral—first-time prostitutes. What we found when we did the study is that many of them moved throughout all the other kinds of prostitution. Some went to the street, some had moved to massage and escort and then back to the street, and they kind of hover around between all of the areas.

So there is no one place to look for them, and to suggest that any of us really knows where they are by taking a snapshot at this time, I think, is overly simplistic. It is an old problem.

Ms. Libby Davies: How many individuals are involved on the street? Do you have an idea? In Vancouver we heard that on a peak night there might be 100, and on a quiet night there might be 20 or so, which really surprised me. I thought it would be a lot higher. Do you have a sense of what it is in Edmonton?

Det Jim Morrissey: It's really difficult to say on a per night basis. But we estimated last year, I believe, that there were approximately 500 women working the street, although at any given time—

Ms. Libby Davies: Overall?

Det Jim Morrissey: Yes. They could be sleeping or perhaps in another city for a day or two, and then back. But that was the best number we could put on it. They are difficult to count. They are like bears in the woods, they don't hold still.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hanger, three-minute rounds for questions and answers, please.

Mr. Art Hanger: Thank you.

Len, you made some comment about looking at the Canadian culture and coming up with solutions for this culture, this environment. Sure, we've all talked about other models, and some of the witnesses coming forward seem to be more pro-prostitution, wanting to maintain some sort of validity to it, wanting these other models to be examined and introduced here.

You've indicated that we should be looking more to what is actually taking place here. I agree with Kate, I think it was, who mentioned the tremendous amount of research that has gone into this issue already and the expertise that people have acquired, whether they're police officers or others who have a deep concern about what's happening to the young in our society who are being victimized.

In your opinion, are we in a position, if you will, to come up with that model that's going to be workable in Canada? It may not be a cookie-cutter solution; I don't think it's ever going to be a cookie-cutter solution.

Det Leonard Dafoe: Yes, I think from what I've heard here today that the sort of common viewpoint that prostitution needs to be treated almost as a symptom of underlying causes—that are big causes—is the approach we require within our cultural circumstance. In New Zealand or Thailand there's a different cultural mosaic that may be more accepting of prostitution as a commodity, but it's been my feeling, having been involved in the vice unit for six or seven years, that prostitution in Canada is a result—at least in Calgary, and I'm not going to speak for people's experiences in Vancouver and Montreal and Toronto—or a symptom of greater issues. I think people at this table all have contacts within various agencies and communities and have expertise that could be utilized to reduce the impact of the sex trade.

In Calgary, we worked with Dr. Susan McIntyre. Dr. Susan McIntyre has published two fairly well regarded studies on prostitution. One is called *The Youngest Profession - The Oldest Oppression* and the other is called *Strolling Away*, on how women exit street prostitution. Dr. Augustine Brannigan, a sociologist at the University of Calgary, has done some other landmark studies.

So I think we do have the expertise within Canada to address this issue without taking the cookie-cutter approach around the world.

• (0920)

Mr. Art Hanger: Thank you.

Now, we're talking—and we've heard a lot of that in the committee this morning—about engaging the community, and I fully agree with Kate on that. You have formulated a plan in your mind as to how that's going to work. One would have to translate that to a country, in a sense, but you've done some preliminary work now.

If we're going to start such a program, for instance, and we're going to look at it nationwide, from just maybe that very small little level of activity that you have created, what would be your benchmark? Would your benchmark be that prostitution is not a situation you'd want anybody involved in, or that prostitution is okay if you're an adult and consent? Or would it be that consensual acts would be fine, and you could go and work in an escort service? That would be okay? Where would you start? Should there be abolition, or would it be that we'll find it acceptable under these circumstances, and go from there?

I would invite anyone to reply to that.

Ms. Kate Quinn: I will speak personally, not as a representative of Safer Cities.

My benchmark would be that marginalized children, youth, and adults have a wide range of choices. My benchmark would be that we would work for a society where people wouldn't have to sell their bodies to provide for their basic needs. I would likely be seen as a person who wanted to advocate for the end of exploitation and prostitution of vulnerable people, and I do see it as a struggle similar to the struggle around slavery. I know there are others who would see it differently, but I've decided in my life, and with what time, energy, and resources I have, that I want to work to create options so that no one has to sell their bodies for the basics of life, and so that people have opportunities, and so that those who've been harmed as children have opportunities to heal, and so that those who are marginalized, like the many aboriginal people and the transgendered people, be welcomed into our community. That's where the effort should go: into making it a safe community for everybody.

So I would advocate that for our resources goal.

Mr. Art Hanger: Thank you.

Ms. Kate Gunn: I would just like to add that part of the benchmark certainly would be that we have a community of citizens who understand the complexity of the issue, and that they understand they are compassionate no matter what the law is and the regulations are. That's why education is a really important component of the solution. It's not only enforcement, not only treatment and services, but education and engagement of the community, so that they understand and are part of the solution as well, in order to make it a safer community for everyone.

• (0925)

Mr. Art Hanger: Thank you.

Det Jim Morrissey: In 2002, a study was presented to us at a conference that many of those here were attending. I believe it was from a PhD at Simon Fraser University—and I'm sorry, but I don't remember her name. Her scientific count involved women involved in both inside and outside prostitution in Vancouver, and she had a methodology for that. Something like 88.6% or 88.7% of them were unhappy with the profession they were in and wished they could exit it. That was the snapshot at the time they asked that question, and it suggests that a little less than 20% either felt otherwise or were happy with it. And there were some other answers to it besides yes and no.

What the psychology behind the answers was I couldn't attest to. It's interesting, however, that the vast majority of them, even though they were busy in the trade and relatively successful at it, were

healthy and were going back to it that night, didn't wish to be there and wanted to exit.

Mr. Art Hanger: Thank you.

Mr. Michael Phair: I thank you.

My benchmark would be a reduction of the number of johns who are around, and a reduction in the number of people who are involved in prostitution. I would see that primarily through the services that are provided for rehab or ways for people to exit both jobs. I would want to see a reduction in those numbers, as well as those of the people who are working in them.

Mr. Art Hanger: Thank you.

The Chair: Madam Brunelle, you have three minutes for the question and answer.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I can see that since 2003, in Edmonton, the RCMP started collecting names, addresses, photographs, fingerprints and medical profiles of street workers as well as their friends and members of their families.

You know that Canada was denounced by Amnesty International because of the number of murders that took place, mainly in Vancouver. One of the problems was that these women were not yet identified as aboriginals although we know that many of them were.

I wonder if what the RCMP did really worked. What was the reaction of the public and the sex trade workers? Were the sex trade workers reluctant? How did they cooperate? Can this database be used to identify the recovered bodies? Is this a solution? If this works, how can the police use this information to increase the effectiveness of its investigations on other aspects, like drugs and so on?

[*English*]

The Chair: Kate Quinn.

Ms. Kate Quinn: I'm really pleased to answer that question, because we were among many who advocated for a task force.

The Project KARE teams are out on the streets. In the first few months, they had 90% of the women agreeing to provide DNA samples.

The RCMP have introduced another level of compassionate policing to our city streets. Their whole goal is to build trustful relationships and solve the murders. The RCMP have also been active in coming out to community group meetings to educate about their role.

In January we experienced the murder of a 19-year-old girl. She had given her DNA and identifying marks to what's called high-risk homicide, and the EPS and Project KARE worked together to identify her very quickly.

So the database is being used, the participation by the individuals on the street is high, and I have confidence that the EPS and RCMP together will solve these murders.

The women are very compliant. If they were to be murdered, they'd want their families to know, so they have been giving their DNA and identifying marks. Actually, this was not new to 2003 and the Project KARE. One of our community programs, Crossroads Outreach, was working with the RCMP prior to the task force to collect all this data, so we have a community agency that has this as well as the RCMP's Project KARE.

• (0930)

The Chair: Leonard.

Det Leonard Dafoe: In Calgary it was my experience, while I working the street as a vice officer, that on a nightly basis we engaged in conversations with many of the prostitutes and took pictures. They were more than willing to supply us with pictures, names, and identifying features because they knew the dangers that were inherent in the sex trade. Their level of compliance was very high.

We also have a program called DISC. It actually started in Vancouver with two constables. It stands for "deter and identify sex trade consumers". It's a database of sex trade consumers who are caught in a repeat mode on our sex strolls. It's available for our homicide and robbery investigators. It identifies the movements between Calgary and Vancouver of individuals who frequent the sex strolls, because as my colleague suggested, they're not just there to purchase sex; they're also serial sexual offenders; they're serial murderers. We do our darndest to try to track these guys and to stop them from doing what they do.

The Chair: Kate.

Ms. Kate Quinn: I wanted to add one little human story. The family of Rachel Quinney, who was murdered in June 2004, approached our organization to work with them on two events. One was a memorial at the time of what would have been her 20th birthday. We worked with Project KARE, the family, and the media, and we went to the site where her body was found. The RCMP have assigned several officers to work directly with the families.

After that experience the Quinney family called me and asked if we would work with them and if we would ask Project KARE to help us organize a Christmas dinner for all the women who were still on the street. A local church donated the use of a facility, the dinner was provided through many contributions, and Project KARE officers went out in their van, picked up women on the streets, went to the shelters, and invited them into the community. The officers did all the dishes.

I think it's an example, again, of the kind of relationship that's being built. The women know the officers are there to help them and to solve the murder.

The Chair: Do you have a quick one?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Yes, I would like to pursue the same line of questioning. It was noted that certain community groups dealing with prostitutes are establishing lists of bad and violent customers. These lists would also allow us to find sexual predators. Are police officers aware of that, do they have these lists of bad customers and potentially dangerous people? Is this information being circulated?

[*English*]

Ms. Kate Quinn: Again, I'm very proud of the work we try to do in Edmonton. Crossroads Outreach publishes a bad date list, which they spread to all the agencies and to the women and individuals on the street. We also actively encourage citizens to report information to the Edmonton Police Service website. It's called the Prostitution Resource Centre, and they can report all the details of men picking up individuals. They can report prostitution activity.

We have found from the criminologist at EPS that what citizens report...there's very little crossover with the men arrested by vice on an undercover sting. What this means is that citizen reporting is absolutely critical. If in my neighbourhood I report this white truck, in a west end neighbourhood they report that white truck, in the east end they report that white truck, and on the Crossroads bad date list the white truck shows up, we as citizens and community groups have given the police more tools for investigation. We work very hard to communicate.

I also want to tell you Project KARE sends out a bulletin to many organizations whenever an individual is missing. We all are given the identity of the person, and if we have seen her or him, we call in. The RCMP want to make sure the person is still alive.

We're pulling together as a community to address the problem of violent offenders. We have active neighbourhood patrols, volunteers who go out on the streets to take down these licence plate numbers, typing them in during their volunteer hours on the weekend.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Davies.

• (0935)

Ms. Libby Davies: Yes, we have spoken with a lot of sex workers across the country, both in public and in camera, and informally, and I think it's been very illuminating in terms of understanding the reality of what goes on.

Picking up on Detective Morrissey's comment that there are a lot of people who would like to exit, when you say there are a lot of people who are unhappy with their work, I don't doubt that. I think you could say that about a lot of work situations. There might be a lot of waitresses who are very unhappy with their work. I suppose the question is, do we make people illegal, or do we focus on the environment they're in and provide choices and as much control as possible to provide safety and to ensure that people's rights are there. Again, I'm trying to look at the contradictions.

I think it was Janice who mentioned something about billboards. I don't know whether you have billboards here, but this idea of naming customers who drive around, and all of that, I wonder, does that happen with customers who go to escort agencies, or massage parlours, and if not, why not? What is the activity, what is it that's producing this reaction? Is it the driving around, because then that's something very specific? Or is it actually the sexual activity, or is it the violence, because these customers, the ones who are driving around, are perceived to be predators?

I think it's very important that we look at this, because there are huge contradictions. Why do we ignore those same customers when they're going into an escort agency? Some of them are violent, but also some of them are not. We have learned that just to characterize every customer as a predator is not correct. We've had sex workers tell us about their clients, and some of them are executives, and they might even be police, they might be judges, lawyers, stockbrokers, you name it, business people.

What I'm really trying to get at here again is what are these contradictions? I agree with Kate Quinn, we have to focus on the marginalized populations and provide choices and resources for exiting, but where there are consenting relations taking place, and if it's being done in a safe environment, then are we saying that this is okay? We are actually allowing it to happen now, so I think it's really important that we know, if we're putting up billboards, then on what basis are we doing that? Is it on the basis that all prostitution is bad and therefore the customers are all bad, or is it on the basis of something else, and then how do we isolate that?

I don't know if anybody would like to respond to that.

Mr. Joe Ceci: I'll quickly try, but because what I'm going to say is so contradictory, I won't speak long. But for me, it's the presence of street prostitution that people tell me they want stopped. I know it's schizophrenic to only focus on that 5% to 20%, or whatever amount it is, of prostitution that takes place, but you have to start somewhere, and that's where people are telling me they want to start.

Ms. Libby Davies: You know, Joe, I don't know that it is totally a contradiction. It's often presented that way; therefore we have to then somehow eliminate this whole industry. If what people are telling us is that it's the impact of visibility, the harm and the violence, then I think, why wouldn't we focus on that?

My next question to you would be, then should we be looking for a safer environment? The Fraser committee 20 years ago recommended that, say, one or two women could operate out of their own homes, not a red-light district. So if we're actually saying it's these particular things that are a problem, then are we willing to take the next step and say this activity exists and therefore we have to provide a safer environment?

What would your response be to that?

Mr. Joe Ceci: Maybe I'm falling back on being a social worker, but I don't know how many people want to self-determine. If they had their free will, would they self-determine to be a sex trade worker?

Ms. Libby Davies: But what's free will? Many of us have limited choices, yes, so—

Mr. Joe Ceci: Anyway, I'm not sure I'd like to be zoning parts of any city for brothels or bawdy houses.

Mr. Michael Phair: I think, in effect, we are already. We allow small businesses in homes right now. One could use that within our framework of zoning, if one wished to, for services that essentially could be prostitution services.

I do think the distinction I'd probably make is around protection and danger. I have a sense that if individuals are working out of escort agencies or a homes, they probably have some other contacts who are there to help protect them if issues arise. I realize this is not always the case, but it certainly can be that they probably are hooked into some other kinds of, not necessarily services, but networks that help ensure a little more safety.

Because we do license, we also have some other ways of tracking individuals. We have city services that inspect massage services and have an opportunity to do some checking as well. So I think there's perhaps a sense that there are some other things that help to ensure there's less danger there.

I think the other underlying issue is drugs—and I'm not saying that there aren't drugs at the other level either, but in order to be part of some of these other networks and services, I think there needs to be some ability for drugs not to rule one's life entirely. Oftentimes I think, when we're dealing with street prostitution, there are so many difficult issues—drugs being one of the big ones—that counter this ability.

I may be wrong in some of this, but it's a part of the distinction that I make. We're doing some things to try to protect in one area. In this area, we have a long way to go.

• (0940)

The Chair: Thank you, Michael.

Leonard.

Det Leonard Dafeo: Thank you.

To respond to Ms. Davies, the desirability of certain actions depends on the group who desire that action. I mean, with communities, the very visible presence of street prostitution is the endless stream of traffic and the predators within their neighbourhood and the condoms and the needles and all the rest of it. That's from their perspective, what they want to see eliminated.

I think police and the social agencies who deal with people in the sex trade have a different view of the dynamic within that group. As a member of the vice unit, I was personally involved in a number of investigations of escort agencies and massage parlours—and it's not to criminalize the women and men working in them but to get at the owners who are profiting from these folks.

There's an organized crime element involved in this as well that cannot be ignored. There's huge money going into some of these pockets, and I'll tell you from numerous investigations, they're not paying taxes. So there's a whole element of things going on there.

The other issue, of course, is that of the ancillary offences occurring within massage parlours and escort agencies—drug trafficking, extortions, robberies. It's not safe by any stretch of the imagination. In Calgary, we don't ignore that aspect of the sex trade.

Thank you.

The Chair: Is there anyone else who wants to speak?

Detective Morrissey.

Det Jim Morrissey: I'd just like to follow up on what Leonard just said. It's not all safe and secure on the inside either, and we do investigations here as well.

However, there will always be a small segment of people who, for a whole bunch of reasons—poverty, mental health issues, psychiatric issues, drug abuse issues—just can't get it together enough to work inside no matter what you provide for them. And even if you did succeed in getting them inside, the same men who want to sexually assault them, beat them, and kill them are going to have to go somewhere. So guess where they're going to go? They're going to move inside, and you'll just have a different set of perpetrators now working inside. The women who used to work for escort agencies and in massage parlours who thought they were relatively safe there—because the most dangerous place is for certain on the street—would now have these turkeys coming into their places.

The Chair: Kate Quinn, do you have a comment?

Ms. Kate Quinn: Thank you.

I have given some thought to the proposal around women being able to organize, with one or two working out of their homes. Again I would add several cautions. First, we can't ignore the fact that when there's profit to be made there will be those who wish to profit. So how long would it take before either a gang member or a pimp said, you need protection and you have to pay me? How long would it take before a pimp, be it a man or a woman, set up a house and hired women to work in it? I would have a lot of questions on that.

When I first got involved many years ago, I remember asking questions about Nevada and everything they do there. Then I read the story of a woman who worked in one of those legalized brothels. She had no choices, again like the women I met on the streets in my neighbourhood.

I accept that there may be a few women who are sole independents, who totally want to do this and could do this without any outside control. That's possible in a pluralistic society in Canada. Again, I have met some individuals who've been inside massage and escort services. When they told me of their experiences, it put me back in a position of wanting to advocate for more choices for women so they are not limited to working in massage or escort services, or off the Internet.

The other reality—and this may sound harsh—is that the city would have to deal with where to zone these bawdy houses. The community is currently struggling with street prostitution activity and is in fact already dealing with these kinds of houses. We call them crack houses. We call them trick pads. Would any city legislate that a bawdy house could only be opened up in a neighbourhood where incomes were over \$60,000? Our low-income neighbourhoods are already struggling with the real day-to-day impact of

situations like bawdy houses. So it would be a big challenge at the municipal level to even look at how this could operate.

Thank you.

● (0945)

The Chair: Thank you, panel, for being here. It was an early start, and it was an earlier start for you to get here for our early start. We very much appreciate your input this morning.

We will be preparing a report, probably over the summer, to report back to Parliament in the fall. I'm sure your contribution today will be reflected in that report. It's a complex subject, and there isn't an easy answer. There are many viewpoints on it. We're struggling with it, as are your communities as well.

Thank you very much for being here.

We will pause so our next panel can assemble.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (0955)

The Chair: I'd like to welcome our next panellists here this morning.

As for the general routine, you have roughly five minutes for presentations. If there are several individuals representing one group, there is only one presentation per group. That will be followed by questions from our members of Parliament in seven-minute rounds. Time allowing, we will then go to three-minute rounds of questions and answers.

At this point I will call on Mr. Peter Rausch, from the Alberta Avenue Business Association.

Mr. Peter Rausch (Executive Director, Alberta Avenue Business Association): Thank you.

I'm the executive director for Alberta Avenue Business Association. We're one of the 10 business revitalization zones created by the City of Edmonton. We're charged with promoting and developing businesses in our area.

Alberta Avenue, 118th Avenue, is a business, commercial, and social centre and has been throughout the history of Edmonton. It's located north of the centre area of Edmonton, 15 blocks from the downtown. Our BRZ covers over 25 blocks along 118th Avenue between NAIT and Northlands.

Ten years ago we represented 220 businesses. Today we represent 180, despite a booming Alberta economy. The majority of our businesses are sole proprietorships or family-run businesses. Many of the owners and the staff live within the area. It's an area with great history, and we're proud of our past.

In the late seventies and eighties, most of the street prostitutes were located downtown. Through one initiative or another, over time they were herded north. When one community screamed loud enough, they were driven into another area. Despite the best efforts of the police, social action groups, and agencies like Crossroads and PAAFE, the number of prostitutes has grown within our city, as well as their impact.

Legitimizing their activities as massage parlours and escort services only hides the number of people involved with the sex trade and related crime. Most of the sex trade workers in our area have reached the lowest common denominator—drug addiction, victims of violence and abuse—or they turn to the streets because it's seen as the only way they can get money.

By all accounts, we are the centre of the street prostitutes in Edmonton. Crossroads indicates that 60% of the street sex trade is along 118th Avenue and 95th Street. Due to cutbacks for renewal initiatives from the different levels of government over the last 15 years, our avenue slowly has become more derelict, which suits the sex trade and related crime. The sex trade is directly linked to drugs, crime, theft, and other illegal activities. The violence it brings is a threat to our local residents and our business owners. We are a secondary victim of crime.

Over time, our neighbouring communities and businesses have become distressed and frustrated. Alberta Avenue is a unique area of town. It has been historically a starting point for many new people coming to Edmonton. More than 98% of the residents are good, hardworking citizens who deserve to celebrate their life and community.

Currently there are a number of new initiatives under way to revitalize our area and hopefully allow our residents and businesses the same level of safety and security expected in the other areas of Edmonton, but the social issues and reality of the sex trade are not going to be changed by bricks and mortar.

I wish this committee could find the time to drive down 118th Avenue to see the scope and impact that street prostitution has on our community and daily activities. Sex trade workers are on our streets and back lanes of our businesses every day, throughout the day and night. It's unrelenting. It's a daily fact of life in that area.

Our businesses start their day with the chores of cleaning up the storefronts or back alleys or sidewalks of used condoms, drug paraphernalia, and empty bottles from the activities of the night before. When the street prostitutes are asked to move away from the storefronts or from the back lanes, it often becomes confrontational—sometimes with the pimps getting involved.

Over time our business owners and staff are worn out, fatigued from their efforts of trying to make their businesses safe and inviting to their customers. Many businesses lock their doors when they are open for business. This includes our day care centres.

Our businesses can't hire or retain staff due to the location. They often have to pay for cabs for their staff to go home safely at night. Female employees—often the daughters of family members—are approached by the johns and harassed by the prostitutes, as they go to work or lunch or coffee or wait for a bus.

Many of the business owners are approaching the age of retirement, but they can't find people interested in buying their lifelong efforts. This was the retirement plan for many of them.

●(1000)

Some shops just give up and close, due to the environment that's caused by the sex trade and related crime in our area. Shoppers are harassed by johns or the girls as they try to go to the local drugstore

or market. Local residents refuse to go to a store a block away. Our local community patrol members have been physically threatened by the johns and the sex trade workers or their pimps. There have been assaults on these volunteers.

We know there are businesses involved with the sex trade or drug activities. Can you imagine what it's like to try to run your legitimate business, your livelihood, with a neighbour like this, when there's little that the current laws can do to close them down? Fear of retaliation is there if you choose to do something about it.

Our association is actively trying to attract major chains and other new businesses into our area. Despite meeting their site selection criteria, they do not locate in our area due to the optics. One property owner contacted me on Tuesday, and he can't get refinancing because one of the financial institutions refuses to finance in that area. It's tough to run businesses.

Our association has promoted some of the gems that are in our area of the city. Even with some of the best bakers, restaurants, markets, and stores in Edmonton, people throughout Edmonton, and even our local residents, are reluctant to shop there. Police crackdowns only serve as a break in the action. Within days, and sometimes hours, it's back to normal, and it starts all over again the next day.

We would like this issue to be addressed by all levels of government and the public. It's not an issue that impacts just a few areas, it permeates our city. We want action. We want legislation that addresses the issues of street crime and prostitution, backed by the money to implement and enforce the legislation, as well as support for the victims of these crimes. We are not a ghetto. We have the right, as businesses and residents, to expect the same level of safety and security as in other areas. We pay the same taxes federally, provincially, and municipally.

The Chair: Please wind it up in about a minute.

Mr. Peter Rausch: I have two more points, sir.

The level of frustration along 118th Avenue with the sex trade and related crime is reaching a critical point. If the laws are not changed or enforced, we want them moved down the road out of our area. Someone else can go through the same problems and suffering that we have for too long.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is Elizabeth Hudson.

●(1005)

Ms. Elizabeth Hudson (Author, As an Individual): I'd like to introduce myself to the honourable members. I am Elizabeth Hudson, author of *Snow Bodies: One Woman's Life on the Streets*.

As a witness, I bring to you not only my knowledge of what it was like to be a drug-addicted streetwalker, but I'm also here as a very concerned individual, frightened for the safety of street sex trade workers. Over the last 30 years, with what I can only describe as chilling regularity, I have read newspaper headlines marking the rising death toll among street sex trade workers.

I am not alone in recognizing the appalling death rate. I quote from a September 16 editorial in the *Vancouver Sun*: "...almost every Canadian prostitute murdered in the last 30 years met her death working the street".

To understand the appalling number of deaths of street sex trade workers over the last 30 years, one need look no further than the communicating law for answers, for I believe it is the communicating law that is directly responsible for the deaths of street sex trade workers. The communicating law accomplished its goal of punishing both the sex trade worker and the client, but with frightening repercussions never envisioned by those who enacted it into law.

One of the unseen ramifications of the communicating law was the irretrievable loss of middle-class clients. Middle-class clients, fearful of being charged under the communicating law, would no longer risk using the services of a street sex trade worker. This loss proved catastrophic as it left the street sex trade worker with a much lower class of client, a more dangerous class of client. With fewer choices, due to addiction and/or poverty, the street sex trade worker was reduced to working with these riskier clients, and the results have been devastating.

For proof, you need to look no further than a study done by Leonard Cler-Cunningham and Christine Christenson. They found that among the small sample of sex trade workers who participated in their study, an astonishing 73.2% had been physically threatened; 60.3% had been threatened with a weapon; 56.7% had been forced to have sex against their will; 30% had been kidnapped; and 35.9% had faced attempted murder.

Although the most visible, the street sex trade worker makes up only about 20% of all prostitution. But it is the street sex trade worker who is, for the most part, penalized by the communicating law with ever more escalating rates of violence and death.

It must be noted that each move made by federal, provincial, or civil governments to punish and/or humiliate the johns has, in effect, only punished the street sex trade worker, purposely and continually leaving them with fewer options. All one has to do is listen to the very wording of the communicating law in section 2 to understand another obvious but tragic outcome for the street sex trade worker:

"public place" includes any place to which the public have access as of right or by invitation, express or implied, and any motor vehicle located in a public place or in any place open to public view.

This phrasing allows the street sex trade worker no latitude to ever succeed in working in a protected, lighted area. So the street sex trade worker must resort to working in dark industrial areas where they are more vulnerable and exposed and from where they are disappearing at alarming rates.

These negative outcomes for the street sex trade worker were not envisioned in 1984 and are barely recognized today. The communicating law has effectively punished the street sex trade worker and made what was already a dangerous profession more so.

John Lowman, a criminologist at Simon Fraser University, has proved that this is not conjecture, but fact. His 1996 study showed that after the communicating law was enacted, there was a 500% increase in prostitute deaths in British Columbia alone.

The threat to prostitutes can graphically be seen on bad date sheets handed out by such organizations as Crossroads and Street Teams. On those sheets are the daily lists of assaults, rapes, robbery, and threats faced by those selling sex on the street.

It would seem that over the last 30 years, the communicating law has ignored the collateral damage it has inflicted on the street sex trade worker, and if we continue to do nothing and continue to ignore the harm the communicating law has done, we will continue with more deaths of street sex trade workers.

In summary, if the actual act of prostitution is legal and it is only illegal to communicate a desire for sex for cash, then I believe the government must act now to prevent further deaths of street sex trade workers. Parliament has a responsibility to ensure that the streets are at least as safe as they were 30 years ago when the soliciting laws were in effect. Enough street sex trade workers have lost their lives to warrant abolition of the communicating law.

Regarding recommendations, I propose designing legitimate strolls by utilizing the moneys received from fines from both the sex trade workers and the clients. I also ask for more funding for agencies that help sex trade workers with their health and addiction issues, and also for those agencies that assist sex trade workers to make the transition from the street back into society.

Also, I believe the government should consult with street sex trade workers on any subsequent changes to the law to reduce the harm that is perhaps not visible to the legislators.

Thank you.

• (1010)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Shannon Ross Watson.

Ms. Shannon Ross Watson (As an Individual): Thank you. Thank you for this opportunity to address you on the solicitation laws.

My name is Shannon Ross Watson, I volunteer with Kate Quinn at john school by speaking to the men about the effect their behaviour has on my community. Because of my work with the Safe and Caring Communities Committee, I received the Alberta Solicitor General Award for Crime Prevention in 2003.

I have submitted a brief, and again, this is such a complex problem it was very hard for me to get this information all together. Basically I'm addressing three things: the effect that street prostitution is having on my neighbourhood, possible regulation of the sex trade industry, and vehicle forfeiture.

Twenty years ago Edmonton had three or four neighbourhoods affected by street prostitution, and now there are 19. Street prostitution moved into my neighbourhood six years ago. The purpose of the communicating law is to control the nuisances, but the effects of street prostitution on neighbourhoods far exceeds the word “nuisance”. For many residents the most frightening aspect of street prostitution is the accompanying drug-related activities.

As my neighbours glance out their window and see a drug transaction taking place, they worry that the drug dealers will witness them trying to record a licence number and retaliate with violence.

I can tell you that there is no creepier feeling than being followed by a slow-moving vehicle driven by a john as he trolls your neighbourhood. Residents fear letting their children walk to school, go to the cornerstore, or play in the parks. Some residents feel so threatened they just move. I have two neighbours who are threatening to move right now. Among these neighbours are two police officers, and they feel now that my neighbourhood is unsafe for them to stay and raise their daughter. If the police feel that my neighbourhood is unsafe, maybe it is unsafe; I'm not sure now.

Drugs and prostitution seem to go hand in hand. The drug activity that is accompanying the street prostitution is pushing the limits of our care and compassion. The Kings Cross district in Sydney, Australia—and this is an area that has relaxed prostitution laws—has a legalized stroll and it has brothels. Some 95% of the prostitutes are heroin addicts. There are clearly defined links between prostitution and drug distribution areas. Most of the street prostitutes in my neighbourhood look thin and ill, and I am assuming they need drugs in order to continue the existence that they are living. And that is why we are seeing the drug transactions.

So though the physical debris and the visible presence of the women on the street is terrible, the most insidious effect of street prostitution is the perception or reality that my neighbourhood is now unsafe.

In my brief I pose the following questions: Does street prostitution create unsafe neighbourhoods? What is the value in our society of having safe and healthy neighbourhoods? Are the present sanctions harsh enough? Are they a strong enough deterrent?

There have been suggestions to decriminalize solicitation to repeal the prostitution laws or create a legal, regulated sex industry. These initiatives should never be considered. Endorsing these types of initiatives means that women and sex are still viewed as a commodity to be bought and sold. It is an attempt to normalize prostitution and will still fail to eradicate the illegal or unregulated prostitution.

From my research—and there are four million sites on the Internet about prostitution that you can do research on—all countries that have relaxed and repealed prostitution laws have ended up with more prostitutes, more drug crime, increased control by gangs and organized crime, and an increase in sexually transmitted diseases. Decriminalization did not remove prostitutes from the streets or stop the violence against the prostitutes. Street prostitutes are not getting killed because of our laws; it is because they are doing something risky and dangerous.

Do not consider a regulated sex industry in any form. We do not need any more sex worker businesses here in Edmonton. We have approximately 106 escorts and 869 massage practitioners who take out business licences. Not all of these are the prostitution trade, some of them are legitimate massage therapists, but I don't have access to the numbers.

Street prostitutes do not need to go to prison. What is needed is increased and consistent funding for those who wish to exit prostitution and drug courts to help with addictions. It is not the world's oldest profession, it is the world's oldest oppression. It is inherently harmful and it is something I would never want anyone's daughter to be caught up in.

•(1015)

So what are we to do? I'm stuck. I have prostitutes in my neighbourhood. What's the solution?

In the last part of my brief, I discuss vehicle forfeiture. I think this is a swift and certain penalty that could be a good deterrent. Street prostitution is a car-based industry. The only people walking on the street are the prostitutes. The johns, the pimps, and the drugs dealers are all hidden in their cars. They move quickly from street to street and are safe from identification. The women and the drugs are moved around in vehicles. Most of the street prostitutes who were killed in Edmonton, and probably in Canada, were likely driven to their deaths in a vehicle. Owning and driving a vehicle is a privilege, not a right, and I think it's time to take this privilege away from the pimps, the drug dealers, and the johns.

Here in Alberta, we are pinning our hopes on the provincial vehicle seizure amendment to the Traffic Safety Act. This amendment is awaiting final proclamation. Although it deals with and addresses soliciting, it does not directly impact the drug dealers and the pimps who in some cases are the same individuals.

In order to make my neighbourhood and all neighbourhoods in Canada safer, it is not the soliciting laws that need reviewing, but other parts of the Criminal Code of Canada. Civil or *in rem* forfeiture is not part of the Criminal Code of Canada. Provinces have exclusive powers over civil law, and there is nothing preventing them from enacting civil forfeiture statutes. If the Criminal Code of Canada cannot be amended to include civil forfeiture, then perhaps we need a new act, a neighbourhood protection act that would give the provinces the ability to enact civil and criminal forfeiture laws without constitutional challenges.

I'm not a lawyer and I'm not a politician. I'm a gardener, and I'm just throwing you out a seed, something you can take and maybe use to make this society a better place. This might protect our neighbourhoods not only from street prostitution, but also from drugs, gangs, and organized crime activities. I think that if we endorse prostitution as an activity and as a lifestyle, we are diminished as a society.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Julie McNeice.

Ms. Julie McNeice (Citizen, As an Individual): Thank you very much for inviting me here today. I'm from Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, and the reason I'm here is that I have an undergraduate degree that's partially in restorative justice and crime prevention, so that's where my interest lies. But I'm speaking specifically from the Northwest Territories.

In the NWT we have three times the birth rate for young mothers between the ages of 15 and 19. Our abortion rates are 25% higher than the next closest jurisdiction. The health report that was recently filed in our legislative assembly listed the NWT as having the highest rates of infectious diseases, including STDs, in Canada. The gonorrhoea rate for northern women is 12 times the national average.

In 2002, which is the last time these rates were collected by the NWT Status of Women, the NWT had eight times the national rate for family violence shelters, and we had five and a half times the national rate for reported sexual assaults. The NWT rate for family violence was eight times the national average in 2002. The NWT Status of Women is going to be asking for that report to be revised this year, but that's the last year it was available.

In the Northwest Territories, with regard to colonialism, in the first century of the Hudson's Bay Company, European women were not allowed to live in Canada, and mixed family formations were not allowed around the trading post. So the legacy left behind for first nations people is that they were violated right from Canada's inception, and that legacy has continued.

Today there are some northern communities where almost the entire female population has been sexually assaulted by males who live in their community. These men are their brothers, cousins, uncles, and grandfathers. Some abusers hold powerful positions in band councils. Most assaults are unaccounted for. Women feel powerless to change this, and they are threatened with further violence if they attempt to stop it.

I was a volunteer on our NWT help line for a number of years. We had a call from one fellow in a very northern community, an isolated post. He'd been called as a witness to a sexual assault that had happened to a 13-year-old girl about five years previously. He wanted to be a witness, but he was afraid to because his mother would no longer talk to him, and the mother of the accused was his mother's best friend. He was being ostracized by the community. I had to speak to him, and he phoned the help line almost nightly until his court case came up so he would have enough strength to be a witness. So that's the situation in the territories.

When I was working on my thesis, I was advised by senior government officials in law enforcement that we didn't have prostitution in the territories because there was no demand for it. We didn't charge for prostitution in the territories. I was told by the same people that young women were often forced into prostitution by their fathers, mothers, and boyfriends, and for drugs.

Going online to do research, I found that the University of Rhode Island did some research on the sex trade in Canada. They had a quote from Yellowknife that there was a cocaine epidemic that was closely linked to Yellowknife's prostitution and pornography trade. A group of girls were selling sex for cocaine. The article was entitled,

“Coke Epidemic in Northwest Territories: Child Sexual Abuse called Root of Drug Abuse”.

• (1020)

This coincides with facts on prostitution presented in research by the international Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, and annual reports from the Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada, that many prostitutes are drug addicts. Furthermore, 70% to 80% of people involved in the Canadian sex trade industry began so as children, and 80% to 90% are fleeing sexual abuse that began at home.

What happens to people in the territories is this. Yellowknife is a relatively small community in terms of population size. There are between 16,000 and 20,000 people living in Yellowknife, and in the entire Northwest Territories there are only 43,000 people. Yellowknife is 1,700 kilometres north of Edmonton. For a girl or boy who grows up in an isolated community such as Gjoa Haven or Cambridge Bay, Yellowknife is a big enough place—never mind Edmonton. If they want to run away from home and they go 1,700 kilometres, what do they hit? They either go to Edmonton or to Calgary. They're so naive. What happens to them if all they know is to become involved in the sex trade in order to make money?

In the last 10 years, 78 women have disappeared in Alberta and the NWT, which Project KARE was set up to investigate. We've already had some mention of it.

There is an article entitled, “A Plea for Canada's Missing”, on the Reuters website. It is a Reuters article about comments made at the United Nations on Thursday, May 13, 2004:

About 500 indigenous women have disappeared or been murdered in Canada over the past 16 years, with police having done little to solve the crimes, native groups said yesterday.

...“When it comes to indigenous women it seems easy for authorities to overlook unexplained murders and missing person cases,” said Wilton Littlechild, a lawyer from Alberta.

He made his comments at the two-week meeting of the Permanent UN Forum on Indigenous Issues, which focuses on women's rights.

“Canada is not particularly listening so we are going to the international community,” another delegate said.

As for the negative socio-economic focus—

• (1025)

The Chair: Julie, could I ask you to wind up in about a minute, please?

Ms. Julie McNeice: CISC's focus lists the socio-economic effects of Canada's organized crime activities having to do with prostitution. All of Canada's organized crime groups, including motorcycle gangs, eastern Europeans, Asians, and traditional organized crime—mostly Italian mafia—are involved in prostitution. My concern is that by legalizing prostitution, all that's going to happen is that organized crime is going to be in a perfect position and place to transfer that money into laundering and will be perfectly set up to do so and to reap even further benefits.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

From the Alberta Avenue Neighbourhood Patrol, Cristina Basualdo.

Ms. Cristina Basualdo (Vice President, Alberta Avenue Neighbourhood Patrol): The Alberta Avenue Neighbourhood Patrol has been active for 10 years and is dedicated to community safety. I have served as vice-president for six years. I live in a multicultural neighbourhood with historic homes, along with many seniors and families with children.

The Canadian Charter of Rights says in section 7 that everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of the person. Although this section has been used to argue for the legalization of some prostitution-related activities, I do not believe the intent of the charter is to allow activities that infringe on the rights of others.

I live in a community of victims deprived of their liberty and security. Residents, including women and children, who exercise their right to walk in their own community are subjected to constant john traffic, being solicited for sex, seeing prostitutes and johns having sex in cars in public view, prostitutes who indecently expose themselves, needle and condom litter, and sometimes assault or robbery. They are frustrated and frightened, but I do not have time to share more than a few of their stories.

A friend carrying her toddler saw a prostitute and a john having sex in his car. An 83-year-old woman was accosted and terrorized by a prostitute who demanded money. A mentally challenged man was threatened with death by a prostitute because he refused to give her a cigarette he didn't have. A prostitute threatened two women with a grenade when they refused to buy drugs. Two johns recently tried to drag teenage girls into their cars, and many times men have tried to pick up children. We no longer even patrol our streets due to the risk to our own safety.

It has been said that Canada's current solicitation laws force street prostitutes to work in dark and dangerous places. Street prostitution and associated crime make my neighbourhood dangerous; its residents do not. Prostitutes openly work in front of our new library, schools, playgrounds, family homes, and neighbourhood businesses. Communication occurs in public at any time of the day.

I am saddened by the prostitute murders in Edmonton. Drug addiction causes people to act in inappropriate ways that are dangerous to their own safety and that of others. It is risky behaviour to use drugs and get into the cars of men one does not know. Many addicts resort to other criminal activities, in addition to solicitation, for drugs. Fifty-two prostitutes were arrested in the fall in Edmonton for selling drugs. Another prostitute was recently convicted of living off the avails of prostitution and abusing a transgendered prostitute. A few months ago one of our regular prostitutes was arrested for the assault, robbery, and forcible confinement of a man.

Prostitution, crime, and drug addiction never occur in isolation from one another. Prostitutes tend to work near their drug houses and form a majority of the clientele. Drug houses operate day and night and pose many nuisances and hazards, including discarded needles nearby, drugged-up clientele with unpredictable behaviour, traffic, and noise.

Several years ago a friend and I sat on a bench on weekend evenings for three months and counted 500 johns who solicited us. We submitted over 300 more licence plate numbers to Project KARE, and this is only a small percentage of the actual number of men who cruise our streets. Many are violent, and one is likely to be the serial killer. Prostitution brings men like this to my neighbourhood and jeopardizes the safety of the women and children who reside there.

The Alberta Avenue Neighbourhood Patrol and most of my community are only concerned with laws that affect street prostitution. Section 212 is already an indictable offence and should stay that way. Section 213 should not be repealed. I believe the law should address the safety of the public and activities that infringe on the safety and well-being of others. The law cannot protect people whose activities pose a risk to their own safety and well-being if it puts their rights ahead of those of the victims of their activities.

We support the hybridization of section 213. It is appropriate that due to the hazards street prostitution creates in the community, the offences be made more serious. This would assist the community by enabling fingerprinting of offenders so that repeat offenders could be more easily identified by the justice system and treated more harshly. We would like to see jail time for second offences. I am hoping that this would also have a deterrent effect on those who would not want to risk jail time. It would allow the police to arrest if they had reasonable grounds to believe that a section 213 offence had been committed or was about to be committed.

We encourage increased government funding of treatment programs. However, if the offenders do not choose treatment, they choose enforcement. We support driver's licence suspensions and vehicle seizures for men who violate section 213.

● (1030)

Increasing the severity of section 213 offences would help prostitutes by allowing faster identification and a quicker investigation of their murders. It would act as a deterrent to those not already entrenched in the trade, decreasing the risk to them. It would increase the ability of drug addiction support and transition groups to contact prostitutes. Lastly, prostitutes who are not on the street are not at risk from their customers.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

From the Alberta Federation of Women United for Families, Hermina Dykxhoorn.

Ms. Hermina Dykxhoorn:

Members of the committee and guests, thank you for giving us the opportunity to discuss the issue of solicitation and the surrounding issues of prostitution.

The Alberta Federation of Women United for Families was established in 1982 as a voice for Alberta women concerned for the rights and dignity of women in their role in the family and in the community. In her book *"Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart": Prostitution Harms Women Even if Legalized or Decriminalized*, author Melissa Farley poses these questions:

Can the physical, social, and psychological harm of prostitution be controlled or decreased by decriminalization, regulation or other state monitoring? Is there any way to make prostitution safer? Is it possible to protect the human rights of those in prostitution? Does legalization or decriminalization decrease the dangers of prostitution?

She then proceeds to make a plausible, compelling case against decriminalization. I would suggest to this committee, if they're reading, this book would be very good for them to read. The physical, social, and psychological harm of prostitution does not result from its illegality. It results from the practice itself. Numerous furtive, anonymous sexual encounters with strangers, encounters frequently accompanied by coercion and violence, are not conducive to physical, social, or psychological well-being.

Between 50% and 80% of women in prostitution experience physical assaults. In the Netherlands, 60% of prostituted women suffer physical assaults. I'm calling on the Netherlands because I know a little bit about that situation, coming from there and having visited it often. That's where prostitution is legal. Some 70% experienced verbal threats of physical assault, and 40% experienced sexual violence.

One of the comments I have heard there is that it is not possible to protect the health of someone whose job means they will get raped on average once a week. One woman explained that prostitution is "like domestic violence taken to the extreme". Another said, "What is rape for others is normal for us". One called prostitution "paid rape".

In Germany, where prostitution is legal, 59% of German respondents to a survey on the subject did not think legal prostitution made them any safer. In prostitution, there is no avoiding sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, rape, and acts that are the equivalent of torture. These are an intrinsic part of sex trade work.

Prostitution negatively affects women's physical health. I don't need to tell you that; you've probably heard all the figures on it. Condoms are not completely effective at preventing sexually transmitted diseases, and anyone engaging in numerous sexual encounters with strangers over a long period of time will inevitably contract a variety of STDs, some causing minor, treatable conditions and others causing untreatable conditions such as sterility and, not infrequently, death.

Even though one purpose of legalizing is to monitor safe sex practices, the nature of the work precludes monitoring. Even in countries where prostitution is legal, one in five encounters occurs without any protection whatsoever, because johns will offer more money for unprotected sex. Cervical cancer and chronic hepatitis are common among women who have been prostituting. The two main risk factors for cervical cancer are young age at first sexual

encounter and overall numbers of sex partners. Legalizing prostitution has had little effect on these statistics in the countries where it has been done.

It is assumed that decriminalization will give women legal redress against violent johns and pimps. This ignores the fact that there is legal redress at present without decriminalizing, yet many prostitutes don't use it. Women in New Zealand and the Netherlands, where prostitution has again long been legal, fear a loss of anonymity. That is the nature of the activity. Women want to be able to leave quickly without fear of being publicly exposed. In the Netherlands, prostitutes can accrue pension funds if officially registered, but many don't do so because they still prefer anonymity. When attempts were made to unionize Germany's legal prostitutes, they avoided not only unionization but even registering, and they continue to engage in illegal prostitution because of the fear that the remote areas the government had zoned for them put them at increased, not decreased, risk of physical danger.

Prostitution, whether legal or illegal, is physically violent and unhealthy. Psychologically, prostitution is deadening; it kills the spirit. Prostitution leaves women suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder: 68% of women involved in prostitution met the same criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder, in the same range as treatment-seeking combat veterans or victims of state-organized torture. The profound emotional distress of both brothel and street prostitution leads to high rates of dissociative disorder and other psychiatric conditions such as depression and anxiety.

Researchers have found that, surprisingly, women who prostituted in strip clubs had higher rates of psychiatric disorders than even street prostitutes. Dutch researcher Vanwesenbeeck observed great emotional distress among women in legal indoor prostitution in the Netherlands.

The law is an educator. The legalization of prostitution means that men who would never have risked buying women for sex now see the practice as acceptable. When legal barriers disappear, so do social and ethical barriers. Canada's children, especially our boys, will learn that women are sexual commodities.

In countries where prostitution has been legalized, pimps do not disappear. They are the new entrepreneurs. Promoting prostitution through advertising is also legal in some jurisdictions, meaning that the business of sex grows. Legalization doesn't control so much as expand prostitution.

• (1035)

Forty-three municipalities in the Netherlands want to follow a no brothel policy, but the minister of justice has indicated that the complete banning of prostitution within any municipality could conflict with "the right of free choice of work" as guaranteed in the Dutch constitution. Prostitution has become a human rights issue.

Faced with a lack of Dutch women willing to work in the industry, the Dutch national rapporteur on trafficking states that in future a solution would be to offer to the market prostitutes from non-EU countries who voluntarily choose to work in prostitution. They would be given "legal and controlled access to the Dutch market". This is my editorial comment: desperate women from developing countries will be brought in to be used as prostitutes. The Netherlands would never admit to being involved in trafficking, but this possibility of incorporating desperate women into their legal system is being raised.

It may already be happening. I haven't been there for... I'm going back again this summer.

Another area of great concern to the members of my organization is Canada's low age of consent: 14. This is the lowest age of consent in the western world; in Canada it is legal for a girl of 14 to have sex with an adult male so long as she gives consent. The incidence of child prostitution in the Netherlands more than tripled between 1996 and 2001. Many of those youths were being brought into the developing world, a form of trafficking. Young girls and boys of 14 or even younger are already prostituting themselves in Canada's cities. Any move towards legalization will put the government's seal of approval on an already dangerous and demeaning practice, particularly when it involves boys and girls.

I would just like to go over a couple of recommendations. New legislation is needed in Canada, but it should be legislation that recognizes that prostitution is violence against women, not legislation that decriminalizes it. Canada must raise the age of consent to 18. This would assist law enforcement officers in prosecuting those predators who prey on young men and women. Strict penalties against those who use underage children for sexual purposes must be enforced. The right of men to buy sex should be removed. And I cite the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Canada is a signatory.

Women, girls, and young boys involved in prostitution usually have a disrupted education, few skills, little experience, and diminished prospects for meaningful employment. Sheltered housing, job training, adult education opportunities, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation need the attention of both government and civil society. While not all will respond to these initiatives, they are necessary in order to help those who wish to reintegrate into mainstream society.

Thank you.

• (1040)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madelyn McDonald, from Wood's Homes in Calgary.

Madelyn McDonald (Program Manager, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

I am speaking to you from a program that provides services to women and boys in the sex trade industry.

Exit Community Outreach, a program of Wood's Homes, has been serving the sex trade worker population of Calgary for the past 15 years. With a mandate of harm reduction, using an outreach van, the

service attends the stroll areas within the city, providing condoms, nourishment, crisis counselling, and referral services to this population. Exit staff strive to develop a relationship of trust and respect with the workers and strategically use that relationship to attempt to engage the workers to consider alternatives to the sex trade business. Exit operates the van Monday to Thursday, from 8 p.m. to midnight, and Friday and Saturday from 8 p.m. until 1:30 a.m. The van is also out on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the day from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The program engaged 748 individuals through 3,667 contacts from January to December 2004. The youngest client was 18 and the oldest was 61. The modal age was 25, with most clients, 399 or 53%, in the 18- to 31-year-old range. Eighty per cent of the workers are females, 20% are male, and 6% are aboriginal.

Creating the offence of communicating for the purposes of prostitution made the workers more vulnerable and at risk of victimization, not only because they are liable to arrest and prosecution, but also because they are now forced to work in a less familiar and hence more dangerous location to avoid apprehension. The darker, more secluded places, typically out of police view, simply put the worker in a more dangerous position. One of our workers basically said, "I do not have time to make sure the car I get into is safe and that the person who is driving that vehicle is not dangerous".

The current justice system criminalizes sex trade workers and caters to the neighbours who wish to force the trade out of sight rather than recognizing the inevitable existence of the sex trade and developing a system to confront the issue directly. Law enforcement does not appear to be an effective way of dealing with this issue. Criminalizing already-marginalized sex trade workers does not seem to be working. The typically minor fine is often viewed as an inconvenience by the workers while in the trade, but the criminal record can seriously limit options for the workers when they decide to leave their trade.

In not allowing a legitimate place to conduct business, section 210 prevents sex trade workers from establishing a house that would allow them to ply their sex trade. This would also allow health officials to keep track of the workers and thus provide a safer and healthier environment. Some of the workers we speak with indicate that this would be an acceptable alternative to working the street.

Most of the violence experienced by these workers is generally not officially reported, and many simply consider it part of the cost of doing business. As Vancouver East MP Libby Davies noted, numerous studies have shown that a majority of sex trade workers have received treatment for physical injury while working in the sex trade. In 1990, murders of prostitutes made up 5% of the overall homicide rate of women in Canada.

The Exit Community Outreach program produces a violent offenders sheet on a bimonthly basis. This sheet is distributed to the workers in an effort to keep them informed about the specifics involving the incidents of violence on Calgary's streets. It identifies the vehicle, the driver, and behaviours, as reported by the exit staff. The sheet is also sent to the Calgary police service. The current sheet, March 29, 2005, listed 15 incidents from threats and attempted assaults to robbery and rape. Exit Community Outreach has over the years encountered sex trade workers' stories of violence against them by not only the offenders but also those who groom them into the lifestyle.

A large concern for us is the criminal activity of pimps related to extortion, domestic violence, and drug involvement that remains underreported by the women we work with.

● (1045)

Most of the individuals seen by the exit staff indicate that they began working in the sex trade as early as their teen years. Lack of education and viable employment skills and poverty keep these people entrenched in the sex trade business.

In February 1999 Alberta introduced legislation for the protection of children involved in prostitution, the only one of its kind in Canada. This legislation offers protection to children involved in prostitution by allowing police or social services to apprehend and confine for their protection and safety. In March 2001 the legislation was amended to enhance the protection offered to children and to ensure that their legal rights are safeguarded. The future intent of this protection today for youth is to prevent them from becoming the adult sex trade workers we are discussing today.

Many sex trade workers have serious addiction problems, including alcohol, crack cocaine, methamphetamine—all the drugs we've heard about here today. Indeed, introduction to addicting drugs is often part of the recruitment process, and Wood's Homes' Exit Community Outreach staff attempt to find services for these workers in order for them to leave the street.

The readiness is not always timed with what is available for people wanting to leave the street, and if they have to wait for a service, it's more than likely that we'll lose these people back to the lifestyle they know.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Hanger, first round, seven minutes please, question and answer.

Mr. Art Hanger: Thank you very much.

Thank you very much to those presenters here today. Again, there is some very valuable information for us to include in our study.

I've listened to the comments, and you can almost categorize them: the concern of the communities, the concern of enforcement. There are those who feel that prostitution should be like any other business. There are a number of academics who made those statements, as well as those in the business of prostitution or those who have left prostitution.

Of course, we are looking at the issue of solicitation. That's how it started out initially with the committee, but I think it's become much broader than that because of its impact on so many areas of society. There's been a lot of evidence about the impact of street prostitution and the issue of the safety of women within that context.

Some have advocated that we, as a committee, should repeal all of the prostitution laws, including the communication law, so that prostitutes can move into another kind of arrangement and maybe operate out of their own places. We've also heard clear evidence, as Hermina has mentioned, that there is more illegal prostitution going on in jurisdictions that have allegedly or supposedly legalized it. Of course, that takes the criminal element out of it, and the police really aren't involved then. So another problem exists.

For me, this whole issue is starting to boil down to one point: if we look at the prostitution issue, do we look at only part of it and say our benchmark is that we don't want kids in prostitution, so we concentrate there, and all other forms of prostitution are fine and dandy? Or do we take the view that women are not being exploited, used, or abused in exchanging sex for money from a john or a user? I have my own personal view on that. I would have to say that if we're going to look at prostitution overall, then none of it is acceptable, and all of it is exploitive of women.

But I'd like to hear the comments from the panel, because where we go as a committee will decide what is going to happen out on the street, and it will affect everyone in the community, one way or the other. If we're going to consider some of it acceptable, then what's going to happen in our communities after the age of 18, for instance, when girls are permitted to do what they want and it's an unfettered arrangement?

Does anyone want to comment on this?

● (1050)

Ms. Shannon Ross Watson: I'll speak to this, and this is very personal. My moral code is simply this, would your grandmother be proud of what you're doing? That's it.

Ms. Hermina Dykxhoome: In some ways, obviously, I agree with that. I think we realize that prostitution will always be with us. But giving it government sanction is just saying there are never any problems, and we can't do that, because there are. It's up to this committee and up to all of us to discuss what we can do to make it better for the women who are in it.

You know, I'm one of those people who says that if a girl of 14 has prostituted herself, there's nothing wrong with the police taking her and putting her in a home, and looking after her for a month or two, or whatever it takes, to clean her up. It's similar to what Heather Forsyth has done here.

I don't think we need to think about the human rights aspect in that, in the right to prostitute oneself. She's doing it, she's desperate; let's do something about her. Obviously prostitution will always be with us, but we haven't really dealt with the men who want it. It's always been with us, and that's one thing, but it seems to me to be almost worse today. The types of individuals who are into buying services from women I think are worse than they would have been before, because most men now can...or sex is readily available to people. You don't even have to be married, you don't have to....

Do you know what I mean? The men who will pay for it usually, or probably, want something beyond just the physical act that we normally think of as normal. To me, those men need to be exposed, or there needs to be some consequence.

• (1055)

Ms. Elizabeth Hudson: I don't think that's helped. We've seen over the last 30 years that it hasn't helped.

As well, addressing the fact that in residential neighbourhoods prostitutes are picked up in vehicles, vehicle work is always more dangerous—i.e., if they're in your neighbourhood, they do not have access to hotels, motels, or other places where they can take the client and be safer. Vehicle work is one of the most dangerous kinds of work you can do.

I also say that they don't want to be there any more than you want them there, but they have been pushed in there. That's why I believe we have to set something up where they know this is the stroll, and it's not your neighbourhood. And they don't have to do vehicle work.

Ms. Shannon Ross Watson: I'd like to address that.

They have done this in other countries. Kings Cross in Australia is the perfect example. There is a stroll. There are legal brothels. There are drug injection sites. If you want to know what's happening in Kings Cross right now, I can give you the name of the superintendent there, and he'll tell you that residents are barricading themselves against the street prostitutes. There are schools being barricaded.

Just because you make it legal, just because you give a safe stroll, just because you give them a safe spot, it doesn't mean it will stop anything else that's happening. What it does is it gives society free rein to all prostitution. I am totally against any kind of service like that.

As I say, phone down to Kings Cross. They'll tell you that the residents are barricading themselves against the prostitutes.

Ms. Elizabeth Hudson: When the soliciting laws were in effect in the early 1970s, you did not see prostitutes in neighbourhoods.

Ms. Shannon Ross Watson: And I know why that happened, I know—

Ms. Elizabeth Hudson: They had safer places to work. They worked usually in the downtown east end. They were much safer. Rates of violence were lower. But they were not in neighbourhoods.

I understand the rage of community organizations and business organizations, but you have to remember that this is largely a very voiceless population. You must always realize that they really don't want to be there either, and that's why we have to find someplace for them to go where they're not around children, around schools, and they don't have to do vehicle work.

The Chair: Thanks, Ms. Hudson.

Cristina.

Ms. Madelyn McDonald: One of my comments to your comment is—

The Chair: Excuse me.

Cristina, did you have a response?

Ms. Cristina Basualdo: Yes.

May I say that the victims of street prostitution in neighbourhoods, which I resent being called unsafe places, are the families in the neighbourhoods, particularly the children who live there. Children involved in prostitution are of course victims as well, but these people are involved in drug activity, they are involved in crime.

Moving them to another area would be a lovely suggestion. You know what? I would support a red-light district, even though I'm morally against it, for the safety of my neighbourhood, but the fact is that these women work in my neighbourhood because they have access to drugs, they have access to drug houses. The drug houses and the prostitutes feed off one another.

We can't allow the street prostitution to flourish in my neighbourhood without allowing everything else that is involved to flourish.

The Chair: Madelyn.

Ms. Madelyn McDonald: I want to speak to the fact that the population we work with and the many women and boys who are on the strolls choose not to be there. This is certainly one of their ways of making an income. We are also dealing with people who have long-standing mental health issues. Coupled with the issues, they self-medicate. That self-medicating is with the drugs that do go hand in hand. I think the clients we have worked with over the years and the ones who are not with us any longer certainly saw no way out.

I also would question, if you truly wanted a red-light district, whether you would even involve these people—the clients I work with. They have criminal backgrounds. They're HIV-positive. They are on death's doorstep. I doubt, if or when licensing happened, that these people would be allowed to even be licensed. Therefore, you would set up a brothel for those people who could get licensed and you would still have this population who would be hiding in the bushes, coming out at night, and who are not going to be able to go into a brothel.

So let's be clear when we're talking about a red-light district. Are we talking about it for the clientele I work with? I don't think we are. Then whose neighbourhood are we going to put it in?

• (1100)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Brunelle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I wish to thank you for coming to speak to us. It's obvious that the prostitution issue is a very sensitive one. Ever since we started our study, we are hearing very diverse and often conflicting arguments.

Our committee was given the responsibility to examine solicitation laws in order to increase the safety of the sex trade workers and the public. However we think there are numerous problems. We are facing a degradation of the social fabric of our society. Women find themselves working in the street because of poverty and the lack of housing. There are also drug problems. And there are of course the very legitimate problems of citizens who find it difficult to accept this situation in their neighbourhoods. We may wonder how we will find solutions because as we explore these issues, new problems are constantly cropping up. But the status quo is not an option. We simply cannot go on like this in Canada. We have to find solutions. Thank you for participating in this discussion.

Ms. Julie McNeice, I think you're the first witness from the Northwest Territories to appear before the committee. Problems relating to aboriginals are even more serious. This is not the first time we are being told about colonialism problems, that is problems dating back to a very long time ago.

Did you consider any solutions to your problems? What do you think of the Sisters in Spirit campaign which is trying to make people more aware of the murder of aboriginal women?

[English]

Ms. Julie McNeice: From a restorative justice vantage point, I would tend to view prostitution as an internalization of problems, and perhaps doing other things against the law for young men as being an externalization of problems.

For me, from a restorative justice perspective, everyone has an opportunity to change and everyone can change. We can turn people around. We can turn youth around. Maybe sometimes it means turning them around at a younger age, but in any case I believe that everybody can go into a healthy lifestyle if they choose to do so.

As far as prostitution in the territories goes, I believe they do it because they are coerced into it and I think there might be an element of opportunity for them to work on it on an individual level.

I myself lived in an isolated community for 12 years, in Rankin Inlet, and my children were born there and raised there for the most part. Non-aboriginal people are not isolated from this as well. They have as many difficulties to go through, if they have lived in a community that is isolated like that.

And that's on the one hand. On the other hand, we have the most diverse population in Canada. We have people from all over the world who live there. That's why a lot of people choose to live in Yellowknife.

There's also the opportunity for human trafficking, and I've done a lot of research on that as well. There are a lot of organized crime figures who move people around Canada. In fact, going by the criminal investigation report that I mentioned earlier, there is quite a connection between Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, and Santiago. Apparently they move the women every two weeks. It's very, very highly organized, and I believe it would take a lot of people working together to help that.

• (1105)

Ms. Hermina Dykxhoome: As I was researching this—I read a lot, obviously—one of the things I was reading about was

prostitution in the indigenous population. A lot of work has been done in New Zealand with the Maoris, and in Australia and so on.

I don't know whether the committee has met with any native women's groups or anything like that, but there is a hierarchy in prostitution, and these women are at the bottom of the hierarchy. It's very brutal, apparently. I know we have that here in Alberta. We have a lot of native people. I don't know whether they've come to speak to the committee, but it would be important to find out what they have to say.

Ms. Julie McNeice: I want to mention something. This is not a problem that the territories have, but I was reading that provincial law does not affect reservations, so therefore there is no division of property upon divorce on 600 reservations across Canada. When women decide to leave their husbands and leave the reservation, they leave with virtually nothing.

Ms. Elizabeth Hudson: I'd like to point out that, yes, when we're talking about street prostitutes, we're talking about desperation. Desperation drives the trade.

If you continually take away the customers, seize cars, and so on, what frightens me is that these women may resort to doing the same types of violent crimes that their male counterparts do. You may see women committing more violent acts because prostitution has been taken away or made more difficult. That is a concern for me.

Mr. Peter Rausch: I'd like to make three quick points. First, this subcommittee is looking at legitimizing and legalizing prostitution. I'd ask you to look at yourselves and say, would you be—

The Chair: Mr. Rausch, we're not necessarily looking at what you've just said. We're considering the prostitution laws.

Mr. Peter Rausch: Okay.

The Chair: Let's clarify that.

Mr. Peter Rausch: Fair enough. If that were the recommendation, would you be willing to be the first ones to have it as your next-door neighbour?

Second, I remember when Canadian society started looking at impaired driving as an unacceptable norm thirty years ago. We know this issue is going to take time. After thirty years of commercials, and reinforcement through policing... I have two kids in their late teens; they and their friends don't accept drinking and driving. It's a different society from the one I grew up in, in which it was an acceptable norm. So maybe that's something this committee could look at in the longer term, in terms of how to promote it and change the paradigms of people in Canadian society.

In the interim, there are a lot of contradictions as you're going through this session. If we, as business people, are looking at it...the enforcement right now has to be against the johns and the pimps. It has to be compassionate enforcement, and support for the sex trade workers.

Thank you.

The Chair: Anyone else?

Madame Brunelle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: We certainly understand your position and that of other people like you who live in communities affected by prostitution. I agree it's intolerable.

Some groups told us that, in an attempt to find solutions, they have decided to build bridges or try to meet with some prostitutes in order to improve the climate. In some places, people told us it could be appropriate to designate areas where prostitution would be practised.

Do you represent a neighbourhood association? Did you consider any solutions or new ways of doing things? Everyone knows it is almost impossible to eradicate prostitution.

•(1110)

[*English*]

Ms. Julie McNeice: Thank you.

I would suggest for some people there could be, say, a leadership program set up for people who are younger, to learn that what they feel inside is okay, it's normal, and that they could choose to think about it in different ways and to live differently.

I'm thinking specifically in terms of values. My daughter works at a young offenders' facility in Yellowknife, and a fair percentage of the people there are what they call FASD, which means they have fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. And they don't understand what love is. In fact, only one of them gets a visit from their parents. When the facility opened last year and they did group tours, I looked around on a bulletin board—they had an elementary school going through there just before we did—and there was a little note on the board from a grade one boy who had written, "I would like to live here. This is better than my home". And this was at a young offenders' facility.

Ms. Elizabeth Hudson: Could I just break in here?

I really like the idea of community associations meeting with the women who are working on the streets, because it makes you see they are human; they bleed like we bleed. It makes it human. You might be surprised that they would work with you, if you treated them as human—

Ms. Julie McNeice: My point, though, was that these people don't know what it means to feel humiliated. They don't understand why these feelings are happening to them. They don't know it's okay to have them. So if you start from basics with people, particularly people who have been abused, then they have the choices in front of them; they can make these decisions.

The Chair: Ladies, we're going to have to move on to Ms. Davies.

Go ahead, Ms. Davies.

Ms. Libby Davies: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Actually, just to answer your question, Peter, about where we begin, I personally don't have a problem living next door to a sex worker. I may have already done that, as far as I know. I don't know all that my neighbours do. So for me the issue here is not about a moral debate or judging people. It's really about looking at the reality that's out there and how to mitigate, how to reduce, the risk and the

harm that's taking place, both to those who are involved in the sex trade and to the communities that are impacted by it.

To me, the question is more whether there are problems with my neighbour, who might be a sex worker or who might be some rowdy teenagers. That's how I'd approach it. It is not so much who they are but what the activity is and whether it is causing a problem.

Just to pick up on Shannon's earlier point, I don't think the debate is whether we endorse prostitution or not. To me the issue is the reality that's going on. People may take an abolitionist approach, and I respect that, but in the meantime what do we do? What do we do in terms of some very dangerous situations that are taking place?

Shannon, you said earlier that you didn't think the law was to blame for the violence and the murders, that it was the risky behaviour. I want to tell you that we have heard from many sex workers who tell us that, at least in part, the law is to blame. It is really important to know whether or not you can hear that.

This really gets me to my main question to everybody. I understand your frustrations. I've lived in neighbourhoods—I represent neighbourhoods—that have dealt with the impact of the sex trade, and the anger and the frustration is incredible. Many of those neighbourhoods have gotten to the point where they want to sit down and sort it out. That means actually bringing people to the table.

That is really my question. There are some pretty hard positions that have been taken here in terms of seizing cars or saying to just move it down the street. Can we get beyond that? To change something, you have to engage. You actually have to listen to other people's points of view. I don't know if it helps to always talk about sex workers in this incredibly negative way. In fact, it's harmful.

Ms. Hudson has actually put the question out herself. Is it possible in Edmonton to actually have a process? We are doing this in Vancouver now, where residents and business people and the police are sitting down with sex workers. And, yes, the drug question is involved and they're sitting down with drug users. We're beginning to make some really important changes. But you can only do that when people are willing to engage and hear other people's points of view and do it from a point of view that everybody is equal and has a voice, and not that some people are better than others. Maybe that's my bit of moralizing, I don't know.

I would really like to ask you whether or not you think that is possible here in Edmonton.

•(1115)

Ms. Shannon Ross Watson: I'd like to answer that.

When I received the Solicitor General Award for Crime Prevention, it was because of my work on the Safe and Caring Communities Committee. This is a group of people from the community who sit down and talk about the problems. We have former prostitutes. We have people in the church. We have businesses. We have local homeowners. And all we do is sit and try to create this communication.

It is not the prostitutes so much, it is the drugs. And if there is a war on drugs right now, we're losing it. We are seeing it in our neighbourhood, and that is what concerns us the most. I want to know what value we put on healthy neighbourhoods in our country. If we have 19 unhealthy neighbourhoods now in Edmonton, is that going to make our society better? Does that make us more caring? Does that make the discussion more helpful if we keep having communities damaged?

A voice: But you're not talking about—

The Chair: Excuse me. Shannon, you go first. We have Cristina, Peter, Elizabeth, and then Madelyn.

Ms. Shannon Ross Watson: I am one of those caring individuals, and I know that these women do not deserve to be here. If I were queen of the world, I would like to take them off to a tropical island and let them heal and get better, but it's not going to happen, so we have to sit down and we have to create this discussion.

Ms. Libby Davies: What if they don't want to go?

Ms. Shannon Ross Watson: I know. That's the thing, if they don't want to go....

Ms. Cristina Basualdo: First of all, I have to say I question the validity of a study where a greater effort seems to have been made to contact those who are guilty of breaking the law and their advocates than to contact the community members who have to deal with the problems associated with it.

You said, Ms. Davies, that you wouldn't have a problem living next door to a sex worker. My issue is not with who they are; it is with what they do, and if you listened to what I said today, I told you what they do and the problems they cause. Certainly if it were your child who a john had attempted to abduct or who had been assaulted by a prostitute, I think you would understand that the place for these women is not on the street while they wait to choose to get into a program. I believe the government should be providing treatment programs, but we cannot accept the behaviour that is causing harm to families and communities in the meantime.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Peter Rausch: In terms of the links you were asking about, our business association does work with the community leagues and the patrols, and there is a joint effort among a number of community leagues. Our community leagues all have met and sit on a steering committee with Janice Melnychuk, one of our councillors addressing. There is representation not just in our zone but across three zones, across the city. And a lot of people were disappointed there wasn't city-wide representation from all wards. So there is support, and we are trying to be proactive as we address this issue.

Ms. Libby Davies: Are sex workers involved in that as well?

Mr. Peter Rausch: I'm not too sure of all the different subcommittees.

Ms. Elizabeth Hudson: I don't believe so.

• (1120)

Mr. Peter Rausch: PAAFE was there, and some other ones, in terms of the representation. The first meeting was, I think, a month ago. In terms of working together as a group, our business association held a meeting with our two councillors, the police,

bylaw enforcement, and public health because there are a number of issues that come across.

We wanted to make our businesses and property owners aware of the laws and regulations, which people have to comply with. And what happens if they don't? It's tough to move a girl down the street when she can just stand there, and then it gets confrontational. So we are taking those steps. I appreciate that, yes, having a sex trade worker is not bad, but as the detective earlier said, we have 500.

The Chair: Thank you, Peter.

Then could we have Elizabeth, please?

Ms. Elizabeth Hudson: I just feel that often work about the sex trade is hijacked by community associations, by police associations, by other organizations, and that the sex trade workers themselves are terribly under-represented. And I think that often the objective of making the streets safer for women who are in the sex trade industry is overlooked. It is actually legal, and I think more attention should be paid to that. I think the number one overriding element should be, okay, unhealthy neighbourhoods...well, what about dead women? That's what I want to address. That's what I think is important.

The Chair: Thank you, Elizabeth.

Could we have Madelyn and then Julie.

Ms. Madelyn McDonald: I would certainly, as one of the service providers, be more than happy to go into community associations and talk with and work with the people who are dealing with this in their community. I am not interested, however, in going into those associations and being attacked. We put a van out on the street to support and help these women. I don't know how many phone calls I field in which people say, "If you people weren't in that van, these people wouldn't be here".

I try to get my head around the fact that we came after those people were there. We're not going looking for the population. We go to the known stroll areas that have been identified, to support, to develop a relationship, to be able to say...when someone says to us, "Get me out of this", but more importantly, to be able to get them out of it. And oftentimes we are bound by "Sorry, we don't have a program to get you to", because there's a waiting list.

So the person who wants to leave has difficulty leaving, but our service is out there to protect those people so that we don't have dead people. And then we read the newspapers and say, "My goodness, how could this be happening?"

Our issue is to try to protect. We strategically have people, volunteers who drive these vans and drive them purposely so they can put a human face to the misery of these men and women who walk into that van every day and who certainly did not believe they were going to grow up and be selling their bodies. But it has absolutely happened to them, and trying to put that human face to these people, I think, is very important in order to figure out what the next step is in getting them out. I am not naive enough to think we are going to eradicate this problem, but I do think we have to be watchdogs for people who are unable to get out or unfortunately have found themselves in this type of situation.

The Chair: Thank you.

The final word will go to Julie.

Julie, just as an aside, you've given us a lot of statistics, facts, etc. Would you be able to provide the committee with your sources for those statistics, please?

Ms. Julie McNeice: Yes, I'll leave all my papers behind.

What I was going to say is that I had inadvertently arrived at conclusions similar to what Madelyn just said. That is, what is going on in Yellowknife right now is what we call "citizens on patrol". It's an idea they obtained from Anchorage, Alaska, where it originated. A binder about this thick describes how citizens are armed with walkie-talkies that are connected to the police, and they go two by two walking in the streets of Yellowknife at certain hours. It was designed mostly for picking up drunks, particularly in the wintertime, but it's a very successful program going on there.

Another thing I have observed is that in Winnipeg they have two very successful programs, and I think they have done something similar, the "john-cam". It's a camera that's set up on the streets that are frequented by hookers, but it doesn't record or register any people's faces or any licence plates. It videotapes it for a television program that is on maybe 24 hours a day, and people do recognize the vehicle of somebody who's picking up a prostitute, sometimes by the scratches on it, by a logo, or by a car seat that's in the back. So there are some programs going on in Canada already that are very successful.

• (1125)

The Chair: We will conclude this part of our hearings today.

Thank you very much for your opinions. There is a diversity of viewpoints on this, but certainly we appreciate your comments and we will take them into consideration when preparing our report.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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• (1130)

The Chair: We're back in session.

This is what's called a spontaneous round, for members of the public or anybody else to come forward for roughly a three-minute presentation. Then, depending on how much time we have left, there'll be questioning by the members of Parliament. We would go for approximately one hour.

Mr. Goldring, this is your community, Calgary, and as colleagues in the House of Commons, we're happy to extend the courtesy to you to give a three-minute presentation as well.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I'm very pleased to be here today.

My constituency office is on 118th Avenue. Of course, we're very much aware of the problem in the neighbourhood for the stores and businesses.

I want to talk about what I believe are some of the root problems. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which

Canada has subscribed to, describes a child as being a person under the age of 18. That conflicts with our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which wants to allow full charter rights for children. It also conflicts with how and where you can do enforcement, with the understanding that all underage prostitutes become adult prostitutes.

I think a good place to start is to fully examine why we as responsible adults cannot carefully control children who enter into the prostitution business. I think that's one of the underlying problems. We even have a problem trying to hold them for two to three days. There was a real controversy over that one issue alone. I believe that as responsible adults, we have to do something in that area.

We also have the NIMBY situation on 118th Avenue. They can remove the prostitution and drugs from there, but they will only go into another area. I think 118th Avenue has had it long enough, and I think it's somebody else's turn for that. I think there should be more direct enforcement on that. If it ended up in Anne McLellan's riding, maybe it would also receive some federal attention.

Poverty is certainly affecting this. Some prostitutes work part time at it because they're forced to do drastic things to pay the rent. Many prostitutes are not your career business people in massage parlours or escort agencies. The escort agencies and massage parlours are city controlled, with city licensing and very hefty city fees. Once again, part-time prostitutes who do it just to raise some money to pay the rent are certainly not going to be in those types of situations.

The other thing that affects it is the drugs. The needles they give out to drug houses throughout the area end up on people's lawns. They're a real hazard to the community. Also, young people have the impression that drugs are going to be legalized. But soft drugs such as marijuana lead to hard drugs. Any solution to the prostitution problem has to go hand in hand with a solution to the drug problem.

As the gentleman said earlier, 30 years ago the level was acceptable, if I can use that word. But the level was far lower than it is today.

There are things that can be done in addition to enforcing the laws that are on our books, and there are laws on the books. There was an initiative here of auto impounding, and I believe that came through the provincial government. If you're out hunting and fishing illegally, they can take your car. So if a john is out looking for a prostitute, I think it's fair and reasonable that he could lose his car. That certainly would eliminate a lot of the traffic.

•(1135)

The Chair: Mr. Goldring, you're well in excess of the three minutes. Could I ask you to wind it up in 30 seconds.

As an editorial comment, I'm not aware of any laws before Parliament that would legalize drugs.

Mr. Peter Goldring: They're not, but the young people have that impression. At the Liberal convention the young Liberals put forward motions to legalize marijuana. Young people on the street seem to think that's what's coming.

The Chair: But that motion was not accepted.

Mr. Peter Goldring: It was not, but when you have initiatives—

The Chair: Simply because people proposed it, let's not get into a political argument. We want to hear about prostitution.

You have thirty seconds, sir.

Mr. Peter Goldring: All right.

In the final area that it can be done, there was an initiative at one time for fingerprinting the prostitutes so that we could control them. This was for disease-spreading. It also would control them so that if they're moving from city to city, we know who we're dealing with and the police can control things a lot better.

In short, I believe 118th Avenue has had it long enough. It's time to move the prostitution along. It's also time to enforce the laws that are on the books, because enforcement will help to suppress it. There are also newer laws that we could look at bringing out. And we have to look at the social issues too, and what we can do particularly for the underage prostitutes to prevent them from reaching the street or to remove them from the street immediately, so that they don't grow to be the prostitutes when they're over the age of 18.

•(1140)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

Pieter de Vos, please.

Pieter de Vos (Community Organizer, As an Individual): I'm going to take to heart the spontaneous piece of this. I'm not as well prepared as other people.

I appreciate the moral and causal complexities of the prostitution issue. There seems to be a polarity in the discussion we've had today between the interests of individual sex trade workers and the interests of the community. For the sake of simplifying it, I'm going to talk from the perspective of the community.

I work for an organization called the Community Action Project. It was formed by six women who organized to deal with a drug house that was also a source of prostitution and violence in the community. As an organizer, my job is largely to have conversations with people in the community. There's a consistent concern about prostitution. In fact, one woman wrote to me today concerning this thing. She says it's important to recognize that CAP began because a prostitute was soliciting in her front yard and it seemed to be okay with the general public and the police.

What she's referring to is the point that when the organization I work with was formed, there was a tacit zone of tolerance for prostitution already in this city. It happened in the neighbourhoods of

Norwood and Alberta Avenue. The concern she's pointing out is that there is a legitimate concern that repealing the sections of the code applying to solicitation will not improve the situation of street prostitution in the community I work in, and it has the risk of making it worse.

I'm not going to take six minutes to talk about it. What I'm going to do instead is hope that you'll allow me to pass the mike over to Shelly Severson, who is a resident I work with. Her story can tell more powerfully the impacts on and concerns of the residents than I can.

The Chair: Shelly, go ahead. You're next on the list.

Shelly Severson (Community Member, As an Individual): I'm totally unprepared.

I don't have data. I don't have statistics. I've never participated in a study. I've lived in the Norwood neighbourhood for 13 years now. My son was eight when we moved in. He has been solicited by prostitutes while playing in our yard. I have been solicited by prostitutes while gardening in my yard. It's not an acceptable situation.

I have no learning about what the situation is for the street prostitutes. I can't imagine the life they lead. That's not my concern right now. Yes, it should be, as a good citizen; however, as a resident, I believe relaxing or removing these laws is going to make the situation much worse.

We live on a corner lot. It has not been unusual to have six prostitutes working beside my house at night, and to have six prostitutes beside my house in the morning. Sex acts are occurring in my yard and in vehicles beside my home. I believe you treat people the way you want to be treated, so I have very politely asked the workers to please move along. I have been threatened with violence. My child has been threatened with violence. The drugs...you go out and you clean up the needles and used condoms that are in your yard in the morning, before you can let your dog outside. Your children cannot play in their own yard. There's something very wrong with that picture, and I truly believe we are going to see an increase in that situation if we relax or remove these laws.

It's not a tolerable situation for the residents of these communities. We've worked very long and very hard to make it better. It is much better than it was, but we cannot stop or backslide.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next, Victoria Hemming.

Victoria Hemming (President, As an Individual):

I also live in an area that is affected by this, and I am the president of the community league there. I think this whole issue is sanctioning human misery. I basically think that having this come into effect, it's saying, as other people have said, a woman's body or a woman's right is not a product. That's what we have to look at.

I'm also not understanding why there's always one-sidedness to this. I don't see people going after johns. I hardly see any enactment. I get the feeling, are they sacred? Do they have no play within this? You have a situation where, yes, prostitution is not legal but soliciting is. Someone is committing a criminal act; if it's not the prostitute, then it's the people picking them up. Why do they get off time and time again?

They have absolutely no reason not to stop their activity. If you put in a brothel and say it's okay, then it's okay in the brothel, so it's okay for the ones who are walking the street. If it's okay in the brothel, then it's okay to go out and say, "I feel like hitting someone, so I'm going to go and pick someone off the street and do it". It's absolutely one-sided and, I think, a very misogynistic view of human beings. I think men are not taken to account for this. I don't want to sound anti-men, but it's got to be done on their level so that these people, who only use prostitutes two or three times a year, don't do it, because the laws will be there to make them accountable and hurt them directly.

I think policing is your only effective method. We had tons and tons of prostitutes, and we had a huge crackdown, and they did it under the idea that they were going for drugs and weapons, and they got all of them on those charges—every single one. It reduced it in our neighbourhood and was effective. Yes, it comes back, but if the laws weren't there, we'd be seeing it a lot more.

Notice of this meeting and the entire thing was only given to our community through the kindness of PACE. We did not receive anything about it, and I think this was reprehensible. It is very one-sided towards the organizations that probably have some sort of financial gain from it. That's something I wanted to bring up, and my feelings on it.

I'm sorry if this sounds really insensitive, but I don't feel this government is qualified enough to get into this. I see them running the gun registry, I see them running all kinds of things, and other than enacting laws that are on the books, I really don't think we are in a position to be able to regulate this to the satisfaction of residents and the street sex trade workers.

• (1145)

The Chair: Thank you.

Shawna Hohendorff, please.

Shawna Hohendorff (As an Individual):

My name is Shawna Hohendorff. I'm the program coordinator at Kindred House. It's a program at Boyle McCauley Health Centre.

We're a harm reduction program serving women and transgendered working in street prostitution. We provide a few hours a day... We provide non-judgmental, compassionate support. We meet the clients where they're at. We're a harm reduction program, and that means to meet the client where they're at. We provide medical support, and food and clothing through donations. The gals come up to rest and to be safe for a few hours. Most of them will come up and stay all day. It's a place where they can go and be off the street.

Drug misusers account for 98% of our clients, 80% are aboriginal, and 10% are transgendered.

We support the women with what they need, from band-aids to support in getting off the street, at their request. The unfortunate problem in exiting is that we have lost some of our existing programs. Our detox and treatment beds are overcrowded, and there are few options for housing after treatment.

What we know about harm reduction is that when people feel worthwhile and there's somebody caring about them, and we build a relationship, there's a possibility for change. If there isn't a possibility for change, then there isn't the possibility to have the dignity all people deserve.

I would be in agreement with what a lot of people have said today, particularly Kate Quinn when she was talking with the other woman—I'm sorry, I don't know her name—from Safer Cities, about education and public awareness and campaigns to educate the public. These people in prostitution are our daughters, our sisters, and our mothers, and are part of our communities. They're not separate from our communities. Some of them have been victims of our inability to protect children and support families, and our inability to counteract racism and the acceptance of diversity. I have huge respect for the women I work with for being able to take sometimes horrible situations and actually survive, and use them to survive.

We need to create options. That's the other agreement I would have. They will come if there is a place to go. We need to have more compassionate options, with tolerant housing. We expect that when people leave the street they will just stop doing all of what's normal to them. I think we need to change our attitudes about that. People slowly change behaviours, as we all slowly change behaviours. I'm sure all of us have dieted or stopped smoking or have broken habits. It takes a long time to do those kinds of things, particularly without support. I think it's impossible, actually, to do it without support. I'm not as organized as I'd like to be either.

I'm also looking around the room, and I see none of my women here. That's because they do feel marginalized. That's because they don't come out of their area, because this building would not be welcoming to them, nor would they feel comfortable here. That's huge, for me, to see that.

I asked a few of them around the table yesterday what they would say if they were coming—I invited them—and they don't know if the laws should change. They just know they want support. They don't really know the answers to all of those questions that we seem to know around the table. I know they don't feel listened to, and that's mostly why they didn't come. They feel like these kinds of meetings and bureaucracies are not open to their particular attitudes or their particular life stories.

• (1150)

The Chair: Could I ask you to wind up in about 30 seconds?

Ms. Shawna Hohendorff: Sure.

We could talk about choice, but that's a whole big conversation.

Working with this population has made me know that I should have suits of grey, and not black and white. I don't know all of the answers, and I think it's a complex set of problems. What I really think we need to do is to listen, so that it is holistic, and so that they are part of our community, not separate. That's one of the biggest messages. They're incredibly bright and incredibly brilliant people to have survived what they have and made it work. I have huge respect for them. I wish we all could.

The Chair: Thank you.

Carol-Lynn Strachan, please.

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan (As an Individual): Thank you.

I'm honoured to be able to speak to the committee. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to tell you my story and maybe offer a suggestion.

My name is Carol-Lynn Strachan. I have been a sex trade worker since I was 16 years old. When I began in the business, I worked out of private homes and out-of-the-way streets in order to avoid the police and ruthless pimps who worked the stroll.

You have to bear with me, I'm a little nervous.

The Chair: Could you speak a little more slowly. It's tough for our translators to pick it up when you're going so quickly. We realize you're maybe nervous, but just calm down.

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: This is where most of the pimps worked. My strategy didn't work. It wasn't long before I fell under the thumb of a pimp.

Then in 1990 the City of Edmonton introduced an escort bylaw that required all escorts to be licensed under a licensed escort agency. I was contacted by Edmonton city vice police who informed me that I had to go work for a licensed escort agency or I could receive some heavy fines. I thought to myself, here I go again. Now I have to go back to work for someone else.

I looked around for an agency that would hire me. I soon learned that most of them only wanted very young women, and in the eyes of most of the pimps running the agency, I was already too old. I came up with a plan and started a cooperative where the women and men could register with the agency but, in practice, work as independents. The bylaw stated that all businesses must be conducted over phone lines registered with numbers to the agencies and that would be call forwarded to the cellphones.

Since the city began regulating the sex trade in 1990, stating that it was for our own safety, at least 16 prostitutes have been taken from our streets in Edmonton and murdered. To many of the public, we're nothing more than just statistics. In one of the cases, the RCMP found my card with my contact information on the girl's body. To me, this indicates only one thing: she wanted to come inside, get off the streets and work in a safer environment. To this day, I still wonder if she was on the streets because she could not get a clearance to obtain an escort licence.

Here, the City of Edmonton has taken in over \$500,000 in sin taxes—that's gambling, liquor, and the sex trade. Not one red cent has gone back into helping the sex trade workers in any way. In my

opinion as a sex trade worker, this is how I'd like to see the laws of Canada changed.

Section 213 of the Criminal Code must go. It would save lives and it would get a lot of prostitutes off the streets, clean up our neighbourhoods, and improve relations with the general public. Most of us don't want to be a nuisance in your neighbourhood, any more than anybody else wants us to even be in there. We were forced to, largely because of our local government's handling of the sex trade.

Thank you.

● (1155)

The Chair: The first round, Mr. Hanger, please.

Mr. Art Hanger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the presenters too for coming here and giving their stories and, of course, experiences in the community, their lives. And to my colleague Peter Goldring, thank you.

Ms. Strachan, I'm interested in your comments. First, you advocate repeal of section 213, which is the communication law. Evidence has shown in this committee time and time again that regardless of whether the law is there or not there, there are still girls working on the street. It doesn't go away because you change the law. It doesn't drive everybody inside. They could go inside right now if they chose to.

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: Not in Edmonton.

Mr. Art Hanger: Why not?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: Basically because of the licensing practices done by our local governments. They're created a three-tiered system. It's basically street-level prostitutes, brothels, and massage parlour, and escort agencies. So basically, for a girl to come off the street, she can't have any criminal record. If she has anything on her criminal record, she can't get cleared by the city police, and if you can't get clearance by the city police, you cannot come in and work as a sex trade worker. You're left outside for bait.

Mr. Art Hanger: So a criminal record is the issue?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: Yes.

Mr. Art Hanger: So those who don't have a criminal record could go off the street?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: I have a criminal record that's over 14 years old. To this day I have to go in and beg to get my clearance.

Mr. Art Hanger: Yes. So the girls could still get off the street. And who are they subject to—

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: Not necessarily. No, they can't get off the streets. If they can't get a clearance, they can't come inside to work.

Mr. Art Hanger: So decriminalizing and legalizing it would allow them to do that?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: It would probably be a lot safer. We wouldn't be in your neighbourhood—

Mr. Art Hanger: What would allow them to do that?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: All we're asking for is a zone of tolerance.

Mr. Art Hanger: Which is...?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: A place where we can go and work, where we're not harassed or picked up by the police or the general public—that type of thing.

Mr. Art Hanger: A zone of tolerance—is that a red-light district?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: The City of Edmonton doesn't like that word. So we prefer the wording “zone of tolerance”.

Mr. Art Hanger: Yes. Are you suggesting that it gets rid of the problem in other parts of the city?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: Well right now, I find girls working way down on the south side of Edmonton, way down on the north end; they're all over the city. They're hiding. To me, that's totally unsafe for a sex trade worker. If they have a problem or if they need help, the way it is now, they think they're breaking the law, so they're not going to come forward to ask for our assistance or to get that help.

Mr. Art Hanger: So you're suggesting that a zone of tolerance will eliminate the problem.

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: Well, it's not going to totally eliminate the problem, but it will give them a safe area in which to work. I mean, prostitution's been around forever. It's not going to go away, so give us one spot to work.

Mr. Art Hanger: What I'm hearing from you doesn't match with some of the other pieces of evidence we've received. Other jurisdictions have done the very thing you claim should happen here, yet their problem is worsening over time. It doesn't get rid of the street activity. It doesn't make it safer for women. In fact, even if you decriminalize, then the police really don't have the control they had prior to that. You endanger those women who are engaged in the activity, and the community doesn't get any better because there's still the illegal side to it.

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: You know, I worked the streets in the seventies. At that time we used what we called the “buddy system”. When I got into a vehicle, my girlfriend took down the plate number, and I did the same for her. Nowadays...it's showing in the fact that the deaths are rising, because people are pushing them around the city. It's not working.

Mr. Art Hanger: Are you in an escort service right now?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: I work for one, yes.

Mr. Art Hanger: You work for one. Do you think the escort services exploit women?

•(1200)

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: Absolutely.

Mr. Art Hanger: Do you advocate that other women engage in this level of prostitution, in escort services?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: I mean, if you face the reality of what we're all doing, we're all prostitutes. It's just the fancy name behind it, that's all.

Mr. Art Hanger: You feel that it's exploitive of women, still?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: Yes, I do.

Mr. Art Hanger: But you're still advocating that this is what the committee give consideration to, that the girls work inside as opposed to outside on the street.

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: What I'm talking about is, basically, the safety issue. I mean, working for an escort agency or working for a message parlour doesn't make us safer.

Mr. Art Hanger: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Hanger.

I would ask the witnesses to put on their translation devices. Madame Brunelle is from Quebec, and her first language is French. It will be easier for you to understand as well.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Good morning. Thank you for having the courage to come to speak to us.

We know that sex trade workers with drug problems are those who have to deal with the most difficult and dangerous situations. If a solution like the one you suggested is implemented allowing women to work inside, would some of them still be prevented from working in a brothel or elsewhere because of their addiction?

[English]

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: I think if we can get close to these women instead of harassing them, then we might be able to address their drug addictions by treating them more like human beings instead of a commodity or somebody's dirt.

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: So you're suggesting to get these women off the street. But we would need safe places or community organizations to care for them and help them by providing some kind of treatment.

Is this what you're suggesting?

[English]

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: We do have one program in place with Kate Quinn at Crossroads. She is trying her very best, but unfortunately because of the lack of funding her office can only stay open from about noon to five. I think with more funding and the girls working with her, she could be open later hours at night, which would give a safe place for a street-level prostitute to run to in case she gets beaten up or something by a john.

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Several sex trade workers told us they have very difficult relations with the police and are subjected to acts of violence by officers. What do you think of that?

Do police officers provide good services to citizen groups? Do you find these services satisfactory?

[English]

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: Unfortunately for me, from my years of being on the street, I'd have no faith in our local law enforcement. They have formed a new project, Project KARE, which is supposed to be looking into the disappearances and murders of some sex trade workers. I have been in contact with them. I've asked them on several occasions to work with us, and we still haven't heard anything back, so I really don't think they're actually working with the sex trade workers. I think a lot of it is a job creation program.

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Do citizens have an opinion on police services?

[English]

Mr. Pieter de Vos: I could briefly answer to that. It's improved a little bit, but we've had to fight to get improved services in our community.

At the time CAP formed, one of the reasons it formed.... It was six mothers who actually formed CAP. In their journeys to the same centre they had a common interest around a particular drug house and the violence and prostitution that were coming out of that house. When they phoned police at that time, they got a dismissive response that basically said, "What do you expect us to do about it? You chose to live here".

The community has worked very hard over the last few years to organize to get a more accountable response from the police, which has included getting beat cops in Norwood. It has taken work, though.

• (1205)

Ms. Victoria Hemming: I'd like to say that policing in our neighbourhood is totally underfunded. Citywide, we are supposed to be getting just a few police officers, and I think it's a negligible number who are designated into our area. I think we could well afford to have the trainees up there and a lot more money put into policing in this area.

Mr. Peter Goldring: On behalf of the police, I think they're doing a wonderful job. Their hands are tied by the limited tools they have and the judiciary, if they're going to be doing the enforcement. Once again, I repeat that on 118th Avenue I commonly hear the reason that it hasn't been completely removed as "Where is it going to move to?" That impacts upon how effective the police can be, if their hands are tied by the tools of the judiciary, the number of beat policemen they have, and the question of where they are going to be moving it to.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Brunelle.

Ms. Davies, please.

Ms. Libby Davies: Thank you very much for coming today as individuals, and especially Carol-Lynn. It is really hard, if you are a former sex worker or a current sex worker, to come into a public arena and face public scrutiny, because there is such a huge stigma. I really want to thank you.

Shawna, your point about the women you work with, who would feel pretty overwhelmed about coming here, is a very clear point as well. We have tried to conduct hearings in camera and informally, and we'll be doing some of that this afternoon. It is difficult. Particularly when you hold a minority or contrary view, it is really hard to speak out, so thank you for doing that. It doesn't matter what I believe or anybody else believes. If you hold a minority view, it's pretty hard to come out and put that on the table and be questioned, and we've seen that a lot.

This is the question I have. There is this issue about what on-street prostitution is and whether we would be better off if we were able to create safer environments off the street. In some communities people have come to that realization. The sense I get here in Edmonton is that there is actually very little dialogue that goes on. We heard a little bit this morning, but it seems to be much more of a them-and-us type of proposition. We went through that in Vancouver for 20 years, but we've gone beyond that now. When drug users sit down with residents and merchants and the police and community agencies, you begin....

I actually don't agree with you, Peter. I don't think that police hands are tied. It is a matter of working things out. It is almost that you have to work out the rules of the game and you have to negotiate with people, but you have to hear people first. I get the sense that here, in some communities, this has been really difficult. People take very hard positions and it becomes them and us—we don't want you here. Neighbourhood complaints are legitimate too. They are totally legitimate. So how do you negotiate this stuff?

I wonder whether any of you feel there is space here to do that. And if there isn't, particularly for those whose voices haven't been heard—and residents may feel their voices have not been heard either—have you any ideas about how that might be done? It is happening in other places, and changes are taking place. The first place is actually to recognize that people have different perspectives and it isn't them and us. Drug users live in neighbourhoods, and so do sex workers. Families do. Businesses have legitimate rights. So how do you sit down and talk that out without getting mad?

If anybody has ideas about how that could be done, it would be helpful.

Mr. Pieter de Vos: I don't necessarily have answers to your question, Libby. I've experienced it myself. I've actually worked with prostitutes for two years, working with PCHIP girls. I understand the dilemma. I think there has been a gap in the conversation. Oftentimes what I have experienced—and I have worked within social agencies that operate in the community, in the capacity of either working with homeless people or with prostitutes, and I am now working with the community. I have realized that on both sides of that fence there are strong opinions.

Oftentimes the people in agencies think that communities are nothing more than tire burners and that their opinions and their concerns about their families are somehow less legitimate than the concerns of their clients. Granted, their clients have a set of pressures and interests that sometimes outweigh, if you were to put them on a piece of paper, and might look more severe than the pressures of a mother who is fearful about her own daughter's safety in the community. We tend to do that on both sides of the fence here.

Oftentimes what is happening is that we have agencies operating in communities that have very little connection to the community itself. They often don't live in the communities they work in. Very much in the same way as when I worked at the Bissell Centre with homeless people and had very strong opinions about housing and so forth, I didn't live in the communities that were being impacted by derelict housing. Yet I had very strong opinions.

All I'm saying is that there is a gap in the communication. It's happening on both sides of the fence. Often when it comes to who gets consulted, agencies tend to get consulted more than communities do, because communities get tarred with the brush of radicals or so forth.

I don't know what the answer is, but we both need to start talking, because the interests on both sides of the fence are legitimate.

• (1210)

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I agree. I don't want to just insist on the police and the legal system to do all the work, but we do have a responsibility to the taxpayers of this city, and they expect a certain level of decorum on their streets, in their neighbourhoods, and in their front yards. So first and foremost, if we have the laws on the books and we can add to the policing, I think we should be attending to that. Of course we should be dialoguing with the affected community, the same as with the homeless community and many others, because many of these issues are interrelated. But before we start other things, I think we have a responsibility to the taxpayers to adhere to the laws we have on the books and see if they work.

The other comment here was about a zone of tolerance. A fear of many in my community of Edmonton East is that they know exactly where that zone of tolerance is going to go. Quite frankly, I think this is problematic too.

You should be dialoguing, yes, but I think we should be examining what we can do within the existing laws and structure.

The Chair: Shelly, do you have a comment?

Ms. Shelly Severson: Yes.

As a resident, I also want to point out that whatever dialogue occurs and whatever solutions, for lack of a better word, come about, they have to be fair and equitable for everyone. As a resident, of course I'm going to say my needs have to be heard, but so do the other participants' needs. It has to be fair and equitable for everyone.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hanger, another round, but we're going to have to be very short with our questions and with our responses in order to get everybody through.

Mr. Art Hanger: You're chewing into my time again, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Well, your time starts now.

Mr. Art Hanger: This is an interesting discussion we're having right now. How do you dialogue with a drug pusher? I'd like to know. How does he fit into a community, when he is destroying the fibre of the community? I want somebody to explain that to me, because I don't see that he has a role in the community, to tell the community what it should be like.

In this issue of prostitution, it is very clear many of those gals are on drugs, and they start out at a very early age. And those pimps, who are often their drug pushers, are the ones who are keeping them on the street. If we don't concentrate on that drug pusher... He doesn't have a say in how that community is to tolerate him—no say whatsoever, from my perspective.

I don't understand this issue of dialogue. Look at the criminal element, telling good people of the community, "You have to tolerate me for being a criminal. I'm going to abuse your kids, I'm going to threaten you", and a whole bunch of other things. I don't understand that. We're not there; I'm not going to go there—nor would I even advocate we go there, because then I'm bearing a burden of how our communities are breaking down by accepting that kind of situation.

But I'd like to hear your comments.

• (1215)

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: I don't think we're going to make communications or give the drug dealers hugs or anything like that. What we're asking for is basically to get all the groups and the organizations in the city of Edmonton together to see if we can resolve a problem in the neighbourhoods.

Mr. Art Hanger: But the drug pusher has no part in it.

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: We're not suggesting he should be part of it. We don't want him—

Mr. Art Hanger: Well, it's been suggested here.

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: Well, if they're there, bust them.

Mr. Art Hanger: Good.

Ms. Shawna Hohendorff: The words "underlying issues" keep coming up. I think we have to look at gang-related activity on the basis of those kinds of things, as well as the women. When we're talking about taxpayers and moneys and policing and all of that, the huge amount of money spent in our judicial system is actually phenomenal in terms of stings and that kind of thing. All that money could be put into programs. I could really see that if 118th Avenue had a program like Kindred House, the women wouldn't be on the street as much. They would only be on the street when their bodies were craving and when they needed to use—most often—except for those who are working for other reasons. But I only have experience with drug misusers.

So look at money.

The drug dealer probably isn't coming to the meeting. But looking at who the drug dealers are, what the populations are, what's going on there—I think looking at those demographics, looking at the underlying issues in all those places, is attached to the problem.

The Chair: Thank you. Victoria.

Ms. Victoria Hemming: I totally disagree with the idea that you're going to somehow convert everybody on 118th Avenue to come to a little area. I find that very pie in the sky. But that is my opinion, and you have yours too.

Regarding the issue of coming to a dialogue, I agree that you're not going to get the undesirable element. They don't pony up and volunteer for this type of thing. They don't pay taxes. I think the residents are getting the short end of the stick. I think that it's all very good to say we'll fund it, we'll fund it, we'll throw money at it. Throw it in the rights spots.

And the right spots would be to clamp down on criminal activity, clamp down on the man. Again, we're missing the men in the equation. Clamp down on them. It's supply and demand: cut off the demand, and the supply has to find an alternative on its own. If it's not easy to make 100 bucks in an hour, then you're going to have to start working on yourself to make it some other way.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, please, Madam Brunelle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I would like to talk to you about something else, in the same field of course. During our Canadian tour, I noted that sex trade workers seem to be moving from province to province. While we have no specific data, the population appears to be quite mobile.

There are also researchers who say the sex trade is getting global and that women immigrants, mainly from Eastern countries, are coming here and contributing to the globalization of the industry. Their living conditions are reportedly very difficult. Even their passports are taken from them by pimps and organized crime.

Did you witness any of this? Can you talk about it?

[*English*]

Ms. Shawna Hohendorff: I haven't seen that kind of thing. Most of the women I work with have been working here for years, and the farthest they've been is maybe Vancouver. Like in Calgary, we get trafficked back and forth, but mostly not of out of province. I haven't seen that yet in my work.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: This migration may be limited to aboriginal women.

[*English*]

Ms. Shawna Hohendorff: I haven't seen that.

The Chair: Does anyone else want to comment? Is there a migration of women, Carol-Lynn?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: The people who own most of the agencies have large agencies. They'll have some in Edmonton, Calgary, Grande Prairie, and Fort McMurray, and they shuffle the girls in between this way, but not across Canada that I'm aware of yet.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Alright. Thank you, I have no further questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, please, Madam Davies.

Ms. Libby Davies: Yes, just briefly, I really don't think anybody is trying to convert anybody here. We really need to get past this in terms of converting people to one position or another. There are real conflicts going on here, right?

Even if we totally rely on police enforcement, it's obviously not working. I mean that's really what we've had. I'm sure whatever happens in the future, enforcement will be a part of it. It has to be.

I know that in my community drug users have kids too. Sex workers have kids. They're concerned as well about what happens around the schools. But if you approach it from the point of view that certain people are not people, they're not citizens, they don't have a voice because "they're criminal", then I don't think it really produces anything in terms of a process that actually allows you to resolve the conflicts.

What I can say is that I have seen processes take place where the different players sit down and actually work through these conflicts. And sometimes the police are part of it. Sometimes it's better not to have the police there, because it changes the dynamic.

I don't know if anybody wants to make any further comment, but I think if there were something in some of these local communities, say your community—I don't know what the name of your neighbourhood is, but it sounds like you're.... Sorry?

Ms. Victoria Hemming: It's Parkdale/Cromdale.

Ms. Libby Davies: It sounds as if you are very frustrated with what's gone on, yet on the other side, if we have sex workers who are being murdered and they feel they have nowhere to go—

Ms. Victoria Hemming: But we have volunteers who have had people pull grenades on them—a grenade. We're not talking about a gun; we're not talking about something small; she had a grenade pulled on her. If that's not a concern in a community—

Ms. Libby Davies: Of course it is.

Ms. Victoria Hemming: So I'm thinking more policing—

Ms. Libby Davies: But are you hearing anybody say that's not a concern?

Ms. Victoria Hemming: Exactly. What we're saying is—

Ms. Libby Davies: It is a concern, right? But you have to be able to find a place where you actually do create an environment where you can figure this out one bit at a time, maybe. Law enforcement is a part of that.

Ms. Victoria Hemming: There's lots of funding going on for these things.

Ms. Libby Davies: For what?

Ms. Victoria Hemming: For all the different get-them-off-the-streets programs and things like that.

Ms. Libby Davies: There isn't, actually.

Ms. Victoria Hemming: There's not as much as maybe they want.

I'm just saying the community leagues are run on their own by volunteers. That's how we run it. You have people who have full-time jobs out there having to go on patrol afterwards until three or four in the morning. How fair is that?

I have to take time off work. I'm sitting here, I'm going to get fired, and I'm a volunteer. Give me a break. Maybe I'll go out and make a hundred bucks.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I think it's important to recognize that it's not all criminals, but it's a multitude of people. It can be the single mom, as I said, trying to make the rent payment at the end of the month. Certainly, there are the criminal elements, the drug dealers; there's a multitude of problems.

One of the problems I find most disturbing is the one around the young people. How do we approach that? In other words, do we not have that adult responsibility to detain a person under the age of 18 who is out there on the streets?

How many of that community would that be? I think that would be a substantial part of the present-day community as well as a major part of the future community of the adult prostitute.

That's something to really wrestle with: do we—and I'm not suggesting we do—detain them? Do we not have a responsibility to

intervene at that very early age to do something that positively can affect that child's outcomes, and do it so you stop them before they are so-called addicts to the street life? Is that not something we could determine from this, and how would we do that?

The Chair: Carol-Lynn, did you have a comment?

Ms. Carol-Lynn Strachan: This is the year 2005, and these young people are being pushed off the streets and pushed into programs. Yes, I agree this should be done, but on the other hand, you find them hiding on the Internet, working through various adult sites like Adult FriendFinder or telepersonals and these types of things. They're actually finding places to hide, and I think that should be addressed too.

As for being criminalized under the Criminal Code for soliciting in a public place, again, the girls are all hiding. The only way we're going to get them to come out of hiding.... If they do need assistance or help—and I'm not saying they're all drug addicts or whatever—the assistance can be there and given to them.

● (1225)

The Chair: We've exceeded our time.

I appreciate the comments. We like to hear from you, because you are on the front lines and you certainly have a sensitivity to what's been going on. We're very appreciative that you have come forward with your comments for our study. We can see this is an issue that has many conflicting and diverse viewpoints, and hopefully together we'll be able to craft a report that will be beneficial for Canadians as a whole.

Thank you very much for being here today.

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