

April 13, 2023

To: **Chair Karen Vecchio, MP**

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Canada's House of Commons – 44th Parliament, 1st Session

Brief on Human Trafficking

E FRY Hope and Help for Women (E FRY) would like to commend the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and its members for its focus and commitment to combat the Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People.

THE ISSUE

Across Canada, women and girls are manipulated, forced, and coerced into sex trafficking daily. The average age of victims is between 12-24. Ontario accounts for more than [70%](#) of reported cases in Canada, with most ([62%](#)) originating in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Within the GTA, the Peel Region (Peel) is a known "hot spot" for human sex trafficking; as of 2012, Peel Regional Police Vice Unit conducted over half of the human trafficking investigations in Canada. [Testimonies](#) from individuals with lived experience and social service providers suggest that the number of victims and survivors are significantly higher. Our experience in working with sex trafficking survivors in Peel over the past ten years, tells us that approximately 85% of survivors do not report to the police.

WHO WE ARE

E FRY Hope and Help for Women (E FRY) has been a dedicated leader providing hope and help to women and girls who are at-risk of violence and survivors for 50 years, using a trauma-informed, inclusive, and gender-responsive lens. E FRY supports over 5000 women and girls annually and our theory of change centres on prevention, support, reintegration and advocacy. **Since 2012, E FRY has provided anti-human sex trafficking programs that align with provincial and regional strategy pillars and the national pillars of empowerment, prevention, protection and partnership.** Our programs educate youth, support victims, and address immediate needs and barriers to exiting. E FRY's ability to combat human sex trafficking and ensure no woman or girl gets left behind would not be possible without the support of United Way, providing initial funding for E FRY's anti-human sex trafficking prevention programming. E FRY has been a leader in Peel for over ten years in addressing

human sex trafficking; focusing on prevention, intervention, collaboration, and the provision of appropriate dedicated supports and services to survivors.

E FRY's RESPONSE

Prevention & Awareness Programming

Empowering Against Exploitation (EAE) Program: EAE is a 10-week curriculum for preventing sexual exploitation among female-identifying youth aged 12-24. EAE focuses on helping youth understand and avoid recruitment tactics and addresses social media and online safety, sexual and emotional health, and personal vulnerabilities, while building self-esteem and knowledge of resources like nCourage, our safe and transitional housing, and other community services.

Empowering Young Men (EYM) Program: EYM aims to help young men aged 12-24 develop an awareness of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, and trafficking. The program focuses on improving and transforming the environment that perpetuates or contributes to the exploitation of women and encourages participants to see themselves as agents of change and work towards ending the exploitation of women and girls in their communities.

Community awareness building: E FRY provides presentations, workshops, and training to the community to increase awareness of the issue and capacity and collaboration in addressing it and to ensure awareness of the supports and services available.

Survivor Support Programming & Services

Female Mobile Support (FMS) Program: FMS supports at-risk, exploited and trafficked female-identifying individuals aged 12 and up from crisis to stabilization, including case management services. Since 2015, FMS caseworkers have offered mentorship, creating space for safe and healthy decision-making and improved independence and skill development. Caseworkers also provide connections and referrals to community resources. In 2020, FMS staff began delivering core case management services through nCourage.

nCourage (Hub): a multi-organization anti-human sex trafficking integrated services hub supporting exploited and trafficked individuals in Peel. Services include comprehensive needs and risk assessment, safety planning, advocacy, coordination of immediate and specialized supports, and case management and long-term care that offer stabilization. Funded partners include Our Place Peel as the program lead, Catholic Family Services of Peel Dufferin, and E FRY, providing long-term, comprehensive case management through FMS caseworkers.

Housing

Safe house: Bonnie McPhee House provides female-identifying survivors aged 16-24 with short-term safe housing with specialized programming and support, including safety planning, individualized goal setting, and skill development supported by trauma-informed staff. Bonnie McPhee House accommodates up to six residents, who can stay up to six months.

Transitional house: Peel Transition House assists female-identifying survivors aged 16-24 who have been sex trafficked to reintegrate into the community. This program is designed for survivors who are more stabilized, have shown some progress toward recovery, and demonstrated a readiness to move towards independence. The Peel Transition House accommodates up to six residents, who can stay up to two years.

PEEL'S RESPONSE

In 2015, Peel Regional Police, through provincial support, brought Peel community service providers together to create better supports and services for survivors of human sex trafficking. The support model developed at the conference became the foundation for the Peel Human Trafficking Service Providers Committee (PHTSPC), established the same year. E FRY is one of the original members of the PHTSPC— comprising over 40 community organizations and government agencies collaborating to end sex trafficking and providing a coordinated response to community support and services for survivors of human trafficking (Appendix A).

In 2017, two PHTSPC representatives delegated to Peel Regional Council highlighted the need for services to address ongoing needs in Peel. Peel consulted with PHTSPC to create its three-pillar [strategy](#)—prevention, intervention, and exits/housing— aligning with the Province of Ontario's anti-human trafficking strategy for 2020-2025. In 2018, Peel launched its anti-human trafficking strategy. The PHTSPC member agencies collaborated on successful submissions for a safe and transitional house, with E FRY as the lead agency, and for an anti-human sex trafficking integrated services HUB, nCourage, with Our Place Peel as the lead and Catholic Family Services of Peel Dufferin and E FRY as funded partners.

Peel has made [significant progress](#) and emerged as a leader in community collaboration, identifying and delivering appropriate services and support to those impacted by human sex trafficking. As a result, Peel's Strategy to Address Human Sex Trafficking got approved by Peel Regional Council as a permanent program. For continued progress and collaboration across regional agencies and community organizations, additional funding and resources will help

ensure a wide-scale adoption of a community-collective response for protecting victims and preventing human sex trafficking.

NEEDS TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING

With significant successes, an increasing population of at-risk women and girls (including Indigenous, 2SLGBTQI+ and BIPOC populations), a burgeoning [opioid crisis](#) in Ontario, and the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), greater demand is placed on community organizations and the region.

The most urgent need for Peel and similar hot spot zones in Canada is resourcing that ensures delivery of the full continuum of best practice supports for individuals experiencing and exiting human sex trafficking. Due to the vast work done in the region and dedicated funding from the Region of Peel and the provincial government, Peel's most noticeable needs are now:

1. The lack of immediate beds, dedicated independent housing, and housing options with dedicated support services to address trauma, mental health and addiction.
2. Longer-term funding for prevention programming to community agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEET HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING SURVIVOR NEEDS

Housing

- 1. Prioritize and ensure the full continuum of support services; emergency immediate beds, staffed safe and transitional housing, and independent supported housing– all equipped with dedicated trauma, mental health and addiction services for a minimum of five years, with an option to review and extend.**

Survivors in Peel are dealing with long housing waitlists, even those with Special Priority Program status. Particular shortages exist for survivors who need immediate beds, including those who have not disengaged from traffickers or are not wanting to engage in more intensive supports, survivors who need independent housing, like those exiting E FRY's safe and transitional housing, survivors 25 and older, and survivors with children.

During the Peel Anti-Human Sex Trafficking Strategic Planning Session in February 2023, Paola Carmagnani from Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking stressed, "We are in the middle of a housing crisis – since the hotline launched in 2019, housing

services have been the most requested resource.” Meeting this need will safeguard survivors from precarious housing situations that increase their vulnerability to being trafficked or physically exploited. All levels of government need to collaborate to address this issue.

Beyond beds, additional resourcing and funding would allow for the provision of dedicated services and support for mental health, trauma and addiction services using a trauma-informed and gender-responsive lens.

2. Continue to support programs that create access to rent geared to income, rent supplements, and portable housing allowances for survivors.

Survivors in hot-spot areas like Peel can subsequently gain access to affordable and accessible independent housing, reducing their risk of being re-trafficked.

Prevention

3. Nationalize The Keeping Students Safe – Policy Framework for School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocols, launched by the Ontario government, and specify the need to engage community organizations with deep issue awareness.

This would further support Ontario's mandate and enable high-risk schools to benefit from up-to-date educational workshops and prevention programming by community organizations, such as E FRY's Empowering Against Exploitation Program for female-identifying youth (funded by Public Safety until 2024) and Empowering Young Men Program that addresses the vital role men play in ending gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and empowers young men to become allies. Additionally, student education includes materials and training from experts with the experience and capabilities to engage and offer appropriate anti-human trafficking resources and services to students. E FRY is diligently seeking other funding sources to continue this important work in Peel that underpins the fight to end human sex trafficking.

4. Support regional governments to forge stronger and longer-term partnerships with community organizations addressing sex trafficking.

Community organizations that work directly with at-risk individuals have the relationships and deep issue awareness to provide education and resources. Peel's success is due to government support, PHTSPC members coordinating prevention efforts and sharing knowledge to deliver gender-responsive, trauma-informed services. We urge the government to support this work in alignment with the national strategy to build our collective capacity to prevent human trafficking. Longer-term funding will help sustain community-led programming necessary for long-term impact, as it maintains relationships and community trust.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Peel has to build program resiliency and its capacity to provide ongoing specialized services to strengthen interventions to prevent future human trafficking. Without adequate housing options and supportive services, survivors are more likely to be re-victimized, experience homelessness and face barriers to exiting, impeding their ability to heal and rebuild their lives. Our recommendations reflect the urgent need to ensure victims and survivors of sex trafficking receive full support services to help them exit, recover from the trauma and challenges they have experienced, and remain safe from perpetrators. These services include immediate emergency beds, staffed safe housing, staffed transitional housing, independent supported housing, rent supplements, and housing allowances and integrated community supports and case management services. Additionally, E FRY encourages the government to nationalize programs and service delivery models rooted in community-collective action.

CLOSING REMARKS

Recognizing the interconnectedness of prevention, protection, and support, and continued investment in human resources and funding to ensure the delivery of a full continuum of care for victims and at-risk individuals, will help end human sex trafficking. E FRY thanks the Committee for its time and consideration of this brief on human sex trafficking. We are willing to provide any further details you might require and are ready to engage in further discussions.

For further information, please contact Jody Miller, Managing Director, at jodym@efryhope.com or Deborah Riddle, Executive Director, at driddle@efryhope.com.

APPENDIX A: PEEL HUMAN TRAFFICKING SERVICE PROVIDERS COMMITTEE- COMMITTEE MEMBERS

360 Kids

Associated Youth Services of Peel

Brampton Probation & Parole

Brampton Professional Women

Canadian Mental Health Association

Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin

Crown Attorney's Office

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

E FRY Hope and Help for Women (E FRY)

Family Education Centre

Family Life Resource Centre

Family Services of Peel

French Catholic School Board

Human Services, Region of Peel

Indus Community Services

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

Mississauga Probation & Parole

Moyo Health and Community Services

Ms. Timea Nagy, Survivor/Advocate

Ontario Native Women's Association

Our Place Peel

Pearson Airport Chaplaincy

Peel Addiction Assessment and Referral Centre

Peel CAS

Peel Children's Centre

Peel District School Board

Peel Regional Police
Peel Victim/Witness Assistance Program
Peel Youth Village
Punjabi Community Health Services
Regeneration
Region of Peel Outreach Team
Rising Angels Survivor/Advocacy Group
Roots Community Services
Safe Centre of Peel
Safe City Mississauga
Sheridan College
Square One Security
Supportive Housing in the Province
Trillium Health Partners (Chantel's Place)
Vanier Centre for Women
Victim Services of Peel
William Osler Health System – Withdrawal Management Centre
Zonta Club of Brampton-Caledon/Mississauga

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