

TO: The Standing Committee on the Status of Women

RE: Human Trafficking Study

May, 2023

Thank you for taking the time to consider this Brief. My name is Adrianna and for the purpose of this submission I represent the The BC Coalition of Experiential Communities;

Who We Are:

*The **BC Coalition of Experiential Communities** are a consortium of sex workers who are activists mandated as a mechanism for the voices of experiential people to support the development of legislation and policies; peer driven programs and services; and work toward the elimination of oppressive systems and forces that create harm within the sex industry.*

Sex workers report:

Sex workers and victims of sexual exploitation have reported;

- Inappropriate use of prostitution laws in cases of human trafficking and sexual exploitation
- Biased treatment from police, victim services and other social supports intended to work for victims of these crimes.
- Lack of funding from Victims Services in particular as it relates to trauma counselling and supports.
- Re-victimization via use of “prostitution” to describe crimes endured by victims during trials, appeals, delivery of evidence and sentencing of the criminals who commit these crimes.

My personal Experiences:

As a survivor of human/ sexual trafficking both as a child and as an adult, this brief is extremely personal to me.

My body was first sold sexually at the age of 15. When I had been “rescued” by the police I was taken into a detention center for exploited youth, in hand cuffs and a spit mask. I was chastised for swearing and displaying emotion surrounding what I had just lived through, I was threatened if I didn’t calm down I would be forced into solitary confinement. Children at this facility who had been sexually exploited in one way or another were being treated as criminals.

Is this what “protecting” children looks like to you? When you hear these briefs, and you hear people fighting to protect children are you aware that this is what their ideas amount to in real life?

All the nice trigger words used by people who have never experienced this pain, are taking up space from those who have survived being human trafficked. We are not incapable of speaking for ourselves and we do not need, people like Cathy Peters speaking for us.

If everyone is so concerned with minors and women being trafficked why is there zero help for us? Why are we unable to call police for help when we've been raped or robbed?

You say you're dedicated to stopping human trafficking and exploitation, but where is the evidence?

Human traffickers and pedophiles are being charged with prostitution charges, despite the fact that Canada has existing legal frameworks to charge these dangerous and violent offenders with the crimes that they are actually committing. i.e., kidnapping, pedophilia, rape, withholding a passport for the purposes of human trafficking, and of course human trafficking charges themselves.

Maybe if the people who sexually exploited me and 8 other children had been charged with pedophilia, kidnapping, and human trafficking, they would have spent more than 2 years in jail. Maybe if the appropriate charges were used I wouldn't have been labelled a criminal and my family wouldn't have seen me as a "child prostitute" but as the victim I truly was.

As an adult surviving my second experience with exploitation, my human trafficker could have been charged with kidnapping, withholding a passport for the purposes of sexual exploitation, and human trafficking and he would have spent more than 1 year in jail. If Canada is so against exploitation why is the government and court system so lenient on traffickers but so harsh on victims?

All this outrage, but where is the help for survivors? Where is the help for people to regain normalcy in their lives?

Ex-high school teacher Cathy Peters has received money to travel all over Canada to spread misinformation and speak over real victims, while the victims are left out in the cold to heal and support ourselves with literally zero help. She is not an expert, she has never worked on the front line with survivors but is entertained here in this critical discussion about how best to address these issues.

I bravely placed charges against my trafficker in March 2017. The accused ran away from bail, for years, and his Canada-wide warrant failed to capture him, allowing him to beat another woman with a deadly weapon and then to be released on bail again.

I, as a victim, was forced to send police his location after stalking him on social media because I was tired of the police doing nothing. For years I was perpetually terrified, unable to live a normal life because he was allowed to use the system to re-traumatize me. I didn't even receive funding for therapy through Crime Victim Assistance Program (CVAP) until AFTER he had been released from jail. He was also released early.

The prosecutor on my case, allowed him to take a plea deal and agreed to a statement of facts that wasn't even true, as victims don't get a say in what is deemed "fact" or not.

At the sentencing hearing the judge yelled at me stating that my victim impact statement was contrary to the crime – specifically when I said that the guilty party had isolated me, taken everything from me and left me with nothing. Being that the crime he was charged with literally means he took all my money and left me with nothing, its pretty obvious that the judge didn't even understand the crime. The judge, before giving his final sentence, was forced to apologize to me for his outburst, however that doesn't negate the devastating impacts the judges actions and clear bias had on me and the outcome of the court hearing.

If judges in this country don't even understand prostitution charges why they are being used? When the Canadian criminal code includes charges that are more appropriate and clearly define the actual crime that has taken place?

Cathy Peters in her brief begins her first point with asserting that female spaces are being taken over by “men insisting their women”, this is a dangerous and violent rhetoric, which distracts from the real issues of sex workers AND victims of trafficking and exploitation being let down by the government and institutions meant to protect them.

Transwomen are not the ones violently raping and selling young women and girls, in fact, Transwomen are some of the most vulnerable people in sex work as well as exploitation. Transwomen are our sisters; they are not to blame for the governments inability to protect children from exploitation and human trafficking.

Cathy Peters offered no valid evidence and as such her brief should not be considered as in anyway factual by this Committee during your work.

Action Steps/Recommendations:

- That the criminal justice system refrains from utilizing prostitution charges and instead seeks to charge human traffickers with the existing charges present in the Canadian criminal code for human trafficking, sexual assault, child sexual interference, kidnapping, unlawful confinement and others
- That the government builds meaningful partnerships with survivors to reshape how human trafficking and sexual exploitation victims are treated and supported in particular during the court process and as it relates to after care.
- That the government respect that treatment and supports need to be victim lead and individualized.
- That victim compensation funds be made available in recognition that financial help with rebuilding their lives in necessary. Biased policies which have excluded people based on a “one crime” policy for financial support have excluded those who have experienced multiple crimes even though they need the support the most.
- That CVAP must employ diverse trauma-specialized therapists and counsellors, trauma-specialized therapists that are diverse in ethnicity, sexuality, and gender.

Thank you for giving survivors a voice in this important work,

Sincerely,

Adrianna Hendricks

BCCEC Director