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# Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio





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• (1100)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)):** Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the 55th meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 1, 2022, the committee will commence its study on human trafficking of women, girls and gender-diverse people.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your microphone, and please mute yourselves when you are not speaking. For interpretation for those on Zoom, you will have the choice at the bottom of the screen of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel. All comments should be addressed through the chair. For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For those on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function.

As usual, we're going to do our trigger warning, because that's what we do here in status of women. Before we welcome our witnesses, I would like to provide this trigger warning. This will be a difficult study. We will be discussing experiences related to abuse. This may be triggering to viewers, members or staff with similar experiences. If you feel distressed or if you need help, please advise the clerk.

Just like we have done in the previous studies, if there are any issues at any time, just let us know and we can work together to move forward.

I'd now like to welcome our guests for the first panel. From the Canada Border Services Agency, we have Daniel Anson. He's the director general of intelligence and investigations. From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Michelle Van De Bogart, director general, law enforcement. From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Superintendent Kimberley Taplin, director general, national crime prevention and indigenous policing services. As well, we have Captain Jennifer Demers, national human trafficking section.

We'll be providing you each with five minutes. When you see me start rolling my pen around, that means you have about 15 seconds to wrap up. If we can keep that as close as possible to five minutes so we can get all of our questions through, that would be wonderful.

To start our presentations, we will pass it over to Daniel Anson.

Daniel, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Daniel Anson (Director General, Intelligence and Investigations, Canada Border Services Agency):** Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Greetings to all members of the committee.

My name is Daniel Anson, Director General, Intelligence and Investigations, Canada Border Services Agency.

I will only take a few minutes to clarify for the committee the Canada Border Services Agency's role and responsibilities in identifying and combatting international human trafficking.

As this committee is aware, the administration and enforcement of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, IRPA, falls under the responsibility of several government departments and agencies.

While Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has the primary responsibility to develop admissibility policy which sets the conditions for entering and remaining in Canada and to administer the IRPA, the CBSA shares responsibility with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for enforcing the IRPA. In the pursuit of its mandate, the agency shares information and intelligence with other government departments and law enforcement partners, as required.

[*English*]

More specifically, the CBSA prevents, identifies and interdicts suspected human traffickers in the cross-border movement and exploitation of victims; detects instances of trafficking, including those for the purposes of forced labour; contributes to the safety and security of potential victims by separating them from the control of suspected traffickers and refers them to appropriate government services; and supports the investigation and prosecution of offenders.

The CBSA and RCMP have a complementary approach in relation to immigration offences. While the RCMP is responsible for immigration offences related to organized crime, human trafficking and national security, the CBSA has responsibility for the remaining immigration offences under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, or IRPA, which includes offences related to human smuggling, fraudulent documents, misrepresentation and the “General Offences” section under the act. The agency will engage the RCMP should it discover indicators of human trafficking while investigating other offences. The CBSA refers all suspected human trafficking cases to the RCMP for investigation, and it refers potential victims to IRCC for support.

As human trafficking and human smuggling are often confounded, I thought I would use this opportunity to differentiate the two offences.

On one hand, human trafficking occurs when one party violates another's rights by depriving them of their freedom of choice for the purpose of exploitation. It can occur across and within borders, and it may involve extensive organized crime networks. It involves recruiting, transporting or harbouring individuals through force or other forms of coercion and deception. For example, these victims may be exploited for the sex trade, forced labour or domestic servitude.

Human smuggling, on the other hand, is a form of illegal migration that involves the organized transport of a person across an international border, usually in exchange for a sum of money and sometimes in dangerous conditions. When the final destination is reached, the business relationship ends and the smuggler and individual part company.

A person who has agreed to be smuggled into the country, however, may also become the victim of human trafficking at the hands of the smuggler. What is consistent is that the relationship between a human trafficker and victim is continuous and extends beyond the border crossing. Victims may suffer abuse from the traffickers and face severe consequences if they attempt to escape.

Since 2012, the CBSA has been working with federal partners to implement the national action plan—now strategy—to combat human trafficking. As part of this commitment, CBSA officers receive training to recognize indicators associated with victims of human trafficking and provide them with support through referrals to the appropriate government agencies.

Despite best efforts, however, identifying victims of human trafficking at the border can be challenging. Potential victims may be unaware of what is in store for them beyond their entry into the country. Furthermore, if they do not know they are being exploited, they may be intimidated and refuse to seek or receive help.

The CBSA takes the issue of international trafficking of women, girls and gender-diverse individuals very seriously. Situations such as sexual exploitation and domestic servitude disproportionately affect these populations. Some estimates indicate that roughly 90% of victims of sex trafficking in Canada are women and girls. Human traffickers reap large profits while robbing victims of their freedom, dignity and human potential.

The CBSA is an active and engaged partner in combatting human trafficking by detecting and disrupting trafficking operations and the transport of victims to Canada. We continue to work with our partners with the common goal of preventing Canada from being a destination, source or transit country for this criminal behaviour.

This concludes my opening statement. Again, thank you for the opportunity to highlight the agency's role and impact. I will be very happy to answer any questions from the committee.

Thank you.

● (1105)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'm now going to pass it over to Michelle Van De Bogart, director general of law enforcement, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Go ahead, Michelle.

**Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart (Director General, Law Enforcement, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness):** Thank you very much.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the traditional unceded land on which we are gathered today, that of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Michelle Van De Bogart. I am the director general of law enforcement at Public Safety Canada. I'll be providing opening remarks on behalf of Public Safety, and I'm pleased to take your questions during this panel.

I applaud you and committee members for this discussion on a topic that is of critical importance for the human rights of women, girls and gender-diverse people in Canada: human trafficking.

We know that human trafficking is a highly gendered crime with root causes often related to power imbalance, gender inequality and discrimination, the fact being that women and girls are most often targeted for purposes of sexual exploitation due to a combination of social, economic and cultural factors.

The Government of Canada has long recognized the importance of a comprehensive, coordinated and multi-faceted strategy to respond to this crime. Anti-human trafficking efforts are being undertaken by numerous Government of Canada departments and agencies, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada Border Services Agency, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Statistics Canada and others whom you'll hear from throughout this study.

Public Safety Canada is the federal department responsible for leading the national strategy to combat human trafficking since its launch in 2019. The national strategy brings together federal efforts under one strategic framework. It's based on the internationally recognized pillars of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership, and also includes an empowerment pillar, which focuses on enhancing supports for victims affected by this crime.

Approximately \$75 million in funding has been allocated to the national strategy between 2018 and 2024. This includes an investment of \$14.5 million for the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline.

The national strategy is now in its last year. Progress and achievements have been gained, but there is much more to do. As an evergreen strategy, we continue to adapt to changing circumstances and the needs of our communities.

I'd like to highlight a few successes under each pillar of the strategy.

Under the empowerment pillar, the Government of Canada invested up to \$22.4 million in 63 organizations that are working to prevent human trafficking and to support at-risk populations and survivors. This was a joint announcement with Women and Gender Equality Canada. These projects have increased and will continue to increase access to services and supports for victims and survivors, raise awareness of human trafficking among youth at risk and develop innovative technological ideas to combat human trafficking.

Most recently, Public Safety entered into a funding agreement with Victim Services Toronto for Project Recover, a collaborative endeavour to help survivors of human trafficking resolve fraudulent debt incurred in their name by traffickers.

Raising awareness of human trafficking among Canadians is critical. Under the prevention pillar, Public Safety launched the award-winning awareness campaign entitled "It's not what it seems" to educate the public, especially youth and parents, about human trafficking. This year, Public Safety's marketing team is working on the planning and development of awareness material for indigenous audiences.

A significant initiative under the protection pillar has been our continued support for the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline, a multilingual, toll-free service available 24-7 that refers victims to local law enforcement, shelters and a range of other supports and services. Under this pillar, we are also working to develop guidelines and training tools for frontline service providers, including specific guidelines to support indigenous survivors.

As for the prosecution pillar, I'll defer to my colleagues to speak to their prosecution efforts on investigations and cross-border movements.

Finally, the Government of Canada recognizes that maintaining and developing strong partnerships within and outside the Government of Canada is critical to Canada's success in combatting human trafficking. Under the partnership pillar, engagement with provinces and territories has been central in supporting our collective responses to this crime, notably through the Public Safety Canada-led federal-provincial-territorial trafficking in persons

working group and the FPT ministers responsible for the justice and public safety tables. These remain important fora for federal, provincial and territorial partners to come together in order to leverage one another's efforts to combat human trafficking.

I'd like to conclude by acknowledging that labour trafficking; the trafficking of indigenous women and girls, 2SLGBTQIA+ persons and migrants; the use of technology in human trafficking; data collection efforts; and protecting newcomers from human trafficking, including Ukrainian nationals in Canada, are some of the key issues that have been garnering more attention recently and that will require increased collaboration in the next few years.

● (1110)

With this in mind, I'd like to thank the committee for initiating this important dialogue today. I'm happy to take your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

For our final speakers, I would like to pass it over to the superintendent for the RCMP, Kim Taplin.

Kim, you have the floor.

**Superintendent Kimberly Taplin (Director General, National Crime Prevention and Indigenous Policing Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):** Good morning, Chair and members of the committee. I speak with gratitude from the unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

As mentioned, I'm Superintendent Kim Taplin, director general of the RCMP national crime prevention and indigenous policing services. I'm joined today by Corporal Jennifer Demers, a member of the national human trafficking section.

Thank you for inviting us here as part of your study on the human trafficking of women, girls and gender-diverse people. I would like to begin by explaining the mandate and work of the RCMP, and specifically the national human trafficking section, and by sharing some key points on human trafficking in the Canadian context.

The RCMP across Canada supports the Government of Canada's national strategy to combat human trafficking and remains committed to addressing human trafficking in collaboration with federal and provincial governments and agencies, non-government organizations and law enforcement partners. These networks are crucial for police and non-government organizations to identify and help victims of human trafficking.

The national human trafficking section centrally facilitates the RCMP's efforts in countering human trafficking through awareness, education and community outreach, building and enhancing partnerships, supporting operations, advancing operational policy and internal and external reporting. The national human trafficking section does not conduct specific investigations, but rather supports investigators and acts as a policy centre to educate and raise awareness on human trafficking.

For example, recently, on March 9, the RCMP hosted the human trafficking and sexual exploitation of men and boys training workshop for the RCMP, the Canadian Armed Forces, Public Safety, CBSA and other police services and included other government departments and service providers. This event focused on assisting law enforcement on the human trafficking modus operandi in relation to male victims, and gender-diverse victims were part of the subject matter covered during the workshop.

Anyone can become a victim of human trafficking. However, factors such as age, geographic location, socio-economic background and ethnicity can contribute to unique challenges that put certain populations at particular risk.

As my colleague from CBSA shared, human trafficking does not necessarily require the crossing of borders or any movement at all. Exploitation, as defined by the Criminal Code, is the key element of the offence. Exploitation occurs when someone forces another person to provide labour or a sexual service by having them fear for their safety and/or the safety of someone known to them.

It is domestic human trafficking when all stages of the crime occur in Canada and there is no international cross-border movement. It is international human trafficking when the victim crosses an international border in the process of being trafficked.

The full extent of human trafficking is difficult to assess due to the clandestine nature of these offences and the reluctance of victims and witnesses to come forward to law enforcement. In some observed cases, it is apparent that some victims may not have been aware that they were being exploited.

The RCMP conducts proactive outreach initiatives and investigative probes into potential human trafficking offences. One of the most important sources is the lived experience experts: the survivors. Our partnerships help to empower them to tell their stories and educate law enforcement to recognize the signs of human trafficking.

It is also important for law enforcement to have knowledge of the strategies employed by traffickers when conducting their investigations. In 2022, the RCMP attended an Ontario penitentiary to interview an inmate who had been incarcerated for charges related to human trafficking. The intent of the interview was to get a trafficker's perspective of how he became a trafficker and why he committed these crimes. The interview was recorded and will be incorporated into training for law enforcement.

• (1115)

The RCMP collaborates with domestic and international partners to ensure a coordinated approach to detecting, investigating and combatting human trafficking. The RCMP also helps build preven-

tion initiatives and refers victims to victim services and community-based resources, where available, for assistance and support.

Human trafficking is an important topic and a grave offence. Corporal Demers and I are pleased to be here to answer your questions and to provide information on the projects, initiatives and products that our team has been working on within the past few years.

We also appreciate the work you are doing. Thank you for continuing to bring attention to this crucial area that impacts the lives, health and well-being of women, girls and gender-diverse people.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I will begin by saying I apologize to Corporal Demers. I called you captain. It's corporal. We want to make sure we get that straight.

We will be going on to our rounds of six minutes. Each party will start off with six minutes.

I'm now going to pass the floor to Anna Roberts for the first six minutes.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here.

This is an important study. I have a few questions, and I'm not sure who can answer them.

Canada remains on tier 1. Can you explain to me what that means exactly?

**Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart:** Do you mean tier 1 from the "Trafficking in Persons Report" from the United States of America?

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Yes.

**Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart:** Each year, the United States does an analysis and evaluation of other countries. We're pleased to report that we continue to remain on tier 1, which means that the work we're doing under the national strategy, the work that we're doing at the federal, provincial and territorial levels, is actively working to deal with the human trafficking area. That doesn't mean that we don't have more work to do, but we're very pleased to report that we remain on tier 1.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** There was mention earlier that individual RCMP officers are trained. Is that training done online?

• (1120)

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** The national human trafficking section has worked to create or update existing training for our law enforcement personnel. Most recently we conducted an environmental scan of some leading training that is available. In 2021 we updated that online training.

In addition to the online training, there is also training available to all law enforcement as well at the Canadian Police College. That is a 10-day course. It is delivered in person to law enforcement across Canada.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Is that called “Can you see me?” I think I went through that. Is that the one you're referring to, that training program?

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** Is it from the Canadian Police College?

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Yes.

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** I would have to confirm the proper name for that.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Okay.

I spoke with a police officer in my riding about the situation with human trafficking, and he helped me understand a couple of the sections of the Criminal Code. I'm a little confused by them. Criminal Code sections 279.01 and 279.011 criminalize sex trafficking and labour trafficking. Penalties range from four to 14 years' imprisonment for trafficking adults and five to 14 years' imprisonment for trafficking children. I also understood that some of these criminals who are arrested will ask their lawyer to not force bail on them because the time they serve prior to the court date guarantees them one and a half times—for example, if they serve 100 days, they get 150 days waived off the penalty—and the penalties are not that strict. Some of them don't even serve two years.

Do you think the penalties they receive fit the crime?

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** Thank you for that question.

The RCMP's role is to enforce the laws and not to comment on prosecution or penalties.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Would you agree with me, though, that the penalties...? I've spoken to some people in policing, and they have said that the problem is that they get arrested, they go to court, they get out and then they start all over again. I know for a fact that the federal government does not maintain a national database. How do we prevent these criminals from reoffending?

Is there something that the government needs to change so that we ensure that these children who are trafficked don't fall into this trap again?

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** Thank you for the question.

I did not come here prepared to, nor is it appropriate for me to provide advice to this committee with respect to sentencing and prosecution.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Would you agree that a database is important to be maintained so that we have better control, the criminals do not continue to practise in trafficking and we can protect our victims? Would you agree to that?

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** Again, I'm not here to provide advice to the committee at this time. I'm happy to answer other questions.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** From my understanding, the laws do not fit the crime and we continue to have these issues. I looked at some numbers, and they're pretty scary in terms of the increase in children and young adults being trafficked. How do we stop that if we don't have the sentencing that suits the crime? I think we need to

improve the laws to ensure that the individuals are kept behind bars until they fully understand what they've done.

I guess that's more of a question I have to ask the justice system. I do apologize; I'm not trying to put you in that position. It's just that after going through some of these exercises and going through some of these videos, it becomes pretty obvious that we're not doing enough.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We'll now turn it over for the next six minutes to Jenna Sudds.

Jenna, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses for joining us today and for the incredible work you all do, day in and day out.

I'll direct my first question to you, Mr. Anson. I'm wondering if you could speak to the biggest challenge that you see, from your experience, related to preventing human trafficking across our borders.

• (1125)

**Mr. Daniel Anson:** Thank you for the question.

I would certainly speak to the biggest challenge that we face from an agency perspective, which is that really this is a covert activity that occurs at the border points. It's very rare, if ever, that the evidence or indicators of trafficking in persons present at a port of entry on arrival. Quite frequently, the challenge we face is that a lot of the arrivals could be through otherwise legitimate purposes or for other reasons—for example, temporary foreign workers, temporary resident permits, regular immigration channels or international experience Canada channels. What you tend to see is that there's a legitimate entry into Canada, and then the force, the fraud and the coercion occur afterwards.

In parallel, the increased problem that we face regarding human smuggling only additionally puts people who have been smuggled into Canada further at risk in that it gives a significant amount of leverage and risk to potential traffickers over the person who has been smuggled. For example, they might not necessarily have an actual authorization to work as a foreign national. They might not have control still of their legitimate passport. They might be reliant on fraudulent documents. These are different methods that a trafficker will use to continue that leverage, whether it's promises of family reunification or otherwise.

Really, the challenge for us is that there's only a limited window where the agency can provide an interdiction opportunity at a port of entry where we would immediately separate the trafficker from the victim and ensure that the people who have already been victimized or traumatized are then able to obtain services and support from some of our domestic or federal partners.

To directly answer your question, Ms. Sudds, it's really the fact that there is limited ability for us to directly address and identify, even though we put a significant amount of effort into intelligence reporting and the identification and enumeration of indicators, patterns and trends of trafficking. We then do our best to ensure that this training is distributed to border services officers across the country, is shared across our dedicated expert working group and is systematized within the training given to BSOs at the officer induction course at Rigaud college, as well as in ongoing training to ensure that they're able to identify human trafficking.

That's the challenge we have. We do refer all situations, cases or suspected cases of human trafficking to federal law enforcement partners, be it police of jurisdiction or our partners within the RCMP, but if I had to distill it down to one issue, I would say that's really where we face the greatest challenge in protecting the ports of entry and the access to Canada.

**Ms. Jenna Sudds:** Thank you for that.

Speaking of partners, I'll direct my next question to Superintendent Taplin, or perhaps Corporal Demers if she would like to respond as well.

Taking a look at the national strategy to combat human trafficking, from what I have read over the course of the last week in preparation, I think the evidence shows that we're seeing an increased use of technology when it comes to human trafficking. Of particular concern, I think, is Internet child exploitation.

I'm wondering if you could speak to the work you're doing with respect to child exploitation leveraging technology.

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** Thank you for that question.

I didn't come prepared today to speak specifically to child exploitation. The expertise in that area rests within a specific area within the RCMP, but I would be happy to endeavour to take that question back and provide a written response for the committee.

**Ms. Jenna Sudds:** Thank you very much.

Can you speak to the leveraging of technology in a greater way with respect to human trafficking in general? I don't want to put you on the spot.

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** I know that technology is impacting our lives in so many areas. Again, this is one of the areas where we are seeing an increase in the use of technology.

I would like to turn the floor over to my colleague, Corporal Demers. Perhaps she could speak more specifically with respect to human trafficking.

• (1130)

**Corporal Jennifer Demers (National Human Trafficking Section, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):** Thank you, Superintendent Taplin.

Thank you for this question.

At this time, in our unit I do not personally use technologies. Again, we would be more than happy to get that answer for you in writing to make sure that you get the full scope of it.

**Ms. Jenna Sudds:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that—not to put you on the spot at all.

Ms. Van De Bogart, you spoke about the importance of partnerships, the federal-provincial-territorial tables and the work that is happening with your partnerships. I would like you to share the importance of that collaborative approach in this work. We might not have time, though.

**The Chair:** You have 10 or 15 seconds.

**Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart:** Very quickly, we are doing lots of work. Collaboration is important and not only with our partners at the federal-provincial-territorial tables. We heard from survivors in our 2018 consultations across Canada that we need to ensure that we are meeting regularly with our stakeholders as well. I would love to tell you about the webinars we do—

**The Chair:** Please do the next time, yes.

**Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart:** —to engage in that.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We will now go over to Andréanne Larouche for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being here for such an important study on human trafficking.

I have long wanted to address this issue in committee, as a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. This year, on February 22, we marked the third annual National Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

As most witnesses indicated in their opening remarks, we realize our lack of knowledge and training on this issue and the need to raise awareness. People think that human trafficking is something that takes place outside our borders, but we see that most of the victims are actually Canadian. It happens within our borders. This shows the glaring lack of education and knowledge of the population on this subject.

I will address you first, Mr. Anson, but I invite other witnesses to weigh in.



In 2005, Canada passed a bill banning human trafficking, but traffickers continue to get rich by exploiting people everywhere. Between 2009 and 2018, police departments across the country reported 1,708 cases related to human trafficking. However, as you said, this data likely represents only those cases that have received a police response. Rather, testimony from people who have experienced trafficking and from social service providers suggests to us that the actual number of victims and survivors is much higher.

Do you have more recent data regarding cases related to human trafficking? You said it was difficult to get numbers, but can you give us a more current picture of the situation?

I'll address you first, Mr. Anson, but I invite other witnesses to weigh in so that we have a more current picture.

**Mr. Daniel Anson:** I thank the member for her question  
[English]

I guess I would say at the outset that I certainly appreciate that perspective, and again an appreciation for the statistics is very important.

The CBSA unfortunately does not necessarily have the same domestic mandate in tracking or addressing issues of human trafficking or suspected cases and their prosecution.

We do participate with our police of jurisdiction, national policing partners, in ensuring the continued awareness. The identification of indicators, trends and warnings is shared to inform police of jurisdiction in their domestic investigative processes as well as to provide greater awareness across federal partners of all departments. Therefore, we are definitely recognizing that awareness is absolutely key, aside from our ability to support our domestic policing partners. That is not necessarily something that we track or identify.

Again, the only thing that I would also add to support your question would really be that, based on a variety of different methods of arrival within Canada, people can often be deterred from reporting incidents of human trafficking. It's important to again recognize that many of these people are susceptible to coercion, to fraud and to potential indentured service. In addition, they may be fleeing persecution, natural disasters, dictatorships or discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, religion, race or colour—whatever that might be—so there might also be a tendency to shy away from reporting certain incidents to authorities based on the fact that they may have arrived from countries where there may not be the same type of trust in their national law enforcement or national security partners.

In terms of the statistics and the ability to address the issue domestically, I would definitely have to defer to our domestic policing partners.

[Translation]

Thank you for that question, madam.

• (1135)

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart:** Thank you.

If I may just add, my understanding is that you're going to be hearing from Statistics Canada. We work in close collaboration with them to get information, and they will be able to talk to you about more of the statistics in relation to human trafficking. We do know this is an under-reported crime, but from data from 2022, I can share with you today a few high-level statistics. We know that 96% are women and girls. Most of them—91%—knew their traffickers, and one-third of victims were trafficked by an intimate partner.

I know that our colleagues from Statistics Canada will be able to greatly assist you further in that area.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Ms. Van De Bogart, my next question is for you.

In 2019, the federal government implemented a series of new measures to address the problem as part of a national strategy. Can you tell us what the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking has changed?

You gave your collaboration with Statistics Canada as an example, but in the context of this national strategy, have you developed any other partnerships that might be helpful to the work of our committee?

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart:** Thank you for the question.

Maybe I could highlight a couple of things. I mentioned in my opening statement that the Government of Canada funded 63 projects. Public Safety specifically funded 20 of those projects. The funding has gone to grassroots organizations across the country to work with both victims and survivors. Twelve of those are empowerment projects, and the rest of them are prevention projects. Fifteen of those projects support indigenous people, two of those are indigenous-led and many of them welcome gender-diverse people as well.

Important work is being done. The projects have been going on for between three and four years and, as I mentioned, we're entering our last year of the evaluation. What we will be doing is hearing about both achievements and lessons learned from there. That's one of the areas where I believe we're making a difference.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass it over to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Thank you so much, Chair.

My first question is for Superintendent Taplin. We know there are ongoing issues with systemic discrimination and sexual violence in the RCMP. I want to point to an article that was published by the CBC in May 2021, in response to the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action report, which states, “The report says they show evidence of a pattern of discrimination, harassment, and assault against women by officers of the RCMP.”

It goes on, and Pamela Palmater states, “If female RCMP officers are not safe from sexual assaults by male officers, it should be no surprise that marginalized Indigenous women and girls are not safe either”.

I want to point to an article that was published by the CBC in 2015 about Officer Kevin Theriault, in northern Manitoba, who took an intoxicated woman home from her jail cell, with the permission of the supervising officer, to pursue a relationship. I don't have the exact quote, but in light of that the supervising officer said, “You arrested her, you can do whatever the f—k you want to do” with her. This was reported on the CBC.

What's concerning to me is that the RCMP continue to investigate their own allegations of misconduct. I'm wondering what the RCMP is doing to address this kind of grotesque systemic racism and sexual violence that continues to happen, particularly against indigenous women and girls.

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** Thank you for the question.

The RCMP is one of approximately 150 police agencies across Canada. The national human trafficking section is conducting a national environmental scan that will identify trends, gaps, needs and best practices related to human trafficking investigations and will help to raise awareness.

The first phase of the scan was a file review of RCMP human trafficking cases. The second phase—

• (1140)

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I'm sorry. I have limited time. I'm not talking about what the RCMP is doing to address sex trafficking. I'm asking a question about what the RCMP is doing to mitigate and manage their own involvement in sex trafficking. I would point to northern Manitoba and the woman who was taken out of the jail cell as an act of sex trafficking.

That is the question. Thank you.

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** Thank you for clarifying that question.

I didn't come here prepared to speak to the RCMP actions with respect to internal allegations with respect to how we, in your words, may or may not treat each other internally.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I'll leave it there out of fairness to you. Could you maybe follow up with a written brief? It was a confirmed case of sexual trafficking. It wasn't an allegation; it was confirmed.

We know that in over half of the cases of sex trafficking, no suspect is identified. This was in a report by Statistics Canada on March 1, 2021. We also know that two-thirds of cases result in criminal proceedings being stopped with a decision of stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged.

What is the RCMP doing about this in terms of compiling appropriate evidence so that these cases don't fall through the cracks?

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** The RCMP endeavours to investigate all reported or found human trafficking cases. We use the tools that are provided. We have recently updated our human trafficking policy. That includes guidance for investigations as well as referrals to victim services.

As I mentioned, we are also updating our human trafficking education awareness products and training. Furthermore, we are working with survivors of human trafficking to strengthen our investigative policies and procedures.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you very much.

How much time do I have, Chair?

**The Chair:** You have 24 seconds.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** That isn't a lot of time. Maybe I will start and then follow up with you, Mr. Anson.

It's been reported that a lot of migrant sex workers won't come forward because of fear of deportation, especially in situations where they experience violence.

I will leave it there, and then I'll come back in the next round and ask you some questions about that.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We will start our next round. It's five minutes, five minutes, two and a half minutes and two and a half minutes. We'll start off with Dominique.

Dominique, you have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would appreciate it if you could keep your answers fairly brief, because we don't have much time.

Mr. Anson, you talk in your speaking notes about the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking.

As for you, Ms. Van De Bogart, you talk about the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking.

The action plan is from 2012 and the strategy is from 2019.

Does each agency have its own action plan?

Are you working in isolation, each organization on its own?

What is the origin of these plans and strategies? How do they work when it comes to being efficient and operational?

[*English*]

**Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart:** The national strategy to combat human trafficking that we're speaking about today was launched in 2019, but there was a previous strategy that started in 2012. We have been, as the Government of Canada, working collaboratively together since that time to continue to build on this.

It's just building on what was being done with the work that we commenced in 2012.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Thank you very much.

The regular citizens listening today may have some idea of what human trafficking is.

If I were to ask you to show us what a typical case of human trafficking looks like, what would you tell us so that people understand what we are talking about today? What is the typical case?

[*English*]

**Mr. Daniel Anson:** If I had to respond, I'd say it's very difficult because there are a variety of different types of exploitation that, unfortunately, are used by prospective traffickers of humans.

I've tried to learn as much as I can and will continue to learn about this, but there are a variety of different concepts that I think people misassociate with what I would term the "chains of modern slavery". It could be everything from forced labour to sexual exploitation. It is anything that is done to force somebody, against their will, to conduct an activity that is most likely, in many cases, and certainly related to human trafficking, for horrible purposes.

Whether it's forced labour, where it might manifest itself in the construction sector or among agricultural workers where it's exploiting people who arrive in Canada seeking freedom from persecution, or whether it's people being exploited for sexual purposes... Again, my colleague, Ms. Van De Bogart explained that approximately 96% of people are exploited for sexual purposes and of all the people who are trafficked or are victims of human trafficking, 71% of them are trafficked for sexual exploitation purposes.

What does it look like today? It is in all environments. It is in all classes of society. It is in a variety of different industries. The efforts to raise awareness, I think, are some of the best methods that we can do to combat it.

To speak to the point on silos as well, we do work effectively together within the police and law enforcement regulatory bodies. Also, internationally under the partnerships pillar, we are working with international partners to raise awareness—certainly in source countries from which people are potentially trafficked into Canada.

It looks like a lot of different things, and it's something that we are continuing to evolve. Our intelligence reporting continues to provide indicators as to what it looks like today so that we can get better at identifying it and addressing it.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Thank you.

This is about an information campaign that has been launched or will be launched in which you are calling on the public. Members of Parliament around this table have people coming into their constituency offices, people who are coming into the country, such as foreign workers.

How can the public and my colleagues and I look for signs that might alert us? What might we be thinking about, for example? Are

there situations that might alert us and give us the sense that there is something fishy going on with this or that person?

[*English*]

**Mr. Daniel Anson:** I could provide some ideas related to foreign workers and the role that CBSA plays in providing validation inspections of potential foreign workers.

Are people working extended hours? Are work sites cordoned off? Are people not allowed to talk to the public? Are they working weekends? Are there children who are not going to school? There are a variety of different indicators. There's a lot of information available publicly.

If I could maybe finish with this, there is a human trafficking hotline. It's 1-833-900-1010, and if anyone ever has any questions, you can call 1-833-900-1010 and can certainly secure more information. You'll have dedicated expertise to support you and to potentially provide things that you could look for, as well as which police of jurisdiction you might want to refer the issue to.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. That was really important information to get on the record.

I'm now going to pass it over for the next five minutes to Emmanuella Lambropoulos.

Emmanuella.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank all of our witnesses for coming to give us some information on human trafficking and what our government is doing as a response.

Earlier, Mr. Anson, you spoke about the fact that, when people arrive at the border, they don't have a sign that says they've been trafficked. We don't discover it until later on, and there is a short window when an intervention can actually be made in order to help the victim and to make sure things get taken care of.

Is there anything we're doing when people are coming in at these border service offices and doing interviews or whatever it is? I'm not sure how often it happens, but when someone shows up who is trafficked, or when eventually it's clear that they have been, is there anything we're doing at the border that can let someone feel comfortable expressing that they're not in a good place? I know that it's difficult for them to come out and that they're in danger a lot of the time.

Is there anything more that can be done at the border to get these people to feel more comfortable with coming out or seeking help if they're in a situation that they don't necessarily want to be in?

• (1150)

**Mr. Daniel Anson:** It's certainly a very difficult and complex question, because to provide awareness to people who are potentially being trafficked or who, I would surmise, at that stage are likely being smuggled into Canada.... It's very difficult to raise their awareness.

What I would maybe state to address your question, as well as the previous question, is that raising awareness domestically is a really important part of this in ensuring that people are able to identify indicators after arrival in Canada. I can't speak to what could be done at the borders, but what I would say is that what is being done at the borders is that we rely significantly on our border services officers, our BSOs, to apply a very wide range of over 100 pieces of legislation, from the Customs Act to IRPA. However, this is something they are very determined and very emotional about in terms of ensuring this is an issue that we interdict at the border.

What I would provide as a response to give you the comfort that will follow, hopefully, is that, in a circumstance where a situation of suspected human trafficking occurs at the border, the first thing that's going to happen is that the BSO is going to separate the potential victim from the person who is trafficking them. From that point, there is a range of different procedures that will follow and that will be adhered to by the BSO and will likely lead to detention and, potentially, a referral for investigation to the police of jurisdiction or the RCMP. It's at that stage that the person who has been traumatized and is suspected of being trafficked will have access to a range of different services and supports from our federal partners, which are typically offered through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

The other thing I would add is that quite often—and it's something we hear quite frequently—people are afraid to come forward because they risk deportation. Every case is different, but a variety of different support services are available to people who raise the issue of potentially being trafficked: from emergency housing, emergency funding and support services to a variety of different types of status in Canada, whether it's an open work permit for vulnerable workers or a temporary resident permit for victims of trafficking in persons. There is a support mechanism that is in place, and it is immediately actionable at the border. BSOs receive this training so that they have this top of mind and are able to take action to interdict should they suspect that a victim is being trafficked through the border at a port of entry into Canada.

Thank you very much for the question.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** If they are caught later on, is there a risk of their being deported or are they protected? You've said there is a risk and a danger that the traffickers themselves pose to these people. Is there protection in place? Do you work with your partners to ensure they'll have a safe route, let's say?

**Mr. Daniel Anson:** Thank you again for the question. Again, I appreciate your taking this line of questioning a bit more towards a mature response, because I think it's very important to raise some awareness of some of the supports and services that are available.

I cannot speak on behalf of IRCC, other than to state the existence of a variety of different mechanisms that are in place to protect people who might have already been traumatized from being revictimized. IRCC has at its disposal when assessing cases the ability to stay removals. There are preremoval risk assessments that are done prior to somebody's being deported or placed on a removal list. They have the ability to make refugee protection claims. They can also apply on humanitarian and compassionate grounds to stay their removal.

These are in place. These are certainly the domain of our federal policing partners and we support them, as police of jurisdiction and RCMP support them, in providing the information to inform the decision-making about every individual case.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

I'm now passing it over to Andréanne for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I again thank the witnesses for being with us today.

The National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking was launched in 2012 and the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking was launched in 2019. Yet, the numbers continue to show that the number of human trafficking victims is increasing.

You even said that trafficking affects women particularly. According to your latest figures, women and girls account for 96% of cases. That's really striking.

But what's even worse is that we suspect that this is just the tip of the iceberg. It is a very sensitive issue, but it seems that women and girls who are trafficked find it difficult to speak out. They probably also feel a certain lack of confidence about how they can be helped if they report it. They have already said so. Whistleblowing also leads to fear.

Why do the victims not trust the system and the different institutions that deal with human trafficking?

Clearly, there is a problem with lack of trust.

Mr. Anson, please be frank; since the launch of the last National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking in 2019, how has your work evolved in relation to the detection of human trafficking cases?

Do you feel better equipped in 2023 to prevent and detect these cases?

• (1155)

**Mr. Daniel Anson:** Thank you for that question also.

[English]

I cannot necessarily speak to what is not working. I can certainly speak to what is working.

I would say that, thanks to increased support and awareness, the CBSA, in particular, has worked diligently to increase our awareness and to increase and evolve, in an iterative fashion, the range of training that is provided to BSOs, ensuring that our ports of entry are not mechanisms for supporting or facilitating the trafficking of persons, particularly women, girls and gender-diverse people who will then be exploited here domestically.

What else is working is that, specifically from the intelligence program perspective within the agency, we were initially asked to provide.... I think the target was 11 intelligence reports a year that would provide greater awareness, indicators and warnings. To date, since 2019, we've produced over 145. Currently, we're producing approximately 35 per year. These are very detailed, informative intelligence reports that give a list, an enumeration, of different types of things to look for as they evolve and that also highlight and identify that evolving exploitation of our immigration processes. How are they transiting borders? What are the indicators or warnings in a vehicle of somebody who is potentially being trafficked? What are the behavioural, visual and travel patterns that are identifiable by a BSO?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Daniel.

I'm now going to pass it over to Leah Gazan for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I'm just continuing on with Mr. Anson.

We know that the best way to protect women is to use harm reduction approaches. Sex trafficking is certainly an issue. However, according to the CBC, on May 11, 2015, with regard to human trafficking, Jean McDonald, who worked—I don't know if she still does—at Maggie's, the Toronto sex workers action project, said, "People swept up in human trafficking investigations should be offered permanent residency and immediate immunity from deportation."

Based on my colleague's question about the fears of many individuals who are being sex trafficked, the fear of coming forward because of a fear of deportation, do you agree that one of the ways to protect women would be to offer permanent residency in sex trafficking cases so that they feel safer to come forward with information?

**Mr. Daniel Anson:** In terms of the immigration continuum and in consideration of assessing each individual case, I'm not qualified to speak to that. That is certainly the domain of IRCC, and that is an issue, probably, for the case management area within IRCC. I cannot speak to that other than, again, to highlight the fact that there are mechanisms in place and options available to people who already have been victimized or traumatized. Very specifically, they take into account victims of gender-based violence, which I think is a really important consideration. However, it's not necessarily my domain.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Fair enough.

However, in saying that, from your experience, is one of the hesitations or fears for women who are sex trafficked to come forward the fear of being deported, yes or no? Because I have limited time, I think we only have time for a yes or a no.

**Mr. Daniel Anson:** I understand. Thank you again for the question.

I would say that, in general, there is always reticence to report for a variety of different reasons and a multiplicity of situations that surface. Most particularly, people who arrive through smuggling channels do not necessarily have legitimate status in Canada. If you do not have a real passport or the status to be employed, as a foreign national.... It's another situation where somebody would be absolutely apprehensive to raise that.

In terms of fear of deportation, again, that is something I'm not necessarily able to speak to, but it's a natural inference.

● (1200)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass it over to Michelle Ferreri.

Michelle, you have five minutes.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Thanks, Madam Chair.

Thank you so much to our witnesses for being here. It's a very important topic.

My riding is Peterborough—Kawartha. It's right along the 401 corridor. I'm curious about what you guys think. Again, I'll open up this to anybody.

Mr. Anson, it may not tie into you as much, but perhaps Ms. Demers...?

The 401 corridor seems to be an extreme hot spot for human trafficking. What do you think we could be doing to stop that?

**Cpl Jennifer Demers:** Thank you for the question.

We've been working in partnership with organizations such as Via Rail—it travels right along the 401—and other police of jurisdiction to bring awareness to what they are seeing, the targets and how to manage that.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** There's no particular program per se, other than this communication among the organizations. Is there anything key in place that says that this is the program we're working on, right now, to target this?

**Cpl Jennifer Demers:** We work together in partnerships. We share information. It's a priority for all the partners with whom I personally work. We know this is an area of risk. We share awareness products and training pieces. We're in constant communication with each other.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you.

Ms. Van De Bogart, one key thing that I think would be critical to solving the problem or crisis is data. I have first-hand witnesses in my community. Again, a young woman who was homeless was a victim of trafficking. She didn't get the media attention. Nobody really looked for her. Her mother fought tooth and nail. They were able to find her because of social media, but I don't even know that she would have been reported.

How do we close this gap in data? As my colleague Ms. Gazan said, the numbers aren't truly reflective of how big this is. How do we fix that?

**Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart:** Thank you for the question.

You're right. This is a crime that is under-reported, and we know that. We work closely with Statistics Canada to garner data, so we can inform our strategy with as much data as possible.

I will go back and talk about awareness. We've talked about the fact that we need to ensure Canadians understand what human trafficking is, the signs of possible human trafficking and how to report signs of human trafficking. Under our prevention pillar, Public Safety has been doing a lot on awareness campaigns. We spoke, earlier on...how would you describe human trafficking? In 2021, we launched our "It's not what it seems" campaign, because a lot of Canadians don't understand that many people are trafficked by their boyfriends or intimate partners, or by people they know.

I think data collection is absolutely key. It's an area we need to continue to work on, but awareness is key as well—among the general public, but also in service industries and places where people are trafficked. We're working on some guidelines right now in four key areas to support frontline workers in the service industry, so that they can better understand the signs of human trafficking and—if they see it—know how to report it.

I think that's one way. We can work to ensure people understand. They can report, and that reporting becomes data.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you. That's very helpful. Even my own children, right now.... My son is in grade 8. He came home.... They did a great symposium on human trafficking. That's how a lot of change happens. Our kids come home and educate us. I know it is changing. I never learned about it in my years at school. It is good to see that.

Ms. Taplin, if I may, once a victim is identified and provides a statement or evidence, what steps are taken to provide resources to the victim, in order to prevent them from returning to that lifestyle? We know the person who has taken them has coercive control. It's very challenging to get back into a healthy lifestyle and have trust again.

• (1205)

**The Chair:** I'm going to interrupt here because we're getting so close to the end of this panel. If you want to provide a brief over-

sight, perhaps the rest of that could be in writing because there will be so many steps to that on what we can do.

I'll allow only 15 seconds for that answer, and then pass it over to Marc Serré.

**Supt Kimberly Taplin:** Mindful of the time constraint, I'll note that the RCMP provides and works with victim services at the local level and nationally. We refer all victims to the appropriate victim services within the community to provide extended services to those victims. I'm happy to expand on that.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

Thank you so much. We greatly appreciate it.

Marc, you have the last five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I also thank the witnesses for their testimony.

My first question is for Ms. Van De Bogart from the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Ms. Van De Bogart, you mentioned the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline. The committee has just completed its study on mental health. In that study, we heard that there are many gaps in terms of municipal and community services for trafficked women and girls. You said that victims have access to the hotline 24/7 and are referred to the right service.

What information can you share with the committee about the gaps and challenges that staff face? They sometimes have to recommend services that don't exist or differ between small and large municipalities.

**Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart:** Thank you for that question.

[*English*]

I know you're going to be hearing directly from the hotline next. I'm sure they'll be able to provide some specific information there. I will tell you they provide services in over 200 languages. It's not just for victims, but it's also for people who may have some questions about seeing somebody they may think is human trafficked, so I know you'll be asking them detailed questions.

I would say that, in addition to the work being done with the hotline, in the 63 projects we funded, and specifically 20 from a public safety perspective to grassroots organizations across the country, we've done that purposely because we know one size does not fit all. We know we need to be able to support those communities that know their own communities, know what's going on within their communities and what services they require.

I would also just quickly say that, when we did our initial consultations to build the strategy in 2018, we heard three key principles from our over 200 stakeholders. In order for the strategy to be effective in anything we do, it needs to be culturally responsive, trauma-informed and survivor-centric. We built our strategy on those three principles. Like I said, in the commitments within our strategy we ensure those principles are enshrined in there. Gaining support and confidence from victims, in order to be able to report, and from survivors, to be able to reach out for assistance, is really important. We don't want to retraumatize. We don't want to revictimize. I think that's important as well.

I will just lastly say that we are doing an official evaluation of this current strategy, because we are in the last year. That official evaluation is going to help us in identifying gaps and challenges, in celebrating successes and actually in shaping the restructuring of the renewal of the strategy moving forward.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you, madam.

My next question is for Mr. Anson, but Ms. Van De Bogart can answer it as well, if time permits.

Mr. Anson, earlier you talked about the fact that you don't necessarily have control of refugees at the borders. We also heard that the number of people being trafficked is increasing.

Recently, we have heard through the media that more refugees from Panama, Colombia, and Haiti will be arriving in the United States and Canada in the next few months. As a result, the number of human trafficking victims may increase.

What steps have you taken?

What recommendations do you have for the committee?

• (1210)

**Mr. Daniel Anson:** Thank you for your question.

[English]

Just to clarify one point, we absolutely are a significant point in the process. Bringing refugees into Canada is not something that we've necessarily lost control of. It's not necessarily an issue, but it's something I'm not speaking to today.

Regarding the specific question you asked, though, yes, there are refugees from new countries of origin who are arriving in Canada. There are continually evolving migration patterns, both regular and irregular, through official and unofficial channels and processes, whether those be smuggling or, in certain circumstances, trafficking.

Our intelligence reporting is exactly the way the agency adjusts and continues to modify our approach regarding specific countries

of origin. There are a lot of different changing and evolving migration patterns, day to day and month to month, and in many cases they're subject to the events or the geopolitical situations abroad, as well as to the changing legislation of some of our partner nations, certainly within North America and in Central and South America.

Intelligence reporting allows us to continue to assess what percentages and proportions of these arriving populations are potentially victims, users of human smuggling networks and chains, and what types of organized crime groups are supporting these processes, but also which nations are potentially presenting more frequently as the ones producing victims of human trafficking. That is exactly how the agency is focused and continually evolving with respect to the threat.

**The Chair:** That's excellent. Thank you so much.

We have allowed this panel to go a little longer, but we got a lot of information that is really important to building the foundation for our study.

I'd really like to thank all of you for coming and providing that information. I know there have been a few requests for follow-up, so we'll be following up with you on those as well.

We will suspend for about one minute because we have people to get in here immediately. I will ask for the exchange of the panel, and we'll get started immediately.

• (1210)

(Pause)

• (1210)

**The Chair:** The meeting is resumed. I would like to welcome our witnesses today, and I'm just going to advise that all sound checks were completed and have been successful for the panellists.

Today, from the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, we have online with us Julia Drydyk, who is the executive director. We also have, in the room, from Creating Opportunities and Resources Against the Trafficking of Humans, Kyla Clark, who is the program coordinator.

Thank you very much for joining us. You will each have five minutes for opening statements, beginning with Julia.

Julia, you have the floor for five minutes.

• (1215)

**Ms. Julia Drydyk (Executive Director, Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking):** Thank you.

Thank you so much to members of the committee for having me here today.

My name is Julia Drydyk, and I'm the executive director at the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking. The centre is a national charity dedicated to ending all types of human trafficking in Canada. We work to mobilize systems change by collaborating and working with various stakeholders to advance best practices, share research and eliminate duplicate efforts across Canada.

In May 2019, the centre launched the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline, a confidential, multilingual service that operates 24-7 to connect victims and survivors with social services and/or law enforcement if they so choose.

I want to share three truths with you today that I've learned throughout my time at the centre.

The first is that no one really knows how pervasive human trafficking is in Canada. The few datasets that we do have are incredibly limited in the information they are able to capture. This means that the number of marginalized individuals who do show up in our datasets represents only the tip of the iceberg. That said, the information we do have is concerning.

A staggering 90% of survivors who contact our hotline identify as female. This finding may be intuitive to some Canadians, but it provides additional evidence that human trafficking and particularly sex trafficking need to be understood and addressed as gender-based violence. We also know that approximately 2% of the victims and survivors who contact the hotline identify as transgender men, women or gender-diverse individuals. This means that these groups are eight times more overrepresented in the data relative to their share of the population.

Governments must do more to understand how trafficking impacts high-risk communities, including how it's perpetrated, discussed and understood amongst these groups. We all need to do a better job to tailor our supports to meet those unique cultural needs.

The second truth is that human trafficking is a symptom of much deeper socio-economic factors. Trafficking can happen to anyone, but those who are most economically disadvantaged are at greater risk.

In 2017, the United Nations found that Canadian institutions have historically denied Black Canadians equitable access to economic opportunities. This has led to higher levels of poverty, poor educational outcomes, incarceration and health disparities amongst Black Canadians. We know that this is also true for other historically marginalized groups, including indigenous women and girls, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and migrant workers. Governments need to work holistically to address the economic inequality that makes exploitation and human trafficking possible in our country.

The third truth is that we need to be thoughtful and careful about when and how we involve law enforcement. Many survivors fear police for very understandable reasons. In most cases, survivors are seeking access to counselling, shelters and other services when they call the hotline. Speaking with law enforcement is simply not a priority for the majority of survivors who contact us looking to exit their trafficking situation.

Fortunately, some police agencies are responding to this feedback. In Ontario, specially trained police services are actually stepping back and allowing service providers to lead. This allows service providers to stabilize the situation by addressing a survivor's immediate needs and building trust. Later, police, who have been trained in trauma-informed care, are then brought in to initiate their investigation. We need to see more police agencies examining and adopting this model across Canada.

I want to share one last observation on the limitations of our criminal justice system.

In Canada, there's an overreliance on testimonial evidence to prosecute human trafficking cases. Victims are often reluctant to share details about their exploitation for fear, shame and difficulty recalling traumatic experiences. We know that the court process in and of itself can be very traumatizing, which acts as a disincentive for survivors to seek justice.

Within this context, maybe it's unsurprising that the current approach rarely leads to successful convictions. A 2019 Statistics Canada report found that less than one in 10 trafficking charges results in a guilty verdict. Canada's low prosecution rate is concerning. It's telling us that human trafficking continues to be a high-reward, low-risk crime.

Finding justice for victims while reducing harm will require a significant shift away from standard practices. We need to move towards approaches that better leverage other types of evidence.

I want to thank the committee again for inviting me to speak with you today. I'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

**The Chair:** Wonderful. Thank you very much.

Next we have Kyla Clark.

Kyla, I'll pass the floor over to you for five minutes.

• (1220)

**Ms. Kyla Clark (Program Coordinator, Creating Opportunities and Resources Against the Trafficking of Humans):** Thank you very much for inviting me here today to share my thoughts on how to combat human trafficking, especially human trafficking of youth in Canada.

Creating Opportunities and Resources Against the Trafficking of Humans, or CORATH, works with youth and young adults aged 12 to 24 in and around the Ottawa area who are experiencing or are at risk of human trafficking, most often for the purpose of sexual exploitation.



Having been with the Roberts Smart Centre and CORATH for nearly two years, I have seen first-hand how vulnerable youth are to being trafficked and have observed a significant shift in the age of our clients. Since CORATH's inception, we have observed the average age move from 16 to 12 and 13. This may be linked in part to changes around the online browsing habits of youth since the start of the pandemic.

Social media is a powerful tool for our youth and provides instant access to people they may not have met otherwise. In one instance, we had a youth who friended somebody via Instagram and within the hour was engaging in sexual activities. It can take mere minutes to make friends online, assume they are safe and then meet them in real time.

In this digital age, smart phones provide 24-7 access to hypersexualized media and pornography. It's easy to access, it's free and it's hard core.

Dr. Gail Dines noted that the average age of first viewing of pornography, whether intentionally or accidentally, is estimated by some researchers to be 12 and anecdotal research suggests as young as eight. This type of online exposure undermines the healthy development of our children and youth, and has contributed to school boards taking on an almost frontline role, seeing the need for bold action against the threat of sex trafficking of school-age children.

We have also seen important changes to how youth are being exploited, making it clear that a combination of approaches is needed to protect our youth.

The place to start is with education and awareness. We need youth, their families and the public to know about the risks of human trafficking, to understand the tactics that traffickers use to recruit and to ensure youth have the tools they need to protect themselves.

Many of the youth we see at CORATH have benefited from learning about recognizing unhealthy relationships, strategies for setting clear boundaries, online safety and transportation safety. Many youth take public transit to get around without adult supervision. This is a prime recruitment location. Many are also trafficked via public transit.

In another instance, we had two 12-year-olds who were bored during COVID and began to ride the buses and trains. Within a couple of weeks, they had met some older youth, started using substances, changed their makeup and were appearing with new gifts.

To that end, we need public transit personnel trained to identify and intervene in cases of human trafficking, knowing what sexual exploitation can look like, recognizing instances of grooming and understanding how to intervene. Similar to public transit, training should also be available to hotel employees and others in the service industry, who may encounter human trafficking.

You may have heard the saying that human trafficking can happen to anyone, regardless of their socio-economic status. That is true, and we have seen cases with youth from all backgrounds. However, we can't ignore that some youth demographics are more at risk than others. Many youth who are at risk of being trafficked come from vulnerable populations, such as those experiencing

poverty, homelessness, familial rejection due to gender identity, cultural discrimination or trauma. We refer to these as the invisible identities.

It is critical that we have systems in place with readily available access to support and with resources, including safe housing, mental health services, education and job training. A one-size-fits-all approach to reaching and servicing these communities will not work.

**The Chair:** You have about 30 seconds left. I know you have one full page, but you have 30 seconds.

**Ms. Kyla Clark:** CORATH itself is a collaboration between the Roberts Smart Centre, the Children's Aid Society, the Elizabeth Fry Society and the Youturn Youth Support Services. This collaboration needs to continue in order to combat human trafficking.

We need to use a trauma-informed approach, including lived experiences and survivor voices in policies, programs and policing. We can prevent trafficking, support victims and build a safer and more just society for all.

Thank you.

• (1225)

**The Chair:** Thank you guys so much.

We are going to start off with our first round of questioning. It's six minutes each. We'll start off with Dominique.

You have the floor for six minutes.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon to our two witnesses.

My first question is for Ms. Julia Drydyk.

In your brief, you say that "Governments must do more to understand how trafficking impacts high-risk communities, including how it is perpetrated, discussed, understood [...]"

What exactly do you mean by "must do more", Ms. Drydyk? What are we to understand from this recommendation, this wish you have expressed?

[English]

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** Human trafficking is experienced very differently in communities across Canada. Depending on where you are or what your background is, the language is different and what it looks like is different. We need to be working in partnership and funding frontline organizations so that we're really in tune with the realities on the ground.

Unfortunately, the term “human trafficking” is a dirty term among most of our youth in Canada. It takes a lot for someone to identify as a human trafficking survivor or victim. Sometimes they choose to never do so.

We need to see targeted, thoughtful and evidence-based outreach strategies so that we're developing materials for prevention but also supporting and being responsive to the realities on the ground.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** This morning, people have told us how big, sprawling and tightly woven the web is. Even the police forces have a hard time penetrating it, seeing into it.

Is that your opinion as well? How are we, as parliamentarians and as a committee, going to get it right?

[English]

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** A lot of the people we serve have real fears and issues in engaging with law enforcement. When you look at the people touched by human trafficking and the calls to the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline, the biggest group is actually the victims and survivors. That's followed by friends and family.

One of the reasons I think we're seeing this big increase in human trafficking is that we are seeing progress on awareness and education. As more people are given the tools to be able to detect what might be happening in front of them, they're reaching out for help. That's great news.

I think that we really need a community-based response to this. Many victims and survivors of trafficking are reinforced to be afraid of cops. They're told that they are doing something illegal and wrong. The shame and the stigma are intense. In many ways, that's a reality of their experiences. We need to be working with schools, community groups and parents to break through that web, because so many of the barriers to coming forward to law enforcement are so real. Many victims and survivors are also coerced or forced into conducting criminal activity for their trafficker's gain.

We need to be creating safe spaces where the individual is protected and their human rights are put at the very forefront of whatever interventions are put in place.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Where does this fear of talking to police forces come from? In life, police forces are supposed to support and protect us. I think that is their mission.

Why is that not working for these victims? If they don't know you, if they don't know about you or the hotline, what happens if they can't go to the police? What causes them to fear going to the police?

[English]

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** As a tool to coerce their victims into the commercial sex industry, traffickers will often try to isolate individuals from their networks, their friends and their family. They're lied to. They're told that they will get in trouble or they will get arrested.

I also cannot overstate the stigma and the shame that are imposed on victims and survivors as part of their trafficking, because they are engaged in the commercial sex industry. If you look at the issues of sexism and the oversexualization of women as well, and how they are told to feel guilty and bad about it, that is one of the things that are holding people back from coming forward to law enforcement.

In reality, law enforcement is quite low on the list for survivors who contact the hotline. The first thing is usually to find emergency housing and case management. That's where you have a service navigator who's walking with you to access basic needs and services, as well as supportive counselling. It's usually several calls in, or sometimes years down the line, when an individual feels ready to engage with law enforcement.

Where we see the most positive outcomes for the individual is when they're able to access those community supports to exit their situation and start rebuilding their lives. We hear this from survivors daily. The stigma and the shame that are imposed on them make them feel isolated and unable to access help.

• (1230)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** I understand.

If I understand what was mentioned earlier, there will be enhanced training for RCMP members. When it comes to violence against women, there needs to be a specific approach.

Madam Chair, I think my time is almost up. Am I right?

[English]

**The Chair:** You're almost done. You have about 10 seconds.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** All right, I'll stop here.

[English]

**The Chair:** All right.

We're going to pass it over to Anita Vandenberg.

Anita, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you so much to both of our witnesses for being here today.

I have a few questions about the awareness and education piece.

Before I do that, I want to pick up on something that, Ms. Drydyk, you said. It has to do with the housing.

One of the stakeholders in my riding that I've engaged with is the Child and Youth Permanency Council of Canada. One of the things that they're doing is on the danger period when children age out of care. Children who are in the child welfare system, when they turn 18, they have no family, they have no resources and suddenly they are out in the street. That is the moment. Many of them, of course, are indigenous and racialized. That's when there is nothing for them and many of them end up trafficked. In my constituency they are looking for a way to create housing, maybe special dedicated housing that would be trauma-informed in terms of locked doors and things like that.

I'll start with Ms. Drydyk, but I can see that Ms. Clark is nodding as well. Can I get you both to answer about that particular piece?

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** I'll start.

Housing is the number one biggest need that's requested for a referral service through the hotline. This often looks like emergency housing when they're trying to exit, but it's precarious housing and lack of affordable housing solutions overall that are putting our youth in this vulnerable situation. It's disgusting to say out loud, but traffickers actually look for individuals who aren't having their basic needs met in order to lure and groom them into sex trafficking.

While a lot of the awareness materials talk about luring and grooming someone with expensive purses and clothes, unfortunately more often than not it's also the promise of a safe place to sleep and the promise of unconditional love. While there are absolutely needs for trauma-informed shelters across the country, we also need to be looking at the affordable housing situation.

I want to say on the emergency shelter issue that we're seeing it crumble across the country in small communities and large. We will even get calls in the middle of the night from survivors looking to exit in cities as big as Ottawa and Montreal, where there's not a single shelter bed available in the city to house them. That doesn't even mean that they are necessarily trauma-informed or suitable for the needs of survivors. Really, we're seeing the housing system's collapse directly aggravate the experiences of human trafficking in our country.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Clark.

**Ms. Kyla Clark:** I would add that one of the barriers we're coming across is substance use. A lot of housing that is available requires somebody to be in recovery with no active substance use.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** What about the particular piece about children aging out of the child welfare system?

**Ms. Kyla Clark:** Yes, that's been an interesting avenue, I would say. We do have a couple of organizations here in Ottawa that have a house for women who have been trafficked.

On the aging out, working with CAS they have been willing to keep kids on their caseload up until 21. That has helped give us extra time to develop those life skills so they can be successful.

• (1235)

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Thank you so much.

My other question is about the awareness. Both of you talked about education and awareness. You mentioned the transit system, which is something I wouldn't have thought of. There's obviously in the general public not much awareness about the extent of this but also about where children are being targeted.

We obviously have to reach people where they are. I've seen night clubs where in the women's bathroom there are posters, and the men wouldn't necessarily see that these posters are there. Things like that. I wonder if you could tell me more about how we reach the people who need to know about this and also how we reach the people like the family members who don't know that they need to know about this—but they do.

I'll start with Ms. Clark.

**Ms. Kyla Clark:** We do have a 24-7 support line as well. We get a lot of calls from concerned parents just trying to figure out what this could possibly be and what's been happening.

I just lost my train of thought. I'm sorry.

I think it's boots on the ground. It's going where the youth are hanging out. Locally, the Rideau Centre is a big one. The Gloucester Centre is a big one. It's even working with mall security and having them able to recognize the signs of grooming and things like that.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Ms. Drydyk.

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** I think we need multiple methods and different ways of starting a conversation in communities and at home. We absolutely need to be meeting youth where they're at. As much as it's very hard to be having conversations about sex and this type of sexual activity with our youth, we need to start having these be dinner table conversations because simple messaging isn't enough.

Unfortunately, we are still trying to fix some of the problems that came with really poor education previously, where someone appears to be handcuffed to a radiator with a man's head looming in the background. I've heard from survivors that thinking that human trafficking needed to involve kidnapping or forceable confinement actually kept them in their trafficking situation longer.

This really needs to be about having open conversations in our schools, in community centres and in the media that talk about the spectrum of unhealthy relationships, intimate partner violence and gender-based violence, and that give youth the tools to identify it and exit sooner rather than later.

We did a comprehensive campaign last year—

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you. I have to cut you off. We do have more questions.

I'm going to pass it over to Luc Thériault.

Luc, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank both witnesses. That was very interesting.

Earlier we had people from the Border Services Agency, the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I was a little dismayed to see that if we were to rely strictly on these measures, we would not achieve much in the fight against human trafficking.

I understand that the clandestine nature of this activity and the fact that victims are duped by a so-called good Samaritan who only has malicious intentions contributes to their isolation. It is almost impossible, as witnesses told us, to detect them when they cross the border.

You work closely with victims. I understand that the steps we take upstream are necessary, such as outreach efforts, and that downstream we need to take care of the victims. However, I would like to know what to make of their statements and their perception of policing, so that we know what the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the police services and the Border Services Agency could do more or less of.

Is there an answer to that that might have emerged from conversations you had with victims or from your work with them? If not, that's okay. I'll have more questions for you. Perhaps Ms. Clark, who is in the room, can answer first.

Would you have something to say in reply to that question?

• (1240)

[*English*]

**Ms. Kyla Clark:** I can add some thoughts.

Generally we're seeing that youth have had many encounters with police already up until that point...before the exploitation. That's sort of where this disconnect happens. It's based on their previous experiences.

I think that if service providers and law enforcement could work together more effectively, then we wouldn't be retraumatizing the victim by having them tell their story six or seven times—whether it's a police officer, the hospital or this person or that person. I know that in Ottawa the officers go in plain clothes. They don't make the victim come to the police station. They can meet them in the community and try to bridge the gap in that way.

Thank you.

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** The vast majority of individuals who experience trafficking where the CBSA is involved are those migrant workers who are coming into Canada through temporary foreign worker permits and are largely experiencing labour trafficking in our agricultural and manufacturing sectors. We recently conducted research with 77 migrant workers from across Ontario, and the biggest call to action they had—or among the biggest—was to get information about their rights before they arrive in Canada, at arrival and after.

Unfortunately, the telltale signs of exploitation don't normally occur until after they have actually gone through the turnstile at immigration and realize they were sold a completely different bill of goods than what they signed up for when they were coming to work in our farms and in our manufacturing sector.

It really is about making sure that they have information about what their rights are, making sure that it's information in their mother tongue and at appropriate literacy levels, and making sure that they're getting that information consistently, because often it is a spectrum. It doesn't start off as labour trafficking or as sex trafficking. Usually there are earlier stages of exploitation, perhaps poor working conditions or unpaid wages. It's that, combined with the element of coercion and fear, where you see it fall within the Canadian Criminal Code definition of human trafficking.

Really, we need continuous supports and services and proactive educational campaigns targeted to those individuals in order to see a difference.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** We know that the pandemic has exacerbated a lot of the factors that cause this, including isolation, I would expect.

What impact has the pandemic had on your organization? Have you experienced an increase in cases, a lack of resources? Are you still feeling some effects from the pandemic? Can you describe the current situation as it relates to the pandemic?

Ms. Drydyk or Ms. Clark can answer. I always address both witnesses.

[*English*]

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** I can definitively say that human trafficking did not go down during the pandemic. We've seen a significant increase in calls and cases identified over the last few years, but part of that also might be as a result of our targeted education awareness. Following last year's Human Trafficking Awareness Day, we've seen a 50% increase in calls to the hotline, but we're not sure if that's attributable to COVID, the general state of affairs or because there's more awareness out there.

What I can say is that the biggest impact we've seen has been on our frontline service delivery partners. When the pandemic hit, over 80% of services either closed entirely or had to drastically change the way they were operating. We saw some great commitments from all level of government to fund additional services, but those are drying up.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass it over to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much.

My first question is for Madam Drydyk.

Can you share how your organization defines sex trafficking and sex work? Is it the same, or is it different?

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** Put very simply, human trafficking is the exploitation of someone else for your personal gain, so not all consensual sex work has anything to do with human trafficking. In fact, they're completely different.

Where we look at human trafficking is when there is another individual who is threatening, coercing and enforcing someone into the commercial sex industry and where they are profiting. It's also where you see individuals not feeling able to exit, again, because of the fear and the threats imposed on them.

• (1245)

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much. I have a very quick follow-up.

I asked that question because the Butterfly Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network indicated in an article from March 2019 that racialized and migrant workers—I'm reading directly—"are often subjected to surveillance, harassed, arrested, detained, and deported, even when there is no evidence that they have engaged in human trafficking."

They are less likely to go forward should they be in trouble because of how they are criminalized for what they are doing, and it actually places them more at risk. It's not surprising to me that in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls they actually support a legalization of sex work as harm reduction and protection for women, girls and two-spirit people.

This is a question for both of you. We know that there was research done. It was titled "Trafficking at the Intersections: Racism, Colonialism, Sexism, and Exploitation in Canada". The article concludes that:

...discourse about human trafficking is...often disconnected from a critique of racial and colonial oppression. Public policies prioritize law enforcement, support for victims, and individual vigilance, but leave matters of structural change, community and personal healing, and social justice under-explored. An effective fight against human trafficking must also work to ameliorate the underlying structural oppressions and historical legacies....

Kyla Clark, I know that you mentioned housing. You spoke about kids aging out of care. In the national inquiry, I know that aging out of care and kids in care are seen as a pipeline for MMIWG.

For example, you spoke, Madam Drydyk, about the issue around housing. I put forward a bill for a guaranteed basic livable income. I think it would be a game-changer, for example, for kids aging out of care, to provide people—whether they're in sex work or even trying to exit sex trafficking—real resources and real choices and even not to be exploited in violent relationships or situations. As you said, it's not "purses" that people want. It's housing, food and shelter that lure a lot of people into sex trafficking.

I'm wondering if you could comment on that

I'll start with you, Kyla Clark, and then I'll move to Madam Drydyk.

**Ms. Kyla Clark:** I think you've touched on a really important point in terms of a livable wage. Another barrier to this is that victims and survivors often don't have any identification. That's a barrier to housing, bank accounts and things like that.

There's a lot of talk about... A lot of the laws have been made around this idea of an ideal victim: They're white, they're straight and they're part of the heteronormative community. I think it's really important that we are bringing in and talking about the MMIWG, individual identities and youth who identify as 2SLGBTQ+.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you very much for that.

Go ahead, Madam Drydyk.

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** I absolutely agree that we need comprehensive social change to actually end human trafficking, which is my and my organization's mission. A lot of this is coming about because there are individuals who are preying on people who are vulnerable because of systemic forms of oppression and discrimination.

While there is a lot of effort going into unpacking and unlearning a lot of what our institutions have imposed on us over the years, the legacies of racism, colonialism and sexism in our policing systems are still experienced by people every single day. That is also why we say that you can't arrest your way out of this problem. It is about deep-seated social inequalities. A lot of that comes from income inequality, poverty—

• (1250)

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I want to ask you a question about that. I've been very clear that I think we need to refund communities and put those resources into communities rather than into policing oppression and human rights violations. Would you agree?

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** We have seen some of the best outcomes where they've done just that, for example, in Durham region and other areas where victim services are the primary outreach and communication tool to engage with people who might be experiencing sexual exploitation and cops take the back seat. I agree.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Perfect.

We have one more round. In terms of minutes, we'll go with five, five, two and a half, and two and a half, and then we'll call it quits.

I'll start with you, Michelle, for five minutes. I know that you're sharing your time with Anna.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Yes. I'm sharing my time, so I'll be as quick as I can.

Thank you both for being here. It's great witness testimony. It sounds like you've maybe worked with some of the folks in my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha as well, so I really appreciate your information.

I'm really curious to know whether you've ever gone down the avenue of working with former perpetrators or restored perpetrators who could help in better understanding what makes a human trafficker, and going at it from another angle of helping the victim. As well, from an education perspective, how do we educate our young boys, our young people, on how not to do that?

I guess I'll start with you, Ms. Drydyk.

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** Timea Nagy has been on the forefront of this, but I'll share some of what she has learned. Just like individuals can be lured and groomed into being trafficked victims, we see that traffickers are also lured and groomed into being traffickers. Again, this really looks at the underpinning of the issue of how Canadians are growing up to do such horrible things. A big part of it is misogyny and patriarchy, but it's also what happens when you see such high rates of poverty and growing income inequality. It means we're forced to go at each other instead of working together.

I think a holistic approach is really needed to get at the root cause of how it's possible that anyone treats anyone in this way.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Anna.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to refer to a case from January 18, 2018—I know that this is a justice law case—where a perpetrator had his conviction overturned on May 18, 2022. Instead of serving the 17 and a half years he was supposed to serve, he was able to cut it down to six years. He will be out in less than six months.

You mentioned earlier the use of schools and community groups to help with safe spaces. You also mentioned that they are afraid of police officers. You stated earlier the fear that people have in coming forward. I think our laws are broken. I think the penalty does not meet the crime. It doesn't fit the crime. I have spoken to police officers and they're frustrated. In the particular case I referred to that was overturned, the young lady, who was referred to as "PL" and who won't be named, was afraid to come forward. She knew that her perpetrator was going to be out on bail. He had threatened her and her family. How do we prevent that?

Julia, would you like to take that?

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** Yes. These are all very real and rational concerns that victims and survivors have. It makes perfect sense not to go through the criminal justice system when this is what they're dealing with. There are revolving doors when it comes to traffickers coming out and then threatening potential victims. We also see that court cases take two to three times longer than any other court cases in Canada, with really low conviction rates.

I think we also really need to look at latent bias within the judiciary. Too often victims, when they're being cross-examined, are treated like they did this to themselves. Excuse my language, but they are slut-shamed. They are told that they made decisions and that this was their boyfriend. It's similar to how we've seen other forms of rape and sexual violence cases not perform in the best interests of victims and actually achieving justice.

I think we need to flip the dial and provide more training of the judiciary.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Would you agree that this bail system is not working for the victims? From what I've heard, speaking to police officers, they're just as frustrated. They put these guys behind bars. Then they're let out and they go ahead and basically once again victimize the victim, who is afraid. They're afraid to come out. They're afraid because they fear for their lives and their family's lives.

We have to fix the bail system before we can get this problem fixed. Do you agree?

● (1255)

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** I agree. Also, many victims and survivors choose to just escape and exit. They'll go to a safe house and put their safety first before risking it in order to engage in criminal justice system. There is not adequate safety and protection. I would say that our criminal justice system is failing survivors of sexual violence and failing survivors of human trafficking in Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We're now going to go, online, to Sonia Sidhu.

You have five minutes.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to both of you having great testimony. My first question is for Ms. Drydyk.

In Ontario, research has shown that 90% of victims are female and 42% were first trafficked before the age of 18. What are the primary factors that contribute to the increased risk of human trafficking, especially with women, girls and gender-diverse people in Canada?

Also, we talked about the migrant workers. Any population that is on a study visa is also impacted.

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** That is very accurate. We see that international students are vulnerable to exploitation.

The list of potential risk factors is almost never-ending. It comes down to a place of not having basic needs met and being socially isolated. You also see the compounding issues of racism, colonialism and sexism on top of that.

There's not one thing to look for. When you look for people who might be vulnerable to human trafficking or be at risk, it's individuals who might be having problems at home. They don't know where they're going to sleep that night. They're not getting consistent food. They're not having stability in their lives.

Again, it's having a country where there is an actual strong and robust safety net for every child to have a safe adult to go to. Not everyone is born into a family where it's their parents. It's making sure that our school systems and community networks are well equipped and framed to make sure that no child falls behind.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** I have a follow up question.

Your 24-7 confidential hotline is in multiple languages. How can we work together to integrate prevention with schools, with institutions and with other populations that you just mentioned?

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** If we're going to end human trafficking, this is all about prevention.

I often tell people that if something feels wrong in their gut, it probably is. The benefit of our being a completely confidential hotline that's independent of law enforcement and of government is that we're able to talk to someone based on their unique circumstances.

Sometimes people are afraid because they're worried it's like 911, whereas we're completely the opposite. We're able to share information, be a trauma-informed and safe place to talk, and just kind of work through what the situation is and what their options are.

Again, it's 24-7 and it's available in over 200 languages in Canada.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** How does your centre work with raising public awareness? What else can we do so it can be more effective to work to end human trafficking in Canada?

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** We do what we can as a charitable organization to do national education awareness campaigns.

What we really need to see, as a whole-of-Canada perspective, is that all provinces are acting similarly and in line. For example, the Government of Ontario has invested more than any other province—even probably per capita—in anti-human trafficking initiatives. They're also mandating school boards to provide anti-human trafficking education in the schools. Not all provinces are doing that.

We know that there are human trafficking corridors going through Ontario. Those are extending across the country. Really, if any province does not have a human trafficking strategy in place, then people are going to start falling between the cracks. Again, traffickers will go to those jurisdictions where they're less likely to be detected and where it might be easier to lure, groom and profit off of this exploitation of our youth.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you.

Ms. Clark, do you want to add to that?

**Ms. Kyla Clark:** I would add that a lot of our youth struggle to even identify that they are being trafficked or exploited. That can take months, if they ever do decide. That is a barrier to getting them the help they need.

In terms of the prevention piece, I think it's important that we are teaching kids in school about healthy relationships and what that looks like, and about Internet safety. I think that will arm them and serve them well when they're faced with these situations going forward.

• (1300)

**The Chair:** You have 30 more seconds.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** For the last comment, can the faith communities help them in that mission or provide some more resources?

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** Absolutely. I often hear from survivors that had there been one adult they could trust, they could go to and who could show them they were loved and that they had options, it would have made all of the difference.

I think it's about equipping our faith communities with information about the realities of human trafficking.

**The Chair:** Thank you. We have to carry on, because we're getting over time here.

I'm going to pass it to Luc for the next two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** Thank you.

Ms. Drydyk, at the end of your presentation earlier, you talked about the limitations of the justice system. Ms. Clark talked about police methods, including rehearsed testimony. You say at the very end that one in ten charges results in a conviction. And so you advocate other types of evidence that are not testimony-related.

What other types of evidence do you mean?

[English]

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** FINTRAC has done work to trace some of the financial proceeds and gains from illicit crime. Usually, it is also connected to other forms of illegal activity. That's where you can see other forms of money laundering. It can also be tied to guns and drugs.

Currently, we are working with other organizations to explore the use of artificial intelligence and alternative sources of data. However, Canada's lack of a regulatory system to do so ethically, while protecting the civil liberties of all Canadians, makes that very challenging.

If we can find a way to work collaboratively, so that we can get forms of evidence that aren't solely based on victim testimony, it could go a long way towards achieving higher rates of justice.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** In terms of artificial intelligence, concretely, what sorts of things are you are talking about?

[English]

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** This is very hard because it's hard to think about how to do it in a way that does not conflate human trafficking with consensual sex work. We do see that there can be trends through online escort sex work ads, where the same phone number is used, and other potential indicators of human trafficking. Again, the potential risk, in terms of impinging on individual civil liberties and safety and conflating human trafficking and sex work, is very hard, but it is something worth exploring.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** So you want us to address the problem based on the fact that a very powerful tool, namely artificial intelligence, is used to recruit people. That's interesting.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Luc.

The final round of questions goes to Leah Gazan for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much, Chair.

Building on what you said, Ms. Drydyk, strategies to keep people safe are often decided by individuals who either don't have any experience or currently aren't being impacted by systems. I'm a big proponent of investing in communities and frontline organizations that really lift up the voices of the people who are involved.

In saying that, certainly, that's my bias. People who are involved or have been impacted should be setting the agenda and deciding how they can be best protected.

Do you have any thoughts about that? I'd also ask Kyla Clark.

**Ms. Julia Drydyk:** Engaging and including individuals with lived experience as part of decision-making, but also program design, is just simply evidence-based best practice. How would someone without any experience of what this looks like be able to come up with a solution out of the blue? It's not how the world works.

I completely agree that we need to make sure there are survivors who are a part of every stage of the solution to human trafficking, and doing so in a way that does not just exploit them for their own lived experience and story but involves them more meaningfully as to what the solutions actually look like. We're starting to see a lot of emerging best practices in that across the country.

• (1305)

**Ms. Kyla Clark:** Just to add to that, conversations like this one are really important, so that we can bring in those survivor voices and that lived experience to really make our work trauma-informed. This is how we, instead of going downstream, go upstream and pull people out of that river.

**The Chair:** I would like to thank Kyla and Julia. Thank you so much for coming to today's meeting.

Before everybody escapes the room, last week you would have been sent a media advisory regarding the human trafficking study. I want to have approval so that we can send that out. I wasn't sure if we had given ourselves blanket approval or not, but I'm wondering if we can get a motion to approve it.

There is a motion to approve from Michelle Ferreri.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Fantastic.

Today's meeting is going to be adjourned in a second, but thank you so much to the witnesses, once again.

We'll be meeting again on Thursday at 3:30.

The motion to adjourn is coming from Marc.

Today's meeting is adjourned. That's awesome. Thank you.









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