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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, everyone. Welcome to meeting number 63 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

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 would like to make a few comments for the benefit of 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 mike and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For interpretation, those on Zoom have the choice at the bottom of their screen of THE floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel. As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair. For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can and we appreciate your patience and understanding in that regard.

In accordance to the committee's routine motion concerning connections tests with witnesses, I'm informing the committee that all witnesses appearing virtually have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

Before we go on to the study, I just want to bring up one other thing. Danielle is saying that I'm going all off my notes.

For everybody, there is a vote today at one o'clock and the bells go off at 12:30. I did speak earlier to Sonia about the fact that we do have witnesses and the opportunity to work through the bells and to perhaps vote virtually, or something like that. Before we get into this, I just wanted to bring that up to everybody and address that because we would be asking for unanimous consent at the time to continue to proceed through the day, so that we would not send our witnesses home without being able to question them.

I'll leave that for right now, but when the bells do ring, we will need unanimous consent to continue.

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

Before we welcome our witnesses, I would like to provide this trigger warning. This will be a difficult study. We'll be discussing experiences related to abuse. This may be triggering to viewers, members or staff with similar experience. If you feel distressed or if you need help, please address this to the clerk or myself.

We've had a little bit of switch up. Just to let you know, there was a little bit of change this morning. I would like to welcome our first panel.

From the Exploitation Education Institute, we have Tiana Sharifi, executive director. Online we have, from Timea's Cause Incorporated, Timea Nagy, chief executive officer and founder. In person, from Persons Against Non-State Torture, we have Jeanne Sarson, co-founder, and Linda MacDonald, co-founder.

We will be providing you each with five minutes to begin. When you see me start rapping my pen, that's time to wrap it up.

We're going to start with Tiana for the first five minutes.

You have the floor.

Ms. Tiana Sharifi (Chief Executive Officer, Exploitation Education Institute): Thank you very much.

Madam Chair and honourable members of the House of Commons, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. Today I'm very honoured to be here in person. My name is Tiana Sharifi. I'm the CEO of Exploitation Education Institute, formerly known as SEE, Sexual Exploitation Education. I personally have been working in the field of human trafficking for 10 years and have educated over 80,000 Canadians in my time. I come to you today as someone who has knowledge and experience in this field, as a woman and as a mother.

For background, Exploitation Education Institute, while based in Vancouver, B.C., specializes in the prevention of child and youth sexual exploitation across Canada. We do so through consulting services. We were contracted last year by the international cyber-crime research centre and have co-authorship of research regarding the presence of human trafficking on escort sites.

We have presented at a nationwide RCMP training...for law enforcement across Canada and are presenting an educator sector training...through the Canadian sexual exploitation summit in a couple of days, as well through our educational programs. Our student educational programs are supported by the Ministry of Education in B.C. and other school boards across the country. Just from this January until now, we have educated over 20,000 students and 7,000 adult groups, be they parents, teachers or service providers.

I share with you this experience, because I wish to shed light on how the pandemic has transformed grooming and recruitment into sex trafficking in Canada, as well as what we find makes for effective prevention programs.

Throughout my time working in this field, I've seen the issue of human trafficking and sexual exploitation shift and change markedly with the emergence of the digital space. I believe this shift must be reflected in any current and future studies relating to the issue of human trafficking in Canada.

You may be aware through Statistics Canada that the majority of human trafficking victims are Canadian citizens within our country, and that almost 70% of police-reported victims are under the age of 25. You may be aware of the traditional grooming methods into sex trafficking, including the boyfriending process, or what we would refer to as the "Romeo pimp", or by way of their recruiters, who lure their victims through the promise of a luxurious lifestyle or basic needs, which ultimately leads to their sex trafficking.

While these traditional tactics continue to exist both in person and digitally, social media platforms and influencers, those who have a strong presence or carry a strong following online, have now shifted the very nature of grooming into sexual exploitation.

Sexual exploitation can be defined as a minor engaging in sexual activity in exchange for something. This is what we refer to as a need, an exchange for a need, whether this need is for shelter, drugs, financial security, protection or love. This demonstrates the very complex nature of this crime, which we must keep in mind, because the victimized party perceives that they, too, have benefited in some shape or form by getting their needs met.

While traditionally we would define vulnerable populations of sexual exploitation to be those who lack their basic needs, such as for drugs, shelter, family—for example, youth who run away or who are in foster care—the digital space has shifted this traditional label. When online, youth seek to meet their higher level needs, such as belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization. These are the needs that all minors and adults are constantly striving to meet. Therefore, we are finding that minors who typically would not fit the traditional mould of being at risk have now become so by means of the Internet.

On one hand, the pandemic has exacerbated the vulnerabilities that come with being online. A nationwide isolation has led to a greater need for connection amongst children and youth. Our organization has heard first-hand about an alarming number of children and youth who admit to having sought romantic relationships or flirtatious encounters through social media platforms that they are on. This has only increased since the pandemic.

On the other hand, particular platforms whose popularity only grew since the pandemic are now grooming minors with the promise of a luxurious lifestyle by means of influencing. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram have demonstrated to our younger generation that anyone could potentially come into fame or fortune, with much of this being directly connected with their hypersexualized content and objectification on these platforms. The more scandalous and sexualized you are, the greater your likelihood of likes and follows.

• (1105)

I wish to disclose that I am on TikTok. I find it both entertaining and informative, because the algorithm understands that I'm a mother and my interests.... I get that particular information. However, if you are a youth, the algorithm that you are provided with—and I know I'm supposed to wrap up now—is very different.

All I want to end on here is that self-exploitative platforms, which include TikTok, OnlyFans—

The Chair: Tiana, we'll get some of this during the questions.

Ms. Tiana Sharifi: Okay.

The Chair: I am sure there's a lot more to come.

We're going now to Timea, who is online.

You have five minutes. You'll see me flashing cards up here.

Go ahead. You have the floor.

Ms. Timea E. Nagy (Chief Executive Officer and Founder, Timea's Cause Inc.): Thank you so much.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today.

My name is Timea Nagy. I was trafficked to Canada from Hungary 25 years ago, and 10 years later, I became an advocate.

As an advocate, I lent my survivor voice to several federal and provincial law changes related to HT. I sat on a number of national and international task forces. I have done hundreds of interviews for research projects funded by the government. Most of the time, I lent my voice, time and resources on my own budget, hoping that the research outcome would be heard and that fundamental changes would be made.

I started Canada's first privately funded safe house, where we offered 24-7 mobile victim care for victims and the police. I assisted hundreds of victims and investigations. I won more awards than I can count. I became the face of human trafficking in Canada—

• (1110)

The Chair: Timea, I have to interrupt for a second. We need you to move the microphone up a bit more toward your mouth—not at your mouth, but a bit farther up, toward the nostrils. There. We're good.

I know you have so much to offer, but could you slow down just a tad, so that we can catch up?

Go ahead, Timea. You have the floor.

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: Thank you.

We achieved a lot as an organization, and yet we didn't receive funding year after year, so we closed our agency in 2015. During my time as an advocate, I reached over a million people with my story and trained over 200,000 professionals and service providers. Working with victims, police, service providers, banks and governments, I came to the conclusion that our government was only interested in band-aid solutions. I have sat in this very seat year after year, telling government officials the same thing over and over again, only to realize that real changes aren't going to come.

Human trafficking is a symptom of everything that is wrong with our society and systems today. Our CAS is in desperate need of reform. We have a housing crisis; an unhealthy, toxic, unsafe pop culture; endangering online content in the name of freedom of speech; and a sitting government that is in favour of defunding police, a catch-and-release bail system and fully legalizing prostitution. Let's not forget the grant system, which is designed not so that everyone can thrive but to keep them broke and constantly struggling for funds. This grant system is pitting organizations against each other instead of encouraging them to work together.

You may say that we should look at all of the great work you've done and tell me how serious this government is about fighting this crime. If that's the case, then my question is this: How come we still don't have mandated training in Canada for law enforcement or service providers? Did you know that approximately 70% of our frontline police officers are not even trained in human trafficking? There are police officers who don't actually know the signs of human trafficking.

What about our nurses, health practitioners, doctors and mental health professionals? To my knowledge, we have about three long-term safe houses in Canada to serve up to 40 individuals for up to two years. That is for approximately 50,000 victims. How can we possibly sit here and say that we are very serious about fighting this crime when there's no mandatory training, no sustainable funding and no national collaborative effort? Where is our national strategy? We had one. I'm not sure what happened to it. We have begged and pleaded for years with all governments to put real funding behind a national prevention strategy for our kids. We still don't have one. Instead, we are left to go to schools on our own time with our own resources to make uncoordinated efforts to prevent kids from being trafficked. That's something the government should have done years ago.

We also have a sitting government that is revising mandatory minimum legislation, such as the mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years for trafficking in individuals under the age of 18. Instead, federal judges choose not to use the punishment because it's too harsh. I would like them to tell that to the victims as well.

We have also created a habit of giving out millions of dollars to organizations that have never worked with victims of human trafficking but that look fantastic on paper. We survivors are also asked to lend our voices and expertise to build programs and policies, only to find out that our suggestions are constantly cut out. Programs, safe houses and services are getting kick-started and funded that we don't actually need or that we as survivors don't actually benefit from.

The system is designed to treat the outcome of the human trafficking crisis and is designed to keep the victims in the system. Survivor leaders with programs designed by survivors for survivors are constantly being denied funding. Did you know that—

• (1115)

The Chair: Please hold for one moment.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): The translation is not coming through. The French is coming through on the English channel.

The Chair: Okay.

Danielle, I'm just looking for translation...

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): On my English channel, French translation is coming through.

The Chair: Timea, please wait one second while we sort this out.

Dominique, would you speak in French so that we can test the system?

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): All right.

Good morning to everyone. Happy Monday, I hope you have a good start to the week and a productive week.

We have an exceptional chair.

[English]

The Chair: You're awesome. Thank you so much. You are exceptional. Fantastic.

Timea, I'm sorry about that holdup. We'll go back to you so that you can finish.

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: Thank you.

Did you know that it costs \$785,000 for the next 20 years for any sitting government to take care of a victim once they are being victimized? If we have approximately 50,000 victims in Canada, please do the math. How much money does it cost the government or us, not to mention the emotional toll that the victim has to go through in rebuilding their life?

It is pretty simple: We either make serious efforts to put serious investment behind the cause to effect real change, or we are going to continue to treat the symptoms and not the root causes.

If we can put \$300 million into quit smoking campaigns, I'm pretty sure that we can find the funding to fund effective changes.

In closing, we have enough expertise. We have done the research. We have held enough hearings like this. We know what the problem is and we also know how to fix it.

My question today is to the government and the committee before me: Are we going to make some real changes this time, or are we going to spend the next 10 or 15 years again talking about the same thing, continuing to act out of crisis and making empty promises?

The Chair: Thank you so much, Timea.

I'm going to pass the floor over to Persons Against Non-State Torture.

Linda, I believe you're beginning. You have the floor.

Ms. Linda MacDonald (Co-Founder, Persons Against Non-State Torture): Thank you.

I'm Linda MacDonald, and this is Jeanne Sarson. We are activists and retired public health nurses with over 30 years of expertise supporting women who were trafficked and tortured, mainly by their parents when they were little girls, other human traffickers, spouses and in prostitution and pornography—all involving informal networks and organized crime.

We coined the phrase “non-state torture” to differentiate the torture by the everyday person versus persons employed by the state. Referring to the “patriarchal divide model” on the first page of our brief submitted to you, I point out that some acts of torture occur by both state and non-state torture. The only difference is the perpetrator.

Some of the acts listed are electric shocking, water torture, forced drugging, dehumanizing psychological torture and sexualized torture like gang raping.

Gang rape is a very common torture act. The woman or girl is raped on the first day of captivity by as many as five or more men. This is called “breaking in” by the traffickers, with the goal to destroy the woman's or girl's relationship with herself. This brutal act is so shattering that women often become suicidal. Nursing research shows that the more severe the violence, the risk for being suicidal increases.

As a nurse, I cared for a woman named Lynne, who was trafficked to Ontario from Nova Scotia by her husband and his three male friends. She was kept in a windowless room, fed nothing but water and rice, handcuffed to a radiator and tortured by a steady

stream of men for four and a half years. Some of the men were police in uniform. She was raped with guns, knives and was forcibly aborted five times. She was dehumanized, never called “Lynne” by them again, only being referred to as a piece of meat. With non-state torture informed care, she healed, regaining her dignity and sense of self.

In Canada, these horrendous acts of torture, when inflicted on women and girls, are called “assault” versus “torture”, which is clearly discriminatory.

Ms. Jeanne Sarson (Co-Founder, Persons Against Non-State Torture): I will follow Linda. My points relate to the universal non-state torture questionnaire that is on page 2 of your brief that we submitted.

There were 49, mostly women, respondents, and 24% were Canadians. The 48 non-state torture acts reflect victim-centred language they used to tell of the non-state torture crime done to them.

There are interconnections between the physical, sexualized, psychological and mental non-state torture crimes listed. For example, being sat on makes breathing difficult. It is physical non-state torture, which becomes sexualized non-state torture with oral raping because it compresses the chest and women fear they will not be able to breath and will die. This is psychological non-state torture.

This also relates to choking, strangulation, forced ingesting of the perpetrators' body fluids and the fear of vomiting and being forced to ingest their vomit terror, and horror and fear of going crazy and being pathologized as mentally ill versus being respected as victims of non-state torture crime and human trafficking.

Survival responses include understanding dissociation, suicidality, self-cutting and struggling with everyday coping. Sexualized health issues can include surgical vaginal repairs, hysterectomies, repair of rectal prolapse and sterility.

Recommending Criminal Code amendments to criminalize non-state torture crimes would hold traffickers accountable for the non-state crimes they inflict. Criminal Code amendments would educate society about the severity of human trafficking and foster developing non-state torture victimization, traumatization-informed care and promote the healing ability of women and children.

We are submitting seven other of our published articles and a chapter to advance human trafficking education and knowledge, and we will leave you a copy of our book, *Women Unsilenced: Our Refusal to Let Torture-Traffickers Win* as resources.

Thank you for listening to the voices of women.

• (1120)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to start with our first round of questioning with six minutes for each party. We'll start off with Anna Roberts.

Anna, you have six minutes.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of the witnesses for being here. This is an important study, and through our research a couple of weeks ago, we were able to visit many areas across the country to learn a lot. I agree with every single one of you: I don't think that as a government we are doing justice to female victims.

I'm going to start my questioning with Timea.

It was a pleasure to meet you a few weeks ago, Timea, and thank you for the book. It's very heartfelt and very sensitive. I can understand why you are doing what you're doing to help victims.

I have a couple of questions for you. First off, you mentioned that there is a lack of funding. Would it be possible if we as a government were to implement a law to ensure that, for all perpetrators and users, all the assets were seized and that money were put back into helping the victims? That's my first question.

My second question is, why are judges not applying the maximum sentences to these perpetrators? As a mother of a daughter, I would possibly go crazy if something like that were to happen to my own child, so why are these judges not understanding the importance of maximum penalties? Let's be honest; if you follow the money, and if you don't punish them for what they've done, they're never going to stop.

Can I get your comments on that, Timea, please?

Thank you.

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: Yes. Thank you so much.

First of all, if we are to have a law whereby the proceeds of crime would actually end up going back into victim care, then we would have to fix the grant system first. You take the money out of the trafficker's hand, then a john's hand, and everybody's hand, and then you put it in a pile, and the pile will end up in a broken grant system, and a broken grant system is the one that is going to eat up the money again, and the money is not going to go where it needs to go.

My suggestion is that if we take the money away from the proceeds of crime, we just have to reform the granting system so that the money would actually go to the rehabilitation of the survivors and/or directly back to the victims who worked really hard and made \$300,000 to \$400,000, or \$500,000 for the trafficker.

So that's one, and to answer your second question, I actually don't know why. I have done a little bit of research on it. The judges who have decided not to go for the harsh sentences have said that these would be too harsh. Then I don't understand why we have laws. Why do we have laws if the judges are not implementing our laws? That used to be what their feedback was, that it's just too

harsh. It's too harsh of a sentence for a young individual to go to jail for 10 years for trafficking somebody.

That's the answer we used to get.

• (1125)

Mrs. Anna Roberts: So you—

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: And again, we have a sitting government that is not interested in being very effective in implementing these laws. They are not putting pressure on the judges, at all, to implement the law that has passed.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: You mentioned the catch and release.

Are a lot of the perpetrators getting out there and revictimizing the victims so that they won't testify? Is this why they're getting away with it, because if we're going to let them out on bail, then there's nothing stopping them from antagonizing the victims and their families. Would you say that's accurate?

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: Absolutely.

What is the point of catching them if they're only going to get released? What do you tell the victim? Yes, please come to testify. Pour your guts out, be scared, be intimidated. Face your trafficker in court, who told you that if you do that you're going to be killed, only for the victim to watch this guy walk out on bail.

Literally, what's the point?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Thank you.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Okay. I'm going to address my next question to Linda and Jeanne.

Thank you for the work you do. It's very important.

I would say to you, based on the same questions that I asked Timea, do you think that we should implement a law where the assets seized from the perpetrators and users are put back into things like the safe houses for helping the victims?

Ms. Linda MacDonald: Yes, certainly. These should go back to the survivors, for sure. I do agree with that, yes.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Do you agree with changing the law to make it tougher? These are children. These are our children. These are the people who, hopefully, are going to become adults and be productive citizens of this country. Why are the laws not changed to protect our children?

I don't feel that the sentencing.... To me, 10 years is not enough. It should be 25 years.

Ms. Jeanne Sarson: Absolutely. I agree.

I can give you an example of what happened in Nova Scotia for why the law and judges are not taking it seriously. There's the example of a mother whose 16-year-old was trafficked. When the mother was in court, listening to the conversation, they were calling her daughter a "sex worker" instead of a victim of human trafficking, so the misogyny creeps into the system. It's sexualized, and to think that a 16-year-old is called a "sex worker" when she was trafficked, in itself is, to me, violating the crime, and that's going on in a court of law.

The other thing, for us—

The Chair: Jeanne, thanks very much. I'm going to have to go over to the next round. We're just trying to keep everything as equal as possible.

I'm going to pass it on, for the next six minutes, to Jenna Sudds.

Jenna, you have the floor.

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

I'd like to thank all of our witnesses for being here today and, of course, for the important work you do each and every day.

As you've heard, the committee has had the opportunity to visit various parts of the country. We have really been digging deep into how we can do more on this issue.

First, Ms. Sharifi, from my understanding, your organization had three prongs of work—the consulting piece, the training and the education. On the education piece, you referenced in particular programs in B.C. working with school boards. Your testimony really strikes a chord on the need to reach young people and educate young people. You're in B.C. in school boards. What are the barriers to expanding that more broadly across the country?

• (1130)

Ms. Tiana Sharifi: Interestingly enough, Ontario is the only province that has mandated this kind of education. B.C. has not. B.C. is actually very behind.

In order to even get into the schools, we've rebranded our programs. Anti-human trafficking education is healthy relationships education, consent education and cyber safety education; otherwise, the issue is not taken as seriously. We're within different school districts, and the ministry approves of our programs, but the understanding is that we deal with relationships and consent and cyber safety as a means to get the information about human trafficking and its root causes out there.

I strongly believe we need a countrywide emphasis on prevention education. If you want to deal with just human trafficking as it is as the issue, you're too late. I believe we have to mandate this education as young as elementary school in addressing the root causes to any form of exploitation.

Ms. Jenna Sudds: Thank you for that. It certainly resonates, I think especially as you were stating on the impact of the pandemic in the digital age—kids, young girls, are on these platforms, as you've mentioned, at a younger and younger age—and ensuring that they understand, which is very difficult, the risks of being lured in.

As you go into the schools, around that social media piece what methods are you using, or how are you reaching those young people so that it's actually resonating? I think that needs to be, as you've said, replicated across the country.

Ms. Tiana Sharifi: What we try to do is take a lighthearted approach. If you come into a school just trying to create fear and shame, it won't hit the kids as effectively as games and activities and humour would. We really approach it from a very lighthearted perspective. As well, in that sense, schools are much more accepting of bringing us in.

When we educate, and I think this is also important, many victims of human trafficking do not define themselves by that definition. When it comes to minors, most of the victims of sexual exploitation don't identify as being exploited, so the language we use is very different. We don't say "predators", because to them, whoever they're talking to is not a predator. It's a "friend" or a "follower". We don't use the language that they're being "human trafficked", for example, or "the five warning signs of a pimp", because they don't identify with that. We talk about "relationships that might lead to exploitation".

We come from a space of empowering them and giving them agency where if you're going to be online.... It's not to say don't speak to anybody, or don't do this and don't do that. That's not as practical. Instead, we provide them with tools—for example, these are the things you should watch out for that could lead to an exploitative relationship or an unhealthy friend or follower. I think that language is very important.

Again, it's about addressing those root causes and making them aware of the vulnerabilities they have; aware of the personal needs they're lacking that they're trying to get met, whether in person or digitally; and aware of the healthy alternatives.

Ms. Jenna Sudds: I think you can then contrast that with the messaging that's necessary to go to parents. I think that's very different.

Ms. Tiana Sharifi: Yes. Absolutely.

Ms. Jenna Sudds: What does that look like? How do we reach the parents of these young people?

Ms. Tiana Sharifi: As a parent myself, I think the worst thing we can do is overburden other parents with a sense of responsibility that is not practical. I know this is not the standard approach, but I believe that telling parents they should absolutely have 100% wherewithal of what their children and youth are doing online, for example, is not practical. It's overwhelming. Parents don't know how to do that.

Instead, what we do with parents—and I think this is really important for any kind of adult education—is ask, "What are those communicative tools, so that you can have open conversations with your children and youth?" Instead of knowing absolutely every platform that's out there and all the risks of every platform that's out there, talk to your kids about what platforms they are on. What are they interested in?

I'm sorry. I could go on for hours. Again, we just have to make it more relatable and ground-roots.

• (1135)

The Chair: I'm sorry. It always happens, but I was waiting for you.

Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass it on. I want to make sure that you have translation, if you don't speak both French and English.

I'm going to pass it over to Andréanne Larouche.

You have the floor for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Sharifi, Ms. MacDonald and Ms. Sarson, thank you for being with us today. Your testimony was gripping, and it underscores the seriousness of human trafficking of women, which should not exist anymore in 2023. Women are being treated horrifically.

Good morning, Ms. Nagy.

We met in Winnipeg. I remember our discussions. They helped me see the problem of human trafficking in a whole new light. The two days we spent at the Canadian Human Rights Museum at the beginning of April were very interesting.

What has stayed with you from the discussions we had with all kinds of participants with a stake in this issue?

[*English*]

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: I left that conference feeling extremely discouraged.

As such, I made a personal decision to leave this space, as a survival advocate, in about a year. The reason I did that is I cannot believe that after 15 or 20 years, we are sitting at the human rights museum and still only talking about the problem, instead of starting to talk about solutions.

I was so discouraged by that conference. When I saw corporations and large organizations spending their time, effort and energy sitting in for a two-day conference, talking about the problem they've been talking about for years, that's how I felt.

That conference led me to a personal decision to leave the space after 15 years.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Nagy, the discussions were rewarding, but I came to the same conclusion as you. Unfortunately, things are not moving fast enough. I agree with you wholeheartedly.

You brought up the issue of national strategies, and I would like to talk more about that. We've been talking about national strategies for over 15 years already, as you said. A first plan was proposed, followed by another national strategy. In short, the national strategies and reports add up, but very little changes.

What progress would you like to see? Why are these national strategies piling up and being pushed aside? Why aren't things changing?

It's clear that those types of crimes are on the rise.

[*English*]

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: Thank you. I love your questions.

There are several reasons. Governments are coming and going, and different governments have different priorities. Unfortunately, human trafficking is just another political issue. Different governments have different perspectives on this issue. The Liberals have a different view of this issue, the NDP have a different view of this issue, and the Conservatives do. The truth is that it should not be a political thing; it's not a political issue. It's not a cause that you need to pick up just before elections to get elected or push it away so that you can get more votes.

The numbers are speaking for themselves. The research is the same today as it was 15 years ago. I'm so sorry, but I didn't catch the name of the lady who was talking about the education. I loved her point of saying that it's too late now. It's too late. We said 15 years ago what would happen in 10 years if we didn't do this. We had approximately 5,000 victims 10 or 15 years ago, and now we are estimating there are 50,000.

What needs to be done? We need a comprehensive national effort. We need to put in the work and we need to put in the funding. We need to make investments in systematic changes by investing in organizations that are offering prevention and providing national prevention—a real investment in preventing this. At the same time we need to put investment into those who have already been victimized and help them to reintegrate back into society. We need to stop the Ping-Pong reaction where we just throw money right, left and centre, and there's no coordination whatsoever.

We have answers. We know what we need to do. We just need to start doing the work. There are regions, like Peel Region, that have done phenomenal work. We have best practices left, right and centre. We just need to actually take this seriously—just like all of the other presenters have said earlier.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: So you would say, Ms. Nagy, that there is a lack of political will.

There is also the whole issue of coordination. The problem of human trafficking involves several departments, such as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Public Safety Canada and the Department of Justice. As you said, detection is one thing, but helping the victims is another. We also need to do a better job of identifying the number of victims and helping them get through this.

Not only do we need to think about prevention and how to help, but also about detection.

[English]

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: Yes, absolutely.

There is a way to do it. You can create a national coordination centre that would be funded by all of the ministries that you just mentioned and actually start the work. It's literally as simple as that.

The Chair: Thanks so much, Timea.

We're now going online. We have Lori.

Lori, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannaamiik, Uqaqtittiji.*

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of the witnesses. It's my privilege to sit here with you today. My colleague, MP Leah Gazan, wasn't able to attend. I do appreciate the testimony by all of the witnesses and the incredible work you're all doing to help make sure that women and girls are safe.

I will be directing all of my questions to Ms. Timea Nagy. I'm very impressed by your statements and the work you're doing.

I understand your call for a national investment in national systemic changes and ensuring that we have better services for victims. I wonder if you could give a bit more information on what services should be available to survivors to support them in their reintegration process.

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: Thank you so much.

I believe there should be programs available that do not just focus on the victim mindset—immediate shelter, money and immediate safe housing—but on employment and life skills training, such as how you handle money and how you get back to your life. A lot of the programs that are being funded focus solely on putting a victim in a safe house or in a program for two years, treating them like victims, with everything being done for them.

That means that two years are taken away from this individual for potential personal growth. For two years this victim is basically forced to stay in the system on welfare, and so and so forth. The time spent on that should be reduced. Instead of putting them in long-term safe houses, offer them transitional stages where they get assisted living slowly. First they pay \$20, then they pay \$80, and so on, transitioning them out of victimhood to survival to try to work and be healthy members of society.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Thank you so much.

With your expertise in ensuring that survivors are getting the supports they need, I wonder if, in your opinion, your organization receives enough funding to address the violence experienced by survivors of sex trafficking.

• (1145)

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: You might be shocked to learn this, but I've been in this movement for 15 years and my organization and my former charity have never received any funding. We were denied for probably 15 grants in total. We spent in total \$40,000 applying for these grants, and we were constantly denied, including pro-

grams such as you mentioned: employment programs, self-development programs and so on.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Could you explain some of the reasons your grants might have been rejected, and could you provide recommendations to make sure that the great work you do is not rejected?

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: I would love to give you an explanation, but we were never given any. It's usually, "Unfortunately, at this time.... Thank you so much".

Ms. Lori Idlout: I'm sorry to hear that.

I would like to turn to a different area. I understand that you are currently working with the police. Could you explain what training you are providing to the police?

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: Thank you so much.

My current branch of Timea's Cause is called TC Online Institute. We created an online education and training program for law enforcement for the very reason.... It's affordable, and everyone can get it. The hope was that eventually the government would reach out and we could work with the government to put this training out. Unfortunately, again, we were denied funding and support for that. So, now the police agencies are kind of left to their own devices and whatever grant they can get to purchase these courses. The good news is that the up-to-40-hour human trafficking detection course is now being adopted by the Canadian Police Knowledge Network, which is Canada's top online institute for law enforcement.

We have the potential to reach all police officers in Canada, but, again, it's not a mandate; it's just hit and miss, whoever wants it. The Peel Regional Police took the initiative to mandate that all 2,200 officers get our training. Other agencies came along as well, but we are far from reaching all officers. The training has received five stars so far.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Would you have any recommendations to the committee to make sure that more training is being provided to the police?

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: I do. Unfortunately, I understand that, once the government says it's a mandate, then the government has to put money behind it, which is usually not the case. My suggestion would be, yes, make the training a mandate federally. I don't see that happening, but that is definitely my recommendation.

The Chair: Lori, thank you so much. You'll get back two and a half minutes shortly.

We're going to start on our second round. It's going to be five minutes; five minutes; two and a half minutes to the Bloc and two and a half minutes to the NDP. I'm going to start off with Dominique.

Dominique Vien, you have the floor for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would also like to thank this morning's guests.

As Ms. Larouche said, we have heard some very disturbing, blood-curdling testimony. Unfortunately, we can well imagine that trafficking of women, and men as well, exists in this country. However, when it happens within a couple's relationship, within a family, how horrific!

Thankfully, we talk a lot about the victims. This committee gives a lot of space to victims and survivors. I don't want to give space to these men, to avoid glorifying them.

On the other hand, I want to ask you this question: what do we know about these abusers? How do we manage to track them down and stop them?

Ms. Nagy, I'll get back to you a little later. I saw you raise your hand and I'm glad to see your interest.

Maybe we can start with Ms. MacDonald or Ms. Sarson, as they are the ones who told us about this chilling case.

What do we know about these abusers? Can we catch them? What happened to the husband and his friends who chained up the man's wife and abused her? What happened to these men?

• (1150)

[English]

Ms. Linda MacDonald: Of the perpetrators we know, none of them have ever been taken to court because the women are too terrified to go to the police because they're not believed. They're seen as mentally ill when they talk about torture in Canada. We only want to think about state torture. If they go to torture centres even, they're told they don't fit because their crime is not state torture.

The husband and those three men, I mentioned, nothing ever happened to him. Nothing's ever happened to any of the parents of women who have come forward. They are well-respected people living in the community—politicians, police, doctors, lawyers, many of them upper class and very powerful. They're still walking the streets, the torturers we know. That's a very tragic story.

If we had a law in Canada, then women might feel comfortable in saying, "Yes, torture does happen to me. I know you believe it because we have a law."

Then we would start getting the data. We would start educating the police, the judicial system, the health care system, all of the systems and provide services of healing for women and girls who were tortured.

Right now there are no services for them of any kind.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Ms. Nagy, you have the floor.

[English]

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: Thank you. I love your question

We've been saying for many years that we also need an equal amount of research and work done on the traffickers. Again, funding wasn't provided, so we ended up getting private funding. It took me eight years, but I visited a jail to interview Canada's most dangerous offender and the most famous pimp in our history. I sat down and had a two-day interview with him to find out his side of

the story. When I listened to his story, I realized he was sexually exploited. He was raped. He fell under the radar. His father was an abusive human being. Of course, under those traumatized childhood circumstances, he, instead of becoming a victim, turned out to be a perpetrator.

In his testimony in jail he talks to the young pimps who are coming into jail and traffickers. In his opinion 70% to 80% of those traffickers who are traffickers today have a very similar childhood story. When I keep saying we need prevention, I don't just talk about the need to prevent little girls from being trafficked. I'm talking about little boys needing to have this conversation about being a pimp and being a trafficker not being an answer to their childhood trauma.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: That was actually the focus of this committee when we talked about domestic violence or violence within a couple. We said that we need to educate young boys about this issue. We need to do prevention and educate people about this issue.

Ms. Sharifi, you talked about five signals that are available online which women can use. In a nutshell, what are they?

[English]

The Chair: Timea, just because it's been so crazy with technical difficulties and things like that, I'm going to ask you to make that response in writing to our committee about the five that you talked about. We'd appreciate it. If you could write that to our committee, I'd really appreciate it.

Thank you.

I'm sorry, Dominique. I'm cutting you off.

Sonia, you have the floor for five minutes.

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

I want to share my time with Marc Serré.

I want to say thank you to all the witnesses today, and a special thanks to Timea.

I know [*Inaudible—Editor*]. Thank you for all the training you did under Chief Nishan and Deputy Chief Marc. You trained 2,200 officers.

There's one thing I want to put on the record. We are all working on this. Even the parliamentary secretary is engaged on this matter. We are working towards a solution and the funding you were talking about.

We all know it's helpful that the Peel police are working hard to combat human trafficking. Can you tell us how it could be effective to train all police officers in this?

• (1155)

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: Thank you so much. I appreciate your question.

Obviously, we need a comprehensive effort. Training police officers is one of the first important steps. If a police officer attends to a call where the victim is at the very beginning of this journey and recognizes the signs, they have the opportunity to have a conversation and get this victim out of the situation—before the victim ends up in this situation for longer than a month, two months or a year. The sooner the victim gets pulled out of the situation, the shorter amount of time they'll be traumatized and the shorter time they'll need to heal and rebuild their life.

When I say it costs \$785,000 per person to rehabilitate a victim, that is when a victim has stayed in that extremely harmful situation for a longer period of time. The shorter the period of time a victim is in the situation and the sooner they are recognized, the sooner they'll be pulled out of the situations and can rehabilitate their life and find their way back to society.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will pass my time over to Marc.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Sonia.

Thank you to all of the witnesses.

I have two questions. The first is for Tiana.

We went to northern Ontario and Sault Ste. Marie. Over the last five years, we've heard of more gangs coming in. Obviously, human trafficking is related to gangs. We've heard that from other witnesses.

You shifted the focus to the social media aspect. With the pandemic, the role of social media now is enticing and making things a lot worse. We've had some government legislation. The big companies don't like us doing anything related to.... They'll call it “censorship” or whatever. It's big tech.

Can you give us some specific recommendations on what we can do, as a federal government, to regulate TikTok, YouTube and Instagram? This is a big issue, especially for young boys and girls.

Ms. Tiana Sharifi: Absolutely. That's a very loaded question.

In an ideal world, we wouldn't have platforms for individuals like Andrew Tate, who has normalized e-pimping, or the platform OnlyFans. I think that, practically speaking, you can't censor these platforms. Kids will find a way around it, even in countries where they've banned social media platforms. Children and youth find different VPNs to get in.

Again, I come back to prevention and the emphasis on that. I think it's even more effective for our government to recognize that a key piece of human trafficking is coercion. This coercion is happening through particular platforms that are normalizing self-exploitation. I believe the numbers we're seeing are actually exponentially higher, because we're seeing a lot of youth and children being groomed into self-exploitation. They are normalizing pimping each other and not defining it as “human trafficking”. Once they turn 18, all of a sudden they're consensual sex workers.

To reroute your question, I don't believe there will ever be true censorship. In an ideal space, of course.... If we could do that, it would be amazing. I think the more important thing to do is to un-

derstand the coercion aspect of human trafficking and educating on that.

The Chair: Thanks so much.

We're now going to pass it over to Andréanne Larouche for two and half minutes.

Andréanne, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Ms. Sharifi. If I have time, I might come back to you.

Ms. Nagy, I saw you nodding your head on the issue of online violence and I know that this issue was discussed during the two days in Winnipeg. Most of the witnesses, including Ms. MacDonald and Ms. Sarson, mentioned that there has been a change with respect to these crimes and sexual exploitation during the pandemic.

We also know that legislation is currently in the works at Canadian Heritage to address online violence.

What do you think should be included in such legislation to ensure that these crimes are recognized and can be addressed?

• (1200)

[*English*]

Ms. Tímea E. Nagy: Thank you so much.

Again, I'm going back to Tiana's point, we just need a national strategy as far as prevention is concerned. We need to start a campaign, just like we did with non-smoking and seat belts. We need to start educating our children and parents about healthy consent, what is human trafficking and really putting out a national campaign about what human trafficking is, including digital safety, and such.

If you start educating and going directly to the source of who needs to be educated and legislate that and make that a law, such that every single incoming 12-year-old or 13-year-old needs to receive this education, then it's the kids who are going to grow up eventually who are the ones who are going to end this cycle of exploitation, because they're going to know better not to engage in these kinds of conversations online. We just need to give them the tools.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Sharifi, you were talking about coercion. In a few seconds, what did you want to say about online violence?

[*English*]

Ms. Tiana Sharifi: There are digital platforms like OnlyFriends and TikTok, where the hashtag “sugar baby” has 1.5 billion views, and the normalization of self-exploitation and even prostitution digitally is being referred to now as “influencing”. So I will just say that we're seeing a shift in language and kids being groomed by themselves through these platforms into trafficking.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass it over to Lori.

Lori, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.*

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will ask my question again of Ms. Timea Nagy—and this one I think is a bit of a bigger question because it's about refugees and migrant groups. I wonder if you could share with us what factors may contribute to an elevated risk of trafficking for undocumented and other refugee and migrant groups.

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: Thank you so much. It's a great question.

The elevated factors are how vulnerable they are, why they are in the country and what kind of vulnerability they have, just like every victim. Every single victim has one thing in common: What was the thing that they were so desperate for? Whether it's a 13-year-old Canadian girl or a migrant worker who comes over from Jamaica, why did they make such a big change that they want to come to Canada and leave their family behind, to work four or five months, sleep in a bunker, not seeing their family, only to make money? What is their desperation?

The factor that increases their chance of being trafficked is the fact that they're vulnerable, period. Why they're vulnerable could be for many different reasons. The problem is that once they are here, that makes it even worse for them because they don't have a support system; they don't know the law, they don't know whom to call, they might not even speak the language. And they're also terribly afraid of being deported, because once you've made it here—it is very difficult to get here—you don't want to go back because you were sold that dream that you could potentially fix your family's financial crisis, get the money for your mom's cancer medication, and the list goes on.

That's a very short answer.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Could you provide testimony to this committee? With the report that will come out, we hope to see better protections for people, for individuals specifically in this area. Knowing what these elevated risks are, would you provide recommendations to make sure that we know in what ways we can help make those systemic changes that you were calling for earlier?

The Chair: Timea, we're coming to the end, so if you could make it brief, then we can have a plan of action on how we want to get the recommendations from you as well.

Go ahead, Timea.

Ms. Timea E. Nagy: On that note, I can put it in writing. I think there's literally no way of doing that effectively in 10 or 20 seconds.

• (1205)

The Chair: Timea, that's why I thought I'd interrupt first, because I know, with all of the expertise in your head right now, I can't imagine trying to get.... We're starting with the first split of hair.

This is the end of our first panel. We are going to be suspending for a few minutes because the next panellists are all online, so we're going to do sound checks.

Thank you very much to our witnesses. Thank you so much Timea, Tiana, Linda and Jeanne for bringing forward all of your testimony today.

We're going to suspend for about a minute and a half.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1205)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Welcome to our panellists for this next round.

I would like to welcome Cathy Peters, who is here to testify as an individual. From the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, we have Kathleen Quinn, the executive director. From the Aboriginal Women's Action Network, we have Fay Blaney, the lead matriarch.

I'm going to pass it over to Kathleen Quinn for the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation for five minutes.

Cathy, I know somebody in our IT will start working with you.

Kathleen, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Kathleen Quinn (Executive Director, Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation): Good afternoon, members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Thank you for this invitation and this opportunity.

I will begin my comments with three recent news stories from Edmonton.

The first is from April 26. A man accused of trafficking two 15-year-old girls faces 34 charges, including trafficking, procuring, advertising, material benefit, possession and distribution of child pornography, sexual assault and other charges. Police believe there are two other girls he was attempting to lure into the sex trade.

The next article is from April 5: "Man gets 6-year sentence for sex trafficking 2 Edmonton teenage girls". The article stated that the judge said he "considered the vulnerability of the 16 and 17-year-old girls—both of whom came from poor families". The trafficker "psychologically coerced, verbally abused and intimidated" the girls. Listening to one of the victims, the judge stated: "She was worried he would come after her family if she didn't keep working for him." The article said, "The girl was also offered cocaine, which she began taking before every instance of being trafficked....For five months, the girl met with a 'steady stream' of men. She said she was required to engage in many sexual acts that she didn't want to".

The next article, from February 23, is about a man charged with human trafficking of vulnerable Edmontonians. The staff sergeant of our ALERT law enforcement, human trafficking, counter-exploitation unit stated that the trafficker would “lure these women to hotels by offering drugs, food and a place to stay, then exploit them and force them into the sex trade, even taking them [throughout] the province”. Police suspect there could be up to 20 other young women exploited. The charges included trafficking, procuring, advertising material benefit and sexual assault. All three traffickers are young men—21, 22 and 37—and a fourth person charged is a 19-year-old young woman. She goes to court in May.

This has to stop on all angles. I have to ask, what is the missing piece in these three news stories? Who is invisible? I suggest that the invisible are those men who search the Internet or city streets seeking to pay for access to the bodies of girls, women and gender-diverse persons. Their actions create the market for those who turn to trafficking, be they individuals or organized crime. Sex trafficking is a business where traffickers make money because there are consumers demanding the product they sell.

The human trafficking detectives tell me there used to be 2,000 ads per day on LeoList in Edmonton. Now there are 5,000 ads. They are becoming more explicit in the photos and the descriptions of sexual acts.

I spent Saturday with men arrested in police operations for attempting to purchase sexual services. It's called the sex trade offender program. The men learn about Canada's laws, the dynamics of the sex economy and sex trafficking. They hear from a man who is a former sex buyer. The last session is spent listening to two women who suffered sexual exploitation and a mother whose daughter is one of the murdered women of Edmonton, whose murder has not yet been solved after 25 years.

On Thursday I met with an indigenous woman who suffered exploitation. She said part of her educational mission now is to focus on men's mental wellness so that they no longer participate in sexual exploitation of girls, women and gender-diverse persons. She had just come from educating staff at Enbridge, which does a lot of the pipelines in our Alberta communities.

I suggest that one of the biggest steps we could take in preventing sex trafficking would be to increase law enforcement stings and offer sex buyer accountability programs that educate and build empathy so that men no longer participate. Plus, we could then channel the money that they pay to come to these programs into healing and transitional programs.

In Alberta we are soon to launch our office to combat trafficking in persons, which was inspired by listening to survivors who presented to the Alberta task force. Youth-serving agencies have created the southern Alberta coordinated community response model to work with sexually exploited youth. There are two young women, called safety network coordinators, who work with the ALERT detectives. One position is funded by Public Safety and another by ALERT. In April, law enforcement officers from Canada came together to share expertise and challenges. This was called the Madison session, named after a young woman who died as a consequence of sex trafficking.

These initiatives and others that we're working on in Alberta are guided by listening to the experiences of those who survive and who say, “We want to be part of creating the future.”

Thank you.

● (1210)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move over to the Aboriginal Women's Action Network with birthday girl Fay Blaney.

Fay, you have the floor.

Ms. Fay Blaney (Lead Matriarch, Aboriginal Women's Action Network): Thank you.

I'm with the Aboriginal Women's Action Network. It is 26 years old, and it is a feminist group of indigenous women. Up until very recently, we were just a volunteer group with no office and were organizing out of our homes.

In our commemoration project, we held a five-day group with survivors. They were all elders, and it was such an eye-opener for us to learn what these women had gone through.

We also held a group with Inuit women in Montreal because we noted that there was a breaking news story about Inuit women dying there and no one caring. There were so many deaths that were going unnoticed, so we went there to be in solidarity with Inuit women who were on the streets of Montreal.

AWAN has been involved in the Women's Memorial March, the ground zero for the Pickton massacre. We also had intervenor status in the Cindy Gladue case as well as the charter challenge against the PCEPA law. I just wanted to offer that.

We already know that indigenous women and girls are very much overrepresented in sex trafficking in Canada. There are many reports that say around 50% of trafficking victims are indigenous women and girls. Considering that we're only about 4% of the population, we are vulnerable and easy targets due to our marginalized status both in our own communities and in society at large. I would say that's an indicator of how successful the colonization project has been with respect to the diminished status of indigenous women in our own communities.

I won't cite stats, but you do know from the national inquiry that there's rampant violence not only historically but also currently, and there's ongoing rampant violence against indigenous women. We experience probably the highest rates of sexual abuse originating out of intergenerational trauma in the residential schools, as well as in the child welfare system. In this province, about 55% of the children in care are indigenous. I note that it's about 85% or 90% in other provinces across this country.

There was a report released in 2016 in B.C. by the representative for children and youth, citing a study of reported cases of sexual abuse in foster homes that close to 70% of victims were indigenous girls, and another 12% indigenous boys. So it's extremely high. We're being sexually abused as children. We're targeted as adults. Sherene Razack has written quite eloquently about how we're viewed as being sexually available.

Contributing factors today are the systemic racism, the grinding poverty, the utter lack of services, the lack of culturally relevant services and the lack of educational opportunities.

I don't know how much time I have left, but I wanted to move on to what I would like to see happen.

We are a part of the women's equality...I forget our name. We took intervenor status, so you have that on the record. I advocate for an equity model. I would like to see the criminalization of pimps and johns. I would like to see better adherence to the PCEPA law by the police.

• (1215)

On social services, there have been many overdoses. Again, these are overrepresented by indigenous people. We need improved social supports for people who are caught in prostitution. I think it's pretty clear that there's not a big distinction between trafficking and prostitution. I advocate for a guarantee livable income.

Finally, and especially, I would really like to see the demand be addressed that the equality of women be seen as an important issue.

I forgot to mention that in terms of social services support, I would really like to see more exiting programs for indigenous women who have been prostituted across this country.

• (1220)

The Chair: Thank you so much, Fay.

What we're going to do now...I have to suspend for a couple of seconds. We want to make sure that Cathy's sound is okay.

I'm going to suspend.

• (1220)

(Pause)

• (1220)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order. Welcome back.

Cathy has microphone issues, so we're going to go to our two remaining witnesses today.

What I'm going to do is pass it over to Michelle Ferreri for our first round of questioning for six minutes.

Go ahead, Michelle.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses, and to our first round of witnesses, too. It's been very powerful. Quite frankly, some of the testimony we've heard today has been shocking as we continue our study on human trafficking and what we can do as a nation to mitigate this fastest growing crime in the world.

If I can, I'll start with Madam Quinn.

I was really curious, interested and intrigued as we heard from a former witness who was actually a survivor of human trafficking about the role of men and what we could be doing in educating men. It's very fascinating to learn that most of the traffickers and pimps suffered their own level of abuse. Hurt people hurt, as we've heard many times in our world. We know this.

What can we offer in terms of supports from a young age for men who may be growing up in compromised or vulnerable situations?

What do you see as our role, other roles or your role, as an organization that is working with survivors and victims in addressing men?

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Thank you for that really important question. It's truly appreciated.

I would like to say that one thing we do through the sex trade offender program is ask the men to fill in their adverse childhood experiences. It's an overview of what things can happen in childhood that might lead to actions and health issues in their lives. We find that at least 40% to 45% have had some significant adverse childhood experiences. Others have not. That's where we can get a better handle of, let's just call it misogyny, patriarchy and attitudes towards girls and women. It gives us a basis to move forward in terms of education.

I think it's really important to educate about consent and what that truly means everywhere. The other thing that's important is to really look at what we ask of boys and men in our society.

I live in Alberta. We have a resource-based economy. We take men away from their families and their communities. They work in camps. Sometimes the work itself can be very mind-numbing, and they look for ways to fill the voids, the loneliness and, maybe, relationships that have broken because they are away for so long. We need to look at ways to work with the different corporations and the camps and see how we can turn around what has become unhealthy behaviour, including sexual addiction, gambling addiction, drug addiction and alcohol addiction. Shift that into a healthier masculinity.

I'm very encouraged that there are young men who are leading this way and talking about what it means to be healthy and positive males, and not engaged in toxic behaviour.

I'm encouraged that we're having more conversations. We need to bring this out and not normalize using girls and women to fill their own gaps in their lives.

• (1225)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you for that.

Yes, I think we definitely need a lot more data on those predetermining factors of healthy masculinity. I think there's still a lot of work to be done around that. You don't know what you don't know. Sometimes, in a lot of these incidents, men don't know. They've been surrounded by whatever environment, and I think there's a social responsibility to help redirect and try to improve it. I guess that would be my word.

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Thank you. I agree.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

If I can, I'll move to Ms. Blaney, the birthday girl.

We've had a couple of witnesses testify here. Quite frankly, it was quite confusing. I will be honest with you. I will quote some of them.

This was Elene Lam of the Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network, who said, "The terms "human trafficking" or "sex trafficking" are useless and confusing."

Do you agree with that statement, Ms. Blaney?

Ms. Fay Blaney: No, I don't agree with her. I don't understand why she would say such a thing.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I'm sorry; Chair. How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have one minute

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Okay, thank you.

I'll go back to Ms. Blaney.

We've heard a lot about the incidence of murdered and missing indigenous women and indigenous women being far more targeted. We know it's going to take generations to restore a lot of the trauma. I believe seven years is the number of blood trauma.

What do you think, from an indigenous perspective, we can do to help our young indigenous boys—staying on that theme of young men—with healthy relationships? Do you do any work in that field?

Ms. Fay Blaney: I am starting a sexual violence program here in Homalco First Nation. I'm primarily focused on women and girls, but I know that there is an utter lack of programs and services for men and boys.

When men want to come forward and be forthright and honest about what they've been through and what they're doing as offenders, there's no support. If you come forward and say something, the entire community will try to drive you out.

That's what happened during the TRC. There was no support in place. Women were disclosing, and men were being removed and sent to jail.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Fay. I hate interrupting as you're giving the testimony. I really do apologize.

We're now moving over to Anita Vandenberg.

Anita, you have six minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you, Madame Chair.

I'd like to address the first question to Ms. Blaney.

Thank you very much for your testimony. We have heard many times about the large proportion of indigenous women and girls who are trafficked, but it's very useful for us to hear directly from you about what some of the solutions are.

Before we begin, I want to go back to the question that Ms. Ferreri asked about the term "human trafficking". I think that what the witness said was that using a term that is in the criminal code for something that is.... We heard throughout our visits across the country a couple weeks ago that it's really a continuum between coercion and something that the sex workers do that is their choice and then the criminal act of trafficking, but there's a spectrum in-between. It's not always clear where one ends and where the other begins.

I wonder if you could comment on the terms and definitions that we use and the fact that many victims, as we heard even today, don't consider themselves trafficked. If you use that terminology, they don't see themselves in it.

Could you clarify that a little bit?

• (1230)

Ms. Fay Blaney: I don't see the big difference between the two, between being prostituted according to the PCEPA law and being trafficked, because that's the starting point of being trafficked into the sex trafficking industry. Women do get stuck there.

For indigenous women, we are really overrepresented. Most reports say that 50% of trafficked victims are indigenous women and girls. A lot needs to be done to address our marginalization so that we aren't so vulnerable—not just to address our marginalization, but also the attitudes of men who are the buyers. That's the big piece. The demand is what leads to trafficking and leads to prostitution.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you for mentioning that because, when we were in Nova Scotia, we heard from an organization that did a survey of survivors about who the johns were. Who were the people purchasing? They had a chart. It showed that 50% said that law enforcement were among the customers, and several others were faith leaders, political leaders—people who have authority—landlords and that sort of thing.

I'm wondering if you have some insight on that. I know that Ms. Quinn mentioned this in her testimony as well, particularly about the man camps that are up north. I wonder if you could both—I'll start with Ms. Blaney—comment on what we do to ensure that these men know the harms they're causing and that we stop that side of things.

Go ahead, Ms. Blaney.

Ms. Fay Blaney: The equality model, the Nordic model, is a good starting point to address the inequality of women. From an indigenous perspective, it's all of the measures in the Indian Act that have ensured our marginalization.

Our male leadership was very much complicit during the national inquiry. I looked up sexual assaults, for instance, and came up with nine cases. Bridget Perrier, who's very well known, came forward in Winnipeg and said that the chiefs' assemblies were their busiest days, and there were exploited children who were in prostitution.

Our spiritual leaders.... That one is really hard to speak to, but I do know that our spiritual leaders are complicit.

In Prince George here, we had the judge who was charged, and then there's the whole number of police officers who have been trying to cover this up for such a very long time.

I'm very much in favour of the equity model that was followed in the Nordic countries and how it addressed the status of women and the second-class citizenship that we experience as indigenous women.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

It is appalling to think that the very people who are supposed to protect these young girls and women are the ones perpetrating.

Thank you for that important testimony. I think we'll look at that model.

I would like to hear what Ms. Quinn would like to say about that particular piece, as well, because she did address that in her testimony.

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Thank you.

It's been my privilege to facilitate the sex trade offender program for over 26 years. It's how I got involved—seeing the impact of the activities of men exploiting young girls and women on the streets of my core community in Edmonton.

I've worked with over 3,400 men. They come from all walks of life and all heritages and are of all ages. The average age is around 30 to 50, but we have had 18-year-olds to 80-year-olds. Fifty per cent are married.

I think we actually have a real challenge in helping men understand what healthy sexuality is, what mutuality in relationships is, what respect is, all of these things. Then it crosses over to the abuse of power.

• (1235)

The Chair: Kathleen, I'm going to have to stop you there. We've gone a little bit over the time.

Perhaps we can get.... With regard to the information that you're providing, such as some of those statistics on data and on merit, all of those things are quite important.

I'm sure that Anita and I will come up with a suggestion for what we're going to ask you for some more information on, so thank you so much.

We'll move on to Andréanne Larouche.

Andréanne, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being here with us today.

Ms. Blaney, it's interesting to hear about some lines of thought. It's also interesting to see that some recommendations may already exist, but aren't implemented.

You raised the issue from the Indigenous point of view, and mentioned several completed studies that led to recommendations. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada comes to mind, or the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Which recommendations in these reports would you want to prioritize to make improvements in the human trafficking and sexual exploitation file? We know, as you so rightly said, that Indigenous women and girls are statistically overrepresented.

[*English*]

Ms. Fay Blaney: There's an awful lot in the MMIWG report that we can take to address indigenous women's inequality so that we aren't so vulnerable. I think the root cause of a lot of the horrible things that happen to us is our utter vulnerability—the levels of poverty and homelessness, the addictions and a whole variety of issues we face as indigenous women...so we are empowered to be regular citizens in this country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: What recommendation would you make regarding the lack of culturally appropriate services you spoke of, Ms. Blaney? We know that language is also a factor. It's harder for a victim to get out of a crisis, for example, when she doesn't have access to services in her language and has to leave her environment to travel thousands of kilometres from home, without any resources or contacts, and without anyone around her to help her get out of it.

Was that what you wanted to talk about? Do you have any comments to add on it? You can also add details to your thoughts on the lack of culturally appropriate services.

[English]

Ms. Fay Blaney: I'll use the example of Rose Harbour here in Campbell River. It's a shelter. In the shelter, there are 52% indigenous women and zero indigenous women on staff and on the board. I note that, for Inuit women, as well, in Montreal.... When we were doing solidarity work with them, there were not enough indigenous women delivering these programs and services.

What would be even better is resourcing indigenous women's programs and services by and for ourselves, because we are the ones who know our experience. We would not be subjected to the systemic racism we experience within the programs and services we access.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: That's interesting, Ms. Blaney. You were talking about the unfortunate situation of Inuit women in Montreal. As a member of Parliament from Quebec, I am particularly concerned about their situation. We know there are pilot projects, including women-only shelters.

Do you consider this type of resource, adapted specifically to women, part of more culturally appropriate services? A woman experiencing homelessness mustn't necessarily be treated the same way as a man in the same situation, because of the many reasons you mentioned when talking about cultural differences.

Did you want to elaborate on that, Ms. Blaney?

If not, I see Ms. Quinn nodding. There's about one minute left and you could add your comments as well, Ms. Quinn, on the issue of culturally appropriate services. You could also tell us about some existing recommendations or lived experience that could help us come up with more lines of thought.

[English]

The Chair: We have 20 seconds left.

Go ahead, Fay, followed by Kathleen.

Ms. Fay Blaney: Okay.

I know Pauktuutit received funding to develop transition houses, and I think that's pretty awesome. It's good news, but it's definitely not enough. There are large numbers of Inuit who are forced to come to the south. I think housing is a big issue, and cost of living is a huge issue.

I'll leave it at that and pass it on to Kathleen.

The Chair: Wait one second, Andr anne. What I'm going to do is allow them to continue to answer their questions, then I'll take your last slot out.

Go ahead, Kathleen.

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Thank you.

I do agree with Ms. Blaney that there are not enough culturally appropriate resources and shelters. Calgary has the Awo Tann women's shelter, which is very powerful and supportive. Edmonton does not have an indigenous-led women's shelter.

I, personally, really advocate for having a shelter developed by indigenous women—survivors of abuse and violence—that is crafted in the ways they want it.

The Chair: We have a point of order on the floor.

Sonia.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: On a point of order, Madam Chair, the bells are ringing, so if we can—

The Chair: The bells are ringing for a vote.

Since we have the panels here, we need to have unanimous consent so we can continue on, and then we can vote either from here or.... The vote is now at ten minutes after one instead, so can I get unanimous consent that everybody wants to remain here until one o'clock?

Everybody looks good. Okay.

Thank you so much, Sonia, for bringing that to our attention.

Kathleen, we'll give you another minute to continue.

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: If I may, I would like to address something different.

To prepare for this, I read the 2007 report by the status of women committee, called "Turning Outrage into Action". I do think we're still at "outrage". We need more concerted action across the country.

We do have, through the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act, the tool that is needed for Canada to uphold its commitment as a signatory to the Palermo protocol. We signed on in 2002. Article 9 says we need to work to address the demand that fuels the exploitation, especially of girls and women. That is where we're falling down and that is where we can move into action.

I mentioned the sex trade offender program. It's one example. There are many.

The key thing that the men say at the end of the eight-hour alternative measures program is that they didn't know this. They didn't know what was really happening. They see sex sites advertising, so they think it's the norm and it's okay to do. They all say that this should be in the schools and that we should reach men before they get caught.

We also hear from those who've been struggling with suicide, suicidal ideations, sex addiction and all this. They want help. If we shift this to a men's mental health issue, that would be very important.

If we talk about the imbalance of power and who has the power when you pay for sex, that's really important to do. Is it acceptable to use your power over another person, especially in a vulnerable circumstance, as we heard from those news stories I read out?

Thank you.

• (1245)

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much.

I'm going to now pass it over to Lori.

Lori, you have six minutes.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.* Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Thank you so much to both of the witnesses. They were both very powerful and very important.

As an Inuk, as an indigenous woman, I definitely super appreciate your advocacy and the hard work you're doing to make sure we're continually improving our protections for indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

My first question will be for Fay Blaney.

Happy birthday, by the way.

Ms. Fay Blaney: Thank you.

Ms. Lori Idlout: I see that you had been interviewed for an article on December 21, 2016. You talked about indigenous women not reporting to law enforcement. You mentioned in that article the recent situation in Val-d'Or, Quebec, "where Crown prosecutors determined that despite 37 files of alleged police abuse, all of which were brought forth by indigenous women, not one of the six accused officers would be charged."

I wonder if, since 2016, you have seen any changes or any improvements for women reporting against accused officers. What needs to change to make sure there's increased reporting to law enforcement, which is supposed to be there to protect indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people?

Ms. Fay Blaney: I think the police are way too resistant, and I would say the entire justice system is way too resistant to do any changing.

I'm reflecting back on the sexual violence report that LEAF put together in looking at how difficult it is, and Robyn Doolittle did an exposé on police responses to sexual violence. I think the entire system needs change in some way. What they're doing is not working, but they're very resistant to change.

As it exists now, it's not one of my first priorities to get survivors to go to the police and report anything, because they just aren't going to hear you anyway, much less address the crimes that are being perpetrated internally.

In Vancouver, our head of the sexual exploitation unit was charged with sexual violence against youth, and they closed ranks and claimed that it was an isolated incident. In my mind, it's yet another example of how resistant they are to address the issue.

I'm not confident that change will happen anytime soon. If they're refusing education or are reluctant to get education, I don't know what it's going to take to bring about change.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Thank you so much for that.

It doesn't sound like very much has changed since 2016, which is really unfortunate, because it points to the fact that there are defi-

nately systemic and structural barriers that expose indigenous women, girls and 2-spirit people to that increased rate of violence.

I wonder if both of you could answer what the changes are that need to happen.

I realize, Fay, that you struggle with that. Maybe we'll start with Kathleen to answer that question, and if you feel you'd like to, Fay, I would love to hear from you, as well.

• (1250)

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Thank you so much.

I'm seeing some encouraging shifts in a couple of ways.

One is that there are more female police officers, which begins to shift the culture, as well. Two is that in Alberta and in, I think, Peel region and a few other jurisdictions across the country, women who are survivors of trafficking or exploitation have been hired, or young women who are very committed and skilled workers are working with police. They are the frontline responders and their role is to listen and to help that woman to safety, however she defines it.

A woman may never report to police. It may take a year before she decides to report to police, but the role of those safety network coordinators and peer advocates is, first of all, to ensure that safety for that woman and that her basic needs are met, and that she is able to begin to move away from the trafficking situation.

I think we need more of those models across the country. That's what I'll say right now.

The Chair: Lori, I'm going to provide you an extra minute, rather than come back, so you have one extra question if you want to ask it now.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Thank you.

I want to ask about the resource extraction sector, because I know there was a study about the connection that seems to exist with the resource extraction sector...and how sex trafficking seems to be connected to it.

I wonder if both of you could share testimony on the resource extraction sector and what that connection is to sex trafficking.

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Thank you.

Fay, would you like to go first?

Ms. Fay Blaney: You can, Kathleen, since you've been doing work in this area.

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Okay, thank you.

Again, I'm going to draw strength and insight from indigenous women who are really leading this work in Alberta. I mentioned the woman who, for the second year, has been invited to educate staff of Enbridge, one of the pipeline companies. I also support the indigenous advisory monitoring committee for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. People from different first nations communities and Métis settlements are really trying to see what they can do to turn that around.

I think, again, it's the attitudes of men, when they're away from their home communities, that they can meet whatever their needs are with the women who are vulnerable and who are around them. I think corporations do need to take the lead and insist on education about sexual exploitation and consent and murdered and missing indigenous women. That needs to be a real commitment.

We're hoping that Trans Mountain will sign on, just like Enbridge, for this education.

The Chair: Fay, I'm just looking at the time, and we unfortunately just don't have lots of it. We're going to ask that you do your answer in writing. We would be grateful.

We have just two more rounds of questions, and I'm reducing them to three minutes each.

Dominique, you have three minutes. I'll start with you.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Good afternoon, ladies. Thank you for being with us this afternoon.

What I understand about the file we're studying today is that there are those who organize trafficking, human trafficking, who profit from it or buy the service, and there are those subjected to it, obviously. My view is that there doesn't seem to be a lot of people eager to see the issue of trafficking resolved.

Ms. Quinn, you mentioned a few possible solutions earlier, specifically an initiative inspired by women who are survivors and activists. That's a good sign. Those are good actions.

Are we acting equally on all three of those fronts right now?

Are there aspects we're more focused on that negatively impact the others, or that completely obscure them, which we should also look into?

That's question probably requires over 20 minutes to answer, and we only have three.

Many hypotheses and suggestions were put forward. Earlier, witnesses told us that it's not going as well as we think. Specifically, there's a lack of funds.

On which fronts, first and foremost, should we focus on?

What do you think, Ms. Quinn?

• (1255)

[*English*]

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: We always have to keep our focus on those who have been harmed. We have to increase the supports and services.

At the same time—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Excuse me for interrupting you, but there's a problem with interpretation.

[*English*]

Oh, is it working? Good.

Okay, go ahead.

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Again, we are always called to support those who are suffering and exploited, and we need to go upstream and work to stop what's causing the harm. My advocacy on that end is the education of boys and men about consent and not participating in exploitation or trafficking. If we don't turn that around, we will continually be creating more and more services to support those who are harmed.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: I fully agree with you.

Ms. Blaney, do you have hope that the situation will improve? You expressed some reservations earlier.

[*English*]

Ms. Fay Blaney: I would like to see the police apply the PCEPA law across the country.

The Chair: We're going to pass it online now to Emmanuella.

Emmanuella, you have three minutes. Go ahead.

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

I'd like to begin by thanking our witnesses for being with us today.

We've heard a lot about education and the role it could play in helping the situation, but I'll stick with a question on something that I'm curious to hear your thoughts on.

I'll start with you, Ms. Quinn. You called for an increase in law enforcement in order to help victims of sex trafficking and in order to come down hard on those who are traffickers, but we have heard in this committee from sex workers who have come to speak to us about how they often feel endangered. A big part of the reason is that there isn't a labour code, obviously, for sex work, and there are often consequences for women who are engaging in sex work, be it by choice or not. Many women do feel that they don't necessarily have a choice, in that it's the only thing they can do, or they do it when they're in a situation where they feel they need to do this.

In your view, what is a good way to balance the approach? What is a way to ensure that the government can come down hard on those who are trafficking while also protecting victims of trafficking and in general victims of sexual assault and abuse when they are in these types of situations, given the fact that sex work in itself is not illegal?

I'm wondering what your thoughts are on this.

Ms. Kathleen Quinn: Thank you. It is a very complex question that requires the best of all of us.

I do see that there is a continuum. I acknowledge that there are those who identify as sex workers who have high autonomy, no trauma history, no poverty and high negotiating control. However, that is a very small minority of people. The majority are in the survival or circumstantial sex trade and then trafficking.

I once looked at the confluence of the Fraser River and the Thompson River, at where those two rivers come together. The waters mix. It is very challenging. The men have told us that they cannot tell who's doing this because they need money to pay their rent, and they don't know if the person is being trafficked. It's very hard to figure that out.

We do need to really work on some of the bigger things. I support the call for a guaranteed livable income. We did a study once during the pandemic where we added money into women's household incomes and asked them what they thought. They said that if there were a guaranteed basic income, there wouldn't be a need for sex work. Right away, that tells us something right there—

The Chair: Kathleen, thank you so much. I don't mean to interrupt you, but we're coming to end of our entire time here.

On behalf of the committee, I would greatly like to thank the two of you for coming. Thank you very much for bringing forward your testimony. If you have any additional information, such as the information that Anita and I were probably both writing down at the same time, we would love to see it.

Members, we will now conclude for the day. I would remind you that your sports recommendations are due today. We're asking that they be in both French and English, if possible.

We will see everybody on Thursday at 3:30.

The meeting is adjourned.

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