



PAR COURRIEL

Québec, le 28 septembre 2021

N/Réf. : 2021-12309

OBJET: *Votre demande en vertu de la Loi sur l'accès aux documents des organismes publics et sur la protection des renseignements personnels (RLRQ, chapitre A-2.1)*

Monsieur,

Nous faisons suite à votre demande d'accès, reçue le 16 juin 2021, visant à obtenir copie complète des échanges de lettres, correspondances, courriels, incluant les pièces attachées de chacun de la ministre et de la sous-ministre avec des ministres et/ou sous-ministres fédéraux à Ottawa entre le 2 février et le 16 juin 2021 sur tous les sujets.

Nous vous transmettons les documents repérés qui répondent à votre demande et qui vous sont accessibles.

Nous avons également repéré une lettre datée du 16 avril 2021 de la ministre de la Sécurité publique, M^{me} Geneviève Guilbault, à son homologue fédéral, M. Bill Blair. Cette lettre ne peut vous être communiquée puisque sa divulgation pourrait porter préjudice à la conduite des relations entre le gouvernement du Québec et le gouvernement du Canada.

Conformément à l'article 51 de la Loi sur l'accès aux documents, nous vous informons que vous avez trente (30) jours à compter de ce jour pour exercer un recours en révision de cette décision. Vous trouverez, ci-joint, un avis vous informant de ce recours.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur, nos salutations distinguées.

La responsable substitut de l'accès aux documents,

Original signé

Geneviève Lamothe _____

p. j. Avis de recours en révision

AVIS DE RECOURS EN RÉVISION

Avis de recours à la suite d'une décision rendue par le ministère de la Sécurité publique en vertu de la Loi sur l'accès aux documents des organismes publics et sur la protection des renseignements personnels.

Révision par la Commission d'accès à l'information

a) Pouvoir : l'article 135 de la Loi prévoit qu'une personne dont la demande écrite a été refusée en tout ou en partie par le responsable de l'accès aux documents ou de la protection des renseignements personnels peut demander à la Commission d'accès à l'information de réviser cette décision. La demande de révision doit être faite par écrit; elle peut exposer brièvement les raisons pour lesquelles la décision devrait être révisée (art. 137).

L'adresse de la Commission d'accès à l'information est la suivante :

Québec

Bureau 2.36
525, boul. René-Lévesque Est
Québec (Québec) G1R 5S9
Téléphone : 418 528-7741
Télécopieur : 418 529-3102

Montréal

Bureau 900
2045, rue Stanley
Montréal (Québec) H3A 2V4
Téléphone : 418 528-7741
Télécopieur : 418 529-3102

b) Motifs : les motifs relatifs à la révision peuvent porter sur la décision, sur le délai de traitement de la demande, sur le mode d'accès à un document ou à un renseignement, sur les frais exigibles ou sur l'application de l'article 9 (notes personnelles inscrites sur un document, esquisses, ébauches, brouillons, notes préparatoires ou autres documents de même nature qui ne sont pas considérés comme des documents d'un organisme public).

c) Délais : les demandes de révision doivent être adressées à la Commission d'accès à l'information dans les 30 jours suivant la date de la décision ou de l'expiration du délai accordé au responsable pour répondre à une demande (art. 135).

La Loi prévoit spécifiquement que la Commission d'accès à l'information peut, pour motif raisonnable, relever le requérant du défaut de respecter le délai de 30 jours (art. 135).

Loi sur l'accès aux documents des organismes publics et sur la protection des renseignements personnels

CHAPITRE II
ACCÈS AUX DOCUMENTS DES ORGANISMES PUBLICS

SECTION II
RESTRICTIONS AU DROIT D'ACCÈS

§ 1. — *Renseignements ayant des incidences sur les relations intergouvernementales*

19. Un organisme public peut refuser de communiquer un renseignement lorsque sa divulgation porterait vraisemblablement préjudice à la conduite des relations entre le gouvernement du Québec et un autre gouvernement ou une organisation internationale.

1982, c. 30, a. 19.

Québec, le 3 juin 2021

L'Honorable Bill Blair
Ministre de la Sécurité publique
et de la Protection civile
Sécurité publique Canada
Chambre des communes
Ottawa (Canada) K1A 0A6

Cher collègue,

La vague de féminicides qui afflige le Québec depuis les derniers mois au cours de laquelle plus de dix femmes auraient perdu la vie dans un contexte de violence conjugale est déplorable. Le contexte d'urgence sanitaire lié à la pandémie mondiale de COVID-19 ne serait pas étranger à cette augmentation des homicides conjugaux et plusieurs appréhendent que la fin des mesures requises pour la gestion de la pandémie puisse mener à une aggravation de la situation.

Les communautés autochtones ne sont malheureusement pas épargnées, et j'ai établi comme priorité le renforcement des capacités et des effectifs des corps de police autochtones dans le but de mieux répondre aux enjeux en matière de violence conjugale et de féminicides.

Le gouvernement du Québec a annoncé le 23 avril 2021 un investissement de 229,9 M\$ et entend rapidement mettre en place des mesures jugées prioritaires. Ces mesures incluent notamment l'ajout de ressources policières ou civiles en violence conjugale au sein des corps de police autochtones, ce qui représente un investissement d'un montant total de 9,8 M\$. Suivant le ratio établi pour les corps de police autochtones et vos responsabilités fiduciaires auprès des communautés autochtones, je vous demande donc de vous engager financièrement à la hauteur de 52-48 % afin de soutenir la mise en place de ces mesures, soit pour un montant de 5,1 M\$.

Ces mesures assureront une meilleure prise en charge des victimes et une surveillance accrue des contrevenants de même qu'une approche adaptée et culturellement sécurisante qui s'inscrit dans la continuité des recommandations

... 2

de l'Enquête nationale sur les femmes et les filles autochtones disparues et assassinées.

Je désire ainsi que des représentants de nos ministères amorcent rapidement des discussions à propos des modalités de votre contribution. M. Louis Morneau, sous-ministre associé à la Direction générale des affaires policières, est disponible dès maintenant pour tenir, avec vos représentants, un échange à cet effet. Il peut être joint à l'adresse courriel suivante : louis.morneau@msp.gouv.qc.ca.

Veuillez agréer, cher collègue, l'expression de mes sentiments les meilleurs.

La ministre de la Sécurité publique,



Geneviève Guilbault

N/Réf. : 2021-11224

PAR COURRIEL

Québec, le 9 mars 2021

L'honorable Bill Blair
Ministre de la sécurité publique
et de la protection civile
Gouvernement du Canada
269, avenue Laurier Ouest, 19^e étage
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0P8

Cher collègue,

En vertu d'une motion adoptée le 14 juin 2019 par l'Assemblée nationale, une commission spéciale a été créée afin d'établir un portrait de l'exploitation sexuelle des mineurs au Québec, y compris les conséquences sur le passage à la vie adulte. À la suite de ses travaux, la Commission a déposé le 3 décembre 2020 son rapport qui relate les témoignages produits par les 67 témoins entendus lors des auditions publiques, qui se sont tenues entre novembre 2019 et août 2020, ainsi que des 63 mémoires qui ont été déposés à cette fin.

La Commission a déposé un rapport unanime à l'Assemblée nationale qui contient 58 recommandations qui interpellent à la fois les autorités et la population à agir avec force en matière de lutte contre l'exploitation sexuelle des mineurs.

De plus, le rapport fait état de la nécessité que cette lutte devienne une priorité pancanadienne. C'est pourquoi j'ai le plaisir de vous transmettre le rapport en version anglaise afin que vous puissiez toutes et tous en prendre connaissance. C'est ensemble que nous pouvons agir et lutter contre les individus et les organisations qui font chaque jour des victimes à travers le pays. Vous savez comme moi que les frontières entre les provinces n'ont guère d'importance pour ces criminels.

... 2

De ce fait, je fais appel à vous pour que nous travaillions mieux ensemble et que nous favorisions des initiatives ainsi que des activités concertées afin de poursuivre la lutte contre l'exploitation sexuelle des mineurs au Québec et au Canada. Tel que le souligne la Commission, il est impératif d'intervenir tant auprès des victimes que des personnes qui commettent des crimes, ou qui aspirent à commettre des actes répréhensibles, tout en évitant que d'autres personnes ne tombent dans cet univers. Ce phénomène est complexe et demande notamment que les acteurs gouvernementaux agissent de concert pour faire une différence.

Enfin, je souhaiterais prendre connaissance des recommandations qui ressortiront des travaux du Comité de coordination des hauts fonctionnaires – Justice pénale qui doit étudier les recommandations du rapport, spécifiques aux modifications éventuelles, du Code criminel.

Veuillez agréer, cher collègue, l'expression de mes sentiments les meilleurs.

La ministre de la Sécurité publique,



Geneviève Guilbault

p. j. Rapport de la Commission spéciale sur l'exploitation sexuelle des mineurs
(version anglaise)

c. c. Monsieur Simon Jolin-Barrette, ministre de la Justice

N/Réf. : 2021-10367

PAR COURRIEL

Québec, le 9 mars 2021

The Honourable Todd Smith
Minister of Children, Community
and Social Services
Government of Ontario
438, University Avenue, 7th Floor
Toronto (Ontario) M5G 2K8

Cher collègue,

En vertu d'une motion adoptée le 14 juin 2019 par l'Assemblée nationale, une commission spéciale a été créée afin d'établir un portrait de l'exploitation sexuelle des mineurs au Québec, y compris les conséquences sur le passage à la vie adulte. À la suite de ses travaux, la Commission a déposé le 3 décembre 2020 son rapport qui relate les témoignages produits par les 67 témoins entendus lors des auditions publiques, qui se sont tenues entre novembre 2019 et août 2020, ainsi que des 63 mémoires qui ont été déposés à cette fin.

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La ministre de la Sécurité publique,



Geneviève Guilbault

p. j. Rapport de la Commission spéciale sur l'exploitation sexuelle des mineurs
(version anglaise)

c. c. Monsieur Simon Jolin-Barrette, ministre de la Justice

NRéf. : 2021-10367



Report of the Select Committee on the
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS

DECEMBER 2020



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DU QUÉBEC

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To read the consultation document and briefs, view or hear the public hearings, visit the National Assembly website at assnat.qc.ca/commissionspeciale.

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A WORD FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Since June 2019, we have had the honour of being members of the Select Committee on the Sexual Exploitation of Minors, a great responsibility. For more than a year, as MNAs from all political parties, we have been working together to fulfill the mandate entrusted to us, which is to paint a portrait of the sexual exploitation of minors and the transition of victims to adulthood. The goal is to propose actions to counter this scourge. A common objective mobilized us during this exercise: the well-being of victims and their loved ones.

In the course of our work, we uncovered new and revolting ramifications of the phenomenon. The testimonies heard during the hearings held in Québec City, Montréal and Val-d'Or have shaken us. We particularly note the devastating consequences of the sexual exploitation of minors in the short and long term on young people and their families, and the unequal balance of power between the exploiters and the victims. The criminal behaviour of procurers is well known, but there is a need to raise awareness of the role of client abusers who, too often, act with impunity. More than ever, we remain convinced of the importance of fighting the sexual exploitation of minors in Québec and of providing better support to victims. We also understand that they need to be guided in their transition to adulthood.

The answer to such a complex problem cannot be simple. This is why our report contains many recommendations that call on Québec society to mobilize. Of course, they call on the Québec government to take action in a number of areas. By joining forces and making this fight a national priority, we hope to curb this scourge and prevent young people from entering adult life already broken.

Like all Quebecers, the Committee has had to deal with the upheavals imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although this health crisis is upsetting priorities, it does not detract from the relevance of our topic. Young people are still being sexually exploited. What is more, the victims are among those who have the most to lose in such a context. The health crisis does not set aside the urgency of their situation or their immense needs.

We wish to warmly thank all those who participated in our work. The many briefs submitted to the Committee and the testimony heard at the hearings have given us vivid insight into the sexual exploitation of minors. They have also moved us.

We would like to mention the constant support of the staff of the National Assembly. We must also salute Mr. Ian Lafrenière, who chaired the Committee until October 9, 2020, at which time he was appointed a member of the Cabinet. From the outset, he was able to establish a unifying work climate, valuing the contribution of all parliamentarians. It is in this spirit that we have worked in a transparent manner to bring this important mandate to a successful conclusion.

We underline the commitment of the people whose daily endeavour is to counter the sexual exploitation of minors. As parliamentarians, we see this report as a means of sharing their struggle and making a difference by getting the entire population of Québec to join this effort. For this reason, we dedicate this report to all the victims and their loved ones.



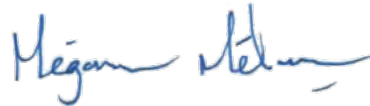
Lucie Lecours
Member for Les Plaines
Committee Chair



Christine St-Pierre
Member for Acadie
Committee Vice-Chair



Alexandre Leduc
Member for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve
Steering Committee Member



Méganne Perry Mélançon
Member for Gaspé
Steering Committee Member

MNAS HAVING PARTICIPATED IN THE WORK OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS



Ms. Lucie Lecours
member for Les Plaines
Chair



Ms. Christine St-Pierre
member for Acadie
Vice-chair



Mr. Alexandre Leduc
member for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve
Steering Committee Member



Ms. Méganne Perry Mélançon
member for Gaspé
Steering Committee Member



Mr. Frantz Benjamin
member for Viau
Member



Ms. Émilie Foster
member for
Charlevoix-Côte-de-Beaupré
Member



Ms. Nancy Guillemette
member for Roberval
Member



Mr. Denis Lamothe
member for Ungava
Member



Ms. Isabelle Lecours
member for
Lotbinière-Frontenac
Member



Ms. Marilyne Picard
member for Soulanges
Member



Mr. Jean Rousselle
member for Vimont
Member



Mr. Christopher Skeete
member for Sainte-Rose
Member



Ms. Kathleen Weil
member for
Notre-Dame-de-Grâce
Member



Mr. Ian Lafrenière
member for Vachon
**Chair from
June 2019 to October 2020**



Ms. Catherine Fournier
member for Marie-Victorin



Mr. Guy Ouellette
member for Chomedey

INTRODUCTION

In Québec, young people should be able to grow up in a healthy, stimulating and safe environment. For many of them, youth is synonymous with exciting discoveries and fulfillment. For others, this period of life is a painful reality. For several years now, the sexual exploitation of minors has appeared repeatedly on the radar of police forces, social services and political leaders.

Important milestones have been set by the Government of Québec to combat this disaster: the Québec Intervention Plan on Street Gangs in 2007, followed by the 2011 Plan and the adoption of the Government Strategy to Prevent and Counteract Sexual Violence 2016-2021, which notably allowed for the creation of the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme in 2017. Efforts remain to be made. Nevertheless, this crime is changing and benefits from the rapid development of information and communication technologies. Our response must evolve at the same pace.

We must push this fight even further, in a comprehensive manner. To this day, the sexual exploitation of minors shatters lives, everywhere in Québec, regardless of gender or social group. Individuals and organizations make substantial profits from the sale of sexual services of young people. Montréal has earned a sad reputation as the Canadian hub of this industry, which is now known to be very lucrative.

Underage victims are generally in a position of vulnerability and dependency on procurers and clients older than themselves. Often manipulated and controlled in such a way as to make them believe that they are acting of their own free will, many young people refuse to be labelled as victims.

As parliamentarians, we regularly witness the public's concerns in this regard. Whether they are directly affected by sexual exploitation or outraged by it, people tell us their painful stories. We share this pain and outrage.

It is in this context that on June 14, 2019, the National Assembly of Québec unanimously adopted a motion establishing the Select Committee on the Sexual Exploitation of Minors in order to paint a portrait of this phenomenon. Although the core of our mandate focuses primarily on young people, we were asked to broaden our reflection to include the transition to adulthood.

We began our work with preparatory training sessions that allowed us to become familiar with the phenomenon of sexual exploitation of minors in Québec. In order to hear from specialists on this subject, we conducted a first wave of public hearings at the National Assembly in November 2019. We also travelled to Montréal and Val-d'Or in January 2020. We heard from people whose commitment to protecting adolescents is matched only by the quality and generosity of their participation in our work. These exchanges focused on important issues and allowed us to see that this phenomenon affects various groups differently, such as certain ethnocultural and Indigenous communities.

Finally, the Committee heard other speakers in a private deliberative meeting and during a day of hearings on August 24, 2020. These hearings provided an opportunity to question speakers on the consequences of a new reality that has emerged: the COVID-19 pandemic. The current context, difficult for many, has not put a stop to the sexual exploitation of minors. On the contrary, it seems that the victims are more vulnerable.

In the course of our work, we received 63 briefs and heard 67 witnesses from the community, health and social services, research, media, Indigenous communities, police services and the legal profession. And, frankly, we were overwhelmed by the testimony of victims of sexual exploitation.

We would like to acknowledge the important contribution of the individuals and organizations that contributed to the work of this Committee. We are grateful to you for agreeing to participate in this democratic exercise. The richness of our exchanges and of your briefs was an indispensable contribution to our reflection. We warmly thank the people who courageously shared their personal experience of sexual exploitation with us. Your testimonies deeply moved us. The insight you gave us into the reality of the victims and their families not only nourished our work, but also motivated us to redouble our efforts in the fight against this scourge. Finally, we would like to underline the tireless commitment of the people working with the victims. We are impressed by your loyalty to young people.

We are proud to present this report to the people of Québec. It is the result of a long process of concerted work among the members of the Committee. We believe the time has come to propose a comprehensive response.

Communication and awareness-raising have emerged as recurring themes in our work. They encompass interventions aimed at the general population in order to produce a change in mentality on the issue and thus counter the trivialization of sexual exploitation. Those who work with victims also mentioned the importance of acting before, during and after the exploitation occurs, both for people likely to become victims of procurers and abusive clients. Following this logic, we approached prevention and training, law enforcement and interventions aimed at reconstruction and rehabilitation.

SETTING THE CONTEXT: TURNING THE SPOTLIGHT ON AN UNFAMILIAR REALITY

It is important to agree on a definition of sexual exploitation of minors and to clarify the vocabulary we use. Our mandate has also led us to attempt to paint a portrait of the phenomenon of sexual exploitation. These elements are essential to develop a common understanding of the problem. We hope that the government and the Québec population as a whole will take ownership of this issue and make it a priority, and that the action will be sustained over time. We owe it to all the young people to help them avoid this trap. We owe it to the victims and the survivors.

Recommendation No. 1

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec formally and solemnly declare that the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors is a national priority.

That, to this end, the Government of Québec develop an action plan based on the present recommendations of the Committee. That this action plan be periodically reviewed by an interministerial committee that must report to the National Assembly every two years on the implementation of the actions and that this report be examined by the competent committee.

Recommendation No. 2

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec declare March 4 of each year as the Day Against the Sexual Exploitation of Minors and that it mark, in association with the United Nations, the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on July 30 of each year.

Recommendation No. 3

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec declare the first week of March each year as the National Week Against the Sexual Exploitation of Minors.

The choice of words

Sexual assault, child pornography, blackmail, manipulation, prostitution, human trafficking... sexual exploitation has a thousand faces. The Secrétariat à la condition féminine defines sexual exploitation as follows:

Through its numerous forms, sexual exploitation usually implies a situation, a context or a relationship in which one individual takes advantage of the vulnerability or the dependency of a person, or an unequal power relationship, in order to use the person's body for sexual purposes for his personal benefit. The benefit can be pecuniary, social or personal, such as sexual gratification, or any other form of advantage¹.

This definition guides us in our mandate. It emphasizes the power of the exploiter over the victim of sexual exploitation and the persons and organizations that profit from it. Certainly, among the groups heard and more broadly in society, a debate persists as to whether or not the sale of sexual services of adults should be considered a choice. For us, members of this Select Committee, there is no doubt that minors find themselves in a situation of vulnerability and dependency. This power relationship to their disadvantage seems to us to speak for itself: When it comes to children or adolescents, there can be no real consent to sell sexual services. We therefore consider the sale and purchase of the sexual services of minors as clearly being a part of the exploitation dynamic.

The mandate entrusted to us by the National Assembly concerns the sexual exploitation of persons under the age of eighteen. Our report and the recommendations it contains must be interpreted accordingly. We use terminology that differs from that used in the adult prostitution industry, thereby distancing ourselves from the debate surrounding it. In order to describe the reality of minors and to reflect the dynamics of exploitation, we refer to client abusers and victims, whether or not they are aware of their exploitation context.

We have observed that the phenomenon must be combated as a whole. The demand from client abusers stimulates the exploitative activities of procurers and traffickers, which puts pressure on the recruitment and activities of victims. An approach along only one of these lines would leave the fundamental principles of this system unchanged.

¹ Secrétariat à la condition féminine. *2016-2021 Government Strategy to Prevent and Counteract Sexual Violence*, 2016, p. 20.

Of course, it is not useless to ensure that young girls, boys, or others (trans, intersex or non-binary individuals can also be exploited) have living conditions that maximize their protective factors and minimize their vulnerabilities to sexual predation and exploitation, but this will be of little effect if the people who generate and benefit from the sexual exploitation market are not directly affected: One victim will replace another if the people and the very system producing and profiting from the "demand" are not affected by our preventive actions.

Michel Dorais, full professor and researcher at the École de travail social et de criminologie of Université Laval – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 3

This implies that, to protect victims, our action must also focus on procurers and client abusers. We are dismayed that they, with a few exceptions, escape the scrutiny of the public and the courts. We are determined to draw attention to them.

Piecemeal knowledge

There is little research and information on the subject of sexual exploitation of minors in Québec, and that which is available has significant limitations. We have painted a portrait of the situation based on information from available sources provided by the groups heard during the hearings. Nevertheless, we feel it is imperative to improve this knowledge.

Because of its illicit nature, the sexual exploitation of minors is difficult to define. Data on the subject remains incomplete and approximate. Our main sources come from investigations carried out by police forces and their knowledge of the field, community organizations that intervene directly with victims and university researchers or researchers affiliated with the health and social services network who have taken an interest in certain aspects of the problem.

These sources have confirmed to us that the sexual exploitation of minors is tenaciously rooted and that we only see the tip of the iceberg. In a portrait drawn up in 2013 based on data from police forces, the Service du renseignement criminel du Québec notes that the official figures underestimate the extent of the phenomenon because of its hidden nature and the limited number of denunciations. It is a crime that is rarely reported by those involved. Since it takes place in private, there are no witnesses able to denounce it. Establishing the number of underage victims is difficult. Of the 437 victims of sexual exploitation recorded in the Police Information Module data between 2002 and 2013, 39% were minors². These statistics only report cases that have resulted in arrests; it is not possible to know if this percentage was representative of reality.

² Service du renseignement criminel du Québec. *Portrait provincial du proxénétisme et de la traite des personnes*, 2013.

The opinion on prostitution published in 2012 by the Conseil du statut de la femme (the council on the status of women) is often used to describe the situation. Based on studies conducted in selected Canadian cities and provinces, the Conseil concluded that "more than 80% of adult prostitutes in Canada entered prostitution as minors. The average age of entry into prostitution is between 14 and 15 years [translation]³". The opinion of the Conseil du statut de la femme also cited a 2009 study on street gangs that estimated that there were 300 minors who were sexually exploited in Montréal. Girls were over-represented. Some organizations working with people in the sex industry report that a large number, if not a majority, enter the sex industry before the age of 18.

According to the testimonies heard, minors are rarely present in escort agencies, massage parlours and strip clubs. Surveillance carried out at these established businesses would make this practice too risky. The presence of minors and the age of entry into prostitution remain difficult to document accurately. Regardless of the number, this is an unacceptable reality that concerns us because of its consequences. The testimonies of victims heard during the proceedings reinforce our determination.

Many victims of sexual exploitation suffer other violent crimes such as assault, sexual assault, and even murder. This violence is largely committed by procurers, but also by client abusers. Victims are at high risk of contracting sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBIs), developing addictions or other health problems. They are also likely to suffer multiple psychological after-effects.

My name is not in the phone book; there is no personal information about me on the Internet. At the restaurant, I always want to face the room, to make sure no one can surprise me from behind. I feel like [my former procurer] might just show up out of nowhere, try to come back into my life or just get revenge by stabbing me in the back. [...] For years I've looked behind me walking down the street.

Testimony from Mégane – Translated excerpt from the collection of Josée Mensales, Diane Veillette and Guillaume Corbeil, *Pour l'amour de mon pimp*, 2015, p. 32

Socially, young victims will often find themselves dropping out of school and will not have the opportunity to gain work experience. Stigmatized, many see their family ties disintegrated and their social relationships undermined by their past, thus contributing to keeping them on the margins of society

³ Conseil du statut de la femme. *La prostitution : il est temps d'agir*, 2012, p. 46.

Sexual exploitation: omnipresent, but invisible

The street is no longer the preferred place to sell the sexual services of victims. A large proportion of transactions takes place online. Due to its illegality, the sexual exploitation of minors takes place behind closed doors in hotels, saunas, private residences and even in apartments rented from short-term accommodation platforms. Thus hidden from the eyes of passers-by, exploitation is more difficult than ever to contain and combat.

Across Québec, more than 630 establishments are linked to the sex industry, such as massage parlours and escort agencies, but also strip bars where sexual services are often offered illegally⁴. Activities involving the exploitation of minors are sometimes concealed by procurers with or without the knowledge of the owners. However, this situation seems to be quite rare since the police are able to intervene and regularly check the age of the people in these establishments. The fact that they are established businesses and have permits for certain types of activities makes supervision easier and makes the exploitation of minors more risky. This is a means of making the owners responsible and of raising their awareness.

Drawing a portrait of the victims

Whether they are boys or girls, privileged or disadvantaged, born in Québec or of immigrant background, very educated or with little schooling, no young person is immune from recruitment for sexual exploitation. Certain factors can accentuate vulnerabilities. Young people who have been sexually or physically abused are more at risk. The individuals we heard from highlighted the diversity of victims' backgrounds and situations. They all have their own stories.

We were told of situations where their motivations can be both emotional and economic. For some young girls, recruitment can take place in youth centres or when they run away from home. Some fall under the spell of their procurer who manipulates them. They think they are acting out of love or business while the exploitative relationship is being consolidated. Nevertheless, they quickly fall under the influence of their exploiter. The procurer benefits from the commodification of his victim, who has little or no say in the matter. The victim is seen as a commodity that can be sold or renewed.

4 Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle (CLES). *Portrait de l'industrie du sexe au Québec*, 2014, p. 25.

They don't need me. I'm the one who makes them think they need me. I don't care about them. I just want to abuse them. Guys, when you turn your back, they say "little slut", "fucking bitch", "she just fucked with fifty guys and gave me all that money"; "fuck, she doesn't respect herself". She has forgotten what the value of a woman is. So you take advantage of that. Not just any woman will accept this, but if she does, you've just won the jackpot.

Translated testimony from a procurer, "La pointe de l'iceberg", *Trafic : À la recherche du client*, épisode 1

Young men are also victims of sexual exploitation. They are not necessarily under the control of a procurer and the relationship with the client abusers is different from that of young women. The testimonies we heard highlight motivations related to survival issues: drug use, housing, food, basic hygiene, etc. Although the majority of client abusers are men, the sexual orientation or gender identity of these young victims is not homogeneous.

We understand that stigma, discrimination and prejudice are factors of vulnerability. People from gender and sexual minorities (LGBTQ2S+⁵) are unfortunately still the target. Nevertheless, each individual's circumstances are different, making it difficult to establish a general picture of the situation in Québec. This diversity is not sufficiently documented.

We also know that LGBTQ+ young people, when they are victims of sexual exploitation, are part of networks that are different from those we hear about in general and in spaces that are also specific to LGBTQ+ communities, outside, therefore, of what you can imagine happening with young girls.

Marie-Pier Boisvert, executive director of the Conseil québécois LGBT - Translated excerpt from the public hearing of January 21, 2020, in Montréal

Racism, discrimination and racial prejudices with sexual connotations against certain communities contribute to the vulnerability of some people, including Indigenous women. It should be noted that those who leave their communities for urban centres are particularly at risk of being recruited by procurers. As with Indigenous victims, prejudices reinforce the attraction of recruiters for people from ethnocultural communities.

⁵ This acronym includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and two-spirited people. The plus sign is intended to include other sexual orientations or gender identities.

Well, websites, in general, escort sites and resale sites, we're going to talk a lot by ethnicity, "Blacks", "Asians", but the word "Frenchies" is always present. If you are looking for ads, you will find...

Paul Laurier, president of Vigiteck - Translated excerpt from the public hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City

Procurers and traffickers: the lure of profit first and foremost

Procurers and traffickers come from all ethnocultural and linguistic backgrounds and from all walks of life. Motivated by the lure of profit, they act alone or within organized criminal networks. Sometimes they hide on the fringes of the legal industry, exploiting people in strip clubs, for example.

According to the portrait of the Service du renseignement criminel du Québec, 85% of procurers are men and 15% are women⁶. The latter have sometimes themselves been exploited in the past and use this means to improve their lot.

Procurers are not systematically affiliated with criminal groups or street gangs. However, that is the situation for the majority of suspects involved in more than one procuring case. They engage in several criminal activities at the same time, in an environment where violence dominates.

Procurers deploy several strategies to tighten their grip on victims. They can offer attractive prospects: jet set lifestyle, parties, luxury gifts, easy money, complicity and love. Without them realizing it, victims quickly find themselves trapped in psychological manipulation, social isolation, threats, violence and drug addiction. In some cases, exploiters deprive victims of their fundamental freedoms; they impose contracts, force tattoos, remove identity papers and charge exorbitant fees to leave the prostitution scene.

I entered prostitution of my own free will, it's true, but they didn't let me out.

Testimony from Mégane - Translated excerpt from the collection of Josée Mensales, Diane Veillette and Guillaume Corbeil, *Pour l'amour de mon pimp*, 2015, p. 31-32

⁶ Service du renseignement criminel du Québec. *Portrait provincial du proxénétisme et de la traite des personnes*, 2013, p. 13.

Victims of trafficking are sometimes transported from city to city and to other parts of Canada. They then have no social network and do not necessarily have a good command of English. In these circumstances it is difficult to call for help.

Client abusers: central yet anonymous players

The client abuser, that is, the client who buys sexual services from minors, does not have a unique profile, except that it is almost always a man. His age, profession, motivations and social background vary. Some may be sexually attracted to children and teenagers, in which case they are known as paedophiles or hebephiles. Nevertheless, many seek a youthful appearance and indiscriminately buy sexual services from young pubescent persons without their age being from the outset an exclusive criterion.

I'm a bit disappointed to tell you that we don't know much about the client abusers in the phenomenon of sexual exploitation as regards minors. [...] What is observed is that it is not so rare that some individuals will solicit sexual services from women and then quietly move on to soliciting minors. [...] In some individuals, the consumption of child pornography and then of pornography has also been observed before committing an act.

Yves Paradis, director and sexologist psychotherapist, Centre d'intervention en délinquance sexuelle de Laval – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City

However, the role of the client is central to the dynamics of sexual exploitation since without demand, exploitation would not exist. In the course of our work, we realized that the client remains in the shadows: unknown and rarely arrested. We have resolved to place him at the centre of attention, because by eradicating demand, we stop the system of exploitation.

The impact of the pandemic

The current COVID-19 pandemic is shaking the whole Québec society. Witnesses heard on August 24, 2020, told us that it is having an impact on sexual exploitation activities and the availability of care. The phenomenon is still too recent to assess its consequences with certainty. Nevertheless, the Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté, in a series of watch bulletins, has made observations and hypotheses based on the testimony of young people. On the one hand, confinement has led to the temporary closing of strip clubs and massage parlours, moving the purchase of sexual services out of sight. Decreased demand may exacerbate the vulnerability of those offering sexual services and lead them to accept risky practices which may result in the transmission of sexually transmitted or blood-borne infections. Above all, victims are at particular risk of exposure to COVID-19, which is easily transmitted through close contact.

In the first few weeks, we felt a contraction in the market, that is, a marked decrease in demand. [The] surveys that were done among the various victims confirmed that demand was lower. That had an impact on the price. There was a decrease in demand for services for this reason. There was an increase in demand for unprotected sex, since [...] those who had to do it out of need or exploitation had to bring in the same amounts, were exposed to this type of negotiation. [...] [The] supply of virtual sexual services has multiplied and, I believe, will remain on different platforms. [...] It existed, but there has been a proliferation of this phenomenon, that is, traffickers and different exploiters have asked their victims to continue, and this has led to more income or a diversification of income for these individuals.

Dominic Monchamp, lieutenant-detective in the criminal investigation department of the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City

Confinement can lead to the loss of positive social contacts for victims. However, this remoteness also applies to the harmful influences of a procurer. The stress associated with the pandemic may steer some people toward increasing their use of psychoactive substances, which constitutes a risk factor. We have also observed that the pandemic limits access to the resources of the health and social services system⁷.

On a more positive note, there has been a significant decrease in the number of runaways among young people in the care of youth protection in Montréal since the beginning of the containment measures⁸. Although it is difficult to target a single reason for this trend, it could stem from a certain fear of contamination among young people, a surge of social awareness in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus, or changes to the activities offered in this context.

Meeting with the Indigenous communities

During the work of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, several testimonies mentioned the vulnerabilities of members of Indigenous communities to sexual exploitation and human trafficking. The Canadian government's National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024 echoes this situation⁹. However, the available statistics remain too fragmentary to provide a reliable portrait of the sexual exploitation of First Nations and Inuit people in Québec. We felt it was essential to meet with them in order to understand the ramifications of this scourge.

Our discussions with members of Indigenous nations, including Mohawk, Cree and Anishnabe, and with groups representing them highlighted the importance of taking into account their particular context. In this regard, the work of the commissions of inquiry

⁷ Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté. *Exploitation sexuelle en période de pandémie*. Bulletin d'information COVID-19, 2020.

⁸ Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté. *La fugue en temps de pandémie*. Bulletin d'information COVID-19, 2020, p. 5.

⁹ Government of Canada. *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024*, 2019, p. 7.

that preceded our work is noteworthy. These include the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Erasmus-Dussault Commission, 1991-1996); the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2008-2015); the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG, 2016-2019), which includes a complementary report for Québec; and the Public Inquiry Commission on Relations Between Indigenous Peoples and Certain Public Services in Québec: listening, reconciliation and progress (Viens Commission, 2016-2019).

Some of the recommendations of these commissions of inquiry are directly related to the subject of awareness of sexual violence, and several target aspects that constitute vulnerability factors in sexual exploitation. Despite the reports, the situation of Indigenous communities remains difficult. We are aware that several solutions have been put forward and we recognize this contribution that must be built upon with the First Nations and the Inuit. We are of the opinion that the recommendations already proposed following previous inquiries must be implemented quickly.

It is also important to consider the historical context of the First Nations and the Inuit and the intergenerational effects of colonization and assimilation policies. Various forms of discrimination against Indigenous people, particularly women, have been institutionalized. These policies have worsened their living conditions and have created many social problems in the communities.

Sexual exploitation among minors, for us, is nothing new. It goes back several generations. We have four generations to heal, maybe the fifth to come. Sexual exploitation began even before boarding schools, because many of our children, many of the children who come from boarding schools, they were sexually exploited every day.

Adrienne Jérôme, Chief of the Council of the Anishnabe Nation of Lac Simon – Excerpt from the public hearing of January 23, 2020, in Val-d'Or

The many risk factors that plague Indigenous communities today fuel prejudice and racism against them. Moreover, the alignment of responsibilities and services that fall under the jurisdiction of the governments of Canada and of Québec is often complex. This situation hinders the optimal deployment of resources to communities and Indigenous people living off-community.

Difficult conditions

From our discussions, we have learned that major obstacles undermine the living conditions of communities in addition to constituting factors of vulnerability with regard to sexual exploitation. The majority of communities are struggling with overcrowding and a state of advanced housing decay. The situation is aggravated by strong demographic growth. Many Indigenous communities face high rates of poverty, unemployment, health problems, food insecurity and a significant school dropout rate. Difficult living conditions are a source of individual and social tension. The use of alcohol and drugs exacerbates them.

These factors heighten the risk of violence and abuse in the family environment. They contribute to an increase in the number of potential victims, including children. Most communities do not have temporary shelters for women and children wishing to flee a violent environment.

Tensions between Indigenous people and Québec public services (police, justice, health and social services, youth protection, etc.) make it difficult for potential victims to access the required resources. Recent commissions of inquiry have reported several testimonies to this effect, including physical and sexual abuse allegedly committed by persons in authority such as members of the clergy and police officers.

In order to offer adequate services to the Indigenous population to counter sexual exploitation, we will have to listen and consider the needs, values and cultures of Indigenous people. Obstacles remain as regards access to the resources deployed by public services: lack of staff training, language barriers, difficulties in accessing the Internet.

In the community and off-community

Our exchanges with Indigenous communities in Val-d'Or and Montréal have made it possible to distinguish the contexts of exploitation of which their members are victims. The issue of violence and sexual abuse remains taboo in many communities, notably because of their small size and the proximity of their members. Despite their remoteness from large cities, the presence of large-scale employers and major construction sites attracts an abundant workforce established close to their living environment. The influx of male seasonal workers, access to alcohol and drugs and the sharp rise in rents contribute to fueling the supply and demand for sexual services.

Although situations of sexual exploitation may concern young people in the community, the testimonies collected told us about situations of exploitation observed in urban areas. In the city, they often face racism and prejudice. The language barrier and the cost of living increase their vulnerability. Several obstacles faced by Indigenous youth in urban environments were documented in the "Avis sur la réalité montréalaise des jeunes Autochtones" produced in 2015 by the Conseil jeunesse de Montréal¹⁰.

¹⁰ Conseil jeunesse de Montréal. *Avis sur la réalité montréalaise des jeunes Autochtones*, 2016.

Some of our medical support comes from Montréal urban centers, so our community members travel there and, at times, they do require escorts or they need to travel with someone to their appointment, their medical appointment. And there have been several cases where some of these young girls have been recruited not only by Aboriginal people but also non-Aboriginals. [...] And now, you know, because of the exploitation that is happening in these urban centers, it is now happening within our Cree communities. Not long ago, we had training with the Montréal police on human trafficking. They came to the community, and, at that presentation, a community member came forth and said that, you know, there's a pimp in our community. So this is why, you know, it's very important that we address these issues and be able to bring out these stories because it is happening right in our own communities now, not only in urban centers.

Virginia Wabano, planning, programming and research officer at the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay – Excerpt from the public hearing of January 23, 2020, in Val-d'Or

According to the organization Québec Native Women, "one of the overriding [risk] factors is the lack of resources for 18 year-old girls at the end of the protection period provided by the Youth Protection Directorate, who find themselves without reference points when they are no longer institutionalized [translation]¹¹."

Many Indigenous people are homeless, including many women. Their access to medical care and social programs is compromised. They are then especially vulnerable to exploitation and sexual abuse¹². Often on the margins, it is important to better understand their specific needs in order to propose solutions adapted to their reality.

A phenomenon and practices that remain poorly documented

The overall picture of the sexual exploitation of minors in Québec remains difficult to draw because of the clandestine nature of the phenomenon. Parts of the problem remain unknown, for example the reality of people from minority groups. Similarly, knowledge of best practices, both in terms of awareness and prevention as well as intervention, seemed to us to be imprecise. We noted that a number of researchers and organizations are contributing through their work to improve the state of our knowledge. Nevertheless, it is essential to further document the phenomenon in order to be able to develop a common and clear vision of the situation and to propose measures that act in response to the reality and the needs of minor victims.

¹¹ Québec Native Women (QNW). *KA UTSHINIKANAT UTINNIUNNUAU. Celles dont on a pris la vie*, 2018, p. 13.

¹² Commission d'enquête sur les relations entre les Autochtones et certains services publics (CERP). *Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec: listening, reconciliation and progress: final report*, 2019, p. 130.

It seems to us that it is currently impossible to accurately assess the extent of the problem on the territory, thus making it impossible to evaluate the impact of our actions. This is explained by the fact that, in order to have a realistic evaluation of the scope of the problem, we would have to call upon several sources of data (Youth Protection Directorate, Service de police de l'agglomération de Longueuil, schools, community organizations). Some communities record part of the information we would need, while others do not record this information centrally.

Prévention Jeunesse de Longueuil program – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 6

We realized that data collection is not uniform across organizations. For example, the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme recognizes that improvements must be made within police forces in order to establish a more accurate picture of the phenomenon. In addition, data sharing is often limited between organizations due to the protection of personal information.

Yet, this information would certainly contribute to the establishment of a clearer picture of the situation in its various facets. In fact, our work has brought to light important grey areas and the difficulty of measuring the phenomenon with reliable statistics. A few research projects have been conducted in certain regions to determine and evaluate the needs of women involved in a prostitution dynamic¹³. However, these initiatives are isolated and do not provide a complete picture of all the regions. Personal stories would benefit from being better documented, such as those of boys who are victims of sexual exploitation, sexual minorities, ethnocultural minorities, and Indigenous people. Important fields of research are also opening up on the use of social networks and sexual exploitation in the virtual sphere. Also, little research has documented the real drivers of sexual exploitation. It is important to highlight the risk factors that transform men into client abusers or procurers.

Faced with the multiplicity of awareness, prevention and intervention approaches, we also observed a lack of knowledge about the evaluation of the initiatives implemented. How can we ensure that the programs created adequately meet the needs of victims, their loved ones and other people involved in prostitution operations? Harmonized evaluations would document the success factors of the strategies and guide future actions. In the same vein, numerous initiatives aimed at sharing expertise have been put in place. They may take the form of regional platforms, such as the Table de concertation de la région de Québec, or groups within certain organizations, such as the internal committee on

¹³ A few examples: Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractères sexuels (CALACS) de Granby. *Rapport/Portrait de l'exploitation sexuelle en Haute-Yamaska et Brome-Missisquoi : Comprendre pour mieux intervenir*, 2020.

Karine Côté, Christopher M. Earls, Sabrina Bédard et al. *Profil psychosocial des femmes qui offrent des services sexuels au Bas-Saint-Laurent*, 2016.

Gîte L'autre Porte. *Portrait de la prostitution en Abitibi-Témiscamingue, des services existants et des besoins*, 2015 (page consulted on October 29, 2020).

Service de police de la Ville de Montréal. *Diagnostic local sur la prostitution dans Hochelaga-Maisonneuve*, 2015.

Service de police de la Ville de Montréal. *Diagnostic sur la prostitution et l'exploitation sexuelle dans Ahuntsic*, 2015.

sexual exploitation of the Crime Victims Assistance Centre of Montréal or the Comité de concertation en matière de lutte contre l'exploitation sexuelle des enfants sur Internet of the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions. Several coexist, while bringing together similar partners. Concrete information sources must be brought together to draw a more comprehensive picture of the sexual exploitation of minors and document best practices to curb this phenomenon. Thus, we consider that it is necessary to encourage research on the issue.

Recommendation No. 4

The Committee recommends that a world-class research chair be established and financially supported in partnership with UNESCO to study the phenomenon of and responses to the sexual exploitation of minors.

Recommendation No. 5

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec mandate experts to report on the presence of child pornography on sites linked to companies registered in Québec and the measures put in place to prevent and suppress it.

How the law protects victims

Laws protecting victims of sexual exploitation fall under the jurisdiction of both levels of government, Canadian and Québec, due to the sharing of jurisdictions.

Criminal Code offences

Several Criminal Code offences may apply in cases of sexual exploitation of minors. These include the age of consent to sexual interference, luring and invitation to sexual touching.

The **Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act**, which came into force in 2014, amends provisions of the Criminal Code. It marks a change in approach to the criminalization of prostitution. This Act is based on the "Nordic Model" developed in Sweden in 1999 and since then adopted in several countries. This model aims to reduce the demand for prostitution by making it illegal to obtain and commercialize sexual services and ultimately abolish these practices¹⁴. The law nevertheless offers immunity to people who offer their own sexual services. Tougher mandatory prison sentences apply when a client obtains sexual services from a minor. The offences and penalties for trafficking in persons are similar to procuring but are different in severity.

14 Department of Justice of Canada. *Technical paper: Bill C-36, Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*.

Québec laws

The National Assembly has the power to legislate for the protection of minors in situations of sexual exploitation. In this way, it can help them.

The **Youth Protection Act** is an important tool. Amended in 2017, it makes it mandatory to report any situation that could compromise security or development, including situations of exploitation.

In Canada, the provinces are responsible for the administration of justice and the enforcement of criminal law. Police officers conduct investigations and then turn their case over to a prosecutor from the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions. In Québec, the latter is responsible for conducting prosecutions.

The **Crime Victims Compensation Act** allows for financial compensation for injuries suffered as a result of a criminal act committed in Québec. The list of criminal acts eligible for compensation remains limited and crimes such as human trafficking or sexual exploitation are not included. The **Act respecting assistance for victims of crime** establishes the network of Crime Victims Assistance Centres (CAVAC), present in all regions of Québec.

Other laws governing social programs may have an indirect impact on victims of sexual exploitation. For example, the Act respecting assistance to individuals and families dictates the eligibility conditions for the Social Assistance Program and the Social Solidarity Program. The **Act respecting Access to documents held by public bodies and the Protection of personal information** sets out the terms and conditions for collecting and sharing information between different organizations.

Government action

State interventions to counter sexual exploitation are manifold. On the one hand, several ministries and public bodies work with young people on a daily basis and have missions that commit them to fighting against the sexual exploitation of minors. On the other hand, there are many targeted initiatives, sometimes local, where efforts are made to combat one or other of its facets. The systematization of efforts is reflected in the adoption of strategies by the relevant levels of government.

The Government Strategy to Prevent and Counteract Sexual Violence 2016-2021

In 2016, the Québec government launched the Government Strategy to Prevent and Counteract Sexual Violence 2016-2021¹⁵ to provide a concerted response to sexual assault, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation. Coordinated by the Secrétariat à la condition féminine¹⁶, it guides the actions of more than ten ministries and agencies, mainly the

¹⁵ Secrétariat à la condition féminine. *Government Strategy to Prevent and Counteract Sexual Violence 2016-2021*, 2016.

¹⁶ Since 2004, the coordination of government action on conjugal, family and sexual violence is the responsibility of the ministre responsable de la Condition féminine and the ministre de la Justice.

Secrétariat itself, the Ministère de la Sécurité publique, the Ministère de la Justice, the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

This strategy brings together the most recent actions in this area and is the main lever in the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors. It includes 17 actions specific to sexual exploitation, based on three main areas of action. The first area of action concerns prevention, awareness-raising, education and staff training. It includes measures such as the deployment of information and awareness tools on the myths and realities associated with prostitution among adolescents. There is also an awareness campaign on sexual violence, including sexual exploitation. The second area of action aims to increase the capacity for screening and psychosocial, police and judicial intervention. The creation of the *Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme* is one of the flagship actions. One measure sets up multi-sectoral teams to promote collaboration in interventions in the field with young people (the *Prévention Jeunesse* projects). The judiciary is involved, in particular through the creation of training on sexual exploitation for prosecutors. The last area brings together actions to develop knowledge, share expertise and promote collaboration. To this end, extensive research on the physical, psychological, relational and social consequences of prostitution on girls and women has been produced.

An interministerial coordination committee on sexual violence has been set up to ensure the implementation and monitoring of government actions. Of the actions targeting sexual exploitation, ten are in the process of completion and seven have been implemented¹⁷.

Action by the Government of Canada

The National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024¹⁸ of Canada addresses sexual exploitation and forced labour and provides for investments of \$75 million over a period of six years. The action plan is based on five principles: victim empowerment, prevention of trafficking, protection of victims, prosecution of offenders and partnerships.

Other federal strategies coordinate the fight against sexual exploitation. Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-based Violence¹⁹ funds actions to strengthen efforts to combat online child exploitation. New funding has been injected into the implementation of the National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet²⁰. The purpose of these resources is to equip the digital industry, increase prevention activities and strengthen the capacity of teams dedicated to the fight against child exploitation on the Internet within provincial and municipal police services.

¹⁷ Monitoring the implementation of the Government Strategy enables the progress of the various actions to be assessed. (Secrétariat à la condition féminine. *Stratégie gouvernementale pour prévenir et contrer les violences sexuelles 2016-2021, Suivi de la mise en œuvre des actions – État d'avancement au 31 mars 2019*, 2020)

¹⁸ Government of Canada. *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024*, 2019

¹⁹ Status of Women Canada. *Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*.

²⁰ Public Safety Canada. *National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet*.

COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING: THE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE SITUATION

The phenomenon of sexual exploitation of minors persists because it is based on the trivialization of hypersexualization, pornography, the sex industry and the commodification of sexual services.

While it may be easy to blame the clients for his actions, we must ask ourselves how we, as a society, got here.

Going to see strippers to celebrate an 18th birthday.

Hiring an escort for a bachelor party.

Watching online pornography that features young women.

These are all socially acceptable behaviours. [...] How is it that we, as a society, have come to trivialize a number of things that have allowed the number of clients to grow. There is no point in protecting our daughters if we, as a society, do not think about the clients.

Catherine Proulx, director, and Karine Dubois, producer and researcher for the podcast *Trafic : À la recherche du client* – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 8

The individuals and organizations we heard are unanimous: we need to change mentalities. To do this, the entire population must be aware of the reality experienced by the victims of sexual exploitation of minors and of the many consequences that affect their lives until adulthood and even beyond. Various avenues are envisaged to help the community take this turn. Thus, we believe that it is necessary to carry out impactful awareness campaigns, revise sexuality education classes and encourage the healthy use of information and communication technologies.

These measures concern all citizens, whether or not they are affected by the sexual exploitation of minors. They aim to raise awareness, which is essential for all Quebecers to combat this scourge. Raising awareness is everyone's business, and in this sense, it must become a national priority.

Awareness-raising campaigns: a collective electric shock

We are pleased that a broad consensus emerged from our consultations on the need for an awareness-raising campaign on the sexual exploitation of minors. This is a way of informing the entire population, but also of making it aware of its responsibilities and including it in the fight against this form of abuse against young people. It should be noted that, in recent history, numerous societal campaigns have transformed the way Quebecers view major issues: drinking and driving, the wearing of seatbelts in cars, workplace accidents, domestic violence, smoking, and many others.

As with the prevention, intervention and law enforcement campaigns concerning domestic violence [...] and drinking and driving [...], it is necessary to act on the popular perception that trivializes the purchase of young people's bodies.

Service de police de Laval - Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 8

The involvement of the whole of society is fundamental and we believe that a vast awareness campaign is an appropriate mobilization tool. While we believe it is crucial to reach the entire population, specific messages must be addressed to certain audiences.

As the saying goes, no one is deemed ignorant of the law. However, our observations and the testimonies we heard lead us to conclude that a portion of the population is unaware that the commodification of sexual services has been illegal in Canada since 2014 under the Criminal Code. Therefore, the public must be informed about the penalties to which anyone who purchases sexual services or engages in procuring is exposed. Conviction for such acts on underage victims is punishable by imprisonment from six months to ten years. It also results in the perpetrator being entered in the National Sex Offender Register for at least ten years after conviction by the court²¹.

Nowadays, everyone knows that drinking and driving is criminal and you no longer drive under the influence of alcohol. Those who do so know very well that they are exposing themselves to serious consequences.

Y des femmes - Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 9

²¹ Institut national de la santé publique du Québec. *Legal Framework, Media Kit on Sexual Assault*.

In addition, the entire population must be aware that it is their duty to report to the Director of Youth Protection any situation that compromises the safety of a minor. Situations at risk of sexual exploitation are included.

We have seen that this phenomenon takes different forms, sometimes insidious and almost invisible. It is important that society be made aware of this. Its devastating effects on victims, both during the period of exploitation and during reconstruction, must be denounced. One component of these campaigns should target more directly the client abusers, that is, those who purchase sexual services from minors, the procurers and those at risk of becoming procurers. Awareness-raising must, of course, target the victims, informing them of the resources available. The places they are likely to frequent provide opportunities to carry the message: beauty parlours, clothing shops, hotels, motels, strip clubs, etc.

We believe that an awareness campaign must lead young people, their parents and interveners to detect the dynamics of sexual exploitation. The population must be able to recognize and evaluate the risks of recruitment and use caution with social networks. Early on, healthy and respectful romantic, intimate and sexual relationships should be promoted to all. This positive view of sexuality and intimacy is de facto opposed to the foundations of sexual exploitation.

Although there are all kinds of abusive clients, let us not be under any illusions; the demand for the sexual services of minors comes almost exclusively from men. Similarly, there is a male predominance among those guilty of procuring. This is why it is important to mobilize men in the fight against this scourge. It is clear to us that their involvement in this campaign is a guarantee of a change in mentality. Their contribution is required to challenge the discourse that trivializes the purchase of sexual services from minors.

Recommendation No. 6

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec develop broad, multi-platform and recurring awareness campaigns aimed at:

- Providing information on the sexual exploitation of minors to the entire population, with specific components aimed at families and young people, community organizations (e.g., youth centres or family centres), social interveners, the restaurant and hotel industry, and organizers of major events;
- Reminding the population of the criminal nature of buying sexual services.

We have understood that the phenomenon of sexual exploitation affects certain groups differently, which is why awareness-raising would benefit from highlighting the specific experiences of the most vulnerable people. Too often, prejudices and myths about sexual identity, sexual orientation or belonging to a particular cultural community tend to trivialize the situation of these people. These prejudices must be combated with force and empathy.

Because of the diversity of objectives and audiences to be reached, we consider that an effective awareness campaign must occupy several platforms. For example, targeted social networks, school transport or billboards intended for young people, advertisements in airports, hotels or restaurants to reach the tourist clientele, strip clubs, massage parlours, saunas or search engines to target potential client abusers. Generally speaking, social media and traditional media are avenues to explore in order to reach citizens. This accessibility effort must aim to better represent other vulnerable groups, such as Indigenous people, cultural communities and immigrants of various migration statuses.

Recommendation No. 7

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec, in partnership with the First Nations and the Inuit, conduct an awareness campaign for visitors entering their territories.

Recommendation No. 8

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec, in partnership with the First Nations and the Inuit, conduct an awareness campaign targeting Indigenous youth and their communities on the sexual exploitation of minors..

A successful campaign should adapt its messages and disseminate them in several languages to be accessible, especially to foreign tourists. The points of entry of the borders seem to us to be the best places to reach them.

Recommendation No. 9

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec, with the support of the federal government, conduct an awareness campaign, specifically at the points of entry of airports, ports and border crossings, aimed at all travellers regardless of their status, to remind them of the criminal nature of the purchase of sexual services and human trafficking on Canadian territory.

Sexuality education classes: the cornerstone of awareness-raising

Sexuality education classes in primary and secondary schools are a fundamental tool to prevent situations of sexual exploitation. Reintroduced in Québec schools since September 2018, sexuality education content is mandatory in primary and secondary education. These classes aim to promote egalitarian relationships, prevent sexual assault and violence, build a positive body image, respect sexual and gender diversity, avoid unplanned pregnancies as well as sexually and blood-borne infections, and challenge the sexualization of public space.

We consider that the development of young people's personalities should be supported in order to proactively prevent their exploitation. Self-esteem is the foundation that we must all help to consolidate. This is achieved by instilling in girls and boys a critical outlook on the world, based on an egalitarian and respectful vision of interpersonal relationships, whether friendly, intimate or loving.

In a Québec that strives to be egalitarian, we should ask ourselves this question: [...] How is it that even today, in 2019, there are still young girls who think it's a sign of love if the procurer boyfriend – she doesn't call him that, but that's what he really is – says to her: "Well, you're going to help me make money, you're going to do this for me?" [...] It says a lot about the condition of young girls and it means that there is still education, especially sex education, I repeat, to be done regarding that because there is a problem of self-esteem.

Michel Dorais, full professor and researcher at École de travail social et de criminologie of Université Laval – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 5, 2019, in Québec City

Sexuality education classes are the ideal time to break down the myths conveyed about the world of prostitution, to recognize the dynamics of sexual exploitation of minors and to master the strategies for protecting oneself and those in one's entourage. The ability to assert oneself, to say no, to ask for and receive help from people one can trust, to recognize and avoid risky situations and to maintain healthy intimate relationships based on trust are all elements that enable girls and boys to resist pressure. Yet, at present, sexual exploitation is not explicitly mentioned in the detailed content materials on sexuality education²². However, content on the prevention of sexual assault or violence in intimate relationships helps to prevent it. There are similarities between these forms of abuse. Content that protects young people from sexual exploitation should nevertheless be present right from the start in the pre-school education program and then in the school curriculum until the end of secondary education. Obviously, the way in which the subject is approached is

²² Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur. *Contenus détaillés en éducation à la sexualité: préscolaire et primaire*. 2018. Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur. *Contenus détaillés en éducation à la sexualité: secondaire*. 2018.

adapted to the age and abilities of the pupils. The subject of sexual exploitation is not addressed head-on at all ages. For younger students, the topics are more about developing assertiveness, preventing sexual assault and the foundations of a healthy and respectful relationship. It is also important that the programs put in place be developed with the support of experts to ensure that the interventions do not have an opposite effect to the one intended, for example, by ensuring that the content presented to adolescent girls and boys does not contribute to the trivialization of the prostitution environment.

In this regard, it is to be noted that sexuality education classes should aim not only to protect potential victims, but also to divert other students from the roles of client abusers or exploiters. Adolescent girls and boys should understand the importance of living their sexuality with respect for others and for themselves. This update of the educational program is a priority.

Recommendation No. 10

The Committee recommends that the Ministère de l'Éducation include adapted content specific to the prevention and risks of sexual exploitation of minors in sexuality education at the primary and secondary school levels.

The Committee recommends that the following themes be addressed in sexuality education classes, notably consent, respect, self-fulfillment, self-esteem, healthy interpersonal relationships, sexual exploitation, recruitment methods, safe use of social media and information technology.

We agree that sexuality education is an indispensable tool to counter the trivialization of the hypersexualization of society and prostitution. Young people are exposed to models of sexuality strongly influenced by pornography. It is important to counterbalance this distorted view and present realistic models.

Socially, [...] pornography, hypersexualization and the sex industry as a whole are trivialized. This in fact makes it easier for procurers to work, so to speak. Recruiters have an increasingly easy life because this environment is really trivialized among the general population.

Marie-Michèle Whitlock, intervenor of the Regroupement québécois des centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 5, 2019, in Québec City

Sexologists observe that a positive and inclusive view of sexuality, devoid of moralizing or repressive approaches, is a win-win situation for young people. In this respect, the involvement of adolescents in the creation of information, awareness and prevention tools seems to us to be a promising avenue. In this way, we ensure that we create an effective message that will reach them. In addition, their participation in the development of resources encourages their mobilization. Adolescents then become mobilizing agents for their entourage.

First of all, content on sexual violence – and more specifically sexual exploitation – requires specific knowledge and skills. These subjects require a tactfulness that cannot be taught in a few extra hours of training, as proposed by the Ministry. In fact, the support and guidance of a pedagogical advisor hired by each school board, combined with their knowledge of pedagogy, seems to us to be insufficient for teachers to deal with sensitive topics such as sexual exploitation. Professionals trained in sexology receive a minimum of three years’ training before addressing these issues. [...] Sexuality being a taboo subject for many, talking about it with an external resource increases their level of confidence and allows for fruitful exchanges.

L’Anonyme – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 10

Despite the strong consensus that emerged from the Committee’s consultations on the importance of sexuality education, two questions remain open. Who should teach these classes? How much time should be devoted to them? Like most of the interveners we heard, we consider that staff who teach sexuality education need to be adequately trained and able to deal with sensitive topics. Teachers often have the confidence of students. So would it be appropriate to entrust them with this content? A specialized sexology organization mentions that the authority relationship maintained between teachers and pupils can sometimes prove to be a hindrance to the prevention of sexual violence, despite the bonds of trust that can develop between them. For some young people, it is difficult to confide in their teacher for fear of having their grades affected or their problem revealed to other pupils. In addition, some cases are more serious, especially those involving sexual assault or sexual exploitation. In these circumstances, it is advisable to consider the support of specialized resources, sexologists or others, who will be equipped if students decide to disclose a situation of abuse or exploitation.

Recommendation No. 11

The Committee recommends that sexuality education classes be taught by trained teachers supported by sexologists or other qualified professionals.

In our opinion, school has a crucial role to play in the sexuality education of both children and adolescents. However, this learning also relies on the parents and all those working with young people.

Parents are and remain the primary educators of their child's sexuality, although not everyone feels comfortable doing so. The majority say they are in favour of the idea of a sexuality education initiative at school.

Ordre professionnel des sexologues du Québec – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 15

We believe that parents need to get more involved. We must ensure that they are involved in this aspect of their children's development. We want them to be able to fully play this role.

As part of the sexuality education program, parents are provided with fact sheets informing them of the topics discussed in class with their children. Tools created by different organizations are also available on the Web. But are parents aware of these resources and tools that can help them continue sexuality education and prevention at home? It would be relevant to reflect on the best ways to reach parents in order to better equip them.

Marie-Vincent Foundation – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 10

Maison d'Haïti's "Juste pour Elles" and "Projet Gars" awareness-raising and prevention programs

Both programs are aimed at young people between the ages of 10 and 17. "Juste pour Elles" works to prevent sexual exploitation and hypersexualization. The program promotes healthy and responsible sexuality, based on egalitarian and non-violent relationships. It is intended for young girls in the Saint-Michel neighbourhood of the city of Montréal. Its goal is to empower them. The program includes weekly meetings, recreational, artistic and sports activities and group discussions. The "Projet Gars" aims to prevent problems related to toxic masculinity and bullying. With the same type of activities as "Juste pour Elles", this program encourages healthy relationships by challenging the social constructions that define male identity.

Virtual life: its real dangers

As elsewhere in the world, the use of smartphones is growing strongly in Québec. Teenagers are also spending a lot of time on numerous social networks. These behaviours have considerably modified procuring practices. Age, friendly network, places to go out, emotional state, etc. Like many adults, young people too often disclose an underestimated amount of personal, even intimate information on these platforms, making them vulnerable to predation by procurers. Social networks now represent a privileged tool and recruitment ground for these skillful manipulators. This is sometimes done insidiously over a long period of time.

More and more procurers are also using platforms like YouTube as a means of recruitment with a culture based on music or values they want to convey, and it is not uncommon to even see victims featured on them. In these videos there is also [increasingly] denigration of women [...].

Dominic Monchamp, lieutenant-detective in the criminal investigation department of the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City

It does not matter where these ill-intentioned individuals live; their recruitment pool extends to all regions of Québec, and they don't have to leave their living room. These networks give them the opportunity to communicate much more easily with vulnerable youth at any time of the day or night. Smartphones allow for private and constant communication. In this way, procurers and other abusers tighten their grip on their victims without the knowledge of their loved ones.

[...] among younger people, they are extremely agile and fragmented in the way they consume digital media, in the sense that they use several platforms and change quickly. [...] They will sometimes use five, six, seven different platforms for different groups, for different activities. And the fact that they're constantly changing [...] exacerbates the lack of digital literacy because it implies that they haven't necessarily managed their [privacy] settings on each of them. [...] [O]ne can end up making publications on these platforms that illustrate their vulnerability at certain moments in their lives in a way that is completely public and accessible to anyone. So, anyone with malicious intent can identify individuals in a vulnerable state, get in touch with them easily and have levers to manipulate them super easily because young persons are not aware of this and potentially neither are their parents, nor their teachers, nor anyone around them.

Nellie Brière, lecturer and consultant in digital communications and social networks – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 6, 2019, in Québec City

We consider it imperative that young people and their parents be made aware of the safe use of social networks. Recognizing online recruitment techniques is necessary, but it is all the more crucial that everyone develops their digital literacy. For example, we must understand the risks associated with the disclosure of private information and take a critical look at how it is used. Both children and teens need to understand the importance of adopting safe behaviours, whether in chat applications or online games: for example, understanding the risks of sending intimate photos. Many young people experience positive socialization on social networks, but these networks can also be places for sexual intimidation and harassment. These negative experiences increase young people's vulnerabilities.

Parents need to take an interest in their children's online activities and be able to offer them adequate supervision and support in their use. This requires knowledge of popular applications and social networks. An interest in their children's online activities increases their ability to detect and intervene in problematic situations. In which case, resources must be available to support them in this intervention.

This is why it is recommended that parents find out what applications their children have downloaded. The role of parents is crucial in educating young people in the responsible use of technology and the Web and in helping them develop a critical mind in the face of hypersexualization, which can have harmful effects on the perception and understanding of egalitarian male-female relationships.

Cathy Tétreault, executive director of the Centre Cyber-aide – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 6

In order to prevent online recruitment, both young people and their parents would benefit from being better informed and more aware of the use of social networks. Moreover, the Internet provides easy access to pornography, whose harmful effects on the construction of young people's sexuality are well known. Parents should play an active role in order to better support their children in the healthy and responsible use of different technologies.

Recommendation No. 12

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec conduct a vast awareness campaign for children and their parents to make them aware of risks and consequences of using various technologies, applications and social networks as well as to equip them in recognizing high risk situations as it pertains to sexual exploitation online.

A sign of the times, client abusers also use digital tools to get in touch with victims, or their procurers. Rather than leaving this field to clandestine activities, virtual space offers interesting possibilities for raising awareness. For example, consider the dissemination of targeted messages when a potential client abuser carries out a search on certain terms, or awareness messages targeting sexual services advertising sites. Advances in artificial intelligence make it possible to better target virtual content and behaviour potentially related to the sexual exploitation of minors. Although this field of action is still in its infancy, it seems to us imperative to develop it as soon as possible.

Recommendation No. 13

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec implement a cyber alert system that directly targets persons seeking the sexual services of minors and sites advertising sexual services.

PREVENTION AND TRAINING: WEAVING THE SAFETY NET

At certain times in their lives, young people are at greater risk of being sexually exploited. We asked ourselves how to detect and equip them before they are caught up in this cycle. Conversely, other individuals will slide into the role of exploiters. Interventions are all the more necessary to dissuade them from doing so.

In addition to parents and loved ones, staff working with young people or in environments close to the phenomenon of sexual exploitation have a decisive role to play. Trained and sensitized, the staff is able to better recognize and intervene when necessary. They are a potential ally in the implementation of a global strategy.

A young man found overdosed in a sauna, nobody at the hospital asks him what happened. They are unconcerned about young people, "young people take a lot of drugs nowadays", but nobody wonders what happened to make them take so many drugs.

From the testimony of a survivor of sexual exploitation - Translated excerpt from the hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City, private deliberative meeting

The protection of young people: a shared responsibility

Some girls and boys are more likely to be involved in sexual exploitation, both as victims and as procurers. Several measures that were presented by interveners during our work aim to protect young people in their environment. One way to achieve this would be to put forward initiatives that positively influence them and promote their development. The establishment of trusting relationships with significant adults, access to quality information on sexuality and the presence of positive role models are among the protective factors that can be found in young people's entourage. These elements, combined with individual protective factors such as self-esteem, "increase a young person's resistance to risk and decrease the likelihood of being sexually exploited [translation]²³".

²³ Cécile Charbonneau, Michel Dorais, Luc Mercier et coll. *Guide de prévention et d'intervention en prostitution juvénile*, 2017, p. 27.

Family

We were reminded that parents are the first actors involved in prevention. From the earliest years of their child, they are in a position to consolidate the protective factors proactively. However, families do not all have the same parenting capacities; some parents have more or less difficult life courses, others feel helpless in the face of the often rapid changes their children experience in the transition to adolescence. This is why support for parents is a path to be favoured.

Similar to workshops offered before the birth of a child, such as prenatal classes or breastfeeding training, the implementation of workshops would promote the development of knowledge and skills. To fulfill their role, parents must master the basics of child and adolescent psychosexual development, sexuality education and understand the social issues facing young people. They must be able to detect risk behaviours, signs that a person is being sexually abused and know what actions to take.

Dialogue, you don't start that when the teenager is 16 years old. It starts when she is born. If we hadn't had good contact with her, we would have lost her, that's for sure.

From the testimony of the father of a sexual exploitation survivor – Translated excerpt from the hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City, private deliberative meeting

Certain skills are effective, such as maintaining good communication, answering the child's questions, listening, and being open and respectful when learning about the young person's dating habits or the digital applications they use. The support provided to parents should, among other things, encourage them to develop attitudes that build on young people's strengths, promote self-esteem, teach them to recognize healthy relationships and to set limits.

Providing the right tools to young people is one thing, but if we want to be more effective in terms of prevention, we also need to raise awareness among families. Very often, the parents of minors in prostitution are totally overwhelmed by events. They do not understand how this could happen to their child. All the more so because they do not see themselves as a problem or depraved family.

Maria Mourani, criminologist, sociologist and president of Mourani-Criminologie – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 19.

Too often when problems arise, parents are helpless in their search for help. Accessibility to appropriate resources and information is essential to them. And this access, which is currently too limited, needs to be improved

Living environments outside the home

Young people build their identity, interests, goals and vision of life by frequenting several places: shopping centres, parks, community centres, youth centres, schools, etc. Given the importance of the digital world, it seemed relevant to us to recognize social networks as a living space in their own right where prevention must be deployed. Young people discover models for their development there, whether positive or not. We have understood that the watchword is to reach young people wherever they are.

Interveners in many community organizations go out to meet young people in the places they frequent. Among them, street workers help prevent the entry, maintenance or return to a dynamic of commercialization of sexual services. They also intervene with young victims and adolescents tempted by procuring. Their approach is based on building relationships of trust. Thus, their action is not limited to the sexual exploitation of minors. However, their presence in the field and their knowledge of young people make them key players in both prevention and screening.

Young people who are more at risk, who are more vulnerable, they won't always realize what spiral they are falling into, eh? So, by educating, by raising awareness, by offering adequate prevention programs, we can ensure that these young victims will be able to recognize the signs, and then hope that they will be able to act appropriately when faced with potentially dangerous situations.

Tanya Brunelle, project coordinator of Sans proxénète ni escorte of the Maison Kekpart – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of January 21, 2020, in Montréal

Young people spend a lot of time at school. Hence, several initiatives to reach them are deployed in the school environment. Some are led by school resources, others by community organizations: conferences, workshops, information booths for girls and boys. We applaud these actions. However, due to a lack of data, it is difficult to get an overall picture of these measures and their results.

Between the end of classes and their return home, young people are alone and do not necessarily benefit from supervision. A strategy was presented to us by community organizations. It consists of keeping them positively occupied with meaningful activities until the parents return home. In this way, young people develop their skills and enjoy a safe place to exchange, such as a youth centre or community centre.

Shakotihenté:se-Kanesatake project

The Shakotihenté:se-Kanesatake Crime Prevention project provides after-school indoor and outdoor activities that focus on community service and traditional values transmitted to adolescent girls and boys in the Mohawk community. This allows young people to participate in outdoor activities, to become committed to those most in need and to learn or refine their knowledge of the Mohawk language.

Recommendation No. 14

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec support initiatives aimed at preventing and detecting sexual exploitation of minors in all places frequented by young people.

In youth centres

Unfortunately, young people in the care of a Director of Youth Protection and placed in a youth centre are even more vulnerable to the dynamics of sexual exploitation. Created on May 30, 2019, the Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection (CSDEPJ in French), under the chairmanship of Régine Laurent, has a mandate to broadly examine the youth protection mechanisms in the various intervention networks concerned. The object of our mandate was more specific than that of the CSDEPJ, so we will therefore address the issue of youth centres from the perspective of the sexual exploitation of minors since several witnesses have expressed concerns in this regard.

Certain aspects of the operation of youth centres are alarming because they contribute to fueling the phenomenon of sexual exploitation. These young people are often taken into care by youth protection because of traumas such as those related to sexual violence, abandonment by parents, neglect, etc. They are vulnerable. Easily identifiable, the centres can become recruitment targets for procurers. In addition, youth centres bring together young people who are experiencing problems of a different nature. Thus, sexually exploited young girls can promote the exchange of sexual services with other equally vulnerable adolescent girls who are looking for freedom, recognition or money. Finally, the conditions of accommodation are similar to a form of detention. Adolescent girls and boys will seek to escape this rigid framework at all costs.

Social workers invite you to go back to a shelter, but it is not a place to learn how to live. The housing conditions are unbearable. That's where I developed my aggressiveness. In a youth centre, you have consequences: you get sent to your room. When you're in your room all the time, you don't solve your problems. You don't have fun at the youth centre. You have nothing.

From the testimony of a young runaway – Translated excerpt from the hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City, private deliberative meeting

Running away from home is a major risk factor. According to an analysis carried out by the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme, in cases of procuring, 44% of minor victims were runaways when they were recruited. Moreover, 77% of these young people had run away from a youth centre, that is, one third of the young people in the grip of a procurer.

Two recent reports make numerous recommendations to prevent runaways and to intervene more adequately when they do occur²⁴. In response to a wave of teenage runaways at the Centre jeunesse de Laval in 2016, André Lebon was mandated by the ministre déléguée à la Réadaptation, à la Protection de la jeunesse, à la Santé publique et aux Saines habitudes de vie to shed light on the events. His report focuses on the specific case of Laval, but also proposes recommendations of national scope. Taking note of its conclusions, the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux subsequently mandated the Institut national d'excellence en santé et en services sociaux to document best practices in prevention and intervention to counter runaways in youth centres. Many topics are covered, including the creation and maintenance of meaningful links between young people, their loved ones and counsellors, access to activities in the community, information on the risks associated with running away, etc. Collaboration between the staff of youth centres, community organizations and police forces is also put forward. Collaboration protocols should be formalized and regularly revised within partnership agreements that define the roles and responsibilities of each party.

We were sorry to learn that Québec youth centres dedicated to the protection of the most vulnerable young people in our society are turning into recruiting grounds for future victims or procurers. It should be noted that immersion in the world of procuring also takes place during adolescence or early adulthood.

²⁴ André Lebon. *Les Fugues reliées à l'exploitation sexuelle : État de situation et Solutions*, 2016.

Institut national d'excellence en santé et services sociaux (INESSS). *Les meilleures pratiques de prévention et d'intervention en matière de fugues auprès des jeunes hébergés en centre de réadaptation pour jeunes en difficulté d'adaptation*, 2018.

ACTES project

Coordinated by the Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté (IUJD) of the CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, the Activité clinique sur la traite et l'exploitation sexuelle (ACTES)²⁵ project aims to prevent procuring and human trafficking among young offenders who are more likely to join criminalized circles. Launched in June 2019, this project is funded for a three-year period by the Fondation québécoise pour les jeunes contrevenants. ACTES is based on a partnership between ICSUSS, an IUJD researcher and sexuality education organizations. This resource accompanies people in situations of exclusion and marginalization in the field. Former offenders who have been involved in procuring activities have also been approached with a view to co-developing the workshops.

Preventive measures are necessary and must be generalized. Some youth centres have developed expertise and intervene to strengthen protective factors or to provide a safety net for boys and girls. These interventions take different forms. For example, workshops adapted to young people's backgrounds focus on sexuality education and the development of self-esteem and skills. The Pour ados seulement program, set up at the Centre jeunesse de Montréal, is an example of content to help young people in difficulty adopt a healthy and responsible sexuality.

Recommendation No. 15

The Committee recommends, on the basis of locally developed initiatives, the creation and mainstreaming of sexuality education programs directly adapted to young people in youth centres.

Networking with resource people, such as a police officer or a street worker, allows young people to cultivate relationships with workers outside youth centres. These initiatives yield interesting results with young people during their off-site activities and after their stay at the youth centre. They sometimes prove to be beneficial, particularly in runaway situations which exacerbate their vulnerability to sexual exploitation. The bond of trust developed with a counsellor can then help them avoid the worst.

²⁵ At the time of the public hearings in November 2019, the project was still in its development phase. The CIUSSS interveners we met mentioned that ACTES aims to work with some twenty young people.

SELFIE program

The SELFIE program is a series of group workshops aimed at preventing or correcting behaviours at risk of sexual exploitation. The program is the result of a collaboration between the community organization Projet Intervention Prostitution Québec and the CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale. Participants are led to deepen their knowledge about themselves and to reinforce their protective factors through discussions on themes such as sexuality, values, personal identity, intimacy and self-esteem.

Inclusive prevention recognizing the vulnerabilities of people from minorities

Representatives of organizations spoke about factors that often make it difficult for some people to live their lives and the consequences of stigmatization, whether they are Indigenous, transgendered, from cultural communities, etc. Increased prevention efforts must support them before they become victims of sexual exploitation. Sharing their reality has been essential to guide our work. Indeed, this vulnerability calls for special sensitivity. Before hoping to protect them from situations of exploitation, it is necessary to address its roots.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls²⁶, whose report was published in 2019, documented their different realities and the issues that are likely to make them vulnerable. Prevention measures intended for them must be considered on this basis if they are to be successful. The development of culturally appropriate initiatives, in partnership with the communities, seemed to us to be an avenue that contrasts with the colonial past. This dismal legacy is being pointed out to put into context the difficult living conditions of Indigenous communities and their members. Many of the social ills that are all too common can be traced back to the exploitation of Indigenous women and girls. Moreover, for clients, the persistence of racial prejudice is a legitimization of violence against them. Sexually exploited people, as well as First Nations and Inuit people, are more likely to be victims of violence. This situation is unacceptable.

²⁶ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. *Reclaiming Power and Place*. 2019.

Although certain factors tend to make young Québec women vulnerable to sexual exploitation, the situation of Indigenous women differs from that of the general population, since they evolve in an environment that has been greatly disrupted by the effects of colonization. In the Indigenous context, the analysis of the factors that lead women to find themselves in a situation of sexual exploitation cannot be carried out without looking at the historical and social violence perpetrated against Indigenous peoples.

Many will agree that the process of colonization, the establishment of reserves, the patriarchal and infantilizing effect of the Indian Act and its impact on First Nations are at the root of a multitude of social ills that have had repercussions on the socio-economic, cultural and political dimensions as well as on the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of nations, communities, families and individuals.

Viviane Michel, president of Québec Native Women – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of January 21, 2020, in Montréal

The Iskweu project in Montréal

An initiative of the Native Women's Shelter of Montréal, this project aims to accompany families when an Indigenous woman or girl goes missing, in particular by acting as a relay between the families and the police services. A prevention component has been added, in collaboration with the YMCA's First Stop program. It consists of distributing a welcome kit to Indigenous women and girls arriving in Montréal. The kit contains a map of the city, a bottle of water, a public transit card, a medicine pouch, a calling card and a padlock. Upon arrival, they are especially vulnerable. One of the goals is to prevent them from being recruited by procurers who take advantage of their condition and even go so far as to spot them in train stations and bus terminals.

Groups working with LGBTQ2S+ individuals have reminded us of the violence experienced by young people who are victims of homophobia or transphobia, suffering from prejudice against their sexual or gender identity. It should be noted that, for some, the process of affirming their sexual or gender identity is accompanied by tensions with their parents and entourage. Such a climate can fuel family conflicts and push young people to leave their environment, sometimes to settle in a large city. LGBTQ2S+ Indigenous youth are doubly affected to the extent that they lose their roots in their culture. Harmonious family relationships are important and are one of the protective factors. Conversely, conflict is a risk factor. It is difficult to assess the number of these Indigenous people among the victims of sexual exploitation of minors. Prejudices make them vulnerable, notably by making it difficult for them to access certain support services. It is important to emphasize the multiplicity of situations experienced by these people. Prevention focused solely on the

reality of a majority would miss the mark. How can we feel concerned when our experience is so different? This imposes the duty to think about creating targeted content, free of clichés and prejudices. LGBTQ2S+ individuals also have their own social networks. Thus, the collaboration of community actors seemed to us essential to reach them.

We believe that it is high time for a drastic change in the public discourse concerning LGBTQ individuals [...]. We are still victims of prejudices that justify violence against us, whether it is the idea that boys are capable of defending themselves, or that if they are not capable, they deserve what they get, or that violence between men is necessary, since that's how men are and that's how men function.

Similarly, trans people, whether male, female or non-binary, are still seen as circus animals, or even objects that can be used and then disposed of and that no one will care about. If they were seen as humans, they would not be treated that way.

Lesbian girls are also subject to violent prejudice. It's a short step from, "Well, if only she had found the right guy, she wouldn't be like that," to, "I'm going to show her what a good cock is like".

As for bisexual people, of whom I am one, we are not hypersexualized, as people would like to make me believe, but we undergo the hypersexualization that people impose on us [...]. But, I insist, it is others who sexualize us [...]. And I think that this is a risk factor that is generalized for the entire LGBTQ+ community. If you're subjected to that kind of talk long enough, you end up believing it.

Marie-Pier Boisvert, executive director of the Conseil québécois LGBT - Translated excerpt from the public hearing of January 21, 2020, in Montréal

Vulnerability factors do not predict which youth will be sexually exploited or are at risk of becoming procurers. They are elements that make them vulnerable. Members of some cultural communities face difficult conditions: higher unemployment than the national average, discrimination and racism, strained relations with public services and police forces, etc. In addition, the immigration process can lead to precariousness and thus obscure access to support resources. If a suitable solution is not found, entering the world of sexual exploitation may appear to be the only option. Thus, we have recognized that such a lifestyle choice is toxic, but we have not stopped at the choices of these young people alone. It is important that we understand their condition and their journey in order to deploy prevention efforts with relevant protective factors.

Families with young people need support. Youth vulnerabilities are caused by many factors. Socio-economic factors can make family life situations difficult for youth. Issues of identity and racism, reconciling sexual and gender orientation are just some of the factors that youth face, contributing to vulnerabilities and personal insecurity.

Mela Sarkar, member of the South Asian Women's Community Centre – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of January 21, 2020, in Montréal

Youth who are homeless or living in poverty, people with intellectual disabilities are also vulnerable and marginalized. Interveners working with youth must be made aware of these particularities. We have agreed and still agree that special resources and tools adapted to their condition promote effective interventions.

Providing better information is key to building trust with interveners and reducing vulnerability to exploitation. It is important to establish links with young people from all backgrounds and origins, regardless of their migratory status and level of proficiency in the French language.

Recommendation No. 16

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec conduct a multilingual information campaign for victims to make them aware of their rights, particularly when they are linked to a crime and are manipulated by it.

A difficult portrait to draw

Carried by many organizations and funded by various sources, we found that it is difficult to list all the prevention projects in the field. The interveners we met are driven by a sincere desire to make a difference. However, it was difficult for us to assess the consistency and results of the actions undertaken. Some actions may duplicate each other, thus dividing available resources. In order to ensure the quality and effectiveness of initiatives, it is necessary that they be evaluated by specialists and that their results be analyzed. The Government Strategy to Prevent and Counteract Sexual Violence 2016-2021, under the responsibility of the Secrétariat à la condition féminine, does not include all of the initiatives financed in the field. Thus, the Secretariat's monitoring of the Strategy's actions only partially documents initiatives related to the sexual exploitation of minors. We found that there is an urgent need to develop a comprehensive picture of resources, projects and programs and to make all the services deployed accessible to victims and their families.

Recommendation No. 17

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create in partnership with local organizations a single and interactive platform dedicated to the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors within the next year. That this platform offer information and referrals bringing together all the resources for assistance in the area of sexual exploitation of minors throughout Québec.

That, to this end, the Government of Québec inventory all existing educational tools, initiatives and organizations deployed in Québec for prevention and intervention in the area of sexual exploitation of minors.

Recommendation No. 18

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create and offer parents, using the single and interactive platform, the necessary tools to raise their awareness, to support and educate them about the issue of sexual exploitation of minors and the safe use of technologies, applications and social networks, as well as to help them in their interventions with their children, starting at an early age.

During our hearings, all of the community organizations we met with told us about the difficulties they face in carrying out their mission in a context where a growing proportion of funding comes from calls for projects. Indeed, the funding granted to the mission by the Programme de soutien aux organismes communautaires of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux does not meet the needs of the organizations. Thus, they must compensate by responding to numerous calls for projects. These calls for projects fund specific initiatives, but for a limited period of time. They are carried out over a period that can vary from one year to several years, depending on the criteria set by the funder. Often, these envelopes are limited to new initiatives, which jeopardizes the sustainability of projects already underway that are nevertheless effective. At the end of the grant, organizations must find new funding or abandon proven services. The precarious nature of organizations hinders the development of expertise. It appeared to us that project-based funding over a short period of time contributes to working in isolation. This method hinders concerted efforts in the field. We heard many criticisms of this funding structure.

On the one hand, the grant envelopes are scattered. They may come from the federal government, various ministries and agencies of the Québec government, municipalities and certain private foundations. The different funding sources add to the accountability and generate a lot of work. On the other hand, several organizations note that the envelopes are distributed more or less consistently depending on the issue at hand and that priorities change over time. How can we be sure that funding for a serious issue such as the sexual exploitation of minors will be available in a few years? The many funders each have their own priorities according to their scope and strategies. This makes it difficult to implement projects and sustain initiatives that have proven successful. For the sake of consistency,

we have clearly seen that it is essential for the federal government to make the necessary transfers to the Québec government. In this way, the response to the needs in terms of prevention and assistance to victims of sexual exploitation would be better structured. This formula would prevent overlap and confusion in project funding announcements.

Recommendation No. 19

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec implement as soon as possible a mission-based funding formula for community organizations fighting the sexual exploitation of minors rather than on a project-by-project basis. That this funding be increased.

A necessary dialogue

The phenomenon of sexual exploitation of minors is extremely worrying. It cannot be stopped without significant cooperation from the various levels of government, schools, police forces, community organizations, youth centres and many others. In order to carry out coherent and effective action, all those involved in the various environments must collaborate and share their knowledge. Young people must be at the heart of the concerns: their complex situation is not just the mission of an organization or institution.

The principles of effective concerted action

A number of initiatives aimed at collaborative and concerted action have developed in recent decades in Québec, underscoring the necessity for such an approach. Certain basic principles ensure their success. We would like to highlight the efforts made by the various interveners to work together in the interests of young people, despite very different organizational cultures and approaches. Some initiatives are successful and should be emulated by all.

Table régionale de Québec sur l'exploitation sexuelle et la prostitution juvénile

Following the dismantling of a juvenile prostitution network in the early 2000s in the Québec City area, the need for collaboration and concerted action between the various actors fighting against the sexual exploitation of minors became apparent. An initial working committee was set up, bringing together the community organization Projet Intervention Prostitution Québec (PIPQ), the Service de police de la Ville de Québec and the Centre de recherche sur l'adaptation des jeunes et des familles à risque of Université Laval. This collaboration was then formalized with the creation of the Table régionale de Québec sur l'exploitation sexuelle et la prostitution juvénile. It now includes representatives from the youth centre, Université Laval, the Service de police de la Ville de Québec, the PIPQ, the CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale, the region's school boards²⁷, the Sûreté du Québec and the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions. The Table's objective is to develop expertise in order to put in place a safety net for the prevention of sexual exploitation and child prostitution. To do so, it offers training that equips interveners in each organization and coordinates a network of key interveners in all of these bodies. In addition to creating a common language for intervention, the Table defines the areas of contribution and collaboration of each stakeholder.

As with any good inter-organizational collaboration, the first step is to adhere to a common definition of the problem and to adopt a consistent language for all parties. The development of training tools and a common action plan helps to build this mutual understanding.

The scope of action of each organization is limited by its mission and the laws in force. It is therefore necessary to clarify the areas of collaboration and expertise of each organization. In fact, members of police forces and school personnel do not apply the same methods of intervention with youth at risk of sexual exploitation. These differences must be respected and put to good use for effective collaboration.

Concerted action must be based on a solid structure and be provided with the necessary funding for its operation. Human resources will thus be able to ensure its coordination. This partnership promotes the development of sustainable communication channels and facilitates regular meetings between partners.

²⁷ Since July 1, 2020, school governance is provided by service centres each represented by a board of directors.

Collaboration will be stronger if it is anchored in the priorities of all the teams and their managers. Thus, as reported to us by the group Québec Native Women, the success of certain initiatives seems to depend first and foremost on the dedication of those in office and not on the quality of the collaborative structures put in place. Under these conditions, initiatives can be threatened by the simple departure of an employee.

It is clear that some of the partnerships that have been created between police forces and Indigenous organizations are showing promising results. However, it seems that these advances sometimes depend solely on the goodwill of the officers on duty.

Québec Native Women - Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 11

We noted in passing that concerted action requires a great deal of involvement and time from the organizations, even though their resources are limited. Given the nature of their mission, some organizations are called upon by different tables. We are right to be concerned about the pressure exerted on the teams and their ability to meet the needs of the community.

Prévention Jeunesse program

The Prévention jeunesse program of the Ministère de la Sécurité publique is part of the Government Strategy to Prevent and Counteract Sexual Violence²⁸ (Action 30). Its objective is to deploy a coordination structure between the various environments in order to optimize the services offered to young people whose situations could compromise their security. This structure aims to coordinate the actions of partners in the community. Five multi-sectoral teams have been set up, namely the Prévention Jeunesse projects in Québec City, Longueuil, Laval, Montréal and the Suroît²⁹.

It would be appropriate to provide each region with collaborative structures to better protect youth. For the sake of consistency and to simplify public understanding, the name, mandate and type of interveners involved should be standardized throughout Québec. The approach should, however, take into account local particularities so that collaborative efforts meet the specific needs of each region.

²⁸ Action 30 reads as follows in the Strategy: "Introduce multi-sectoral teams to better coordinate intervention aimed at young people whose situations can compromise their security."

²⁹ Secrétariat à la condition féminine. *Stratégie gouvernementale pour prévenir et contrer les violences sexuelles 2016-2021 : suivi de la mise en œuvre des actions : état d'avancement au 31 mars 2019, 2020*, p. 13.

Recommendation No. 20

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec ensure that an issue table composed of the various players involved in the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors be designated in each administrative region. That the mandate, mission and name of these tables be standardized. That the reality of each region be taken into account in the composition of the tables with the participation of institutional and community stakeholders. That the sharing of information between these tables be established.

The Committee recommends that the mandates of the Prévention jeunesse program projects be renewed by ensuring recurrent funding and that their scope be broadened throughout Québec.

The balance between the protection of personal information and that of young people

As part of their activities, police services, schools, organizations affiliated with the health and social services network and community organizations collect data on young people and their entourage: inquiries, reports, files, observations of interveners, etc. Has recruitment been observed in a given sector? Does a student show a sudden drop in academic performance? Does a young person have new friendships that influence his or her behaviour? Has a victim received care that reveals violence related to sexual exploitation? Sharing information of this nature among various interveners working with the same young people can be very useful to better target prevention efforts. However, it is important to ensure a balance between respecting the privacy of young people and protecting them.

Sharing is limited by the Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the protection of personal information. In many circumstances, interveners cannot share all data.

It should be noted that beyond the challenges of working with these sexually exploited youth on a daily basis, confidentiality issues are constantly at the heart of our concerns. Since the information contained in the child's file is confidential, the exchange of information must be limited to that which is necessary to facilitate the intervention of the DPCP [director of criminal and penal prosecutions] or a police force.

Centre intégré universitaire de santé et services sociaux du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 8

The law is intended to protect the privacy of young people, but some believe it restricts the flow of crucial information. This problem has been particularly noted to us by police forces and personnel of the health and social services network.

Unfortunately, collaboration between youth centres and police services is not uniform throughout Québec. Moreover, police officers are not systematically informed of recidivism and other factors in the environment of a runaway if no criminal offence is committed, which limits the capacity for action in terms of prevention.

Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 13

Existing mechanisms, such as the Multi-sectoral Agreement concerning children who are victims of sexual abuse or physical ill-treatment, or whose physical health is threatened by the lack of appropriate care³⁰, can be triggered to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders. According to the CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, this remains rare in situations of serious risk of sexual exploitation when the facts collected are not sufficient³¹. The collaborative structures also encourage the circulation of this information between organizations. In the context of certain projects, the consent of young people may be requested for a greater sharing of information between partners. In addition, minor victims of sexual exploitation are sometimes moved to other cities or provinces. Thus, barriers to sharing personal information are multiplied when collaboration must occur across several Canadian provinces.

These restrictions are of concern to the many organizations that work with these youth. This crucial data helps screen at-risk youth and identify potentially dangerous individuals in their lives. It is important that we think about the tools required to facilitate the flow of personal information, of course, only when they are useful for the protection and safety of vulnerable youth. Moreover, the flow of information between communities is also essential when working with victims.

³⁰ Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. *Multi-sectoral Agreement concerning children who are victims of sexual abuse or physical ill-treatment, or whose physical health is threatened by the lack of appropriate care*, 2001.

³¹ Brief submitted by the Centre intégré universitaire de santé et services sociaux du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, 2019, p. 8.

Recommendation No. 21

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec standardize an appropriate protocol for sharing personal data and information between social service and police stakeholders with a view to preventing and intervening to protect minors from situations of sexual exploitation.

Better training for effective screening

The perception of sexual exploitation and the reality of underage victims is too often surrounded by myths, a view that hinders prevention and detection of abuse. Teams that intervene with young people must be sensitized and trained so that they do not let these young people down when they need help.

Two agents show up at my house. I tell them everything: that I am a prostitute, that I have a procurer, that I want to get out of it... They ask me for proof, but I don't have any: no contract, no hidden camera, nothing. They look down on me, and their gestures betray their contempt for me.

Testimony of Mégane - Translated excerpt from the collection of Josée Mensales, Diane Veillette and Guillaume Corbeil, *Pour l'amour de mon pimp*, 2015, p. 29

All sectors of activity are concerned. Targeted training should therefore be developed for the judiciary, prosecutors, police forces (patrol and investigations), social interveners (in psychoeducation, social work, psychology, street work, sexology, etc.), healthcare personnel (nurses and doctors) and school personnel (teachers and anyone in contact with students). People who are able to screen for sexual exploitation must be present in all areas of youth's lives. And those who have the ability to intervene with them when they are alone need to be especially alert. Indeed, these are privileged moments when interveners can inquire about the victim's situation while the exploiter is away.

It emerged from the hearings that it is imperative to integrate content on the more specific experiences of groups that are subject to prejudice or discrimination into the training program. Special attention must be paid to the training of those who work with these young people.

[...] LGBTQ+ youth groups, and all LGBT groups [...] are often afraid to refer to other organizations if they do not really know them well because they are afraid that the young person or adult will suffer prejudice by interveners who are not necessarily trained on LGBT realities. And especially, it is even worse if they are a trans non-binary person. This means that maybe the person will be heard regarding their sexually exploitative situation, but will be subjected to prejudice about their identity [...] and then they will be revictimized, but by an intervener rather than the person who abused them [...].

Marie-Pier Boisvert, director general of the Conseil québécois LGBT - Translated excerpt from the public hearing of January 21, 2020, in Montréal

Two major training approaches are complementary: improving initial training at CEGEP and university and providing continuing education. The didactic content could be integrated into many technical and university programs whose students are likely to deal with the phenomenon of sexual exploitation during their professional life. In this regard, the collaboration between the Ingram School of Nursing of McGill University and the Steinberg Centre for Simulation and Interactive Learning is a prime example of successful training. The addition of this content must reflect the current state of knowledge and adequately meet the needs of future workers. This requires in-depth reflection and the collaboration of specialists in the field of pedagogy and intervention in the area of sexual exploitation of minors.

Training for health care workers on sexual exploitation

It is very likely that victims of sexual exploitation will one day turn to the health care system. Therefore, health care personnel should be trained to screen for sexual exploitation situations. To this end, Françoise Fillion, a professor at McGill University's Ingram School of Nursing, has developed training on sexual exploitation in collaboration with the Steinberg Interactive Learning and Simulation Centre. The SILSC specializes in the latest medical simulation practices and technologies in order to improve the skills of health care personnel. As part of the training workshops, nursing students are required to interact with a patient, personified by an actress, presenting behaviours often observed in victims of sexual exploitation. The goal of this simulation is to make students aware of how they act with people at risk. The collaboration between Professor Fillion and the SILSC continued with the creation of a webinar on sexual exploitation in order to recommend that faculty members integrate this theme into their teaching.

In the course of their professional life, youth workers see their knowledge evolve: the specific context of their practice no longer necessarily corresponds to their studies. Continuing education become therefore essential. However, its relevance and quality must be ensured. In order for this training to be taken by the greatest number of people, it must be recognized and supported by employers and professional orders. Trainees can then act as multiplying agents for their colleagues. Continuing education is also useful for recalling essential notions that have become vague or forgotten over time.

I went to the hospital after a miscarriage, covered in bruises and without a health insurance card. No one intervened.

From the testimony of a survivor of sexual exploitation – Translated excerpt from the hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City, private deliberative meeting

Health professionals, like anyone working with youth, have an obligation to report all situations of exploitation to a Director of Youth Protection. It is necessary that continuing education remind them of these obligations.

Since the sexual exploitation of minors is not limited to urban centres, training should be given in all regions of Québec. It is important to maintain a balance between standardization and the taking into account of local particularities both in the content of training and in terms of collaborations.

In addition to enhancing the knowledge and skills of the personnel likely to work with victims, training sessions that bring together interveners from different environments are an opportunity to strengthen the cooperation between organizations. Teams get to know each other and develop a network. Exchanges at the regional level, and more broadly throughout Québec, strengthen action.

Les Survivantes project of the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal

One of the objectives of the Les Survivantes training and intervention program is to raise awareness among police officers. It informs them about the nature of sexual exploitation. In order to fight against the stereotypes perpetuated regarding this world, survivors, accompanied by program counsellors, describe their journey into the world of prostitution.

Recommendation No. 22

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec improve the initial and ongoing training of workers likely to be involved in cases of sexual exploitation of minors.

That the various targeted employment groups include, among others:

- Workers in the health and social services network (including pre-hospital services)
- Front-line staff in Indigenous communities
- Pharmacists
- All teaching staff and team members at the primary and secondary levels
- The judiciary of the Criminal and Penal Division and of the Youth Division
- Prosecutors in criminal and penal prosecutions as well as in municipal courts
- Police and civilian personnel in police organizations
- Other youth workers (recreational organizations, etc.)
- Correctional and probation officers.

That the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux ensure that all professionals working with young people are aware of the obligation to denounce situations at risk of sexual exploitation under the Youth Protection Act.

That the content of the training be developed in partnership between the regional tables³² and the Research Chair³³.

Recommendation No. 23

The Committee recommends that the École nationale de police du Québec develop and disseminate training on assisting victims of sexual exploitation of minors in the judicial process.

Sectors of activity to play a greater role

Large establishments and events indirectly facilitate activities surrounding the sexual exploitation of minors. They provide them with shelter, communication tools, transportation, or a pool of potential client abusers, that is, people seeking the sexual services of minors. This is the case in the tourism industry, major cultural and sporting events, the hotel sector and short-term rental platforms, and the passenger transportation sector, such as taxis. However, we have found that the actors in these economic sectors do not only have a negative role, far from it. We call on them to play a leading role in the prevention and detection of situations of sexual exploitation of minors.

³² See Recommendation No. 20.

³³ See Recommendation No. 4.

The first step is to train the personnel in these environments. The goal is to get them to identify situations of exploitation and report them to the police. Companies do not have equal means to implement training programs. The major hotel chains, represented by the Hotel Association of Greater Montréal, already offer training programs. However, smaller establishments do not always have this capacity. For them, the implementation of common programs offered by external resources represents a more realistic solution.

Programs to support indirect actors

The RADAR³⁴ program, a French acronym for "locate, act, denounce, help, restore", is the result of a pilot project of the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, conducted in collaboration with the Laval and Longueuil police forces as well as the Hotel Association of Greater Montréal, the Montréal Taxi Bureau, Info-Crime Montréal, CAVAC, VIA Rail Canada and Sun Youth. It aims to prevent and detect cases of sexual exploitation in hotels and transportation services by raising awareness and equipping actors likely to be in contact with victims of sexual exploitation. Police forces offer workshops where they present the indicators to detect human trafficking and the actions to be taken afterwards.

Funded by the Secrétariat à la condition féminine, the Lueur³⁵ program is coordinated by the community organization Le Phare des Affranchi(e)s. Lueur raises awareness of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and provides tools for the tourism industry. Training, specialized coaching, signage and guidelines for staff are made available to transportation companies and hoteliers in the Québec, Laurentians, Lanaudière and Greater Montréal regions that are partners in the program.

³⁴ Service de police de la Ville de Montréal. "RADAR": les services policiers du Grand Montréal lancent un nouveau programme pour lutter contre l'exploitation sexuelle, 2019.

³⁵ Le Phare des Affranchi(e)s. Lueur – Accueillir sans jugement, Agir sans nuire, 2020.

However, at the hearing, the Hotel Association of Greater Montréal pointed out that many elements of this program overlap with the RADAR program.

Other types of initiatives, such as seals, have been created by the international tourism industry to combat the phenomenon of sexual exploitation and trafficking of minors. The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism supported by ECPAT International and UNICEF is a major international example. These certifications require certain practices to be put in place by establishments and staff members. The approach is part of a trend towards corporate accountability in controlling illegal activities that take place in or outside of the business' operations. The involvement of industries must be based on a set of voluntary measures and prevention obligations that target, on the one hand, potential client abusers and, on the other hand, victims.

Recommendation No. 24

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create a seal "No to the sexual exploitation of minors" and promote it throughout Québec, notably in partnership with the hotel industry, festivals, major events and the passenger transportation industry.

That the seal be available to all businesses and that its acquisition be based on conditions that include mandatory training of personnel regarding the detection of the sexual exploitation of minors and the posting of advertising in the business that raises awareness of the sexual exploitation of minors.

Recommendation No. 25

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec impose on online rental platforms, hotel establishments, owners of tourist accommodations, erotic massage parlours and saunas the obligation to prominently post signs pointing out the criminal nature of the purchase of sexual services.

Recommendation No. 26

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec require online rental platforms, hotel establishments, owners of tourist accommodations, erotic massage parlours and saunas to visibly display contact information to report a crime of sexual exploitation of minors.

We encourage major events to participate in this movement and to take a public stand to denounce and prevent sexual exploitation. Their support seems all the more imperative to us since many of them benefit from public funds. In this context, it seems essential to us that commitments in the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors be an integral part of the accountability inherent in obtaining public funding.

Recommendation No. 27

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec make subsidies or other tax incentives for major events, represented by the Regroupement des événements majeurs internationaux, conditional on the implementation of measures to raise awareness, train their staff and prevent the sexual exploitation of minors.

That training on the sexual exploitation of minors be eligible as a training expense for businesses subject to the Act to Promote Workforce Skills Development and Recognition (1% Act).

That this demonstration of concrete actions (e.g. public awareness) against the sexual exploitation of minors be developed in conjunction with the regional issue table³⁶ and that it be validated by the Research Chair³⁷.

That promoters be required to submit a report outlining the measures put in place to combat the sexual exploitation of minors.

In addition to contributing to the trivialization of an unequal view of women, the so-called legal sex industry, pornography, strip clubs, massage parlors, etc., can be involved in activities of sexual exploitation of minors. What measures do establishments in this sector put in place to prevent the recruitment of minors? How do they collaborate with the police authorities in their investigations? What efforts are they making to combat the unequal view of women conveyed in their industry? We believe that these industries have an undeniable responsibility and a duty to act.

Those businesses that contribute, consciously or unconsciously, to the dynamics of sexual exploitation should take more responsibility in its fight. They must be accountable for the activities that take place in their establishments or during events.

³⁶ See Recommendation No. 20.

³⁷ See Recommendation No. 4.

LAW ENFORCEMENT: THE VICTIM AT THE CENTRE OF OUR ACTIONS

Despite prevention efforts, strong, firm and targeted interventions are needed to eradicate the sexual exploitation of minors. This exploitation persists because the demand for sexual services remains. In order to protect adolescent girls and boys, this demand must be addressed by intensifying arrests and convictions of offenders, whether they are client abusers, clients procuring sexual services from minors, or procurers. Investigative practices and the judicial process must protect the victims of this despicable crime on two fronts: to gain their trust to ensure their well-being and to stand firm against their exploiters.

Laws to reduce the demand for sexual services

In 2014, Canada officially joined the Nordic Model, put forward by Sweden in its fight against sexual exploitation, with the coming into force of the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act. This approach criminalizes the purchase of sexual services and procuring, while granting immunity from prosecution to those who offer them. It should be noted that the purchase of sexual services from minors was already criminalized. This amendment recognizes as a victim of clients and procurers any person selling sexual services, regardless of age. This change is in line with the recent amendment to the Youth Protection Act in Québec. The latter confirms that exploited youth are being abused and that this is not a criminal behaviour that should be punished.

Six years after adhering to the Nordic Model, it appears that the law still fails to stop exploitation by client abusers and procurers. Despite the amendment to the Criminal Code, we are finding that there is a segment of the population that is unaware that buying sexual services is criminal. Clearly, the Criminal Code will need to be enforced more vigorously to deter and educate the public. It is important for everyone to understand that certain trivialized behaviours facilitate the work of procurers. The demand for sexual services of minors is unacceptable in any society.

Provisions that are still unfamiliar

In addition to the measures that came into force in 2014, An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons), which was assented to in June 2015 and came partially into force in 2019, strengthens Criminal Code provisions dealing with trafficking in persons. This legislative amendment introduces three as yet unfamiliar elements.

First, it creates a presumption relating to the exploitation of a person by another person in order to ease the burden of proof for prosecutors. However, the presumption should not be understood as a complete reversal of the burden of proof. The 2015 legislation then adds trafficking in persons to the offences subject to forfeiture of the proceeds of crime.

This provision is limited to trafficking in persons and does not cover all sexual exploitation offences. Legislative amendments should be made to this effect. Finally, the legislation creates a consecutive sentencing regime³⁸. Only the first two provisions came into force in 2019³⁹. The National Assembly carried a motion on March 14, 2018. The motion called on the federal government to make, as soon as possible, the Order in Council to give effect to the consecutive sentencing regime for human traffickers.

Recommendation No. 28

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec formally request that the federal government make the Order in Council allowing the coming into force of the provision authorizing the imposition of consecutive sentences for traffickers in persons under the age of eighteen.

The provisions pertaining to the forfeiture of proceeds of crime in the Act to Amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons) may be useful in suppressing the sexual exploitation of minors, but we believe they are insufficient. We consider that all crimes related to procuring should also be covered by these provisions in order to attack the phenomenon in its economic dimension.

Recommendation No. 29

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec ask the federal government to propose amendments to the Criminal Code in order to add all crimes related to procuring to the list of activities covered by the forfeiture of proceeds of crime.

In addition, the amendment to the Criminal Code, which came into force in 2019, allows preliminary inquiries to be limited to more serious offences whose minimum sentence is 14 years or more. A preliminary inquiry is a pre-trial procedure to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to proceed to trial. Where there is insufficient evidence, the accused is discharged. However, offences related to procuring underage persons are not exempt from the possibility of holding preliminary inquiries as the maximum penalties are 14 years. We would like to see the possibility of holding this type of procedure eliminated with regard to these offences in order to reduce the length of proceedings and to protect victims by having them testify only once.

³⁸ Library of Parliament. *Legislative summary of Bill C-75: An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*

³⁹ They came into force upon Royal Assent, in 2019, of the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Recommendation No. 30

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec ask the Government of Canada to propose amendments to the Criminal Code in order to reduce the pressure on victims by removing the preliminary inquiry stage in charges of sexual exploitation of minors and human trafficking.

The provisions concerning the National Sex Offender Registry are also little known. The registry is an important tool to prevent recidivism and ensure the safety of youth. Under subsection 490.011 (1) of the Criminal Code, persons convicted of sexually exploiting minors, trafficking in persons, obtaining sexual services for consideration, obtaining material benefit from the provision of sexual services and procuring are to be included in the registry at the time of sentencing.

Recommendation No. 31

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec ensure that convicted client abusers are registered in the National Sex Offender Registry.

We have learned that the latest amendments to the Criminal Code regarding sexual exploitation are not always well understood by police and other interveners; not everyone is familiar with the changes to the legal framework. They are not necessarily aware of the approach whereby people selling their sexual services are victims. This shortcoming makes law enforcement difficult.

According to a majority of the people we heard in the public hearings, the Criminal Code provisions provide useful mechanisms to address sexual exploitation as a phenomenon, but their enforcement is deficient. First and foremost, law enforcement against client abusers is insufficient, even practically non-existent.

Despite the clear provisions of the law, police forces lack resources to enforce it. They focus primarily on procurers and organized networks that sexually exploit minors. Among these cases, priority is given when a minor victim's safety is jeopardized by her procurer. With very few exceptions, client abusers act with impunity.

Table 1: *Number of cases in which charges were laid related to the commodification of sexual services (excluding purchase of sexual services)*

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	TOTAL
On minor victims ⁴⁰	16	26	51	38	46	36	213
On adult victims ⁴¹	55	51	62	59	95	89	411

* Partial data

Source: Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions, *Portrait statistique général 2015-2020 : marchandisation de services sexuels – victimes jeunes et adultes, 2020*. [Compiled by the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions at the request of the Committee].

According to data from the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions, between 2015 and 2020, 411 court cases for procuring offences involving adult victims were opened. For minor victims, 213 cases were opened.

Clients have the impression, with good reason, that the majority of police services do not arrest people who purchase sexual services from a person of legal age. Reluctantly, we are forced to agree with them.

Service de police de la Ville de Sherbrooke – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 7

It is a fact that most client abusers who purchase sexual services operate in complete anonymity. This discouraging observation led some of the interveners we heard to suggest that the names and photos of offenders be published or that other similar measures be adopted to put an end to the impunity of these offenders.

Table 2: *Number of cases in which charges were laid for the purchase of sexual services*

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	TOTAL
On minor victims ⁴²	18	31	47	51	79	30	256
On adult victims ⁴³	10	10	20	14	26	28	108

* Partial data

Source: Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions, *Nombre de dossiers pour lesquels des accusations ont été portées et nombre de chefs d'accusation pour l'article 286.1, 2020* [Compiled by the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions at the request of the Committee].

40 For the following provisions of the Criminal Code 212(2); 212(2.1); 279.011(1)(a); 279.011(1)(b); 279.02(2); 279.03(2); 286.2(2); and 286.3(2).

41 For the following provisions of the Criminal Code 212(1); 212(1)(a); 212(1)(b); 212(1)(c); 212(1)(d); 212(1)(e); 212(1)(f); 212(1)(g); 212(1)(h); 212(1)(i); 212(1)(j); 279.01(1)(a); 279.01(1)(b); 279.02(1); 279.03(1); 279.03(1)(a); 279.04(1); 286.2(1); 286.3; 286.3(1) and 286.4.

42 For subsection 286.1(2) of the Criminal Code

43 For subsection 286.1(1) of the Criminal Code

According to data from the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions, between 2015 and 2020, more cases were opened for client abusers. In fact, 256 cases were opened for charges of purchasing sexual services from minors, whereas 108 involved adult victims. In addition, the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme has coordinated 11 client operations since 2017. This is a drop in the bucket of transactions.

However, criminal laws are not the only tool used to combat the sexual exploitation of minors. For example, the Youth Protection Act, which is under provincial jurisdiction, requires the general public to report any situation of sexual abuse of a minor. Thus, it is the responsibility of those who have a front-row seat on this phenomenon, such as employees of hotel establishments, to report any situation involving the sexual exploitation of minors. The complacency of witnesses to risk situations is not acceptable.

Recommendation No. 32

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec remind hotel establishments, owners of tourist accommodations, erotic massage parlours and saunas of their obligation to report any situation at risk of sexual exploitation of minors.

Complementarily, secondary actors, particularly hotels and motels, must be held accountable for their inaction regarding the sexual exploitation of minors on their property. How many victims were left to fend for themselves, without assistance, when staff could have acted by contacting the authorities? Businesses can no longer turn a blind eye. Civil recourses must be granted to those who have been sexually exploited so that they can obtain justice and hold businesses accountable for such acts.

The severity of the physical and psychological consequences of sexual exploitation on minors is such that some victims repress traumatic events for a long period of time.

For example, a person who has been sexually abused by several individuals may not remember all or certain parts of the events. In fact, this is in the criteria for diagnosing post-traumatic stress disorder. [...] But the person's body will react [for example], automatically, strongly to a smell that was present when the events occurred. Eventually, in the presence of a specific set of sensory or factual memories, this buried memory may resurface, sometimes years later [...]. It can be an event that closely resembles the initial traumatic event, and then, poof, it reappears. So the person may very well never have had post-traumatic stress disorder, but present one later.

Dr. Élise St-André, psychiatrist at the Institut universitaire en santé mentale de Montréal – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of January 21, 2020, in Montréal

This is why we consider that recourses must be imprescriptible. Victims must have the necessary time to realize the trauma they have experienced.

Recommendation No. 33

The Committee recommends that the Ministère de la Justice examine the possibility of amending the Civil Code of Québec in order to grant victims of sexual exploitation an imprescriptible recourse for damages against a hotel establishment that failed to act or alert the police when it knew or ought to have known that a minor was being sexually exploited there.

Groups having participated in our work take a critical stance on provisions of the law, notably the safety of victims, the consideration of Indigenous realities, or the severity of penalties. Some point out that taking police action against clients and client abusers can harm those who sell their sexual services.

So, we sex workers, our clients, our co-workers, we have no rights, no protection in terms of labour standards, no real recourse when we experience violence. We live in a society that has chosen as its objective to eliminate us rather than give us rights. And so, for sure, it creates a climate that is very conducive to exploitation, when as a sex worker you have no recourse. Well, a person who is looking to exploit someone else is going to target those places where people end up without legal protection. If a client is at risk of being arrested if he reports a problem situation to the police, well, it becomes very difficult to take action

Sandra Wesley, executive director of Chez Stella – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of January 21, 2020, in Montréal

In the view of the Cree Nation Department of Justice and Correctional Services, the provisions of the law do not ensure the safety of Indigenous people. The law would not recognize the unequal power relations between Indigenous people and the rest of the population, nor the social stigmatization suffered.

Finally, a coalition⁴⁴ with an abolitionist viewpoint believes that police forces do not have sufficient legal means to combat the prostitution system as a whole. Penalties are too lenient to act as a deterrent and build confidence among victims. In this sense, tougher sanctions would send a clear message to exploiters about the severity of the crime.

Difficulties in applying laws

Enforcement faces several obstacles. We found that resources to conduct investigations are not always available on the police services side, and also, that crimes related to the sexual exploitation of minors often cross borders, raising issues of harmonization and coordination. Furthermore, we found that laws do not provide the necessary tools for police services to respond quickly to cases where crimes take place in cyberspace.

As we have already mentioned, police forces conduct relatively few client operations. We nevertheless saw them as an interesting avenue for apprehending potential client abusers without relying on complaints and victim testimony. It should be remembered that many seek sexual services indiscriminately from adults and minors. Based on a scenario developed by police forces to bait client abusers, the operations simulate the offer of sexual services without involving victims. However, they are rare, in part because of a severe lack of resources.

What you need to know is that it takes a great deal of resources to carry out a client operation. I won't mention the number of police officers required so as not to reveal or talk about our investigative methods, but it's a considerable number of police officers for several reasons. Security reasons, logistical reasons. [...] When they are carried out, there is the planning of these operations, which takes time, and the mobilization of that personnel for the days during which the operations are going to be carried out. And what happens afterwards in court, [...] when 5, 10, 8 clients are arrested on a given day, necessarily, all these cases will be contested. These are days when all the police officers involved in these operations will be in court.

Dominic Monchamp, lieutenant-detective in the criminal investigation department of the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City

⁴⁴ The abolitionist trend brings together organizations and individuals in favour of the abolition of the prostitution system. It is opposed to the trend supporting the legalization of adult prostitution.

Moreover, given the geographical scope of criminal networks involved in the sexual exploitation of minors, law enforcement in this area is often very complex. It is not uncommon for these cases to take place in several cities, or even in several provinces and territories. The handling of cases can sometimes vary from one jurisdiction or judicial district to another.

There are some harmonization issues that arise in applying provincial legislation. For example, the maximum age of protection for youth differs; when a victim is moved elsewhere in Canada, police powers are restricted. To act in another jurisdiction, they must be sworn in. Considerable collaboration between police forces is required in order to successfully carry out investigations.

Because of the many coordination issues in Canada, Québec must act to promote the sharing of issues concerning the sexual exploitation of minors. It is important that action be concerted throughout Canada.

Recommendation No. 34

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec exercise its leadership at federal-provincial-territorial meetings and within the Council of the Federation to ensure greater collaboration between the provinces in the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors, in the harmonization of the various youth protection laws and in interprovincial interventions.

It also remains a challenge for the modernization of the Criminal Code. It does not keep pace with the rapid evolution of information technology. Police forces do not have the tools to intervene easily in cyberspace, for example, to hold the owners of pages sharing sexual videos of young victims accountable or to shut down Internet sites advertising the sexual services of minors. The content on these platforms is not necessarily hosted in Québec, which complicates intervention.

Currently, [...] I have to refer to the physical location of this business which [...], sometimes, is not even where the operations take place since it is the data that is hosted. So, that is extremely complicated to trace, [...] to conduct our investigations. Whereas if the laws provided that the virtual location where the offence takes place gives jurisdiction to police forces, it would be an extremely powerful tool that would give us more means to act. [...] What is at stake is not so much [the collaboration of] the Web giants [as] much as the state of the law and the tools at our disposal to obtain this information, which are not adapted to the reality of 2020.

Dominic Monchamp, lieutenant-detective in the criminal investigation department of the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City

Although the Web giants seem to collaborate well with investigators, the fact remains that the judicial authorization process to get data is too long. Furthermore, the investigations require monumental coordination to the extent that several police forces are involved, from states with different legal frameworks.

Recommendation No. 35

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec ask the federal government to propose amendments to update the definitions of "place", "public place" and "any place" in the Criminal Code definitions to include private or public cyberspace.

Municipalities: essential partners in the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors

Businesses related to the sex industry are located all over Québec. Every day, people buy sexual services there illegally and with impunity. While municipalities have regulatory powers to oversee such establishments, we firmly believe that they must be more active in the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors, particularly by controlling the uses related to the sex industry in their regulations.

Municipalities have an ethical and legal obligation to do their part in the fight against sexual exploitation and this includes greater vigilance in the granting of permits.

Maria Mourani, criminologist, sociologist and president of Mourani-Criminologie – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 9

We note that regulations in this area vary from one municipality to another. In Montréal, the by-laws differ from one borough to another. This situation calls into question the share of responsibility taken by municipal governments in granting and revoking permits to ensure that no illegal activity takes place in the businesses concerned, especially since interventions carried out under municipal regulations are simpler and quicker than criminal investigations in matters of sexual exploitation.

Municipal regulations for certain businesses in the sex industry

The City of Edmonton has been licensing erotic massage parlours and escort agencies since 1994. The licence is free for individuals working in parlours and agencies. To obtain a permit, staff must complete a few hours of training on workers' rights, safety and health. Paradoxically, owners of establishments are not required to take training to obtain their license, but they do have to comply with a few obligations, such as criminal background checks and the installation of security cameras and alarm systems. The by-law also requires that there always be at least two people on the premises at all times. This system is intended to make certain that no minors are present and to ensure better control against human trafficking.

Since the amendments to the Criminal Code, in Edmonton consistency between the licensing system and the illegality of purchasing sexual services has been an issue. The appropriateness of exempting erotic massage businesses from this regulation will be reviewed by the City.

We have agreed that tightening by-laws in one municipality or borough may result in victims being moved to another location. Disparities between municipal by-laws greatly hamper attempts to ban or regulate these businesses in a consistent manner. A common strategy among municipal actors would prevent a "sway" in activities.

When regulations restrict the parameters of places where sexual exploitation can occur, such as massage parlours, it becomes more difficult for these businesses to operate. However, this tightening of regulations results in abusers moving the people they exploit.

Service de police de la Ville de Montréal – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 9

Procurers use short-term rental platforms to house their activities. The proliferation of this offer and the fact that it is dispersed over the territory complicate surveillance. As in the case of businesses related to the sex industry, municipalities are in a position to intervene in this regard. They can restrict areas where short-term rentals are permitted, but also increase police surveillance.

Given the complexity of the phenomenon of sexual exploitation of minors, it is necessary to think about means of law enforcement intervention that complement criminal investigations. We have thus established that municipal by-laws are a lever of action that municipalities must seize.

Recommendation No. 36

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec develop, with the support of the Union des municipalités du Québec and the Fédération québécoise des municipalités, a provincial strategy aimed at identifying municipal regulations related to the sex industry, particularly with respect to the granting of permits, and standardizing them in order to be more effective in the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors in all municipalities and boroughs.

Specialized teams and coordinated efforts

The nature of the crimes and the high vulnerability of the victims contribute to the complexity of investigations. The development of expertise by police forces and prosecutors is necessary to achieve fair and effective law enforcement. Many initiatives were presented to us during our work.

Some police forces rely on specialization to investigate cases of sexual exploitation of minors. The Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme works with local and international police forces to investigate human trafficking and prostitution. It is under the direction of the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal and includes investigators from the police forces of Québec's largest cities as well as the Sûreté du Québec and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It targets both procurers and client abusers.

While the implementation of the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme has been well received, it should also be noted that it focuses mainly on the arrest of procurers. Thus, the behaviours of client abusers who take advantage of often vulnerable minors to satisfy their sexual desires are not punished. This situation is of great concern to us.

By the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme's own admission, its operational capacity is limited on the Québec territory. The development of regional hubs is one of the solutions that have been put forward to increase its efficiency. The Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme does not replace local police forces in all cases dealing with sexual exploitation. The Police Act prioritizes the different police forces according to the number of inhabitants and defines their fields of investigation. Only level 3 or higher police forces⁴⁵ can investigate procuring. Level 2 police forces would like to intervene in this area because of their detailed knowledge of the local situation. However, the activities of procurers frequently extend beyond the territory of a single city and the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme has the expertise to handle these cases. We felt it was essential to ensure good collaboration with local police services to promote the coordination of efforts and a model for developing expertise.

⁴⁵ That is to say, police services in cities with a population of 250,000 or more, i.e. Montréal, Québec, Laval, Gatineau and Longueuil.

In 2016, the Sûreté du Québec developed a coordination structure for procuring and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It is organized on the basis of three regional coordination centres, in Québec City, Mascouche and Boucherville, and facilitates the sharing of information between police units.

In our opinion, we have found that it is not only necessary to increase the human and financial resources of the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme, but its action must be maximized in all regions of Québec. This is why we consider that satellite teams must be deployed in the regions, notably to fight against the demand for sexual services from minors.

Recommendation No. 37

The Committee recommends that the Ministère de la Sécurité publique increase the human and financial resources of the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme and add regional (satellite) teams with a priority mandate to carry out operations targeting client abusers.

Concerted efforts cannot be limited to the different regions of Québec. Indeed, some witnesses told us that there is a major corridor of movement for victims and procurers between Québec and Ontario. Establishing and supporting partnerships between police forces in different provinces is also a way to ensure effective monitoring and data sharing.

Similarly, the specialization of prosecutors is a necessary formula for improving and standardizing the handling of procuring cases, especially since such specialization already exists for cases involving the sexual exploitation of children on the Internet. The advantages are numerous: developing well-targeted expertise, sharing knowledge and generalizing approaches that are more respectful of victims.

Recommendation No. 38

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create the position of coordinating prosecutor to be assigned to the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme in order to facilitate the coordination of prosecutions related to cases involving the commercialization of sexual services of minors.

Recommendation No. 39

The Committee recommends that the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions designate prosecutors for sexual exploitation cases in the regions to ensure expertise and consistency in the handling of cases within the justice system.

More broadly, better coordination between the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions, police forces and the CAVACs, as well as the implementation of a project such as Les Survivantes throughout Québec would promote a better understanding of the work of interveners. The mobilization of a prosecutor within the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme would ensure a better coordination between police investigations and legal proceedings while developing expertise within the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions services. In order to maximize its capacity for action, an interprovincial liaison officer and members of Indigenous police forces should be added to the Équipe. This would place victim support at the centre of the investigative and judicial processes.

Recommendation No. 40

In order to put the minor victim at the centre of interventions, to facilitate coordination and the sharing of expertise, the Committee recommends that the following be added to the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme:

- an interprovincial liaison officer
- one or more Indigenous police service members
- a designated coordinating prosecutor
- crime victim support centres
- Les Survivantes program of the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal.

And that the Équipe act in partnership with the stakeholders of the regional issue tables⁴⁶ and that a link be established with the Research Chair⁴⁷.

The addition of Indigenous police service members to the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme alone is not sufficient to provide tools specific to interventions in Indigenous communities. During our consultations, we heard the message loud and clear: it is the communities that must define the solutions to address sexual exploitation issues in their communities. This is why it is important to us that a partnership be put in place between the Ministère de la Sécurité publique and the First Nations and the Inuit in order to evaluate the means to better equip Indigenous police forces in their interventions.

⁴⁶ See Recommendation No. 20.

⁴⁷ See Recommendation No. 4.

Recommendation No. 41

The Committee recommends that the Ministère de la Sécurité publique, in partnership with the First Nations and the Inuit, assess ways to better equip Indigenous police forces in dealing with issues related to the sexual exploitation of minors.

Required resources

The growth in the number of procuring cases, of course, creates more investigative work for police forces. Police forces have told us that it is important to devote more resources to deal with this volume of investigations. We are sensitive to this concern.

Those involved in crimes related to the sexual exploitation of minors are equipping themselves with increasingly sophisticated tools and means to act anonymously. Part of the activities take place online, through applications and on social networks. In this context, the input of criminal intelligence analysts is crucial. However, their number remains limited within the teams. In addition, the acquisition of advanced technologies to facilitate data processing is slow. These techniques are essential to accelerate the processing of the amount of information collected.

We had a case [...] where a minor was placed in a hotel with an Internet advertising platform. [...] We recovered the cameras for the period she was placed there. Well, to analyze 36 hours of camera footage, it takes an incredible amount of time for investigators. [...] It took four or five days to analyze that, and that's extremely important. What it allowed us to see is that in 36 hours, this young girl received 33 clients, and we have that on camera. But there is the testimony of the victim. [...] Often, the victim will testify far below reality because of desensitization, because of the loss of contact with time and reality, victimization, post-traumatic stress, and all that follows [...]. That's why this analytical work is so important, if we want to support these victims in their testimonies and restore their credibility. But it takes time [and] technological means. You can't, when there are 33 clients who show up, play 36 hours of footage very quickly, [...because] I have to be able to say why he's a client and he's not the pizza delivery guy.

Dominic Monchamp, lieutenant-detective in the criminal investigation department of the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City

The use of information and communication technologies generates a colossal workload. Whether it is to identify cases of sexual exploitation of minors on social networks or to carry out investigations, police forces do not have the necessary resources. When an arrest is made, all electronic devices are seized, in addition to those of the victims. This amount

of information complicates the analysis, expertise and management of evidence. The time required to extract this information limits the provision of evidence to corroborate the victims' testimony at the outset of legal proceedings.

Information and communication technologies are evolving at lightning speed. Artificial intelligence has great potential to rapidly process data, be it to identify procurers or find runaway victims. In our opinion, computer forensic analysis must be entrusted to highly specialized people.

We believe it is of primary importance to increase the number of personnel specialized in the processing of technological evidence. However, the optimal allocation of resources needs to be defined. We have noted that providing all police forces with personnel specialized in digital tools for investigating the sexual exploitation of minors would not always be justified. In some cities, there are few cases in which expertise in this area could be developed and maintained. We are of the opinion that it is preferable to increase the human and financial resources of the computer forensic teams already in place, such as the Division des enquêtes sur la cybercriminalité of the Sûreté du Québec and the Cyberenquête module of the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal.

Recommendation No. 42

The Committee recommends that human and financial resources be increased in order to strengthen the teams specialized in the analysis of new technologies and social media and that these resources support the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme in its investigations.

The lack of human and financial resources in teams affects the mental health of employees, leading to overload and work stoppages. Cases involving the sexual exploitation of minors are emotionally taxing for investigators. Staff is sometimes affected, and this aspect must be taken into account in the allocation of resources and in their support.

The well-being of victims at the heart of the process

Victims of sexual exploitation have a number of vulnerabilities that can be exacerbated during the legal process. The obstacles they encounter influence their willingness to make a complaint or to persevere in the prosecution process. They often face physical and psychological after-effects and are thrust into a precarious economic situation, or even extreme poverty. They are under pressure from their former procurer. Adequate support contributes not only to the filing of a complaint, but also to the victim's involvement in the prosecution process. His or her involvement is a valuable contribution to obtaining a conviction. The favourable outcome of a greater number of prosecutions depends on the climate of trust that must be established between the victim and the police and judicial interveners.

The pressure that procurers exert on their victims is not only present during the period of exploitation, but also when they are no longer under their yoke. This hold often persists even before the courts, where it is not uncommon to see direct or indirect gestures or threats made by the procurers during legal proceedings.

Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 11

Difficulties in lodging a complaint

It is our firm belief that taking into account the reality of the victims is essential. Many do not define themselves in this way. To file a complaint is not self-evident for all of them; some will never be ready to do so. Victims sometimes see themselves as responsible for their own exploitation. Several reasons prevent them from filing a complaint with the police or maintaining it. Despite the abuse, they may have feelings for the procurer, fear reprisals, be afraid to reveal their prostitution activities to their loved ones, be suspicious of the authorities, or worry they might harm those around them.

Conversely, other elements motivate them to file a complaint. The feeling of being well protected, the desire to avoid an escalation of violence, to break the procurer's hold, to return to a normal life, to want to protect potential victims, to admit the harm done by the procurer or to wish that the procurer accept the consequences of his actions are determining factors.

Witnesses told us that victims from marginalized population groups are less likely to file complaints. Their trust in the authorities is often lacking. We have a duty to look at their reality in order to encourage the denunciation of the criminal acts they suffer. For example, the historical context of colonization and assimilation of Indigenous peoples and the relations between police forces and the Indigenous population remain complex. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls demonstrates the over-representation of women victims of sexual violence within this group. However, they represent only a very small proportion of the cases handled by police services. It is important to better intervene with these individuals by taking into account their culture and their distinctiveness. We believe that our justice system must adapt to meet the needs of these marginalized groups.

While the decriminalization of prostitutes is supposed to be a given, the fear of being criminalized themselves is widespread among sexually exploited women. Procurers set out to fuel that fear.

Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 5

Confidence in the authorities can deteriorate for several reasons, as we have seen time and time again, and this has raised questions. Is information easily accessible and understandable beyond cultural differences? Has the person ever had a bad experience with the police? Is the person afraid of getting into trouble because of his or her migration status? Does he or she feel the need for protection if he or she denounces his or her exploiters? Is a victim afraid of being arrested for other misdeeds if he or she reports to the police? These questions seem to us to be a first step in putting victims at the centre of the process.

Victims find themselves in complex situations where other offences can be attributed to them. It appeared fundamental to us that the fear of being taken to court themselves should not hinder their search for justice and the punishment of offenders.

Recommendation No. 43

The Committee recommends that the Minister of Justice develop policies and measures to immunize victims of sexual exploitation from prosecution when they file a complaint against a procurer or client abuser and that they receive complete information on their rights.

Solutions have been put in place to foster bonds of trust between the most marginalized populations and police forces, notably community policing and joint patrols. Composed of both members of the police force and persons specializing in social intervention and counselling, joint patrols aim to better reach victims in their communities by establishing a relationship of trust based on proximity and support. The *Équipe mixte en itinérance – policiers et intervenants communautaires* in Val-d'Or and the *Équipe mobile de référence et d'intervention en itinérance* in Montréal stand out as inspiring models. This type of patrol does not necessarily aim to support underage victims of sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, interventions that focus on a positive relationship between the authorities and marginalized populations seem necessary to us.

Recommendation No. 44

The Committee recommends that police services increase joint patrols, involving both police and psychosocial workers, or use a victim-centred "community policing" approach to promote effective operations, ensure the safety of victims and strengthen the confidence of marginalized people in the authorities.

Victims' needs at the heart of the procedures

La sécurité et le bien-être des victimes doivent se trouver au cœur des démarches. The safety and well-being of victims must be at the heart of the process. Because of their vulnerabilities, it is difficult for them to comply with the organizational constraints of police services. Investigators and prosecutors rely on adapting their modus operandi to the reality of victims. They accept meetings in a location chosen by the individual, limit the number of interveners present, adopt vertical prosecution in which a single prosecutor stays with the case from start to finish, and encourage remote court testimony.

We found it urgent to modify the investigative and judicial processes. For example, constantly repeating one's story to new interveners plunges the victim into memories that are often very painful. The process is distressing and is a barrier to his or her participation in lengthy court proceedings. The accompaniment of victims must be sensitive, receptive to their trauma and offered to all. This support for victims must be prioritized throughout the police and legal proceedings.

We set up a judicial whistleblower committee, because we know that these cases are extremely difficult to complete for several reasons [...]. With my partners, we also evaluated the number of adults who could be involved in a young person's life, from the time of reporting to the complaint, and even to the sentence when it goes that far. We counted about 20 adults who are involved in the lives of these young people. So that's a lot of people [...]. Young people tell their story numerous times. [...] What this causes is a break in relations along the way.

Geneviève Quinty, Projet Intervention Prostitution de Québec – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 5, 2019, in Québec City

Recommendation No. 45

The Committee recommends that measures be extended throughout Québec to facilitate victims' testimony in court and to provide them with support and accompaniment, for example by preparing them to testify.

Furthermore, support for victims should not be limited to those who file a complaint. Some refuse to do so, others are hesitant and need to be convinced, but they still need support. In fact, we have found that some police forces have an innovative approach. They create partnerships – formal and informal – with specialized community interveners who take part in meetings with the victims. Even before a complaint is filed, these police services ensure that the victim comes into contact with an investigator or intervener in order to see to his or her needs (security, transportation, food, lodging, health, etc.) and to refer the victim to the appropriate resources.

The CAVACs offer privileged accompaniment to victims. They provide them with the information they need to make an informed decision about whether or not to become involved in a judicial process. However, not all regions have specialized interveners. Moreover, the CAVACs are still struggling to make their services known to victims.

Collaboration between the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal and the CAVAC

The Service de police de la Ville de Montréal and the CAVAC de Montréal are collaborating on a project deployed as part of the Government Strategy to Prevent and Counteract Sexual Violence 2016-2021. It aims to ensure that victims are cared for by CAVAC interveners who specialize in the phenomenon of sexual exploitation within the offices of the Service de police. The creation of this interdisciplinary team allows both of the CAVAC's interveners to meet almost all of the victims who have come to the police station. Victims are thus informed of the services offered by the CAVACs and referred to the appropriate resources. Currently, the work of two part-time interveners still seems insufficient to meet all the needs of the twenty-five investigators.

It also seems to us that a project such as Les Survivantes, set up by the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, could join the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme to promote a better management of victims throughout Québec. As we previously mentioned, some victims are even more vulnerable, be it because of their migratory status, ethnic origin or other cultural identity and finally, their sexual and gender identity. Collaboration with grassroots organizations familiar with these groups is one avenue to consider. On the one hand, they are aware of the reality of these people and have the sensitivity required to intervene. On the other hand, they have established a bond of trust through their activities and are able to put forward appropriate interventions.

Many interveners say that if services are not adapted and designed by and for them, Indigenous girls and women simply will not go to them and get the services they sorely need, which places them and keeps them in situations of increased vulnerability.

Québec Native Women – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 6

As painful as they are for the victims, the filing of a complaint and the ensuing judicial process are necessary in the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors. But we have learned that, for many, these steps will also be part of their healing and reconstruction process.

A curb on demand: acting against client abusers

Although the Committee's mandate focused specifically on minors and their transition to adulthood, our work led us to realize that those who purchase sexual services often do not limit themselves to the age of the person offering them. In these cases, clients wear two hats: they are both clients and client abusers.

We believe that the broader fight against the demand for sexual services can contribute to reducing the sexual exploitation of minors. New law enforcement tools need to be created to maximize the strike force of the police.

No one can really claim to know what part of the sex industry is in fact sexual exploitation and it is almost impossible for a buyer to tell the difference. We therefore benefit from educating buyers about the sexual exploitation they may be participating in by purchasing sexual services.

Le Phare des Affranchi(e)s – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 1

In many Canadian and American cities, educational programs, sometimes called John schools, combine law enforcement and education to counter the demand for paid sexual services and prevent recidivism. These measures apply only to clients of adult prostitutes who acknowledge their responsibility, which does not necessarily equate to a guilty verdict. It is a tool used to decrease the demand for sexual services. Indirectly, it contributes to the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors.

There are several program models with varying roles in the judicial process. In Edmonton, Winnipeg and other Canadian cities, the program provides an alternative measure when charges are laid. If the offender completes the training, prosecution is stayed. Educational interventions may also take the form of additional conditions to be met upon conviction. Potential offenders can also use the program on a voluntary basis to change their behaviour.

This model is not suitable for all clients of prostitution, and there are a number of restrictions. For example, offenders with a criminal history of violence are not eligible.

The different programs share certain principles. They take the form of information sessions delivered by interveners from a variety of backgrounds: community, legal, police, health, survivor, etc. Educational sentences can last from a few hours to several days and are delivered at the offenders' expense. The funds raised are generally used to support victim assistance measures. The program is part of a restorative justice approach.

Despite the limitations of this approach, the implementation of educational sentences seemed to us to be consistent with the General Alternative Measures Program for Adults, a pilot project deployed in 2019 by the Ministère de la Justice. It is now offered in several judicial districts. The program allows offenders to take responsibility for their actions

following an alternative route that does not involve the usual court proceedings prescribed by the Criminal Code. Alternative measures can be applied to help offenders become aware of the consequences of their actions and play an active role in compensating for the harm they have caused. This option is attractive in that it helps to reduce the demand for sexual services in general. This program should provide training to offenders to make them realize the seriousness of their crime. Moreover, unlike other similar programs in North America, we consider it crucial to add a psychosocial assistance component by making follow-up with therapists mandatory in the medium term. Offenders using this alternative measure will have to pay for the training costs themselves.

In our view, it is clear that persons arrested for using the sexual services of a minor would under no circumstances be able to benefit from such an alternative measure since there is a minimum prison sentence for this crime. The same applies to repeat offenders, offenders who have already benefited from such a measure and those who have already been convicted of violent crimes, including sexual violence and domestic violence. Reducing the demand for underage sexual services requires action on several fronts and increased law enforcement efforts. In this sense, an alternative measures program is one of the tools to be implemented.

Recommendation No. 46

The Committee recommends that the Ministère de la Justice fund and develop, in collaboration with the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions and the Research Chair⁴⁸, a unique alternative measures program in Québec that focuses on intervention and awareness aimed at reducing the demand for the purchase of sexual services. The program must exclude clients of sexual services of minors, repeat offenders and those who have already benefited from it.

That this program include the following elements: a voluntary contribution from offenders, training and follow-up with an organization that offers psychosocial assistance to offenders.

⁴⁸ See Recommendation No. 4.

RECONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION: BREAKING THE CYCLE OF EXPLOITATION

Despite the sustained efforts of parents, interveners from numerous resources as well as police forces, many young people are victims of sexual exploitation. Some of them have experienced a chaotic journey: alcohol or drug abuse, sexual or physical abuse and neglect that led them into a toxic world. Victims of sexual exploitation suffer from after-effects that affect many facets of their lives: psychological distress, depression, physical injuries, self-destructive behaviour, addiction, difficulties in creating healthy relationships, stigmatization, poverty, dropping out of school and many others.

The hardest part is rebuilding your life. You have no résumé, no prospects and zero self-esteem. It probably takes a whole lifetime to recover. This experience will always be a part of me.

From the testimony of a survivor of sexual exploitation – Translated excerpt from the hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City, private deliberative meeting

This section discusses resources and services to help break the cycle of sexual exploitation of minors. While addressing the needs of victims, the fight against sexual exploitation must aim at rehabilitating exploiters in order to prevent recidivism. For the actions implemented to meet the needs of victims, it is essential that they be based on scientific knowledge adapted to the Québec context.

Urgent and complex needs, fragmented resources

If the mechanisms of entry and maintenance in this environment are known, the exit from a sexual exploitation dynamic is completely different for each young person.

En Marge 12-17 – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 9

Getting out of a sexually exploitative situation does not happen in a linear fashion. Young victims often hesitate, procrastinate, relapse, sometimes for several years and even beyond the age of majority. Offering sexual services may be a way of meeting immediate financial, emotional, psychological and identity or other needs. However, what was once seen as a solution quickly becomes a problem. To break this vicious circle, we must recognize and find an answer to this distress. The approach requires alleviating both the trauma that led these young people to exploitation and the suffering that results from this situation. From one victim to another, needs vary according to age and trajectory. Indeed, the urgent needs of a teenage girl who has run away and is being sexually exploited differ from those of an adult who has begun the process of leaving the milieu. For some victims, the most basic needs are not met: shelter, food, safety and hygiene. Simply having access to a place to wash can be lacking.

You come out of the resource [a shelter for runaway youth] and people approach you: Do you want to go to the movies? Do you want to come and take a shower at my house? They know you're vulnerable and they use that.

From the testimony of a young runaway - Translated excerpt from the hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City, private deliberative meeting

The first interventions therefore focus on the urgent problems of these people. Other victims have less immediate but equally important needs to restore their physical, psychological and financial health. The intervention will be more constructive if the necessary services and care are provided in a peaceful and safe atmosphere.

Above all, the various interveners we heard cautioned us against the tendency to view marginalized adolescents in this environment solely from the perspective of sexual exploitation. When dealing with victims or their exploiters, an overall view of their experiences is essential. Sexual exploitation is a symptom of fundamental inequalities in our society: economic, social or even emotional inequalities, etc. Not everyone in Québec is fortunate enough to be born in conditions that promote self-esteem, knowledge and personal growth.

Two major observations emerge from our work. On the one hand, the needs of victims are urgent, complex and multiple. On the other hand, there are a large number of more or less specialized assistance resources. The offer is fragmented and does not always match the needs expressed. Exploitation experienced during adolescence often continues well after the age of majority, which makes it difficult to distinguish between resources available to minors and those aimed at adults.

Support for sexually exploited people comes from many sources, making the offer dispersed. It is provided by the health and social services network and community organizations. In spite of our efforts, we were not able to paint an accurate picture of all the services in place. However, a few observations emerge from the consultations held. We note that few resources specialize in intervention in the area of sexual exploitation of youth. In fact, these people are cared for by organizations with a broader vocation such as youth centres, shelters for runaway youth, CAVACs and organizations that help children who are victims of sexual violence.

Women in prostitution present many difficulties in different spheres of life and they must seek specialized support and assistance from as many organizations as they require for their needs, which means that these women will have to repeat their story over and over again to different interveners. Often, they will find themselves tossed from one service to another and sometimes even be told that their problems are considered too serious for the services that can be offered to them.

Nadine Lanctôt, professor at the Département de psychoéducation of Université de Sherbrooke – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 4, 2019, in Québec City

In the absence of a specialized agency, victims must navigate between different services. Remember that these young people are extremely vulnerable and their willingness to act is sometimes precarious. The accumulation of interlocutors and the comings and goings between interveners complicate their actions. The CAVACs believe that interveners must increase their efforts to find organizations capable of taking care of these victims.

Looking for a continuum of services

The mismatch between services and the reality of victims of sexual exploitation can have serious consequences. Victims have to knock on many doors to get all the services they need. This means they have to repeat their stories over and over again. These repetitions contribute to reactivating the trauma they have experienced. Furthermore, not all interveners are trained to understand the issues surrounding sexual exploitation.

The witnesses we heard during our work are unanimous: a continuum of services needs to be put in place. They call for a coherent set of resources that provide ongoing support to people in all their complexity and that take into account their needs, both in the short and long term.

Given the complexity of these traumas, the establishment of a continuum of specialized services is essential to help sexual exploitation survivors recover (Thibault, 2015, p. 19; Lanctôt, 2018, p. 8).

Projet Intervention Prostitution de Québec – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 13

According to one researcher, the continuum of services can be summarized in three segments⁴⁹. First, urgent needs must be met: food, shelter, security. The second segment is about the person's recovery. This means offering all the services necessary for recovery, both physical and psychological. At the end of the healing process, support must be offered to promote social reintegration. The last stage proposes training aimed at self-development and the acquisition of socio-professional skills. Two avenues coexist to implement such a continuum: the creation of specialized resources that respond comprehensively to the needs of survivors and collaboration between different organizations. These services must be provided in a safe environment that is conducive to healing, even if leaving the world of prostitution is not completed or even considered.

Economic precariousness: a constraint on reconstruction

Many public services and programs for the general population can contribute to helping victims of sexual exploitation. However, most of them are not adapted to their reality, in particular because of the rigidity of their administrative framework. This is the case for last-resort financial assistance programs, mainly the social assistance program, and the crime victims compensation program.

Financial precariousness is widespread among victims of sexual exploitation. Their low level of education and lack of work experience recognized by the labour market prevent reintegration.

There are also other factors that can provoke a return to prostitution, but it is clearly poverty and financial insecurity that constitute the first factor in a return to prostitution. [...] when a woman has really longed to get out of prostitution, and realized that she was being exploited, that she was the commodity of a huge industry, the woman does not want to return to prostitution. She really has to be at a level of financial insecurity that is catastrophic enough to do so.

Rose Sullivan, survivor and co-founder of the Collectif d'aide aux femmes exploitées sexuellement – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 6, 2019, in Québec City

⁴⁹ Nadine Lanctôt et coll. *La face cachée de la prostitution : une étude des conséquences de la prostitution sur le développement et le bien-être des filles et des femmes*, 2018, p. 8.

Added to this reality are the frauds that the person may have been a victim of while being sexually exploited.

[...] Because of all the things my procurer made me buy for him, I owed a lot of money to the credit companies. I could have gone to court; after all, I was recognized as a victim of extortion, but the legal proceedings would have cost me more money than the sums involved. I wasn't able to pay my debts and had to declare bankruptcy.

Testimony of Mégane, Translated excerpt from the collection of Josée Mensales, Diane Veillette and Guillaume Corbeil, *Pour l'amour de mon pimp*, p. 32

Social assistance

Social assistance is a source of income for about half of the adult women in the sex trade and those who have left it⁵⁰. According to one research team that we heard, social assistance is not adapted to the situation of victims of sexual exploitation.

It is important to note that the age of majority is required to receive social assistance. We believe there is a need to adapt this program, as many sexually exploited youths will eventually rely on this support to get out of the prostitution milieu and ensure their subsistence.

The Social Assistance Program may restrict the ability to file criminal charges. Recipients involved in prostitution may not wish to report income from their sexual services. Worried that their "cheque will be cut," they are reluctant or unwilling to file a criminal complaint with the police for fear that the authorities will contact the Direction générale de l'assistance sociale of the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale. The recovery of overpayments when undeclared income is related to prostitution hinders the willingness to leave the practice of prostitution. We also heard of cases where victims were convicted of welfare fraud when their benefits were stolen by their procurer. In addition, rigid administrative rules or the need to refund overpayments lead some victims to resort to the commodification of their sexual services.

⁵⁰ Maria Mourani. *Le logement : besoins et préférences des femmes et des filles de l'industrie du sexe*, 2019, p. 44.

[...] the current policies of the ministry responsible for social assistance do not effectively combat sexual exploitation, but rather encourage sexual exploitation, in violation of the 2014 federal law [the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act] and human dignity.

Martin Gallié, professor at the Département des sciences juridiques of Université du Québec à Montréal - Translated excerpt from the public hearing of January 21, 2020, in Montréal

In addition, victims struggle to have the physical and psychological after-effects of sexual exploitation recognized. For some, post-traumatic stress is such that it renders them unfit for work. However, obstacles persist in the recognition of these traumas as severely limiting a person's capacity for employment.

But unfortunately, it is often the case that women [are] in a catastrophic financial situation, even years later, because the after-effects are not recognized. [...] we could also talk for hours and hours about the existing and partially efficient disability plans [....] My doctor has signed eight papers to date explaining that I am permanently disabled, and I am currently getting \$660 a month from social assistance.

Rose Sullivan, survivor and co-founder of Collectif d'aide aux femmes exploitées sexuellement - Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 6, 2019, in Québec City

Recognizing that many victims and survivors of sexual exploitation will rely on social assistance as a source of income for a long period of their lives, we felt it was necessary to make changes to this system. It is important to improve the living conditions of survivors, including the investigation process for cases of fraud.

Recommendation No. 47

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec propose amendments to the Individual and Family Assistance Act in order to, among other things:

- Grant social assistance to minor victims of sexual exploitation and to persons without status
- Reduce the time it takes to obtain a first cheque
- Ensure the allowance is in line with the true cost of living
- Exclude compensation from the crime victims compensation program from the income calculation used to determine the amount of social assistance benefits
- Modify the investigation process in cases of fraud due to undeclared income from prostitution (by excluding the procurer)
- Recognize sexual exploitation as severely limiting a person's capacity for employment
- Take regional realities into account in the allocation of financial resources.

Recommendation No. 48

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec review the social assistance files of sexually exploited persons who have been investigated for fraud committed by a procurer or because of the earnings from prostitution and, if necessary, cancel their debts and the repayment of interest.

Furthermore, we found that social assistance benefits are not sufficient to adequately assist victims of sexual exploitation of minors. We therefore consider it essential to introduce a new program to contribute to a sustainable exit from a situation of sexual exploitation or prostitution. This program must include financial assistance to all victims in the process of reconstruction. In order to provide rapid assistance to victims, the eligibility criteria for this program must be simple.

The pathway out of prostitution in France

Since April 2016, France has adhered to the Nordic Model of the fight against prostitution. In addition to prohibiting the purchase of sexual acts, it has created a pathway out of prostitution (in French, "Parcours de sortie", or PSP) and social and professional integration for victims. This pathway is intended for adults who have ceased all prostitution activities. They must commit themselves to an approved association for a period of at least six months, renewable for a maximum of two years. The PSP offers an allowance of 330 euros per month (just over \$500)⁵¹ and is a condition for obtaining access to lodging and social housing. For undocumented victims, the law also provides for a temporary residence permit for a minimum of six months, renewable for the full cycle of the PSP. Those involved in this exit route from prostitution benefit from a cancellation of their tax debts.

According to the Scelles Foundation, between 2016 and 2019, 78 associations were approved and approximately 150 people were admitted to the program⁵². Provisional residence permits seem to rarely be granted, since tensions remain in the field between the spirit of the law fighting against prostitution and the strict application of the migration policy⁵³. Some point out that the effectiveness of the measure is limited by an insufficient budget.

Recommendation No. 49

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec establish a special program for exiting prostitution, the purpose of which would be to provide financial assistance to all victims in the process of rebuilding their lives, including income, access to physical and psychological health services and housing, while taking into account regional specificities. That this program be simple in terms of eligibility criteria.

Compensation for victims of crime

The last amendments relating to crimes recognized by the Crime Victims Compensation Act having been made in 1985, victims of procuring and trafficking in persons are not eligible for the current crime victims compensation program. Furthermore, the crime must have been committed in Québec to obtain compensation. However, victims are often moved from one territory to another.

51 The allowance is 432 euros (about \$670) if the person has one dependent child, and 534 euros (about \$825) if he or she has several dependent children.

52 Fondation Scelles. *The abolition of prostitution, a French reality: a 3-year assessment of the 2016-444 Law*.

53 Fondation Scelles. *Sexual Exploitation: New challenges, New Answers* (5th global report), 2019, p. 308.

It is generally accepted that the sooner the crime is recognized and the victim's needs are addressed, the greater the chances of optimizing recovery, and the associated costs (social, financial, etc.) are significantly lower.

Regroupement québécois des centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 9

Certainly, victims can obtain compensation for other criminal acts suffered during the period of exploitation, such as assault, forcible confinement, sexual assault, etc. However, the lack of recognition of all the crimes suffered has important consequences on the recovery of victims. It can also hinder their participation in legal proceedings.

In order to truly recognize the status of victim to persons who have been sexually exploited, it is imperative to promptly amend the Crime Victims Compensation Act. Victims of procuring and human trafficking must be able to obtain compensation even if they have been exploited elsewhere in Canada. We believe that compensation obtained should not be considered as income in the eyes of other social programs, such as social assistance.

Recommendation No. 50

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec propose amendments to the Crime Victims Compensation Act to add procuring and human trafficking to the list of crimes compensated, to recognize victims of sexual exploitation of minors, to abolish the limitation period, even if the crime was committed elsewhere in Canada.

Specialization of resources and comprehensive management

Trauma related to sexual exploitation is severe and requires sustained intervention. Practitioners in the fields of medicine, sexology and psychology emphasize the benefits of a trauma-focused approach. This type of approach helps the victim understand how traumatic experiences before and during exploitation can interfere with his or her life. For others, a holistic view of the intervention is necessary. Although also necessary, interventions that focus on "apparent symptoms" or problem behaviours – for instance, substance abuse or running away – make it difficult to rebuild the person, his or her hopes and confidence. In addition, trauma-focused therapies are difficult to access. As an example, the Marie-Vincent Foundation uses this approach, but waiting lists are long.

The almost total absence of competent resources for the treatment of complex post-traumatic stress is unacceptable. Current therapeutic intervention by general practitioners is not only inadequate, but also proves to be dangerous in reactivating the post-traumatic event, for example, by having victims recount severe traumatic events in detail. Experts in this field are required; there is no alternative to these competent resources, they need to be developed.

Rose Dufour, anthropologist and founder of La Maison de Marthe – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 11

It is necessary to facilitate access to adequate psychological care for underage victims of sexual exploitation. This access to care must continue beyond the age of majority. We have become aware of the degree of specialization required to treat these victims. If it is not possible to obtain the required psychological care in the public system, the costs for psychological care in the private sector must be reimbursed by the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec.

Recommendation No. 51

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec make care and psychological support available to victims of sexual exploitation of minors as soon as required, reimbursed by the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec, and that access to this care continue after reaching the age of majority.

Youth centres are the resources that are most similar to the comprehensive care of young victims. They provide both shelter and psychosocial interventions. However, it should be remembered that entering a youth centre is not always voluntary. We recognize the important work of youth protection staff in protecting children and adolescents. Nevertheless, several elements set forth during our work have raised concerns about their ability to prevent sexual exploitation and to adequately support young victims. As we mentioned in the chapter on prevention and training, youth centres can expose young people to criminalized environments and the housing conditions can make youth who use them vulnerable. Indeed, it is recognized that recruitment dynamics are transposed within the very institutions whose mission it is to protect youth. Moreover, not all centres have specialized staff or programs to deal with the complex traumas of sexually exploited youth. Furthermore, services for the treatment of the complex trauma of victims are not always provided in a timely manner.

In order to help victims escape the vicious circle of exploitation, individual trauma treatment is a priority for us in Québec. The challenge is the implementation of integrated specialized services such as sexology, for example. Prioritizing the training of specialized resources in complex traumas, but especially those related to sexual exploitation, is necessary for us. We see it with these young people. The challenge is also to be able to make these services accessible in a timely manner, in the sense that, when the young person opens up about the situation or openly states his or her needs, he or she cannot wait for several weeks. [...] So, to have all the services available to us, quickly and efficiently, [...] is still a challenge we are facing today.

Jessica Gauthier, lead professional with the team dedicated to runaways and concomitant problems of the Youth Protection Directorate of the Capitale-Nationale – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 5, 2019, in Québec City

In addition, youth centres do not provide the comfort and healing that victims need to thrive. Witnesses pointed out the rigidity, even the prison-like aspect of these environments, which compromises the essential collaboration of young victims in their reconstruction.

So, these girls tell me that when they are in these centres that do not have this specialization, [...] they are asked to stay in their rooms, [...] the girls, they say "our cells", that's how they say it. And we are asked to reflect. What do you want me to reflect on? About being sexually exploited? It's a bit illogical. So, the kids, they're not crazy, eh? Therefore this creates a lot of anger, it's unbelievable. She tells me: While he [the procurer] [...] hasn't been arrested yet [...] I'm inside, [...] – as if she were in prison – I'm inside, and I'm treated like a criminal, I'm not understood, I need a shrink, I don't have one, it takes time.

Maria Mourani, criminologist, sociologist and president of Mourani-Criminologie – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 6, 2019, in Québec City

Interveners must deal with difficult situations and determine a method of intervention. Between the permissive approach and the authoritarian approach, the right choice is not always clear. In some cases, staff will deem that coercion can protect victims from themselves and the toxicity of their network. In other cases, the imposition of an overly firm framework risks pushing victims back into the arms of the exploiters.

We have understood that it is necessary for youth centres to adapt their practices to respond more adequately to the needs of young victims of sexual exploitation. On the one hand, the mixing of clientele, that is, the cohabitation of victims of sexual exploitation with other highly vulnerable young people within youth centres, can be harmful for the young people housed there. Not only can vulnerable youth be exposed to the promotion of

the commercialization of sexual services, victims of sexual exploitation do not always find the quietude they need to rebuild their lives when in contact with others who have very different problems. On the other hand, specific resources must be developed to meet the needs of young victims. These resources must offer all the services necessary to protect them, care for them and ensure their successful social integration.

Recommendation No. 52

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec prohibit the mixing of clientele in youth centres in order to optimize the recovery of victims of sexual exploitation.

Other issues were brought to our attention, including the high turnover rate and the scarcity of labour in youth centres. All too often, human resource issues result in a discontinuity in the services provided to adolescents. This situation is particularly troubling for victims, given the efforts invested in creating a bond of trust with the adults around them. It is equally worrisome for staff who have to deal with emotionally and psychologically disturbing testimonials in a context of high risk of work overload.

Complementary accommodation must be available for young people who are not yet in the care of youth protection, as well as for those who run away from youth centres. This type of shelter ensures the safety of young victims. However, one testimony raised the issue of the location of these shelters. For example, in Montréal, these resources are located downtown in order to easily reach teenagers likely to be in need. Nevertheless, this results in their being close to the area where their exploitation takes place. In addition, the addresses are known to abusers and procurers. The latter can take advantage of this to identify young people in very vulnerable situations. Thus, these teenagers are constantly in contact with a dangerous world that they may try to escape from.

The situation of adult victims is more complex. There are few resources that combine shelter and psychological support for sexually exploited persons.

Complementary to police services, the availability of services allowing for the comprehensive care of victims would certainly be beneficial. In this regard, housing services for sexually exploited persons with mental health problems, addictions and other dependencies could make it possible to adequately support victims by providing them with a healthy and safe environment in which to face the legal process, rebuild their lives and gradually resume their lives.

Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 11

At first glance, it seemed to us that the existing resources offered safe housing and accompaniment to victims of sexual exploitation. We were thinking in particular of shelters for victims of domestic violence. However, our work has shown us that this type of resource is not able to meet their needs. The mixing of clientele is undesirable and the victims do not identify with it. We were also told that some shelters refuse victims of sexual exploitation for fear of reprisals from procurers. This reality is even more complex for persons from marginalized communities. For example, according to Québec Native Women, there is only one Indigenous shelter resource that agrees to offer respite to sexually exploited women, namely the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, Nigan.

The Avenue prometteuse project of La Maison de Marthe

La Maison de Marthe is a community organization in Québec City. It accompanies and supports women through the process of leaving prostitution. The organization wants to set up a housing resource called Avenue prometteuse in the fall of 2021. La Maison de Marthe seeks to fill the gaps in the support offered to women who wish to leave the exchange of sexual services. The goal is to set up a shelter service that remains open at all times and that covers the basic needs of women. This project aims to ensure the continuity of the services received in a safe and trusting context. Providing shelter based on the model of houses for victims of domestic violence is crucial.

In light of the testimonies heard during the consultations, we believe that the implementation of specialized shelter services for victims of sexual exploitation is a priority, both to address urgent situations and to support the process of exiting prostitution in the long term. We believe that providing shelter is a central element in the organization of services in accordance with basic needs and care to help victims recover; all this while facilitating the passage from one agency to another. Under the same roof, victims should obtain psychosocial assistance of a therapeutic nature and benefit from measures for sustainable social reintegration. In addition to overcoming the traumas they have experienced, victims need support to build their self-esteem and acquire skills that will enable them to develop a life project. Several steps are sometimes necessary to make this shift a reality. Often, a "troubled past" complicates this transition: finding a place to live, enrolling in an educational institution, making a place for themselves in the job market, reconnecting with their loved ones, creating a new social network. And we could list many other obstacles.

In order to encourage the development of such resources, we believe it is necessary to set up a dedicated fund to directly support housing initiatives for victims of sexual exploitation.

Recommendation No. 53

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create throughout its territory specific and highly secure housing facilities with psychosocial and educational services to protect, care for and contribute to the social reintegration of victims of sexual exploitation.

Recommendation No. 54

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create a dedicated fund to support initiatives aimed at providing shelter for victims of sexual exploitation of minors. That this fund be maintained by, among other things, all of the money seized in cases of sexual exploitation of minors and the voluntary contributions of persons convicted of purchasing sexual services.

Collaboration to create a service corridor

In the absence of organizations that deal specifically with the overall needs of victims and survivors, close collaboration between the various resources in place is one way to achieve a continuum of services for them. This joint effort should include community organizations, police forces, the health and social services network and the school system⁵⁴. Each of these organizations intervenes in one part of the problem. In order to ensure comprehensive care, individuals are directed from one organization to another in a consistent manner.

The SPHÈRES project

The SPHÈRES project is coordinated by the Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté of the CIUSSS Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal. It works with Montréal youth who are sexually exploited. The goal of the project is to offer an individualized response adapted to their needs, aiming to promote their removal from this environment, while working towards their recovery and social integration. Funded by Public Safety Canada for a period of five years, SPHÈRES is in its third year of operation. Bringing together institutional and community partners⁵⁵, the project offers a personalized follow-up, support for urgent and safety needs, guidance and referrals to specialized resources, as well as positive activities and experiences aimed at rebuilding these young people. A support service is also offered to the parents of project participants. SPHÈRES prevents the disruption of services on the 18th birthday by following victims up to the age of 24.

⁵⁴ The collaboration between the CAVAC de Montréal and the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, discussed in the previous section, is also a relevant example of collaboration that allows for the creation of a safety net around victims.

⁵⁵ Partners include Les Survivantes du Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, the organization specializing in sexuality education L'Anonyme, the shelter En Marge 12-17 and the Marie-Vincent Foundation.

We have observed that only certain regions have developed a concerted expertise to assist victims of sexual exploitation. More often than not, specific initiatives for these young victims are developed in cities that have been dealing with this problem for a longer period of time. Among these are the Mobilis project in Longueuil, the SPHÈRES project in Montréal and the Table régionale de Québec sur l'exploitation sexuelle et la prostitution juvénile.

The transition to adulthood: between service disruption and the search for independence

The transition to adulthood accentuates the vulnerability of young people who are trapped in the dynamics of exploitation, or who are at risk of being trapped therein. In Québec, youth protection can take charge of minors, with or without their consent, until their 18th birthday. Service is terminated upon reaching the age of majority, regardless of the person's actual degree of autonomy. This new freedom is heavy to bear for young adults who have a traumatic background and difficulties of an economic, social-emotional or psychological nature.

In order to limit the harmful effects of an abrupt interruption of services, youth centres have recently implemented the Programme qualification jeunesse. It aims to prepare for a smoother transition to adulthood by offering a follow-up from the age of 16 to young people who have a significant placement history.

What we want is to be able to put an intervener in place in the months before the age of majority is reached, who will be able to create a significant bond and who will be present when our adolescent, after three, four, six months, a year, a year and a half of experimenting with his or her freedom, says: "Oh, I need support, I need to come back, I need help, I need supervision, and then I call my intervener who will come to help and support me". So, our Programme de qualification des jeunes, that's what it allows. It puts an educator upstream to accompany the young person first to find housing, find a job, make a resume, make a budget, do his or her first grocery shopping and it is also there to welcome the young person once the experience of freedom is over and our young people agree that they need help. It's all this process that is sometimes delicate [...]. The young person wishes to live his or her period of freedom.

Patrick Corriveau, Director of Youth Protection for the Capitale-Nationale region – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 5, 2019, in Québec City

Paradoxically, young people who are in great need of guidance, such as chronic runaways, are sometimes the ones who benefit least from programs designed to prepare them for leaving the youth centre. They would present too great a risk. We find this situation troubling to say the least. In the opinion of a regional youth protection directorate, this program must be amended and its access criteria revised.

Healing victims and survivors: a vision of empowerment and respect

Given the vulnerabilities of victims and survivors of sexual exploitation, services intended for them must be delivered in a period of time that is sensitive to their situation. For Professor Nadine Lanctôt, this period of time must include a combination of a safe and respectful environment with long-term services to build trusting relationships. Thus, stability and a limited number of interveners should be prioritized.

Therapeutic approaches do not always meet the needs of all minor victims. We have observed that organizations that are very active in the fight against sexual exploitation adopt complementary practices, such as street work. Characterized by the establishment of egalitarian relationships within people's living environments, street work aims to enter into relationships with people who are at odds with institutions and who are not reached by traditional services.

Social services that place "getting out" of the exchange of sexual services as the primary goal of their intervention drive away many young people who do not feel the need to be "saved" or helped.

PlaMP (Projet d'intervention auprès des mineur.e.s prostitué.e.s) – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 13

The harm reduction approach to street work, however, is not always unanimously accepted by those working to fight sexual exploitation. These are interventions that do not focus on stopping unsafe behaviours, but rather on tools to limit risk. Some see this as a safety net for young victims who do not identify with traditional approaches or who do not wish to stop the exchange of sexual services in the short term. Others see it as a form of acceptance of the sexual exploitation of minors. Mobilis project⁵⁶ interveners observe that harm reduction is most appropriate for 16- and 17-year-old girls who are very active in the exchange of sexual services. Accompanying young victims who are questioning themselves is more effective than using coercion. This type of intervention helps them to reflect more deeply on their situation. Street workers can also be solicited by youth centre interveners, for example in cases involving runaways. Their non-coercive approach allows them to gain the trust and respect of young people and to intervene in difficult situations.

For us, harm reduction actions are part of the necessary tools to intervene in an adapted manner with certain victims. We emphasize that this approach is relevant when it is part of an overall vision to stop the sexual exploitation of minors. In the opinion of one survivor, the willingness to give up prostitution should not be a starting point for obtaining services, but rather one of the objectives to be achieved.

⁵⁶ It is a project arising from the collaboration between the Centre jeunesse de la Montérégie, now the CISSS of Montérégie-Est, and the Service de police de l'agglomération de Longueuil.

Even though the process is underway, many young girls do not realize that they are being recruited by gangs into prostitution. It is therefore relevant to listen to what they believe to be the benefits [and to] name the ills.

Martin Pelletier and René-André Brisebois, "Cindy et le travail des intervenants du Centre jeunesse de Montréal", *Pour l'amour de mon pimp*, p. 62

In general, interveners in community organizations and institutions observe that young people are often put off by authoritarian relationships, demanding eligibility criteria, imposed behavioural norms, restrictive schedules and bureaucratic burdens. The most successful interventions with victims are often those that are personalized and that are part of an egalitarian relationship.

We find it very important to emphasize that people who have left a sexual exploitation dynamic have a particular knowledge of the prostitution environment and of the intervention tools to prevent this type of abuse. Their contribution is essential to the development of workshops and programs that address the problem. Such a co-construction approach can be carried out with youth in order to understand their real needs, to avoid prejudices towards their sexuality, to mobilize them and to balance the power relationships between them and the adult interveners. Finally, for many survivors, participation in awareness, prevention and rehabilitation of victims contributes to their own healing process.

Having the opportunity to talk to others about what I experienced changed my life. The more I could talk about it, the better I felt. Knowing that I could help other girls, either directly or by helping people intervene better, that is my therapy.

From the testimony of a survivor of sexual exploitation – Translated excerpt from the hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City, private deliberative meeting

The right to be forgotten: facilitating social reintegration

The Court of Justice of the European Union delivered a judgment in May 2014 recognizing the right to digital oblivion. Europeans are able to require search engines to delete search results that contain "inadequate, irrelevant or no longer relevant"⁵⁷ data.

⁵⁷ Karl Delwaide. *The "right to be forgotten" has a three-piece suit tailor-made in Canada? From Québec to British Columbia.*

[The right to be forgotten is] essential. There are girls who are raped. These photos stay on the Web. It should be like in Europe. Systematically, people should be able to ask for it and get it. But it's like we are not there yet. [...] There are, in the deep Web, absolutely atrocious things lying around there, that we should be able to erase.

Paul Laurier, president and founder of Vigiteck – Translated excerpt of the public hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City

The right to be forgotten could be an interesting avenue to facilitate the social reintegration of survivors, particularly when there have been articles in the media or publications on social networks relating facts about their period of sexual exploitation. Examples of this are videos of the period of exploitation found on pornographic sites or a parent sharing a video on social networks revealing that their child has run away from home. Where there are other possible applications, the right to be forgotten could be designed so as to ensure that information about the history of the sexual exploitation of victims is no longer referenced by search engines.

Recommendation No. 55

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec adopt legislative amendments that would have the effect of forcing providers and all Web platforms (existing, past and future) to delete and dereference information about victims of sexual exploitation and to work closely with police services.

Relatives: collateral victims

It is important not to resign from our role as parents. Despite the lies, we must maintain the bond. Never abandon our child.

From the testimony of the father of a survivor of sexual exploitation – Translated excerpt from the hearing of August 24, 2020, in Québec City, private deliberative meeting

Powerless, isolated and stigmatized, parents struggle to get the help they need when they realize that their child is being sexually exploited. After a child runs away, parents do not know where to turn for support. Meeting their needs must be an integral part of the continuum of services for victims.

Learning that one's child is trapped in a prostitution dynamic is both upsetting and stigmatizing. Since it is a difficult subject to discuss with family and friends, the needs of these parents must be met elsewhere.

Projet Intervention Prostitution de Québec – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 12

Social workers told us about parents' distress: emotional instability mixed with anger, disgust, sadness, shame and guilt. Distraught, parents no longer know how to intervene with their child and the temptation to break the bond can be very strong. Yet, family members are an important part of the recovery process for victims of sexual exploitation. Indeed, their presence promotes positive changes in them.

Minors involved in prostitution have access to resources, but these resources do not necessarily address the needs of families who are just as much victims of the sex industry. Anxiety, depression and absenteeism from work are common problems experienced by the parents of sexually exploited girls and women. As regards adult women in prostitution specifically, their parents who search for resources often encounter interveners who raise the question of a life choice and therefore of individual responsibility against which the means to act appear to be limited.

Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 19

Organizations are developing resources to more effectively reach and accompany loved ones, including individual psychosocial interventions, support groups, mediation, etc. These resources have emphasized the importance of an intervention focused on listening without judgment. In addition, collaboration between organizations and parents contributes to weaving a safety net around youth while facilitating coherent actions. Nevertheless, the offer of services to parents and relatives remains insufficient. This situation is of great concern to us. The lack of support for parents seriously undermines the effectiveness of interventions with victims, regardless of their age. It is important for us to respond to their cry for help and to urge the government to create specialized teams to assist them.

Recommendation No. 56

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec set up specialized assistance and support teams for parents whose child is a victim of sexual exploitation.

An information guide for the relatives of victims of sexual exploitation

Prepared by the Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle (CLES), "S'outiller pour mieux comprendre : guide d'information destiné aux proches des victimes d'exploitation sexuelle" aims to respond to the need of relatives to better understand the dynamics of commercial sexual exploitation and its various issues. It addresses the consequences on women, young girls and adolescents, the difficulties related to disclosure and the exit process, and the emotions experienced following disclosure of a prostitution situation. Finally, it provides information on the law and the judicial process. A short section highlights strategies to be implemented for loved ones.

The need to develop services for marginalized groups

Victims of sexual exploitation do not have a typical profile, but some may have specific needs associated with belonging to a particular group. This is the case for young victims from Indigenous communities who, for both historical and social reasons, are uniquely affected.

Risk factors associated with the sexual exploitation of Indigenous girls include a history of sexual assault, family violence issues, violence experienced in communities and urban settings, childhood placement in a youth protection service, substance abuse, culture shock or isolation in urban settings, and mental health issues. In light of the social problems in Indigenous communities, it is clear that a large number of Indigenous girls would be at risk.

Native Québec Women – Translated excerpt from the brief, pp. 16-17

There are no "by and for Indigenous people" resources dedicated to prevention and intervention relating to the sexual exploitation of underage girls. However, the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay believes that it is imperative to implement culturally safe care that combines Indigenous and non-Indigenous traditional knowledge. Organizations such as the CAVACs are adapting: they offer services in Indigenous languages⁵⁸. Other non-Indigenous organizations are partnering with collaborators from Indigenous institutions to expand their service offerings. For example, an organization helping women victims of sexual assault in the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region works with a key intervener from the Centre d'amitié autochtone du Saguenay.

⁵⁸ This is the case for the CAVACs in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Côte-Nord, Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean and Nord-du-Québec.

We have very strong ties with the Centre d'amitié autochtone du Saguenay. We also have a key intervener there, who is Indigenous. So, when we have particular situations, we refer to this intervener because they really have ways of intervening [...] culturally traditional. So, we call upon the expertise of the Centre d'amitié autochtone [...] We also received training [...] I won't lie to you, there is work to be done [...] it's difficult to keep them in the services, for various reasons, that our services may not be completely adapted.

Maude Dessureault-Pelletier, intervener at La Maison ISA-CALACS Saguenay – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 5, 2019, in Québec City

Boys also represent a group of victims who are less likely to seek help. Hypotheses to explain the low use of services include stereotypes related to masculinity and homosexuality, fear of ridicule, or a lower propensity to identify as victims. We felt it was essential that services be adapted to their condition.

Other groups of people would benefit from targeted approaches to reach them. We took a closer look at the services in place to assist victims and survivors. Are they meeting the specific needs of individuals from cultural communities? What about persons whose migration status is undefined? What about people who identify with sexual minorities?

Therapies for client abusers and procurers: breaking the cycle and preventing recidivism

In order to satisfy the constant demand for sexual services, the sexual exploitation of minors makes victims. We feel it is imperative that resources be devoted to those who have committed crimes related to sexual exploitation so that they abandon their delinquent behaviour. Punishment of those individuals who have committed crimes is not a panacea. A comprehensive response must be developed to deal with their social and psychological problems.

Indeed, it is counterproductive to place the prevention of crimes committed against potential victims solely on the shoulders of these potential victims. If we want to effectively combat sexual exploitation, we must logically act on the individuals who are responsible for it: clients, procurers, and any other actor who benefits from these crimes, directly or indirectly, or who is an accomplice witness, even if it is through his or her silence

Michel Dorais, full professor and researcher at the École de travail social et de criminologie de l'Université Laval – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 3

Perpetrators of crime are generally absent from the range of rehabilitation services offered. Yet, rigorous and accessible therapy and professional follow-up can prevent recidivism of both client abusers, that is, clients buying the sexual services of minors, and procurers. Such psychosocial interventions must be oriented towards several objectives: awareness of the seriousness of the acts committed, better management of one's sexuality, development of empathy, and the reduction of tolerance to sexual exploitation and other forms of violence, particularly sexual and domestic violence. Many client abusers have an erroneous view of prostitution. Some use sexual services without distinguishing between adults and minors and presume their consent. Others minimize the consequences of their actions on these underage victims and their entourage, while still others refuse to see the exploitative situation in which the victims find themselves.

Since many girls do not identify with sexual exploitation, several procurers do not consider that they are procuring. They are often unaware of the consequences of their practice.

Projet Intervention Prostitution de Québec – Translated excerpt from the brief, p. 11

The procurers themselves are often recruited at a young age. Like anyone else, they need healthy role models. Few services are currently dedicated to them, other than a prevention project carried out in Montréal with young offenders. The organization Projet Intervention Prostitution de Québec mentioned to us that they receive requests from procurers for various needs: judicial and administrative support, such as applying for social assistance, or even obtaining food aid. It is obviously paradoxical that organizations are dedicated both to helping victims of sexual exploitation and to providing support to their procurers. Resources specific to their condition should be put in place to encourage them to extricate themselves from the spiral of sexual exploitation.

The practitioner-researcher in criminology René-André Brisebois formulates three areas of action to be addressed to help men leave procuring and prevent recidivism. First, they must be educated about healthy and egalitarian relationships to counter the trivialization of sexuality. Second, they need to be encouraged to change the ideas and distortions they sustain about adolescent girls' sexuality and their involvement in prostitution. In addition, these men must be committed to changing, especially by becoming aware of the negative consequences, both on themselves and on others. Support is essential to help them turn to healthy activities and build constructive plans for the future.

Although the procurer's face in the collective imagination is generally that of a man, procuring is also experienced by women. For some of these women, procuring is a way of getting themselves out of sexual exploitation. This particular reality should be taken into account in psychosocial interventions for them.

As in the case of victims in youth centres, we have established that young procurers should be housed in separate units within the young offender centres. Appropriate therapies should be provided there. The Mobilis project team, from the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Montérégie-Est, told us that interventions must be sustained and rapid, before the young recruiters or procurers become too deeply involved in crime. The same attention should be paid to convicted client abusers. In order to prevent them from becoming entrenched in their criminal behaviour, they must receive care. These individuals cannot be left to fend for themselves and risk recidivism.

Recommendation No. 57

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec make available rehabilitation programs that specifically target client abusers and procurers in order to prevent recidivism.

Health and well-being to counter sexual exploitation

The behaviour of those involved in the dynamics of sexual exploitation of minors must be considered in light of their individual and social context. Also, it is necessary to act simultaneously with victims, offenders, and potential offenders in order to curb this vicious circle, reduce their vulnerabilities and ensure their well-being.

Existing levers seem to us to be appropriate in promoting a comprehensive vision of the problems experienced by individuals, notably ministerial action plans for the health and well-being of men and women. The 2017-2022 ministerial action plan for the health and well-being of men, developed by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, proposes guidelines to the network regarding the means to intervene on vulnerability factors specific to men. These courses of action aim to optimize their well-being and health, but also that of their entourage, including women and children. The plan proposes actions aimed at consolidating community services intended not only for male perpetrators of sexual assault, but also for men who were victims of sexual abuse in childhood.

The action plan for the health and well-being of women has not been reviewed since 2015. It was a follow-up to the 2003 document "Au féminin... à l'écoute de nos besoins". This document presented ministerial objectives and a strategy for improving women's health. In accordance with a comprehensive vision of women's health, the proposed actions addressed, among other things, poverty, sexual, mental and physical health, domestic violence, functional limitations, the aging of the population and caregiving. The last action plan considered sexual exploitation as a health issue to be addressed by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. Yet, there was only one measure in this regard. It was intended to ensure the Ministère's participation in interministerial work on actions to prevent sexual exploitation to be submitted to the government. The updating of this

plan seems to us to be an interesting way to ensure health care and social services that are better adapted to the reality of sexually exploited women. We recall that the National Assembly carried a unanimous motion on September 29, 2020, which requires that the new action plan be made public by the Québec government by the end of the year 2020.

Recommendation No. 58

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec, as adopted in a unanimous motion of the National Assembly, table as soon as possible its new action plan for the health and well-being of women. That this plan put forward measures contributing to a sustainable exit from situations of sexual exploitation.

CONCLUSION

We all have within us what it takes to gain or regain power over our lives, and we struggle daily to do so. You, you have the power to lighten our struggles, make them less painful and ensure that they are not in vain

Rose Sullivan, survivor and co-founder of the Collectif d'aide aux femmes exploitées sexuellement – Translated excerpt from the public hearing of November 6, 2019, in Québec City

All of the testimonies contained in this report allow us to affirm that the fight against sexual exploitation must be based on the concerted action of the various interveners. Knowledge of the phenomenon must be deepened, both scientifically and through practical experience in the field.

It seems essential to us that this fight not only be the work of a small number of interveners. Quebecers must mobilize and get involved. In order to carry out this major undertaking, we must rely on communication and awareness-raising. They are essential tools to help young people better understand this phenomenon and its consequences.

We know that certain risk factors increase the vulnerability of individuals. In addition, prevention is an effective way to counterbalance these elements, weaving a safety net for young people. However, law enforcement remains necessary to stop the sexual exploitation of minors when it occurs. To counter the demand for the sexual services of adolescents, there is an urgent need to further target client abusers and procurers. Specialization and concerted action are essential to ensure the quality of interventions and provide the necessary support to victims. They have great needs because of the after-effects of the sexual exploitation they have suffered. These young people must go through a reconstruction process that may prove to be long and can continue into adulthood.

We attach great importance to these different areas of intervention because this is the basis upon which we will build coherent and effective actions in the field. The witnesses we met are all driven by a deep desire to change things and there is no doubt that by working together with the necessary resources, major changes can be made.

The Select Committee on the Sexual Exploitation of Minors having fulfilled its mandate, the effort to implement the recommendations remains to be made. We hope that this report will guide the actions of the Government of Québec and of legislators in the coming years. Follow-up mechanisms will need to be created in order to measure the progress made and to coordinate efforts. Let us all challenge ourselves to keep victims and their families unconditionally at the heart of our concerns.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Setting the context: turning the spotlight on an unfamiliar reality

Recommendation No. 1

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec formally and solemnly declare that the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors is a national priority.

That, to this end, the Government of Québec develop an action plan based on the present recommendations of the Committee. That this action plan be periodically reviewed by an interministerial committee that must report to the National Assembly every two years on the implementation of the actions and that this report be examined by the competent committee.

Recommendation No. 2

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec declare March 4 of each year as the Day Against the Sexual Exploitation of Minors and that it mark, in association with the United Nations, the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on July 30 of each year.

Recommendation No. 3

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec declare the first week of March each year as the National Week Against the Sexual Exploitation of Minors.

Recommendation No. 4

The Committee recommends that a world-class research chair be established and financially supported in partnership with UNESCO to study the phenomenon of and responses to the sexual exploitation of minors.

Recommendation No. 5

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec mandate experts to report on the presence of child pornography on sites linked to companies registered in Québec and the measures put in place to prevent and suppress it.

2. Communication and awareness-raising: the need to acknowledge the situation

Recommendation No. 6

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec develop broad, multi-platform and recurring awareness campaigns aimed at:

- Providing information on the sexual exploitation of minors to the entire population, with specific components aimed at families and young people, community organizations (e.g., youth centres or family centres), social interveners, the restaurant and hotel industry, and organizers of major events
- Reminding the population of the criminal nature of buying sexual services.

Recommendation No. 7

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec, in partnership with the First Nations and the Inuit, conduct an awareness campaign for visitors entering their territories.

Recommendation No. 8

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec, in partnership with the First Nations and the Inuit, conduct an awareness campaign targeting Indigenous youth and their communities on the sexual exploitation of minors.

Recommendation No. 9

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec, with the support of the federal government, conduct an awareness campaign, specifically at the points of entry of airports, ports and border crossings, aimed at all travellers regardless of their status, to remind them of the criminal nature of the purchase of sexual services and human trafficking on Canadian territory.

Recommendation No. 10

The Committee recommends that the Ministère de l'Éducation include adapted content specific to the prevention and risks of sexual exploitation of minors in sexuality education at the primary and secondary school levels.

The Committee recommends that the following themes be addressed in sexuality education classes, notably consent, respect, self-fulfillment, self-esteem, healthy interpersonal relationships, sexual exploitation, recruitment methods, safe use of social media and information technology.

Recommendation No. 11

The Committee recommends that sexuality education classes be taught by trained teachers supported by sexologists or other qualified professionals.

Recommendation No. 12

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec conduct a vast awareness campaign for children and their parents to make them aware of risks and consequences of using various technologies, applications and social networks as well as to equip them in recognizing high risk situations as it pertains to sexual exploitation online.

Recommendation No. 13

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec implement a cyber alert system that directly targets persons seeking the sexual services of minors and sites advertising sexual services.

3. Prevention and training: weaving the safety net

Recommendation No. 14

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec support initiatives aimed at preventing and detecting sexual exploitation of minors in all places frequented by young people.

Recommendation No. 15

The Committee recommends, on the basis of locally developed initiatives, the creation and mainstreaming of sexuality education programs directly adapted to young people in youth centres.

Recommendation No. 16

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec conduct a multilingual information campaign for victims to make them aware of their rights, particularly when they are linked to a crime and are manipulated by it.

Recommendation No. 17

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create in partnership with local organizations a single and interactive platform dedicated to the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors within the next year. That this platform offer information and referrals bringing together all the resources for assistance in the area of sexual exploitation of minors throughout Québec.

That, to this end, the Government of Québec inventory all existing educational tools, initiatives and organizations deployed in Québec for prevention and intervention in the area of sexual exploitation of minors.

Recommendation No. 18

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create and offer parents, using the single and interactive platform, the necessary tools to raise their awareness, to support and educate them about the issue of sexual exploitation of minors and the safe use of technologies, applications and social networks, as well as to help them in their interventions with their children, starting at an early age.

Recommendation No. 19

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec implement as soon as possible a mission-based funding formula for community organizations fighting the sexual exploitation of minors rather than on a project-by-project basis. That this funding be increased.

Recommendation No. 20

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec ensure that an issue table composed of the various players involved in the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors be designated in each administrative region. That the mandate, mission and name of these tables be standardized. That the reality of each region be taken into account in the composition of the tables with the participation of institutional and community stakeholders. That the sharing of information between these tables be established.

The Committee recommends that the mandates of the Prévention Jeunesse program projects be renewed by ensuring recurrent funding and that their scope be broadened throughout Québec.

Recommendation No. 21

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec standardize an appropriate protocol for sharing personal data and information between social service and police stakeholders with a view to preventing and intervening to protect minors from situations of sexual exploitation.

Recommendation No. 22

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec improve the initial and ongoing training of workers likely to be involved in cases of sexual exploitation of minors.

That the various targeted employment groups include, among others:

- Workers in the health and social services network (including pre-hospital services)
- Front-line staff in Indigenous communities
- Pharmacists
- All teaching staff and team members at the primary and secondary levels
- The judiciary of the Criminal and Penal Division and of the Youth Division
- Prosecutors in criminal and penal prosecutions as well as in municipal courts
- Police and civilian personnel in police organizations
- Other youth workers (recreational organizations, etc.)
- Correctional and probation officers.

That the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux ensure that all professionals working with young people are aware of the obligation to denounce situations at risk of sexual exploitation under the Youth Protection Act.

That the content of the training be developed in partnership between the regional tables and the Research Chair.

Recommendation No. 23

The Committee recommends that the École nationale de police du Québec develop and disseminate training on assisting victims of sexual exploitation of minors in the judicial process.

Recommendation No. 24

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create a seal "No to the sexual exploitation of minors" and promote it throughout Québec, notably in partnership with the hotel industry, festivals, major events and the passenger transportation industry.

That the seal be available to all businesses and that its acquisition be based on conditions that include mandatory training of personnel regarding the detection of the sexual exploitation of minors and the posting of advertising in the business that raises awareness of the sexual exploitation of minors.

Recommendation No. 25

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec impose on online rental platforms, hotel establishments, owners of tourist accommodations, erotic massage parlours and saunas the obligation to prominently post signs pointing out the criminal nature of the purchase of sexual services.

Recommendation No. 26

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec require online rental platforms, hotel establishments, owners of tourist accommodations, erotic massage parlours and saunas to visibly display contact information to report a crime of sexual exploitation of minors.

Recommendation No. 27

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec make subsidies or other tax incentives for major events, represented by the Regroupement des événements majeurs internationaux, conditional on the implementation of measures to raise awareness, train their staff and prevent the sexual exploitation of minors.

That training on the sexual exploitation of minors be eligible as a training expense for businesses subject to the Act to Promote Workforce Skills Development and Recognition (1% Act).

That this demonstration of concrete actions (e.g. public awareness) against the sexual exploitation of minors be developed in conjunction with the regional issue table and that it be validated by the Research Chair.

That promoters be required to submit a report outlining the measures put in place to combat the sexual exploitation of minors.

4. Law enforcement: the victim at the centre of our actions**Recommendation No. 28**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec formally request that the federal government make the Order in Council allowing the coming into force of the provision authorizing the imposition of consecutive sentences for traffickers in persons under the age of eighteen.

Recommendation No. 29

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec ask the federal government to propose amendments to the Criminal Code in order to add all crimes related to procuring to the list of activities covered by the forfeiture of proceeds of crime.

Recommendation No. 30

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec ask the Government of Canada to propose amendments to the Criminal Code in order to reduce the pressure on victims by removing the preliminary inquiry stage in charges of sexual exploitation of minors and human trafficking.

Recommendation No. 31

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec ensure that convicted client abusers are registered in the National Sex Offender Registry.

Recommendation No. 32

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec remind hotel establishments, owners of tourist accommodations, erotic massage parlours and saunas of their obligation to report any situation at risk of sexual exploitation of minors.

Recommendation No. 33

The Committee recommends that the Ministère de la Justice examine the possibility of amending the Civil Code of Québec in order to grant victims of sexual exploitation an imprescriptible recourse for damages against a hotel establishment that failed to act or alert the police when it knew or ought to have known that a minor was being sexually exploited there.

Recommendation No. 34

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec exercise its leadership at federal-provincial-territorial meetings and within the Council of the Federation to ensure greater collaboration between the provinces in the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors, in the harmonization of the various youth protection laws and in interprovincial interventions.

Recommendation No. 35

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec ask the federal government to propose amendments to update the definitions of "place", "public place" and "any place" in the Criminal Code definitions to include private or public cyberspace.

Recommendation No. 36

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec develop, with the support of the Union des municipalités du Québec and the Fédération québécoise des municipalités, a provincial strategy aimed at identifying municipal regulations related to the sex industry,

particularly with respect to the granting of permits, and standardizing them in order to be more effective in the fight against the sexual exploitation of minors in all municipalities and boroughs.

Recommendation No. 37

The Committee recommends that the Ministère de la Sécurité publique increase the human and financial resources of the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme and add regional (satellite) teams with a priority mandate to carry out operations targeting client abusers.

Recommendation No. 38

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create the position of coordinating prosecutor to be assigned to the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme in order to facilitate the coordination of prosecutions related to cases involving the commercialization of sexual services of minors.

Recommendation No. 39

The Committee recommends that the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions designate prosecutors for sexual exploitation cases in the regions to ensure expertise and consistency in the handling of cases within the justice system.

Recommendation No. 40

In order to put the minor victim at the centre of interventions, to facilitate coordination and the sharing of expertise, the Committee recommends that the following be added to the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme:

- an interprovincial liaison officer
- one or more Indigenous police service members
- a designated coordinating prosecutor
- crime victim support centres
- Les Survivantes program of the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal.

And that the Équipe act in partnership with the stakeholders of the regional issue tables and that a link be established with the Research Chair

Recommendation No. 41

The Committee recommends that the Ministère de la Sécurité publique, in partnership with the First Nations and the Inuit, assess ways to better equip Indigenous police forces in dealing with issues related to the sexual exploitation of minors.

Recommendation No. 42

The Committee recommends that human and financial resources be increased in order to strengthen the teams specialized in the analysis of new technologies and social media and that these resources support the Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme in its investigations.

Recommendation No. 43

The Committee recommends that the Ministère de la Justice develop policies and measures to immunize victims of sexual exploitation from prosecution when they file a complaint against a procurer or client abuser and that they receive complete information on their rights.

Recommendation No. 44

The Committee recommends that police services increase joint patrols, involving both police and psychosocial workers, or use a victim-centred "community policing" approach to promote effective operations, ensure the safety of victims and strengthen the confidence of marginalized people in the authorities.

Recommendation No. 45

The Committee recommends that measures be extended throughout Québec to facilitate victims' testimony in court and to provide them with support and accompaniment, for example by preparing them to testify.

Recommendation No. 46

The Committee recommends that the Ministère de la Justice fund and develop, in collaboration with the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions and the Research Chair, a unique alternative measures program in Québec that focuses on intervention and awareness aimed at reducing the demand for the purchase of sexual services. The program must exclude clients of sexual services of minors, repeat offenders and those who have already benefited from it.

That this program include the following elements: a voluntary contribution from offenders, training and follow-up with an organization that offers psychosocial assistance to offenders.

5. Reconstruction and rehabilitation: breaking the cycle of exploitation

Recommendation No. 47

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec propose amendments to the Individual and Family Assistance Act in order to, among other things:

- Grant social assistance to minor victims of sexual exploitation and to persons without status
- Reduce the time it takes to obtain a first cheque
- Ensure the allowance is in line with the true cost of living
- Exclude earnings from the crime victims compensation program from the income calculation used to determine the amount of social assistance benefits
- Modify the investigation process in cases of fraud due to undeclared income from prostitution (by excluding the procurer)
- Recognize sexual exploitation as severely limiting a person's capacity for employment
- Take regional realities into account in the allocation of financial resources.

Recommendation No. 48

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec review the social assistance files of sexually exploited persons who have been investigated for fraud committed by a procurer or because of the earnings from prostitution and, if necessary, cancel their debts and the repayment of interest.

Recommendation No. 49

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec establish a special program for exiting prostitution, the purpose of which would be to provide financial assistance to all victims in the process of rebuilding their lives, including income, access to physical and psychological health services and housing, while taking into account regional specificities. That this program be simple in terms of eligibility criteria.

Recommendation No. 50

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec propose amendments to the Crime Victims Compensation Act to add procuring and human trafficking to the list of crimes compensated, to recognize victims of sexual exploitation of minors, to abolish the limitation period, even if the crime was committed elsewhere in Canada.

Recommendation No. 51

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec make care and psychological support available to victims of sexual exploitation of minors as soon as required, reimbursed by the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec, and that access to this care continue after reaching the age of majority.

Recommendation No. 52

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec prohibit the mixing of clientele in youth centres in order to optimize the recovery of victims of sexual exploitation.

Recommendation No. 53

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create throughout its territory specific and highly secure housing facilities with psychosocial and educational services to protect, care for and contribute to the social reintegration of victims of sexual exploitation.

Recommendation No. 54

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec create a dedicated fund to support initiatives aimed at providing shelter for victims of sexual exploitation of minors. That this fund be maintained by, among other things, all of the money seized in cases of sexual exploitation of minors and the voluntary contributions of persons convicted of purchasing sexual services.

Recommendation No. 55

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec propose legislative amendments that would have the effect of forcing providers and all Web platforms (existing, past and future) to delete and dereference information about victims of sexual exploitation and to work closely with police services.

Recommendation No. 56

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec set up specialized assistance and support teams for parents whose child is a victim of sexual exploitation.

Recommendation No. 57

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec make available rehabilitation programs that specifically target client abusers and procurers in order to prevent recidivism.

Recommendation No. 58

The Committee recommends that the Government of Québec, as adopted in a unanimous motion of the National Assembly, table as soon as possible its new action plan for the health and well-being of women. That this plan put forward measures contributing to a sustainable exit from situations of sexual exploitation.

LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS AND PERSONS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE WORK OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS

Organizations and witnesses heard

In Québec City

Service de police de Laval (001M)

Mr. Martin Pelletier, module fugue, sexo,
toxico intervenir – CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal (011M)

Ms. Nadine Lanctôt, full professor of psychoeducation –
Université de Sherbrooke, Longueuil campus (008M)

Service de police de la Ville de Sherbrooke (005M)

Association des directeurs de police du Québec (002M)

Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation (013M)

Edmonton Police Service

Service de police de la Ville de Québec (012M)

Projet Intervention Prostitution Québec (PIPQ) (004M)

Alliance Jeunesse Chutes-de-la-Chaudière (007M)

Regroupement québécois des centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions
à caractère sexuel (014M)

Direction générale de l'indemnisation des victimes d'actes criminels (IVAC)

Ms. Rose Dufour, anthropologist and founder – La Maison de Marthe (009M)

Mr. Daniel Loiseau, former investigator – Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (010M)

Mr. Michel Dorais, full professor – École de travail social et de criminologie,
Université Laval (003M)

Direction de la protection de la jeunesse – CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale (015M)

Ms. Maria Mourani, criminologist, sociologist and president of Mourani-Criminologie
(006M)

Collectif d'aide aux femmes exploitées sexuellement (CAFES)
Service de police de la Ville de Gatineau (019M)
Ms. Nellie Brière (020M)
Ms. Ève Lamont (016M)
Ms. Catherine Proulx, director of the documentary *Trafic : À la recherche du client* (021M)
Ms. Karine Dubois, researcher of the documentary *Trafic : À la recherche du client* (021M)
Centres d'aide aux victimes d'actes criminels - Crime Victims Assistance Centres (017M)
Équipe intégrée de lutte contre le proxénétisme (EILP) (023M)
Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (024M)
Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ) (018M)
Centre Cyber-aide (022M)
Mr. Dominic Monchamp – Service de police de la Ville de Montréal
Mr. Paul Laurier, president and founder – Vigiteck (062M)
Centre d'intervention en délinquance sexuelle de Laval (063M)

In Montréal

Dr. Franziska Baltzer, adolescent medicine – Montréal Children's Hospital (029M)
Dr. Farhan Bhanji, director of education – Steinberg Centre for Simulation and Interactive Learning, McGill University (030M)
Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle (CLES) (056M)
Y des femmes de Montréal (051M)
Ordre professionnel des sexologues du Québec (037M)
L'Anonyme (034M)
Service de police de l'agglomération de Longueuil (036M)
Projet Mobilis (033M)
Mr. Jacques Moïse, psychotherapist, author and speaker (025M)
Phare des AffranchiEs (048M)
La Maison d'Haïti (047M)
Centre d'aide aux familles latino-américaines (CAFLA) (046M)

Programme Prévention Jeunesse de Longueuil (028M)

Programme Prévention Jeunesse de Laval (031M)

Programme Les Survivantes (057M)

Réseau Enfants-Retour (032M)

Québec Native Women (042M)

Ms. Ellen Filippelli (049M)

En Marge 12-17 (035M)

Maison Kekpart

Conseil québécois LGBT (054M)

PlaMP (Projet d'intervention auprès des mineur.e.s prostitué.e.s) (055M)

Chez Stella

Association des hôtels du Grand Montréal (043M)

Ms. Martine B. Côté (027M)

Mr. Martin Gallié (027M)

Grand Prix de Montréal (044M)

South Asian Women's Community Centre (050M)

Dr. Élise St-André, psychiatrist – Institut universitaire en santé mentale de Montréal

Marie-Vincent Foundation (040M)

In Val-d'Or

Conseil de la Nation Anishnabe de Lac Simon

Ville de Val-d'Or

Service d'aide et de traitement en apprentissage social Abitibi-Témiscamingue (SATAS) (041M)

CALACS-ABITIBI (Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel)

Ms. Virginia Wabano, planning, programming and research officer (PPRO) – Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB)

Mr. Donald Nicholls, director of the Department of Justice and Correctional Services – Cree Nation Government (045M)

Organizations and persons who were not heard but who submitted a brief

Mr. Jacques Légaré (061M)

La Maison de Marthe (060M)

Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique du réseau de la santé
et des services sociaux (059M)

La Sortie (058M)

Coalition québécoise contre la traite des personnes (053M)

Ms. Catherine Malécot (052M)

Arrimage Jeunesse (039M)

Fierté Montréal (038M)

Ms. Roxane Bélanger (026M)

Organizations visited

Conseil de la Nation Anishnabe de Lac Simon

Val-d'Or First Nations Community Mixed Police Station – Sûreté du Québec de Val-d'Or

Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre

Organizations heard in private meetings

Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions

Secrétariat à la condition féminine

Commission spéciale sur les droits des enfants et la protection de la jeunesse

Service de police de la Ville de Montréal

Victims of the sexual exploitation of minors and their relatives

RÉZO

Organizations and persons who participated in the preparatory training sessions

Ms. Nadine Lanctôt, full professor of psychoeducation – Université de Sherbrooke, Longueuil campus

Ms. Catherine Laurier, professor at the Département de psychoéducation – Université de Sherbrooke

Ms. Francine Duquet, professor at the Département de sexologie – Université du Québec à Montréal

Centre jeunesse de la Montérégie

Programme Les Survivantes

Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre – Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Mr. René-André Brisebois, practitioner-researcher – CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal

Service de police de la Ville de Montréal

Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions

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