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Chair

The Honourable Judy Sgro

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● (1110)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.)): I call to order meeting number 14 of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Good morning to all of you, especially to our witnesses.

Sergeant Lori Lowe is from the RCMP immigration and passport branch, border integrity, federal and international operations. Lori is the national coordinator for human trafficking.

Yvon Dandurand is from the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy at the University of British Columbia. He is also the dean of research and graduate studies at University College of the Fraser Valley.

I welcome both of you to our committee this morning as we commence a study on the very important topic of human trafficking. We will have sufficient time this morning, so you don't have to feel rushed. It is important for us as a committee to get a good feeling about where the issue is, what has been done and what needs to be done. I understand you both have a huge breadth of knowledge that you are prepared to share with us, and then answer questions from the committee members.

I ask Sergeant Lowe to go forward first.

Det Sgt Lori Lowe (National Coordinator for Human Trafficking, Immigration and Passport Branch, Border Integrity, Federal and International Operations, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to meet with you today to discuss the actions being taken by the RCMP to combat human trafficking.

Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, or harbouring of persons for the purpose of exploitation, typically in the sex industry or for forced labour. Children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation as they have limited comprehension of events unfolding around them.

Traffickers use various methods to maintain control over their victims, including force, sexual assault, and threats of violence. The extent of victimization must be recognized as a significant aspect of this crime. Persons are reduced to and treated as nothing more than a commodity.

Although the United Nations estimates that one million people are trafficked throughout the world every year, the extent of trafficking into, through, and within Canada is not known, due to the clandestine nature of this activity and the difficulty in distinguishing between traffic victims and illegal migrants.

In 2004, the RCMP released a strategic intelligence assessment that examined current and historical trends in human trafficking in Canada. This assessment found that Canada, as a developed nation with a strong, stable economy and generous social assistance programs, was an attractive destination, and that persons trafficked into Canada were destined for the domestic and United States markets. This assessment provided an initial analysis of the nature and scope of trafficking in persons in Canada since 1999. Over time, however, the identification of cases and gathering of information will allow for an enhanced understanding of both international and domestic trafficking.

The first human trafficking charge under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act was laid in Vancouver in April 2005. This case surfaced when an employee at a massage parlour called the police to report that she had been assaulted by the owner. An investigation ensued between the RCMP and the Vancouver Police Department, and the owner was charged with various offences under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Canadian Criminal Code. This case is currently before the courts.

Today I would like to discuss with you the RCMP's priorities for combatting human trafficking, including awareness initiatives, victim protection, and strengthening partnerships. The mandate of the immigration and passport program is to work in concert with domestic and foreign agencies at all levels, as well as the community at large, to protect and enhance the quality of life through education, prevention, and enforcement. At the same time, our strategy is to combat and disrupt organized migrant smuggling and the trafficking of persons.

To fulfill these priorities, the immigration and passport program developed Canada's first Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre, in Ottawa to address national and international components of human trafficking investigations. The centre was fully staffed in May 2006 with four RCMP officers and a civilian member analyst.

To better describe the centre, it can be compared to a clearing house or a coordination centre, where staff help to create new initiatives such as educational and training tools for law enforcement; develop policy; coordinate investigations, including requests from international law enforcement agencies; and provide analytical services. This is a new concept, and while there will be some growing pains, I'm very proud of our dedicated staff and am pleased with the number of initiatives we've been able to roll out in such a short period of time.

In addition to the new centre, the RCMP is aggressively developing initiatives to address victim protection. The safety and security of victims must be considered at all stages of the criminal justice process, and appropriate measures must be taken, when necessary, to protect victims. We are working to find better ways to identify the people who have taken a chance on an alluring job opportunity, only to have their dreams of a better life turned into a nightmare of abuse and humiliation. We need to help law enforcement rescue them and prosecute the offenders.

As you might expect, in order to meet those goals, a comprehensive assistance and protection protocol must be in place to provide victims with protection and adequate services. This will also give law enforcement a better chance of reciprocal assistance from the victim, and ultimately the prosecution of their traffickers.

Our Pacific region immigration and passport section, in collaboration with the Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre, developed a human trafficking victim care and protection flow chart. It follows a victim step by step, from point of identification through risk assessment; to provision of services, protection, and investigation; to repatriation or receipt of status. This section has made significant strides in developing trusted relationships with non-governmental organizations and faith-based groups.

● (1115)

In partnership with the B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development, they are developing a working group comprising social service providers, law enforcement agencies, and other government departments directly involved with human trafficking.

Once established, this group will develop a strategy that coordinates their resources in order to deliver a comprehensive and timely response for identified victims. This group is laying the groundwork for improved coordination among partner agencies that I believe will be adapted by immigration and passport sectors across Canada and shared with law enforcement agencies globally.

Taking a closer look at training or educational initiatives, the RCMP, in collaboration with our Pacific region, the human trafficking centre, the Department of Justice, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and the Canada Border Services Agency, created a highly informative thirteen-minute video that's being shown to law enforcement agencies across the country. The video incorporates information from a variety of experts, including investigators, academics, and non-governmental organization leaders who work with victims. It explains the difference between human smuggling and human trafficking and offers advice on how to identify victims, the elements of a human trafficking investigation, and, most of all, the importance of working together.

Other new awareness materials include a poster titled “Make a Difference”, which lists indicators on ways to identify a victim and contact information.

We've also created a contact card that is similar in appearance to a business card but contains tips on identifying potential victims of human trafficking, as well as phone numbers where specialized RCMP officers will be available 24/7 to provide direct assistance to law enforcement agencies on questions they have regarding human trafficking issues.

Furthermore, RCMP officers are raising the profile of human trafficking among the law enforcement agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations through regional conferences, informal gatherings, and formal presentations, including international venues such as Interpol and Europol, where we share Canadian strategies with others.

Interpol is the only international forum providing exchanges on intelligence and strategies to deal with human trafficking worldwide. This gathering of resources promotes the widest possible mutual assistance between police authorities.

The RCMP immigration and passport program has been proactive in enhancing our international partnerships regarding human trafficking. Some of the partnerships we're currently involved in include the Canada-China working group, the federal Interdepartmental working group on trafficking in persons, the Steering Committee of the Interpol Working Group on Trafficking in Women for Sexual Exploitation, the Europol annual experts' meeting on trafficking in human beings, and the annual meeting of police experts for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Finally, while we are making good strides, of course, there is still more work to do. Some of our future goals include: developing and administering workshops for NGOs to enhance cooperation and facilitate sharing of information; providing information to Canadian peacekeepers travelling to source countries relating to escalation of abuse and exploitation of victims through personal involvement; working with the Canada Border Services Agency to develop training for law enforcement and border agents, who often have first contact with potential or actual trafficking victims; coordinating regional conferences with law enforcement officers to discuss specific investigations and share intelligence; partnering with municipal bylaw officers to maintain checks on agricultural farm workers; assisting with the development of awareness programs for orphanages and foster agencies domestically and abroad; working with the International Organization for Migration and RCMP international liaison officers to develop a structure for the repatriation of victims; and developing an inventory of victim protection measures throughout Canada.

In closing, Madam Chair, let me reiterate that the issue of human trafficking is of the utmost importance to the RCMP. It is our belief that combatting human trafficking requires a multi-faceted approach, and the RCMP is committed to continuing to work closely with our many partners in responding to this crime locally, nationally, and internationally.

Human trafficking is not an issue that can be addressed by law enforcement alone; it must include multi-agency collaboration. We look forward to developing and implementing a broad range of initiatives in the future to increase awareness of this heinous crime.

Thank you for having me appear today.

● (1120)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that important information.

Mr. Dandurand.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand (Senior Associate, International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, University of British Columbia): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for this opportunity to appear before the committee today.

As you mentioned, I am affiliated with the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy in Vancouver, which is a United Nations-affiliated research institute, as well as with the University College of the Fraser Valley.

My colleagues and I, over the last four or five years, have had all kinds of opportunities to work on the issue of human trafficking and have studied the problem. We were involved initially, more than five years ago, in the discussions that led to the adoption of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocols thereto, of course, as observers and as part of a committee of experts. We were also involved in designing and developing legislative guides for member states on how to implement these international instruments with the support of the Government of Canada. We were involved in developing a tool kit for member states on how to implement the protocol on trafficking in persons, and also developing handbooks for law enforcement officers, both in Canada and in other countries. We have worked locally and nationally with our colleagues from the RCMP and other police forces. We also work internationally, again on human trafficking, with colleagues from Central America and with UNICEF in Vietnam and in Myanmar. So we have gathered a fairly good appreciation of the complexity of the problem and would like to volunteer some comments today on how much progress we have made in Canada and what's still ahead of us in terms of actions to counter the problem.

As Sergeant Lowe has already mentioned, we don't have really good information in Canada, or systematic information, on the extent of the problem. In fact, I understand this is the first hearing of this committee on the issue of human trafficking. There's no doubt in my mind that during the course of your work you will hear different views on how important the problem is and how it presents itself in Canada. This disagreement on the nature of the problem and the extent to which it afflicts us in Canada is partly due still, in spite of the new legal definitions of the problem, to disagreements or different views about what constitutes a problem. It's also due to the fact that this is not an easy problem to study, because obviously all of that crime occurs in a clandestine fashion and is obviously difficult to measure. Organized crime does not publish annual reports, so it's quite difficult to get a good sense of what it is.

On the other hand, in the last five to ten years, basically around the globe people have paid more attention to the issue, and we're getting a little wiser about how the problem presents itself and what works and what doesn't work. I think it would be fair to say that the international community is still trying to identify some of the best practices, but we know a lot more today about the problem and how best to respond to it than we did, say, ten years ago.

One of the issues that you will probably notice is that in Canada there are still very few official cases of human trafficking—only a handful. By “official”, I mean cases that have come to the attention of law enforcement and have been treated or recognized as cases of human trafficking. Once you notice this, you have to wonder what's really happening. Are we really the only country in which there is very little human trafficking? Is it true that there aren't many cases out there, or is the problem merely one where a lot of victims in Canada still do not find it safe to come forward and ask for assistance?

In Canada we don't yet have a good way of keeping track of cases. I know our colleagues from the RCMP have worked on developing databases, including intelligence databases, that allow them to keep track of the information that comes to their attention, either in the form of complaints or in the form of intelligence. Still, there are many issues in Canada about studying the problem and figuring out how it presents itself. For instance, there are very few, if any, official cases of trafficking in children in Canada. Are we supposed to believe we'd be the only western country with no incidents of child trafficking? That would be very surprising.

● (1125)

We need to deal with the issue differently and be more vigilant. Obviously this is not a case that comes to the attention of the police spontaneously. It is an area where proactive law enforcement is really important, and that is why the work described earlier by Sergeant Lowe is so important, not only at the level of the RCMP but at the level of all police forces in Canada, and I'll come back to this in a minute.

I've suggested to you so far that we're not as effective as we should be when it comes to fighting human trafficking in Canada, and that's not an indictment of Canada. We are more or less where other countries are. The reasons why we tend to fail to respond as well as we could are many, and I'll list a few here for you, mostly because you will encounter them again in your work and in your deliberations.

The first reason why we're not always as good as we could be in fighting human trafficking is that there is still disagreement about what trafficking is, and that's why it's important to do a lot of public education and public awareness activity, so we develop a common language, a common understanding of what the problem is, and distinguish it from other very important problems such as sexual exploitation of sex trade workers and others, which may or may not involve human trafficking. It's important that we collectively gain some clarity about those different problems and the best ways to deal with them.

Another reason why we're not as good as we could be is that we still have limited knowledge of how human trafficking presents itself in Canada, and that leads us to think we need to do more systematic investigation. Researchers need to work in cooperation with law enforcement and others, NGOs, and people who have first-hand knowledge of the issues so we get a better understanding.

The other reason we have trouble is that the phenomenon evolves rapidly. The modes of operation of human traffickers change constantly. They try to avoid detection. They find different ways. So when you turn the spotlights in one direction, they go somewhere else. There's a lot of what criminologists would call crime displacement. They use different methods. They go to different places. They use different routes. And therefore whatever you think you know about human trafficking is only true of human trafficking last week or last year, because right now they're proceeding in a different way.

That means we have to be a little more efficient at sharing information, particularly among law enforcement agencies, but not just among law enforcement agencies. I'll get back to this, but clearly this is an area where law enforcement needs to work very closely with community groups, with people who work with new immigrants, with people who work with various ethnic communities in Canada, and so on.

Another reason why we are not as good as we could be is that we have a hard time measuring the success of our efforts. So when you don't know whether what you're doing is producing results, it's quite hard to perfect your methods, and again it comes back to getting good information about what we're doing.

There's also another reason: there are still many obstacles to international cooperation. I'm not going to go into many details about this. I would be quite happy to provide more information to the committee if it wishes, but given that the crime frequently occurs across borders, preventing it and controlling it and prosecuting it presupposes very good cooperation among law enforcement agencies and legal authorities in both countries, and that is still fraught with all kinds of difficulties. We have made great progress not only in Canada but internationally with the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, to which Canada is a party. This certainly resolves a lot of those issues, but we're still very much at the beginning of this era of international cooperation. International cooperation comes at a risk, as I think all of us have discovered recently, so international cooperation is an area where we need to focus a little bit more of our efforts in future.

And finally I would say one of the reasons why we don't always succeed is that we have not always examined the assumptions we're prepared to make about human trafficking, what it is, who is involved, who the victims are, what they look like, where they come from, and all those other things.

● (1130)

There is a lot of mythology around this, including mythology about what organized crime is. When we think about organized crime, we think about *The Godfather* or a whole bunch of other stereotypical images, but in practice, organized crime, particularly as it refers to this type of human trafficking and other forms of trafficking, is a very different kind of animal. It looks more like networking; it is very loose associations of different groups across borders. We have to revise our assumptions about what organized crime is like in order to be effective at fighting this kind of organized crime.

Collectively, I would say, we are getting a lot wiser about how to best respond to the problem. Sergeant Lowe earlier talked about the importance of protection. In the federal government a lot of reference has been made to the three p's: prevention, protection, prosecution. Sometimes that could be misleading and sometimes it can help us organize ourselves, but we should never lose sight of the ultimate, paramount importance of protecting victims, because prevention, prosecution, and everything else depends upon how well we protect victims.

We've learned, for instance, that protection of victims must be paramount and must be placed at the centre of the preoccupations of all those responding to the problem. We also know that law enforcement cannot act alone and must reach out to a broad network of victim assistance and other service providers in order to offer that protection to victims.

Many of those agencies are part of civil society. Some of them don't have a long history of working with law enforcement and some of them are distrustful of working with law enforcement; therefore, we are at the stage where a lot of law enforcement agencies need to develop different kinds of networks and relationships with service providers when it comes to this particular group of victims.

I'm happy to say that the RCMP has provided leadership in that respect in Canada. In my region, where I come from in British Columbia, clearly the RCMP has not worked alone. It has brought together all community groups and has made advances in developing cooperation protocols, inter-agency protocols, and so on. That has been useful, but more of it needs to happen. And it's not an RCMP problem; there are a whole lot of other people in Canada who need to be mobilized to do their part in responding to the problem.

I'd like to say a few words, briefly, about Bill C-49. It is very important, and I'm sure you will receive a proper briefing, if necessary, on what Bill C-49 did and how it criminalized human trafficking and introduced other offences. My only regret is that Bill C-49 was not adopted earlier. There is a difference between criminalizing the behaviour as part of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and criminalizing the behaviour as part of the Criminal Code. One of the main differences, of course, is that once it becomes a Criminal Code offence, it entails all kinds of responsibility for municipal police forces and regular law enforcement agencies.

The problem with the previous way of criminalizing it, through the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, was that it put the emphasis on people crossing borders. Of course, that is oftentimes part of the crime, but it creates a reflex of looking for those victims and looking for those crimes at the border. We think it's a border issue and that we need to put more people at the border.

In fact, research everywhere shows us that's the least likely place to identify victims of human trafficking. When they go across borders, most of them are being conned into believing they're being smuggled and that they're going to a brighter future and all of that. In that sense, they almost look like accomplices. They will cooperate with the smugglers and the traffickers, because they don't know yet that they are victims of crime. So the worst place to try to get victims of crime, or to intercept them, is at the border.

Where will you find them? You'll find them in your community, you'll find them in massage parlours, you'll find them on farms—you'll find them in all of those places. Who gets to those places? It is the regular beat police officer, who will bump into those cases more or less by coincidence or by accident. So it's very important that all of the police forces be mobilized to work together and to work with agencies in their own communities to deal with all of this.

● (1135)

So Bill C-49 was a very welcome change and very important legislation. You will probably hear people who think it should have been different, gone further, all of those other things. My own view on this is that it is too early to tell. It's a very good piece of legislation. We should have a look at how it works and what kinds of results it produces, but probably you will hear other witnesses who have different views.

Another very significant thing has happened to address a situation that was very problematic in terms of protecting victims of human trafficking, particularly those coming from other countries. There was no proper mechanism for allowing victims to stay in Canada for a period of time, so the introduction by Citizenship and Immigration Canada of temporary residence permits is another major step in the right direction.

Now there are still issues about how to apply it and when it applies, and there are still ambivalences I think to be conquered in terms of the relationship between people who work with victims and illegal immigrants and others, and law enforcement. I'm sure they'll work it out. This is a sort of new measure, but it's a step in the right direction. The committee probably should ensure that this process is monitored carefully and that we learn about how it's implemented and whether it can be improved in the next several months or years.

I'm not going to say a lot, but you will hear a lot about the difficulty in identifying victims of crime. That is really a very difficult issue always for everyone involved. Victims of crime do not necessarily come forward. They do not necessarily know early in the stage in the process of trafficking that they are victims, so how would they know to report it? Once they know they are being victimized, there are all kinds of reasons why they cannot. They are intimidated. They are victims of violence. They are afraid. They don't trust police officers. Sometimes they come from other countries where police officers are not to be trusted. So there are all kinds of reasons why that happens, and this is why it is so important to focus on that aspect. We have to work together and give ourselves good mechanisms, good means, to encourage victims to come forward and let them know that it is safe for them to do so.

I'm going to conclude here, Madam Chair, by identifying seven areas generally that I think still deserve attention in Canada and where probably your work will lead you to make some recommendations.

One is victim support services. They are currently insufficient in Canada, particularly when it comes to victims of human trafficking, and not everyone understands yet that regular victim services are not always adequate for victims of human trafficking, or victims who come from other countries, or victims of organized crime in general. It's one thing to help someone who was robbed yesterday on the street. It's quite another thing to try to help someone who has been in the clutches of a major dangerous organized crime group.

I'm not saying we need a whole set of new victim services, but we need to assist existing services in developing a capacity to assist those victims. Again, we haven't had that many cases, at least official cases, so most of those agencies are still in a learning mode and most of them would probably be telling you that they don't have sufficient resources to do a good job at this and that they need to train their volunteers, they need to train their staff, and so on. So that's one area.

Another one is support for the role of organizations that work with victims in general.

Another one is that I am not certain that Bill C-49 is being implemented as systematically and as thoroughly as it should be. I'm referring mostly in particular to training of various officials. I'm talking about public information and legal education and so on. There might be more measures that I'm not aware of, but certainly from where I'm sitting, I haven't seen a systematic approach to implementing Bill C-49, and that is required.

I would also say that another major priority is developing local strategies, because that problem is really going to be countered by good cooperation and effective relationships between agencies at the local level. There are some examples of that. I mentioned the example of British Columbia. I know that in Ottawa, also, there are some initiatives, and there are several others. That needs to happen in every community around the country, and that probably needs support, which brings me, of course, to the next part. There is a lack of resources everywhere in terms of putting those measures into place, and they will require support. These things will not happen on their own.

● (1140)

When you're talking about support, assistance, and administration of justice, you're also talking about provincial responsibilities. Therefore, there needs to be good, tight coordination between the federal and provincial governments and a clear road map on how they're going to work together to address this problem.

I have two more points.

International cooperation will require constant attention and more investment on our part in order to succeed. You cannot think of it broadly and try to cooperate with 197 countries, so one will have to be strategic. We do know which countries are more problematic and which ones we need to work with more closely. Therefore, this also will require attention.

On data, I mentioned several times in my comments here that we don't have information. What we need is a strategy to collect information, not just police information, but including police information, so that we all get a better sense of what we're dealing with.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much to both of you.

I think it's very helpful as a base for us to begin our discussions.

We will start our first round of questioning, which is for seven minutes each, starting with the Liberals, Bloc, Conservatives, and the NDP, followed by five minutes after that.

Ms. Minna, go ahead, please.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you both for your presentations. They were very interesting.

Also, I was pleased and disappointed at the same time to hear that Bill C-49 is welcomed but that it may not be getting down to the ground where it needs to be. That is one of the major failings of a lot of our legislation. We can build as much legislation as we can, but at the end of the day, if it's not implemented properly, if it's not really used, then of course the resources aren't applied, and that's a major problem.

One of my first questions was on what your reaction to the legislation itself was and if any changes were needed, but you said it's too early to tell. I was also wondering what we are doing to make it a reality. Obviously, you've given us some good suggestions with respect to that.

You said there's still not enough data, and obviously we have a shortage of research. Is there any research going on at this point that you know of within the RCMP, for instance, or any other institution with respect to the data you know is needed but is not yet available? If not, who do you think should be, at this point, doing that kind of research? Where should the government direct its attention and resources, its funding, to make that happen?

● (1145)

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: The RCMP continually collects information and provides intelligence to members in the field. This is data collection at its finest. Reports are being worked on through our human trafficking national coordination centre's analyst. She's always putting something together, always getting information from the field, and disseminating it.

Regarding research we would like to do, our National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre would like to do a study on trafficking of children, because nothing has been done on that. That's something they're looking into. Also, our National Aboriginal Policing Service would like to do a study on aboriginal women being trapped for massive trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Hon. Maria Minna: I appreciate that you want to do the research. Part of the impediment at this point is the funding, or that resources are missing. I presume the research would involve partnerships with communities across the country and the RCMP would be hooking up with the agencies that Mr. Dandurand mentioned earlier in the various communities across Canada. I presume the research would involve that?

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: It would.

You may recall I also mentioned that part of the problem is that many of those cases do not come to the attention of the police. So even though the work done by the RCMP in collecting information and intelligence is crucial and must continue, there needs to be another component, which is collecting the information that comes to the attention of others—child protection agencies, immigration agencies, immigration lawyers, and all kinds of other people who have the information—but there's no systematic way to collect it.

Other countries have developed hybrid models. For instance, the Netherlands has a special rapporteur, who, at arm's-length, keeps information from both sides. Now, that's important because typically the police cannot share intelligence information freely and make it public, since that would destroy the value of the intelligence. On the other hand, a lot of people working in NGOs and service agencies feel they have to be very careful with the information they have because they don't want to put the victims at risk.

So you need to have a data collection mechanism that provides safety for victims and protects the integrity of the intelligence information collected by the police. I don't think we've made enough progress in Canada. We are wasting time trying to talk about method, and we should get on with it.

Hon. Maria Minna: That's interesting, because what you're saying is that while the RCMP and other law enforcement agencies are doing some research, it needs to be done by a separate body that would bring law enforcement into the mix, but also the communities and all of the other...in order to have proper research.

That goes back to the point you made. The previous government's bill, C-49, while it's good legislation, cannot be as effective without this other arm of knowing where things are at. So that's interesting, because everybody tends to look at the existing institutions as places to start, but it looks like we're looking at something that may be slightly different to do the research and collecting. Okay, that's good.

The other question I had was on the root causes. I know the research hasn't been done, but from what you know at this point, generally, what are the main motivators for trafficking—apart from greed and crime? Obviously I know what the motive of the people who are perpetrating this is, and to some degree I understand that it's economic for the women who come to do exotic dancing or they come to do a job but end up doing something else. Do you know of any way or of any research being done from the economic perspective—the prevention side—that could start chopping off the supply and address the issue of income support and prevention, in partnership with some countries that might be the major source of trafficking? The core issue is what I'm looking at.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: You mentioned greed, and on the other side there are the dreams of people who want to improve: greed and dreams.

Hon. Maria Minna: Yes, they sound the same, but they're not quite the same thing, right?

● (1150)

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: Yes. There's the greed and the sad fact that some people are prepared to do anything for profit. On the other side, there are dreams. Desperate people who want to improve their situation in life are prepared to do anything. Unfortunately, they fall prey and victim to the first category.

Regarding general prevention, obviously anything we can do to assist people—particularly in developing countries where they are most vulnerable—to get access to legitimate opportunities to pursue their dreams in their own country is helpful. So helping development is a major thing.

There's another type of prevention that is a little more targeted, which can also be done with countries where we know we have a lot of trafficking. It's to work with them on explaining to people who have those dreams what the risks are, and to help them understand how they're going to be victimized—help them make sure they do not become the victims of traffickers. But that is very difficult, because if you go to Manila in the Philippines, let's say, you will see long lines of young women and men waiting at an employment agency. Some of those employment agencies are legitimate and some are not. Some will deliver those individuals into the hands of traffickers and others are legitimate agencies. For potential victims, there's no way of knowing.

Again, it's back to international cooperation and working with that country, making sure they regulate, that they do something about overseas employment agencies, and that you work together with them. I'm afraid there is no easy solution to preventing the exploitation of people who live in difficult circumstances in their own country.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move on to our next questioner. The seven minutes is to include questions and answers. I am trying to be flexible, to make sure we have time to get in as many answers as possible.

Ms. Mourani is next.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Madam Chair, I would like to thank you for your presence and for your words.

I appreciated your saying, Mr. Dandurand, that sometimes we waste time on definitions and procedures; this is true. I experience this myself in connection with street gangs. We waste time defining what a gang is and determining whether it involves organized crime. It is a big problem. Our being unable to agree on definitions makes it possible, in a way, for the phenomenon to grow without any evaluation or control from us.

According to the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, 92% of human trafficking victims end up in prostitution. It is estimated that 48% of victims are children.

Do you think that legislation that decriminalized procuring and consequently bawdy houses would only help to liberate an underground, undervalued market? Do you think that would only make it easier for these criminal networks to operate? That is my first question.

My second question is as follows. When a nation—Canada or the Quebec nation—gives out temporary visas for so-called artists who are generally headed for the male entertainment industry, do you think we are opening the door to trafficking? Do you think that this program should be abolished? I feel that this is a sort of somewhat disguised legal trafficking.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: With regard to your first question on procuring and its links to human trafficking, there are various opinions. Generally speaking, I think that the more some of these activities remain clandestine, the easier it is for organized crime to exploit people. I do not think for a moment that the suggestion is being made that procuring should be decriminalized where children are involved. However, where adults are concerned... One thing that helps criminal groups is the fact that prostitution remains clandestine and therefore the people who work in this area do not dare to ask for help because they do not know what kind of response they will get from the authorities, especially when they come from other countries, where there may be a lot of repression. This is a complex question and I cannot avoid it, but I think that the answer lies in part in measures that would make prostitution legal, particularly between consenting adults.

The figures from the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention that you quoted are right, but you probably noticed also that readers of these reports were advised to take into consideration the fact that the reason why this percentage is so high is that these are the types of cases that are being studied.

I said to you earlier in my presentation that our positions on human trafficking often dictate our actions. If we think that human trafficking is practised above all with a view to prostitution or sexual exploitation, we are going to focus our attention on those areas, we are going to assign investigations to the morality squads, and so on. The results will confirm our impression that the aim is mainly sexual exploitation.

If in another country you start paying attention to, say, the exploitation of farm workers, suddenly you will realize that 80% of workers are victims. We have to be careful with these percentages. Nevertheless it is quite clear, as you said, that sexual exploitation, particularly that of women and children, is one of the major dimensions of this problem. It is probably not the only one, but it is a major one.

All we know about organized crime operations is that they take advantage of the fact that we have reduced these activities to clandestine activities in our society. It is difficult for victims to ask for help.

● (1155)

Mrs. Maria Mourani: If I understand what you are saying, the clandestine nature of activities helps to reinforce and promote the expansion of organized crime and, if we legalized procuring or bawdy houses, organized crime could no longer operate in this area. Is that right?

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: No, that is not what I was saying.

here there are also problems of human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation. The problem is posed there a bit differently. In Austria, there is regulated and legalized prostitution, along with clandestine prostitution. It is easier for victims to disentangle themselves from their difficulties when they know that being involved in prostitution will not necessarily be regarded as a criminal activity.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Mourani, you have ten seconds left.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: With regard to visas, should we get ride of that infamous artist's visa program for the male industry?

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: I thought that program was abolished. That program created a lot of problems. I am told there really is not any reason to keep such a program.

[*English*]

The Chair: Not that I'm aware of.

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): I want to especially thank Sergeant Lowe and Mr. Dandurand for coming today.

I agree with Ms. Mourani that this kind of program needs to be shut down. Our side of the House is endeavouring to do exactly that.

We've talked a lot about international cooperation. Some of the insightful comments that you both brought forward have been extremely useful. I would like to ask Sergeant Lowe a specific question. A lady coming to our committee has been working in a modelling agency for a long time. There are numerous stories. These are Caucasian Canadian women who have been trafficked to other countries. It's done in a unique way and she will describe it. Modelling agencies have big events in which the girls pay $500 to show everybody how beautiful they are. They think they're being launched on an exciting career, and then it becomes something else.

You said something about needing resource materials, like the video that the RCMP have out right now. I've seen this video, and I commend the RCMP for putting it together. It's so helpful and so tastefully done. The resources for getting other videos out to community centres and other such places need to be made available quickly.

With respect to these girls in modelling agencies, could you comment on the structure that is used, where these innocent girls suddenly find themselves in other countries, their documents are taken away, and they are forced to do things just to survive? We have one such girl that I'm hoping will come to committee to share her experience with us. Time will tell whether she'll be brave enough to do this during the committee hearings we have before Christmas.

Can you tell me what would be most useful for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in terms of their programming and the objectives discussed this morning? You've talked about expanding your way of doing things to non-governmental organizations and community centres.

We've recently put 1,000 new RCMP officers on Canadians streets. But we have a big problem here. As you've both so eloquently put it, people are only now becoming aware of what's going on. It's been a little secret society. Had I not been the mother of a police officer, had I not been the justice critic for Manitoba at one time, I would never have known about it.

I think it behooves all of us to join in this tremendous fight. I would ask the two of you, beginning with Sergeant Lowe, to give us some insight into this matter.

● (1200)

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: You're asking what we would like in order to do more.

What we've been able to do so far, we've done with existing financial and physical resources. We've been able to do quite a bit, but there's so much more we can do.

In British Columbia, there are two police officers who are going around the whole province giving presentations. They're having to turn people down, saying they're sorry, but they're so booked right now that they need extra people to get this done. They're showing the video and they're handing out the posters and the contact cards we've distributed. They're handing out their own cards. People say we need more people. You're hearing it from the public. You're hearing it from the other law enforcement agencies.

They're speaking, specifically now, with law enforcement—with RCMP detachments across the province and with other municipal police forces.

They address NGOs, also, in large groups. What the officers tell the NGOs is to get a large group and they will be happy to present to them. They can combine a whole bunch together. That's what they've been able to do, and it's been very successful there.

We need resources to provide awareness all over the country. We have six immigration and passport sections across Canada. There are not even six officers who we've been able to dedicate to this. In British Columbia we have one dedicated to it. The other one is helping out at this time.

We need resources in each of the I and P sections to do this awareness training. We need officers to go out and investigate, to go out and actively seek victims, and once they find them, to provide protection for them.

We need people to do research, especially in the northern communities and the prairies. We need to go to the reserves to talk to the aboriginals there, to talk to the NGOs there, and to talk to law enforcement agencies there. We don't have the resources to do that now, and we desperately need them.

Those are our biggest needs right now.

● (1205)

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: I would just add to this that the RCMP, as I said, has provided very strong and effective leadership in the police community in Canada. They had a head start because they were responsible for part of the enforcement of the offence under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The other police forces are just coming online, because before this, it wasn't their responsibility. With Bill C-49, they all have to do something. Many of them, I would say, are probably still asleep. They still probably don't know exactly what it means for them.

Sergeant Lowe mentioned British Columbia. The RCMP, itself, has gone to the municipal police forces and provided information and so on. I believe that the RCMP, and the national centre in particular, is crucial, but I would like you to also remember that there are a lot of other law enforcement agencies and other groups that need to be brought on board. It's not just a problem for the national police force. Others need to be mobilized.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I understand that.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: That's what I meant by the implementation of the act. Who is out there telling municipal police forces about this new legislation and what it means to them and that kind of thing?

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Do I have a few more minutes?

The Chair: Your time is up already, and a little bit more. We'll try to see if we can keep these rounds going so you get another opportunity.

Ms. Mathyssen.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a number of questions. One of them pertains to something you said with regard to the need for support within civil society for the victims of trafficking. I wanted to look at it in two ways.

First, for the women who are trafficked into the country, I know there are some measures in place. This spring the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration announced new measures to help those victims: 120 days for recovery and counselling and medical support. I'm thinking beyond that. I'm thinking to the reality of those women being victimized and brought into the country. I'm wondering, if we had lived up to our international obligations in regard to foreign assistance, the kinds of commitments that we've made year after year and not lived up to, would that have prevented some of this trafficking of women into the country?

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: I think it would have if we had been successful. It's a tall order for Canadians to try to abolish poverty around the planet on our own. We should do more, and what we're doing is already important. But we should do more to do this. If we want to take measures to prevent human trafficking, in particular, we need to be a little more targeted in our interventions and work closely with authorities in other countries.

I gave the example earlier of recruitment agencies, travel agencies. There are all kinds of other people we could regulate, work with, to make sure they don't provide opportunities for criminals to exploit unsuspecting individuals.

I would say that more targeted interventions and cooperation with other countries would probably be more effective in the short term.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Okay, thank you.

I'm thinking, too, about women here in Canada. As was pointed out, there are women who are innocently duped into entering a career they think is going to be positive, only to find out it's not. In that regard, I'm thinking in terms of the kinds of social programs we need to have in place. You made reference to victim support services, but if we had better social programs in terms of dealing with poverty among women and really looked at the importance of economic security among women, would that go a long way towards addressing this trap that women find themselves in—the poverty trap that leads them into exploitive life situations?

● (1210)

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: I think it most definitely would. The biggest problem is that the women need money, and they're going to do what they can to get it. Being self-sufficient, getting job training, getting extra schooling, or anything like that would be beneficial, just to get them on their feet and proud of themselves for what they're doing.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you.

There's been a great deal of discussion about Status of Women Canada and the role that agency plays in terms of the lives, the quality of life, and the hope of improving quality of life for women in Canada.

As an agency, a committee of government, do they have a clear role to play, from your perspective, in addressing this?

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: We mentioned earlier the need for research. Certainly some of the early research in Canada was commissioned and supported by Status of Women Canada. Someone needs to provide leadership at the national level, so there needs to be a focal point, and that focal point cannot be just a law enforcement focal point. There needs to be a law enforcement focal point, but there also needs to be a broader focal point—someone who will provide the leadership, both in terms of federal-provincial discussions and also in terms of mobilizing NGOs and others in civil society to see that the problem is understood and that we develop a common understanding of what we can do together.

I don't have a view on whether it should be Status of Women Canada, but there needs to be a focal point, and for the longest time part of that focal point was Status of Women Canada.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Okay, so there needs to be that leadership to bring all these pieces together.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: You still have two minutes and thirteen seconds left.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Well, I did have a rather long question, and it had to do with the victims of trafficking.

I know the RCMP's policy is to reach out to help them and to make every effort, but I wondered, because the notes indicate that some of these women are returned to their own countries.... What happens to them once they've been deported, once they've been returned home? Do we have any way of finding out? Do they simply end up in the same situation again, or is there some kind of support?

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: In an RCMP investigation, a woman is returned home because she wanted to be returned home. That's the reason. If we were doing an investigation, we need her here as a witness, so we wouldn't just decide we're going to send her back or deport her. As I said, she'd go back because she wanted to go back.

Before she was sent back, we would ensure that our international liaison officer in that area was aware of it. He would either greet her at the airport or have the law enforcement of the country greet her at the airport, and they would contact the local authorities there ahead of time to ensure that this person would not be retrafficked and would not be prosecuted for what she did in Canada.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you. I assume a certain level of protection would be offered once they returned home, in the event that the perpetrators were less than enthralled with the actions of these women in coming forward.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: There's a whole range of responses. What Sergeant Lowe has described as RCMP policy is very important. It's costly and difficult to achieve, because it relies on having good relationships with other countries. That is because the protection in another country is not going to be offered by the RCMP; it's going to be offered locally. If you look at the rest of the planet, there's a whole range. There are documented cases of victims returning to Myanmar who were given cyanide at the border because they had contracted HIV/AIDS. There are victims returning to Canada from other countries who receive all kinds of assistance and help and protection.

So there's a whole range of things, but repatriation is a very sensitive part of our response. It's a difficult one. It's one that only works with good cooperation with other countries, and in many countries there are no services available, so you can have all the agreements you want with that country.... Basically, people have to rely on the little there is when they go back, in terms of medical services or in terms of whatever other services are available. It's a complicated issue, again.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Could I take a moment to acknowledge the two visiting intern students from the Ukraine who are with us this morning? Nick Pekh and Julie Bura are somewhere in the room this morning, if they could stand for one second.

Welcome. We hope you had an interesting learning experience.

For the record, I would correct Ms. Mourani's comment about there being a program for entertainers and artists. A temporary resident permit is issued at the discretion of the minister or at the discretion of the department on humanitarian, compassionate, or exceptional grounds, or there has to be some rationale behind it. But it is not a program that issues permits under that category. I only want to make sure we are clarified for the blues on that.

We'll now enter into a five-minute round of questions and answers.

Ms. Stronach.

● (1215)

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for your presentation to us this morning.

You've talked a lot about the need for better coordination and better international cooperation. What about as it relates to Canada? Is there better coordination among the various levels of government? Perhaps you can talk a little about what we can do here at home to make progress in this area.

I have a few questions, but that's my first one.

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: We have the federal interdepartmental working group on trafficking and persons that coordinates federal efforts. Province by province, they're developing regional committees to bring NGOs together with law enforcement and other provincial agencies.

Those are the biggest steps that we're taking right now to make sure things are coordinated.

Hon. Belinda Stronach: Okay. I represent a community within the York region. We've had some discussion on this topic with our local police, and we've found that in the southern end of the region, with the body rub houses, they've made it a priority to deal with that issue.

We've also asked about the resources that are available for the victims. We've had a hard time finding any resources that are available for those victims, and the police don't offer much in support of the victims. Is there a comment you can make?

I know you've already talked a lot about the need to support victims, but perhaps you can talk a little bit about that.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: I would make two quick comments in response to your question.

One is that you'd be hard pressed to find an organization trying to work with victims of human trafficking or helping them come forward that does not have serious resource issues. Of course, all of those organizations are constantly looking for resources, but right now it's at a very critical stage.

In the few cases that have come forward, special measures have had to be put together, either by the RCMP or others, to deal with the immediate needs, but that's not sustainable. At one point there needs to be a network of services available for rapid response.

Luckily, we haven't had any major cases involving numerous victims recently, but it can happen. We can have another container full of victims or you can have a dozen children showing up one day at the border or somewhere. All of a sudden, we require a special effort to be made, and we're not there, and the services are not there.

On the cooperation issue, I think the experience in which I had an opportunity to participate in British Columbia shows that it's not only agreeing to work together. It's very complex and it's very delicate. There are all kinds of things to be looked at, such as privacy, security of victims, and so on.

It calls for very detailed agreements, protocol, and inter-agency protocol. Certainly, in British Columbia, it took them at least a year to come to a common understanding of who was going to do what, at what time, with whose cooperation, and so on. Of course, in order to develop those agreements, you need commitment and you need resources. Resources are a major issue.

We haven't had large cases, but we should be prepared for that, because it is a pattern. Oftentimes, when you find one victim, you find ten, fifteen, or twenty. It's a pattern. No criminal organization deals in one victim. If there is one victim, there are others. The question is, where do you find the others? Then all of a sudden you have an immediate need for a lot of services for a group of victims.

Hon. Belinda Stronach: Thank you.

The Chair: You have one minute left, Ms. Stronach.

Hon. Belinda Stronach: My other question would be this. Are there any figures on the number of women abroad who are victims of trafficking and have been returned to their countries of origin? Do we have any statistics available on that?

● (1220)

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: No, we don't.

We haven't mentioned this, but in many countries they have a problem with revictimization. Unfortunately, many victims are victims more than once. After repatriation they're not protected, so they're basically exploited again. There's actually the fear sometimes that if you're too effective in returning victims, you're just creating new business for the criminal organization. You keep sending back the person they can sell once, twice, three times.

I don't want to sound alarmist, but there are cases, documented cases, where that has happened.

Hon. Belinda Stronach: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to our witnesses.

I have two questions and only five minutes, so I'll try to capsulize as best I can.

Briefly, can you give me a profile of the victims of these crimes? From where in the world are they coming, generally? Is it other countries, or parts of Canada here? And are these victims coming from abject poverty or from mainstream society, falling into a trap of this type?

Could you speak to that, Sergeant Lowe?

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: Sure. I can provide you with some of the countries of victims that we're dealing with now, or have dealt with in the past, and perhaps Mr. Dandurand can speak more to the profile.

The places are Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Korea, Africa, and eastern Europe. In the cases I'm familiar with, young women who come over here believing they're going to be doing such jobs as waitressing are really put into the sex industry. They have no idea until they get over here what they're up for. They have no idea. Once they get into it, they can't believe it. They can't escape.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: So they're not necessarily coming from economically deprived conditions. They might just see this as a way to broaden their careers, or see it as the excitement of going to and working in another country. Would that be correct?

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: In most of the cases that I'm familiar with, these are women who are coming to work because they need the money for themselves and for their families. So for a lot of these girls, they want to leave, but if they do, their families will suffer for it.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: It's employment.

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: Definitely.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: All of that is true, but it's true because this is where we look.

There is also the victim of trafficking who comes because they think they're going to get an education. They're coming here, they think, to go to college, and the next thing they know, they're being exploited, sexually or otherwise.

There is the victim who is fairly wealthy and who wants to become a supermodel, and who thinks this is the opportunity of a lifetime. Who doesn't want to become a supermodel?

There is the victim of trafficking who wants to be a superstar musician. They're offered the chance to come and work at a nightclub as a musician. They think this is their chance to make the American market. The next thing they know, they're working on the floor, not on the stage.

All of those things happen. There are patterns here. But the problem with patterns is that they're patterns of the cases we know. Even in the early stages of research on human trafficking, most researchers were focusing on establishing the routes. You must have seen those maps; everyone has them. They're maps of the world with arrows going in every direction.

The problem is that these are the directions from last year, or two years ago, or three years ago. These are the cases we know. If we say this year it's Korea, guess what? The guys will move from Myanmar. If we say it's Jamaica, the next thing you know it will be Honduras. If we say it's Honduras, it will be somewhere else.

Why is this? Because the criminals out there are organized, by definition, and one of their main objectives is to avoid detection. They take a lot of care to try to see what law enforcement is doing. Where are they looking this week? Through which airport is it easier to enter?

So it's all of those things; it's not a static phenomenon. Although it is important to try to get a profile of the victims we deal with now, we cannot be lulled into thinking that it's going to stay that way. It changes constantly.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: I don't want to cut you off, but I have only a minute left.

With regard to Bill C-49, have there been any prosecutions on this so far?

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: No prosecutions yet, no.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Okay.

You alluded to the fact that there are some major hurdles there in terms of spooling up law enforcement. Are there any initiatives in place right now that you can tell me about that are helping law enforcement agencies to be better aware of their obligations under Bill C-49?

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: We are working with the Department of Justice to do training with law enforcement officers. We've started in Ottawa, and we'll be going out across Canada.

● (1225)

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you.

The Chair: You have 55 seconds left.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Really? I'm doing better than I thought.

Finally, what would be your best advice to this committee about what we can do as we move towards preparation of a comprehensive report on this topic? From your point of view, what would be the very best outcome from this process over the next few months? What can this committee do to advance this issue for the benefit of our society and particularly for victims?

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: Continue to support the efforts of federal government agencies and continue to keep it high profile. Traffickers know when we're working on something; they're a step ahead of us. If we keep it high profile, that might make them more leery about getting involved in what they do. It's a long shot, but it's something to work towards.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: I concur. I would add that you deal with the issue of resources and coordination with the provinces. So much of that is principally the responsibility of provinces: administration of justice, social services, child protection. You need to work closely with them. That is probably the priority, in addition to what was suggested.

The Chair: Okay.

The Bloc, Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Dandurand, a little earlier, you said that in countries where prostitution is legal, a parallel market has developed all the same. So legalization does not provide all the answers.

Furthermore, I read that the average entry age in the world of prostitution is 14. Do you have the same data? I also read somewhere that the trafficking route is actually the slave route, like in the days of the black slave trade.

In conclusion, do you think that the municipalities should stop granting permits to escort agencies? With regard to the infamous temporary visa programs for artists and domestic workers, do you think that these programs amount to loopholes in our immigration system? Whether the visas are granted by the minister or not does not really matter, they exist. You will correct me if that is not so. Do you think that these are loopholes in our system?

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: You are raising several very complex questions. I think that the data you are quoting about the average age at which people go into prostitution are probably right. This is so, not only in Canada, but also elsewhere. It seems that the age is going down each year; they are being recruited at younger and younger ages. I think we have to put those questions aside. If we talk about children, there is no question of legalizing prostitution or approving or having temporary immigration permits. In any case, this is not the way to go. So we must beware of that.

Whether the victims of this type of exploitation are also victims of human trafficking or not is not really an important question. There are many ways of exploiting people, including children and women. Human trafficking is only one of the ways. Obviously we have to take other measures to protect people who are victims of various forms of exploitation, even if they are not victims of human trafficking.

That is why some stakeholders are going to tell you that we have to start by dealing with the question of prostitution, etc. We have to take care of all these questions. If we begin to mix them all up and make a single problem of them, that will complicate things instead of helping us to develop practical strategies. A certain number of measures should be taken with a view to protecting Canadian women and children from sexual exploitation. Actually that has nothing to do with human trafficking. Other measures have to be taken to deal with human trafficking. You referred to programs or practices. Perhaps it would be fairer to talk about practices rather than programs. Such practices exist for other reasons, often praiseworthy and legitimate ones.

Sometimes these programs are diverted from their initial objectives by organized crime. It is very difficult not to create programs that are not at some point completely diverted by organized crime. You will often be told, for example, that everything that can be done to make life easier for victims—including temporary residence permits—can be used by organized crime gangs. Someone who belongs to a group of traffickers can tell the victims that, since Canada is a tolerant country that respects human rights, they just have to give him $10,000 and he will organize their entry into Canada. As soon as they get here, still according to the trafficker, all they have to do is declare themselves victims to get a temporary residence permit and have access to medical services, etc. All the measures taken to protect victims can be used against them by members of organized crime.

But that should not prevent us from adopting measures to protect victims. We should know that every time we make a move, as Sergeant Lowe said, organized crime does not remain passive; it finds ways of countering our measures or undoing what we are trying to achieve.

● (1230)

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I was told that when...

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Mourani, I'm sorry but you have five seconds left.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I was told that, when victims were detected, they were deported. Do you not think that we should grant such people permanent residence instead?

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: I think that is something to be considered. First of all, creating the possibility of offering them temporary residence for a few months is already a step in the right direction. A mechanism has to be found to enable us to know whether such people are actually victims or not. If we open the doors wide and say that anyone who declares herself a victim is welcome in Canada, there will be a flood of people wanting to immigrate illegally to Canada who will declare themselves victims. We have to be careful because it could actually work against victims.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Mathyssen, go ahead, please.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you.

I had a question. It pertains more to the ICCLR. I'm very interested in the work you do. You began in 1991, and that was through the initiative of the Canadian government. You're non-profit. How is your agency supported? Is it supported by the government?

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: I don't know all of the details of the support. I'm a senior associate. I do not manage the centre, but I do know that there's still support available to the centre through, I believe, the Department of Justice Canada.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Okay.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: I don't know the extent to which it is supported. It also receives support from the Government of British Columbia, although not to the same extent.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: I noticed that you do research and policy analysis, disseminate information, and implement technical assistance programs. How important is your ability to disseminate information in ensuring that issues like human trafficking are truly addressed?

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: Our value is that we help other agencies and groups in Canada bridge and make relationships with people in other countries. Our ability to work in different countries, participate in policy development processes at the international level, conduct research, and so on, makes the centre a resource for others.

We have, for instance, worked with the national coordination centre. We have worked with people in British Columbia to support it, and brought to them whatever information and resources we were able to gather from elsewhere. In that sense it is an important resource, and, without modesty, I think it adds to our ability in Canada to fight the problem.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: If that funding were cut off there would be serious negative ramifications. I'm thinking about all of the agencies across the country, all of the groups that make sure organizations have the capacity and the information to do their work, and how very important that is in creating the full picture.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: Yes, funding is essential for organizations like this centre, and for all of the other organizations that work in that area. Keep in mind that with transnational issues you're talking about moving across borders, travelling, and all of those other things, and none of that is cheap. I know sometimes it might look exorbitant, but just to deal with one case you might have to go to another country several times—either the law enforcement agencies, or whatever.

Very well-developed victim services agencies very seldom have an opportunity to work with agencies in other countries. They look after the needs of victims here and that's the end of it. But when you talk about trafficking in human beings, all of a sudden the victim service agency here has to connect with the victim service agency in Manila, or somewhere else, in order to make sure the needs of the victims are looked after and the person is prepared for her or his return. These are new things that were not done, are not funded currently, and create great need.

● (1235)

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: The more support services there are on the ground, the more effectively we do our collective jobs, whether it be equality for women, economic security for women, or preventing the trafficking of women.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: There's one more important reason. If we want to counter their problem, prosecute, and go after that form of organized crime, victims have to come forward. They have to cooperate with law enforcement and do all of those other things. Unless you protect them and help them, there is no way they're going to be able to do that.

Of course, you should help victims because they need help. We're kind and considerate and we care about them, but even from a point of view of controlling the crime problem, you have to work with victims, because otherwise you don't have a case. You cannot do a whole lot without their cooperation, and they will not cooperate unless they're protected and assisted. All of that is put together. That's why I said when we talk about protection, prevention, and prosecution, it makes some intellectual sense, but in practice you have to do all three or you have nothing.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you. I appreciate that very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Grewal.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for your time and your presentations.

Is there a connection between human trafficking, organized crime, and prostitution?

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: Absolutely. But there is also a link between that and the entertainment industry, and between that and the berry industry where I come from. There are many links, but that is the crucial one, as was pointed out earlier. The data we currently have, however faulty, seems to indicate that is one of the principal forms of exploitation that leads to human trafficking.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Do RCMP officers and investigators get training in human trafficking?

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: They are getting training. We have an immigration and passport investigators course that we put on across the country twice a year. They get a full day of trafficking training there. We are working with the RCMP academy in Regina, where the cadets are, to get human trafficking on their agenda.

There is a lengthy period of time when they study the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, and we have added human trafficking into that with a scenario, and different IRPA offences like smuggling. We're also talking with different police colleges across the country about working with their cadets. We are providing training to other law enforcement officers across the country.

The Chair: Ms. Guergis.

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): It has been suggested around this table many times that some of the root causes for inequities between men and women, criminal behaviour, and even human trafficking are based on economics. I'm wondering if you would agree with that blanket statement.

With my experience, volunteer work, and training, I know that it's not based entirely on economics. It's based sometimes on a way of thinking and talking about organized crime, as you have already mentioned.

Could you give us a little more on this?

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: We're looking at some countries where women aren't allowed to work. If they go to another country, they can work, but they can't work at home. So they get hooked up with a recruiter and leave their home to work in another country and become self-sufficient. That's what they think they're doing, but it's not what happens. That's where the deceit lies.

Mr. Yvon Dandurand: People who are vulnerable for economic reasons can be exploited, but people are vulnerable in many other ways. Sometimes they're vulnerable because they're not very bright. Sometimes they're vulnerable because they're overly ambitious. There are all kinds of reasons why people are vulnerable or make themselves vulnerable.

People who are economically vulnerable, who don't have access to opportunities, are ideal prey for human traffickers. But they're not the only prey.

● (1240)

Ms. Helena Guergis: I would agree, especially in light of the work we're doing in Afghanistan, where the women are now able to leave the house. Their bones were breaking at one point when they weren't even allowed outside the door. So it's becoming apparent to them that there are many other opportunities out there, that the old way of thinking, what they've always been taught, is not the only option.

The Chair: There is one minute and eleven seconds left.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I have to reiterate an insightful comment that one of you made about the fact that there are some young women who want to be stars. They come from good families, but their ambitions are very strong. They see the modelling agencies, or the opportunity to go to Milan, as a way of becoming a star. Then, suddenly, they're not a star; they're trafficking victims and their whole lives are changed.

Would you agree?

Det Sgt Lori Lowe: I would totally agree.

The Chair: I want to take this opportunity to thank you both very much for this information. You've given us a sound basis for the important work we're going to do in the committee.

I will suspend our meeting for a moment while you leave and we prepare for our next meeting.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

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

Mrs. Mathyssen.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: I want to raise something that concerns me profoundly. We've just heard how important it is for organizations to have the support of government to do the capacity building, the research, and the polling necessary to carry out their mandate. It's come to my attention that the mandate for Status of Women Canada has just been posted on the web. I'm concerned about the lack of support for things like capacity building, research, and polling, the very things that we've just heard are essential to serious work.

The minister is coming on Thursday, and I would respectfully ask that a discussion about the new mandate occur, so that we can understand exactly what Status of Women will be funding in support of those organizations whose remarkable work in the community helps to ensure equality for women.

The Chair: I want to bring it to your attention that we have the minister from eleven o'clock until noon. She is here only for one hour. As I said earlier, we have requested a second date. The minister has said she will try, but she cannot come before the end of November, given the fact that she will have to deal with main estimates and responses to government reports 1 to 3. If I could, I suggest that we be very focused on the issues that we want to have the minister directly address.

The departmental officials will stay for the second hour so that we can get comments as far as the vision, the mandate, and so on are concerned. So if we could be as succinct as possible with our questions on Thursday, I think we would be more successful in trying to be sure we know what the mandate is and where we're going, coming from the minister herself, but the senior officials will remain.

You will have received a study on the main estimates in your offices by now and several votes that are referring to Canadian Heritage vote 110 and vote 115 on interim supply. If you could look those things over prior to Thursday's meeting and formulate the questions quite specifically, it would be helpful. As well, a report on plans and priorities should be on your desk when you go back. So if you could, please look at those issues.

If anybody wants them, I have eight or nine copies of a “pension tension” forum going on this morning, which I went to from ten to eleven. I did bring some copies for the committee. This is unofficial stuff.

You should have received all of those documents by email. If you could, just make sure you have them in your offices. If you don't, please call the clerk right away and we'll deal with that.

Ms. Smith.

● (1245)

Mrs. Joy Smith: I must say that I just spoke with the minister a couple of days ago and she is looking forward to being here. She's very excited about sharing some information with the committee and with the public on these issues, so please have your questions ready.

The Chair: We look forward to her attendance.

Are there any further comments?

Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: I have a question, Madam Chair.

You mentioned the two votes. Go over that again. That was rather quick. Did you say there will be materials in the package we're receiving?

The Chair: Yes, there will be a Canadian Heritage vote 110 and vote 115 on interim supply. That information has been transmitted.

If we don't vote on these things at committee, they're deemed adopted when they hit the House in November. If we have any questions or concerns about them, we need to try to get the answers either from the minister or the officials, who will also be here for the following hour.

If there's nothing further, I move adjournment.

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