**LETTER TO THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY**

**15 June 2023**

**Submitted by: The Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking**

***Who are We?***

The Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking (“OCEHT” or “The Coalition”) works to meet the acute, immediate, and long-term resources and support needs of persons impacted by human trafficking, including those who have exited a trafficking situation, their families, and communities, as well as persons who may be at risk of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and/or organ removal/harvest.

The OCEHT also provides training to volunteers and service providers to assist and educate them to identify signs of trafficking and to know how to respond appropriately. We are a community-based network made up of various local organizations, service providers and community members from a wide range of diverse backgrounds, both educational and occupational. Our approach to human trafficking is a preventative one.

We are committed to creating and sustaining a continuum among organizations, service providers, community members and volunteers that provides a uniform, timely and appropriate response to those who seek access to supports, services and resources because they have been affected by human trafficking, irrespective of their age, gender, religion, sexual orientation and ethno-cultural background. Irrespective of the avenue through which a person seeks assistance, our commitment is to work together within and outside our network to ensure that the response is equally appropriate and effective.

**Human Trafficking in Canada**

Human Trafficking in Canada is a growing issue that requires collaboration, research, education, awareness, increased action and resources if we are to eradicate human trafficking in all of its forms. The Coalition acknowledges that the term “human trafficking” refers to sexual, labour and organ trafficking, as well as domestic servitude and serfdom.

The Coalition seeks to highlight the prevalence of human trafficking in Canada using the alarming statistics below:

* 51% of girls trafficked in Canada in 2019-2020 had been or were currently in the child welfare system. 50% of trafficked girls were Indigenous, while 50% of trafficked women were Indigenous - yet Indigenous women and girls make up 3% of the Canadian population. [[1]](#footnote-0)
* 96% of victims of human trafficking were women and girls.[[2]](#footnote-1)
* 65% of police reported human trafficking incidences between 2010-2020 were reported in Ontario.[[3]](#footnote-2)
* From 2011 to 2021, police reported over 3,500 incidents of human trafficking in Canada.[[4]](#footnote-3)
* From 2010/2011 to 2020/2021, the median amount of time to complete a human trafficking case was 382 days. This was more than twice as long as sex trade cases (147 days) and other violent offence cases (181 days).[[5]](#footnote-4)
* The most common type of trafficking identified by The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking in 2019-20 was sex trafficking (71%), followed by labour trafficking (7%).[[6]](#footnote-5)
* Police-reported incidents of human trafficking show that 24% of victims are girls under the age of 18, and 45% are women aged 18-24.[[7]](#footnote-6)
* Approximately 75,000 people living in Canada are transgender or gender diverse, representing 0.24% of the Canadian population aged 15 and older.[[8]](#footnote-7)
* According to a report by the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, from 2019-2020, 2% of victims/survivors were transgender women and men, and gender nonconforming individuals, a rate that significantly exceeds their relative share of the population (0.24%).[[9]](#footnote-8)

**Human Trafficking and Human Rights**

The Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking asserts that the crime of Human Trafficking is a grievous violation of an individual’s human rights and dignity. Particularly, the Coalition draws attention to the following rights listed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):

* **Article 3:** Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
* **Article 4:** No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.
* **Article 5:** No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
* **Article 7:** All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.
* **Article 2:** Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.
* **Article 23: (1)** Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment; and **(2)** Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
* **Article 25:** Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Particularly, The Coalition highlights the words of Kara Napalitano, who said: *“Violations of human rights are both a cause and a consequence of trafficking in persons, making the promotion and protection of human rights particularly relevant to the fight against it.”*

**Recommendations for Change**

Considering the above, The Coalition makes the following recommendations:

* The Coalition recommends that the Special Rapporteur work with all levels of Government in Canada to review the age of consent. Particularly, the Coalition recommends that the age of consent for sex, which is currently 16 in Canada, be raised to align with the age of purchasing alcohol, cigarettes etc, which is currently between 18-19 years old in Canada.

* The Coalition recommends trauma-informed and survivor-centered approaches to all work in this area.
* The Coalition recommends a review of the 94 Calls to Action that are not being addressed for MMIWG2S+. - There is a direct link between human trafficking and indigenous women/girls. MMIWG2S+ are disproportionately affected by human trafficking. While the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided calls to action for Canada, the Coalition feels that more can be done to address the crime of human trafficking against Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada.
* The Coalition recommends cross-sectoral human trafficking prevention education for all those who work in the hospitality, transportation, food service, financial, healthcare, law enforcement, criminal justice system, child and family services, and all other industries where an individual may work in close proximity, knowingly or unknowingly, with a victim or survivor of human trafficking.
* The Coalition recommends increased research and subsequent policy that looks to remove burdens for survivors of human trafficking who choose to pursue legal action against their trafficker(s).
* The Coalition recommends policy and/or legislation that provides criminal record expungement for survivors of human trafficking who were criminally charged as a direct result of their lived experience.
* The Coalition recommends increased research on human trafficking in rural areas across Canada and additional resources/funding for rural communities where human trafficking is suspected to be or is happening.
* The Coalition recommends increased resources and support for those who are reintegrating into society after being trafficked. The Coalition recognizes that this may also require additional funding from all levels of Government for service providers.
* The Coalition recommends increased resources, funding and intersectional education for support workers and service providers from all sectors who may, knowingly or unknowingly, encounter members of the BIPOC community who are victims/survivors of human trafficking.
* The Coalition recommends that the Federal and Provincial governments across Canada work together to appoint a committee for the National Survivor Advisory Committee. The Coalition recognizes that this committee was established in 2019 but has yet to have members appointed to it.
* The Coalition recommends increased research and action on human trafficking within the Child Welfare System in Canada. The Coalition recommends that this research be intersectional in approach, with special attention to the needs, vulnerabilities and circumstances of youth in the child welfare system. Further, The Coalition recommends that particular research be conducted on the policies and procedures for support workers in the Child Welfare System to ensure that they have the tools to ensure the safety of our children and youth who are at risk of or currently being exploited.
* The Coalition recommends increased Federal Funding for Children in the Child Welfare System to access recreational activities including summer camps.
* The Coalition recommends increased research on the direct links between homelessness and human trafficking in Canada.
* The Coalition recommends increased funding and efforts for programming geared towards gender diverse populations, who are disproportionately affected by human trafficking.

We thank the Special Rapporteur for their attention to the issue of Human Trafficking in Canada and for the inclusion of our submission.

1. The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking’s report, Human Trafficking Trends in Canada, 2019-2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Conroy, S. ((2022, December 6). *Trafficking in Persons in Canada, 2021.* Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Conroy, S. ((2022, December 6). *Trafficking in Persons in Canada, 2021.* Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Conroy, S. ((2022, December 6). *Trafficking in Persons in Canada, 2021.* Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Conroy, S. ((2022, December 6). *Trafficking in Persons in Canada, 2021.* Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Conroy, S. ((2022, December 6). *Trafficking in Persons in Canada, 2021.* Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Conroy, S. ((2022, December 6). *Trafficking in Persons in Canada, 2021.* Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Women and Gender Equality Canada (2022, February 7). *What is gender-based violence?* https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-violence/about-gender-based-violence.html#trans [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. Froutan, A. (2022, September 26). *Human Trafficking Trends in Canada (2019-2020)*. The Canadian Centre To End Human Trafficking. https://www.canadiancentretoendhumantrafficking.ca/human-trafficking-trends-in-canada-2019-2020/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)