



Special Committee To Prevent The Abuse And Exploitation Of Children Through the Sex Trade

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**SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO PREVENT THE ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION
OF CHILDREN THROUGH THE SEX TRADE
2000**

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Kevin Yates
Regina Dewdney

November 6, 2000

The committee met at 1:30 p.m.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — To the committee members, I'd like to introduce to you this afternoon a friend that I have spoken with and talked with. This wonderful young woman's name is Nona Birdsall, and Nona is from a community not just too far from Humboldt. And she's here to tell you her story about being involved in the sex trade but she's also . . . She'll be starting at a point where she feels comfortable starting in regards to her whole life story.

And Nona has so generously and thoughtfully put together, for all committee members, a compilation of poems that she has written. And I think one of your friends has a poem in here. I'm not too sure if she did submit it, but these poems are reflective of the feelings of someone that has been through what Nona has been through. And she will distribute them to you a little bit later on.

So welcome. We're very happy to have you here with us, Nona, and I must say that we all consider you very courageous and we just want to give you all the pats on the back that you deserve for coming forward because we need to be more informed. And we're just going to ask you to start wherever you will, Nona, and present to the committee your story, as you're comfortable with it.

Ms. Birdsall: — Okay. Well what I thought I'd do was read you a couple, just a couple of poems and then explain them to you and then explain my life and the situation and everything that's gone on.

Sorry, do you want me to talk louder . . . (inaudible interjection)
. . . Okay.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — . . . introduce ourselves. We've met. I'm Peter Prebble, the MLA for Saskatoon Greystone. I co-chair our committee with Arlene. Maybe I'll let everyone introduce themselves. Why don't you go next, Randy?

Mr. Pritchard: — Hi, Nona. I'm Randy Pritchard. I'm the technical adviser to the committee, one of the staff.

Mr. Yates: — I'm Kevin Yates, the MLA for Regina Dewdney.

Ms. Jones: — I'm Carolyn Jones, the MLA for Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Harper: — I'm Ron Harper, MLA Regina Northeast.

Ms. Draude: — I'm June Draude. I'm the MLA from Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Woods: — I'm Margaret Woods, the Clerk to the committee.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And we also have with us, Nona . . . I'll let you introduce yourself.

Ms. Harpauer: — Donna Harpauer, MLA from Watrous. I'm . . .

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — And we have three other support staff. And Kerry and Donelda and Kathy, I'll just ask you to introduce yourselves.

Ms. Wells: — Kathy Wells from *Hansard*.

Ms. Klein: — Donelda Klein with *Hansard*.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — And we have one other staff person who's not in the room right now. Kerry's not here right now. Anyway, we'd like you to proceed.

Ms. Birdsall: — Okay. This is . . . I want people to understand that not just screwed-up kids become prostitutes or in the sex trade or drug addicts.

My life has been strange but it wasn't all that bad. I didn't get beat up. I didn't get abused. I haven't seen my mom since I was 10 but that didn't really affect me. It was more the situations.

I remember when I was young
Playing outside, passing notes in school
Laughing with my friends
I wasn't a bad kid
I did my homework
Listened to my parents
Smiled at all the right times
And stayed out of their way
I left home at 15
I thought my life was so bad
I had to be home by dark
Now looking back, that was the stupidest thing I've ever
done
Running away because of a curfew
I have a lot of pride
So even when the going got tough
I would not go home
In fact I have never gone back
I loved my stepmother
But to say she was right and I was wrong
No way!
I survived
Now all I have to do is survive the rest of my life

When I was 15, I ran away from home. I ended up . . . I ended up on a reserve outside of La Ronge. It was called Sucker River. I had an abusive boyfriend. When I ran away I was 15 — it was 20 days after I turned 15; you know, I was 15 — and I had an abusive boyfriend, I got pregnant, and finally, when I was 16 I left him.

And when I left him, my daughter ended up in the hospital. And I had no food, I had no diapers. And I met this very nice lady who told me how much money I could make working the streets. Her boyfriend seemed so nice. So they got me high and I went out.

I worked for them for about two months. I never saw a penny of the money. The first time was the hardest, and then after that you really don't care. You've already done the worst thing you could ever imagine doing, so it doesn't matter what you do on

from there. Or that's how you feel anyways.

I worked the streets. Probably the last time I worked was around March 6, was the last time I worked. But before that . . . I mean that's almost six years. It was awful. I can't explain how awful it was — 16 years old, selling yourself to 90-, 80-year-old people. It was awful.

Pimps come in many forms. They can be nice, nice, nice people, great people, who can, you know, lie to anyone and can make you believe that they are great; they'll be there for you; they'll protect you. Well you don't really need protection from anyone but them.

I had a daughter at the time. I let other teenagers move in with me to look after my daughter. I protected them, I thought. The one girl was . . . is two years younger than me and she lived with me for the entire six years, and I protected her the best I could. I worked instead of her working. I supported our drug habit, which was massive. I supported us. She looked after my daughter.

I worked double time. I'd probably go out eight times a night to support us. And then finally I got married to a pimp. He was Prince Charming. He got in trouble, had a drug debt. I had to work it off. I figured it would never happen again. I married him and I got pregnant. And he decided that if I wasn't going to work, the only reason he told me he married me was for the money. Because I was working in Prince Albert, and as a white girl in Prince Albert you make a lot of money. There's not very many white girls out there.

So I was making good money — probably 300 a night. So when I decided that I wasn't working any more, he kicked me out. And I was pregnant with his son — I have his son now. And after I had his son, there was no support or anything so I went back to work. Work — sounds like there was a job out there.

I started selling myself again and then I started shooting up. Drugs and prostitution go hand in hand. I don't know one hooker out there that doesn't do drugs. You have to.

I'm sorry, the things you do are awful. I've had horrible tricks. I've been beat; I've been gang-raped. It was awful. And you have to stop the girls before they're older. The cops picked me when I was 15 a few times and they let me go because I was almost 16.

I don't care what people say, kids under 18 have no clue. They don't know that they're wrecking their lives. You have to forcefully do something about it. You have to drag them off the streets. I don't care if you have to put them in group homes with alarms on all the doors. You have to do something before they ruin their lives.

I know judges that are johns. I went to court for . . . I got picked up for prostitution and I went to court and the judge that was charging me was one of my johns. I knew him quite well. So I got a \$30 fine, you know.

My brother's doctor who delivered his baby was one of my johns. It was my friend — well not one of my johns — my

friend who lived with me, it was one of her johns. He took her out into the country. It was a bad trick. He wouldn't stop driving. She didn't know where she was going. She ended up jumping out of the car. Bad tricks happen every day.

And you can't tell me that men that pick up girls that are under 18 aren't sick, because they are, okay. There's lots of hookers that aren't under 18 okay, and if they want to pick them up, fine. You know, they're going to . . . but they don't have to pick up young children. There's girls out there that are 13, 12, 10. I mean, there's girls that their mothers make them work, their fathers make them work. I know whole families that work — aunts, mom, daughter. It's not good.

I'm not sure exactly what I should talk about, if I should talk to you about the johns I've had, the bad tricks. If I could . . . I've had horrible tricks. I've had men that get turned on by beating you. I've had the ugliest guys you could ever imagine. But it was awful and no one should have to go through this. And the only way to stop it is to stop people buying them. Because as long as there's money out there, if someone's going to buy a prostitute, they're going to sell themselves.

There's always going to be someone either forcing them to do it or they're going to do it because of their drug habit or something. If there's no one buying them, then there's not going to be any hookers. And the johns don't really . . . I mean they don't get punished. It's the johns are the ones that are doing the wrong I think. There will always be girls that are going to sell themselves if there's money.

The johns have to be stopped. They have to be fined. They have to be . . . I don't care if you call their wives, their mothers, or whatever, you know, put their names in the paper whatever. You have to stop them because that's why there's prostitutes, because there's people that are going to pay for them.

I mean there's a lot. In Prince Albert, okay, I went out like eight times a night some times, you know. And barely ever duplicates, you know. Like I guess I wasn't the best hooker in the world. I didn't get many regulars; I wasn't quite into it.

There's tons of them out there. When I worked the streets I stood on the corner and there'd probably be 60 cars going by over and over again, you know. And there was at least 12 girls out on the corners. And they were out on the corners, you know; they were standing right on the corner. It was quite obvious.

I don't know, you have to . . . I don't know what else to say. It has to be done; it has to be stopped. Because all it is, is ruining people's lives. I'm 22 years old and I don't see any future. Okay I'll read you another poem. Actually, can I hand these out to you?

Okay I worked really hard on this so don't throw it away. I hope you guys don't mind if I read you a couple of them because this isn't . . . this is . . . The girls on the street, they're no different than your daughters, you know; they're no different than anyone else. They still have the same . . . Oh, sorry, give me a second. I wasn't planning on crying . . . They have the same morals, they have . . . Like I know that sounds really bad

— they have the same morals — but they do, you know. They know what they're doing is wrong. They know it's awful but there's no way out for them.

Okay here I go.

As night falls
I pray for sleep to come
My thoughts are filled with confusion
Not knowing what the future holds . . .

This was written when I was in detox . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I have no idea. Third. I guess I'll start from the top then.

Love, Life and children
If I can hold on for
One more day
I can make it.
I will make it.
My children make me laugh
My children make me cry
My children are my life
God give me the strength
To give my children a good life!

And I have a daughter. I don't want my daughter to be a hooker.

As night falls
I pray for sleep to come
My thoughts are filled with confusion
Not knowing what the future holds
When I was using I knew the future was going
And I didn't care

I knew everyday that after, you know, after I worked I was going to shoot up. My life was going downhill. I knew where it was going.

Sleep does come
But confusion follows
"My dreams"
I do not understand.
Carla's always there . . .
I miss her so
But nothing will bring her back.

And on the next page I have a picture of Carla. And this picture was taken the last time I worked. As you can see the stop sign — we were on the corner, we were working, you know. This was just our life. She writes a poem after this and then there's a letter following it, and then I'm on the page where *The Suppliers* are. It's you know, says suppliers:

If no one buys calculators
They'll stop making them
It's all about supply and demand
If people stop picking up hookers
There will be no demand for hookers
There for there will be no hookers
But as long as people are picking up hookers there will be hookers

No matter how many times you arrest a hooker she will go back out to work
Because that's where the money is
You have to stop the johns
No johns no hookers
Supply and demand

Tired of this life
Alone and afraid
The guilt traps me
Like a cage
Can't get away
Can't think

When you're in this situation, there's nothing else but hooking and drugs and that's it. You hook because you need the money. You do the drugs because you have to forget, you know.

What do you want from me?
I would like to go to sleep now
I see them all
When I close my eyes
I remember

The thing that scares me the most

Is like . . . Oh, sorry. Try it again.

Is tonight like every night
I long to be numb
To stop the pain the memories
I need a fix
So I sell my body
So that I can forget
What I have done
I have nothing left but my body and a fix
That's all I need
A worthless piece of trailer trash
That's all I am!

I hope you guys don't mind if I read a few poems because . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . okay. The next page, it's:

I am young yet there is
No future for me
I am what you'd like to forget
I am the girl next door
I am the black sheep
I am a mother
I am a daughter
I am the future
God help us all!
Can't you see me cry!

I am a hooker,
I am a drug addict.
In this hole I've dug
I can no longer see the light!

I have survived
I have gone to the brink and back
I have won,

But what have I won
A lifetime of shame
Everyone knows my past
And no one will forget

Then I moved from the city
To my little home town
I gave up everything I knew
The drugs the street life
Sometimes I wonder what my life would be like if I was
normal
If I never sold my body
Never even tried drugs
(Little) white picket fence
And a husband who loves you
I can never be normal
My past will haunt me wherever I go
I will be nothing more than trailer trash.

I like that phrase trailer trash, sorry. I like this poem too; I really like all my poems.

Sometimes it rains
Yet the children still play
Yes I know this sounds corny
But I'll say it just the same.

Sometimes I wonder
What the future might hold?
"Sometimes."
I wonder,
Why the past
Held what it did . . .

I didn't always have the right words
Or the right looks
But this is who I am
Accept me or not . . .

I am like everyone else.
I want to be loved
I want to be held

I may have sold my body
But I still have my soul.
My morals are no different than yours.
I've just learned that there is a lot worse things in this world
Than shame
I would love to walk with my head held high with pride
But I have no pride left

I need a brake from all this pain shame and fear
To not care for just an hour or two
The solitude of drugs
But I need money
For the drugs
For the numbness I long for
So I walk out the door
To sell the only thing I have left
"My body"
So I can get high and numb the pain away! . . .

Thank you. I'll be all red. All right give me a second here.
Okay, in the next page, I'm not going to read the first poem . . .
Oh, mascara's all over the place. I'm going to read the second poem. I don't know if you people say okay.

To change
So easy to say
So hard to do
But I'm strong
As 1 day turns to 2
I find myself wondering
Will the fight ever end?
Will the pain ever stop?
I'm so tired of handling it by myself
If only someone would listen
Hold me and tell me it's all right
My children need me strong.
But I feel so weak;
I wonder will anything really change.
Help me lord to hold on for one more day!

And this is about my children because I do have children and I wonder . . . I mean what am I supposed to tell my children when they grow up? Oh sorry, mommy was a hooker. Darn, you know you have no future now. It's not like they're ever going to be president.

What does the future hold for a child of a prostitute?
I know whole families that work
The aunties, the mother, the daughter
I know a prostitute that her parents make her work
The situation on the street gets worse everyday
How do you stop them?
How do you help them?
Throw them in jail
Do you think that would work?
So they get a fine
How will they pay the fine?
They'll go right back working the streets
It's like any business as long as you have someone buying
your product
You'll keep doing the same thing
If no one buys it
You'll stop doing it because you're not making any money
The same thing goes for a prostitute
If you stop people from buying them
They'll stop working
I lost too many friends to the street
I don't want to lose any more
I don't want my children
To make the same mistakes I made
Something has to be done
And soon.

To give up everything I know
to start new
I left the life I knew for the promise of a better life
The life I know nothing about
A life where I do not fit in
I only know the street life
There are codes and rules on the street
This new life I have started

I am lost
The codes I lived by no longer apply
I am so lost
I'm scared.

And this is about . . . Okay, I quit drugs, I quit working and I don't know anything else except the street, you know. There are codes and there are rules and you understand them when you're there and they all make perfect sense. You never rat out, you know, you don't do this, you don't do that. When I came back . . . I want to live this normal life and I don't know how; yes, I don't know how.

Okay and this is about that too.

In rehab they tell you to stay clean
You have to stop associating
With the friends that do drugs
So I did
The problem is that everyone I know does drugs
They accept me and all my sins
They accept my sins and me
They understand
Try to explain my life to someone that has never done drugs
Someone that has never even seen a hooker let alone talk to one
This new life I've started is I and I alone
No one to talk to
No one to understand
Drugs are starting to look pretty good
My old life was a living hell
My new life is lonely

They say I am trouble
All I am is a junky
No matter how long I stay clean
No matter what I do
No matter how hard I try
I will always be dirt in their eyes

How did I end up this way?
What do I tell my children?
Would you like a mom?
That was a drug addict, a prostitute
How do I tell my son that his father made me work the streets
for
His drug debt
How do I tell my children their father kicked me out because
I wouldn't work the streets
And went out and found someone that could

I can't take much more of this
They look at me with disgust
They whisper behind my back
Did I change for nothing?
Why do they look down at me?
I've worked so hard to change
They don't know what I've gone through
I doubt they ever could!

Where I live, I live in this really nice small town, you know, all proper people, and they know. They know about my past and

they — I'm going to cry again, sorry — they won't even let their kids play with my kids. They don't talk to me. They don't look at me, and if they do, it's a look like oh God, I hope she moves quick. And I'm not going to move, sorry.

They're all good people there but they don't understand. And *Pretty Woman* is the worst movie in the world. There is no happy endings like that. I'm sorry, I had to put that in because I hate that movie. There's no happy endings.

From my drug abuse and my prostitution, I now have Hep C. I'm 22 years old and I'm going to die — sorry for crying — and it's awful.

If someone can learn from my mistakes, I hope they do so they don't have to live with themselves. It's more than any one person should ever have to handle. And I kind of thank God for the drugs, because I would have killed myself if it wasn't . . . I mean I was too spun out to know what I was doing.

I don't know what else to talk about. If you guys want to ask me some questions — don't mind me crying. I do this all the time. I'm not on my antidepressants today.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you, Nona. Thank you very much. I know that, you know, from just listening to you, your feelings, what you feel about this is so overwhelming that sometimes it's really hard to put into words what you've gone through and what you feel. So I thank you for the great effort that you've made and for you sharing your life with us. Like this is really . . . it's wonderful.

Nona, when I met you and talked with you a little bit, you described to me a lot of things, but you described to me what it's like trying to come off of drugs and why it doesn't always work.

Like you can go through rehab and you come off the drugs. But can you share with the committee sort of step by step what's that like — trying to come off of drugs, coming out of rehab, what you felt like, what it made you feel like. And even going through rehab, like the detox, and the, whatever the word is when you're body is trying to adjust to not having drugs. Just could you relate that too.

Ms. Birdsall: — Yes. Can I read a poem about it first and then, you know, explain it in a bit more detail? I have to find the poem. I'm sorry, I'm not very organized.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — That's fine. Just take your time.

Ms. Birdsall: — Okay.

Alone and afraid
No one around
Not even a friend
FAMILY WHAT'S THAT?
No one to talk to
No one to care

As the withdrawals come
I start to shake

Now to sweat
As I feel the bugs crawling all over me
Oh! God please get the bugs off me
As I start to vomit
I feel what's left of my sanity slipping away

Just one more fix and then I'll quit
Just one more and I'm not so sick

Detox is a living hell. I went through Larson House twice. It's probably the best place I've ever been. They're mean to you, but it works. They have counsellors there. There are ex-drug addicts, ex-hookers. That's what they need, people that actually have been there.

I went through detox and I kind of went through a bit of detox in the psych ward. I was losing it pretty big time.

You feel like you're dying when you're coming off drugs. And everything, everything is different.

If you want to stay clean you have to cut ties with everything. I have some of the best friends in the world, and they are all junkies. They are good, good people but they are junkies. And I can't talk to them any more. If I do then I'll get high, I will.

Everything comes flying at you at once. You've quit drugs. You're no longer, you know, numb, and all your problems just kind of, you know, suck you in and you feel like your world's ending. And then you relapse. You do. I don't care — everyone relapses once.

You know, I went through Larson House, when I was 16 to get on antidepressants. And when I say I don't have my antidepressants today, I'm not taking them, like, to get high. I have shrinks prescribing me everything they want to and I don't take them because I'll get hooked again.

Coming off drugs is hell. Everything overwhelms you. Everything's there. And everyone is criticizing you. Everyone's watching you. Everyone's expecting you to screw up. And when you do, because people do screw up, they look down at you. Like, well for example, my sister. I screwed up, and my sister asked me, well what were you doing in detox and rehab, you know, in doing all this great stuff that you were supposed to be doing, were you saving up for the next binge? Oh yes, I was just planning it, you know?

People don't forget that you were a drug addict either. I mean you quit drugs and you think everything should be peachy; you know, all your problems are gone because you quit. Well they're still all there except you have to deal with them now and you can't get high.

I don't know how I survived coming off the needle. It was awful. I still dream about it. I still can remember the high — oh, it was great. It was just all the problems that went along with it. You no longer cared when you were high, so all your feelings are twice as strong when you come off drugs because they're all just there and it feels like they're there for the first time ever, you know. You cry a lot, you shake, you puke. You feel like there's bugs crawling all over you. For a couple of weeks it's

really awful. I can't handle bugs now.

It's awful. And I don't know how else to explain it except it was the worst experience of my life. Even hooking and all that, trying to come off drugs cold turkey, oh, I would gone and sold myself for a fix in five seconds if they would have let me out, but luckily they locked me up and they wouldn't let me out so I got over it.

I still dream about it though. I still think about it. I actually still carry a needle in my purse because it's kind of my power trip that any time I want I can get high. Any time I want I can shoot up. And I don't. And it's kind of like my power trip — I don't know, that sounds funny — but it is.

Even after you quit there's always reminders. I went through my stuff in my brother's basement . . . to go through some of my stuff — yesterday actually — and my kid's jewellery box was full of dirty needles and I found it in there. And it always comes back to haunt you.

I found out after I quit, probably about three months ago, that I have Hep C. Darn, you know. Darn it all. I didn't expect to do that, but I do. And along with me the people that are still druggies, who are my best friends and they always will be; they were great people — well not all of them, I'm just talking about two — they were great people and they both have Hep C. They caught it from me. I killed them and it's . . . you don't get over things like that.

Okay. I think I answered that, didn't I?

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Yes. Thank you very much, Nona. Thanks. Nona, if it's all right with you I'm just going to, you know, allow the other committee members to maybe ask some questions or have a chitchat with you about things that are on their mind and, you know, please do respond in a fashion that you feel is open and direct.

Ms. Birdsall: — I will.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you. Okay. Carolyn.

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Nona. That was very, very powerful. I'm wondering if you can help me struggle with the answer to the question of why johns choose children? There have always been adult prostitutes, hookers, on the street. And it seems to be . . . I don't know that it's a new phenomenon, but it certainly, I think, is increasing in its prevalence that johns increasingly are choosing younger and younger girls. And I'm wondering if you can help us with that at all?

Ms. Birdsall: — Older girls are worn out.

Ms. Jones: — They're more . . .

Ms. Birdsall: — They're worn out. That's sounds really awful. But if I were to go back and work right now I'd be an extremely old hooker. I'd be, you know, kind of lucky if I'd get picked up. The younger girls are new — they're fresh. They probably look pretty cute in their miniskirts and no butts. And, you know, I mean, younger girls aren't worn out like older hookers. They're

not full of needle marks. They're not sickly looking — well some of them are. And the younger you are the less men you've slept with basically.

I'm only 22 and I couldn't tell you how many men I slept with. I'd say thousands, and I honestly can say thousands. Younger hookers are just . . . I guess they're exciting, something that they can't get everyday. I mean — I don't know— how often do you get to sleep with a 14-year old? Wahoo. And I guess that's about it. I don't know why they pick young girls underage.

I know that when I was underage and working they thought it was exciting. I was young and I was partying and I was carefree — or they thought I was.

I don't know why they pick young ones. Maybe because they have a problem.

Ms. Jones: — Yes. Well your comment about, you know, because they're sick, I mean I certainly can concur with that. I mean, you know, politely we call them pedophiles.

Ms. Birdsall: — Yes, I call them sick.

Ms. Jones: — Yes.

Ms. Birdsall: — I'm sorry.

Ms. Jones: — No, no. I mean pedophilia is a . . . you know, it means that they want young girls, but I mean there are . . . or young children. And certainly there are johns who, you know, frequent prostitutes or don't.

Ms. Birdsall: — They don't look all young, you know.

Ms. Jones: — I'm sorry.

Ms. Birdsall: — There's not young girls that always look young. Like I know when I was 16, 15, I had a chest, I had a nice bum, you know, I mean I had . . . I was looking good. I didn't look like I was that young, except I did, you know. Like they knew. They obviously . . . Like lots of them asked me my age and I swear I've been dropped off because I was under . . . I was over 16. I've been dropped off because they wanted someone younger. You know, they don't always look as young as they are, but they get turned on by that. I don't know. Go on. You were talking. Sorry.

Ms. Jones: — Well it's okay. I'm just wondering, I mean do you, in your opinion, does it have anything to do with the erroneous perception that young girls are disease-free.

Ms. Birdsall: — Yes.

Ms. Jones: — Yes.

Ms. Birdsall: — Yes.

Ms. Jones: — And apart from that it's just kind of because they're sick.

Ms. Birdsall: — Yeah.

Ms. Jones: — Or are there other reasons that you might share?

Ms. Birdsall: — Well if — it sounds stupid — if the john was smart.

I worked six years. I have never caught in that city from working the streets — not once — which is really lucky, because I used condoms. I used condoms for everything. I did not get Hep C from hooking. I got Hep C from the needle, you know.

I'm trying to defend that I'm clean and they should be sleeping with me? But, no.

Yes. Probably because they think they're disease-free because they're young and they're exciting and they can't get it every day. You know, you go to a bar and sure, you can get a 22-year-old, you know, younger. You know, they're just sick. That's my only answer.

Ms. Jones: — Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Birdsall: — Yes.

Mr. Harper: — Well thank you for coming in and, as Carolyn said, a very powerful presentation.

I basically have only one question. Would you be willing to share with us the process that you went through to get off the street? You know, the deciding moment, what made that decision, and what you did from that point on?

Ms. Birdsall: — The deciding moment of me getting off the streets is I was going to sleep in Kingsman Park and I was junkied out. I had not eaten in probably four months. Well, March 6 I quit and I've probably gained 80 pounds since then. I was very sick. Me and my girlfriend were going to sleep in the park and I decided that that was that.

Now that wasn't the last . . . That was the last time that I worked the streets every night, because I worked the streets every night. You know, I rented a house. It was right on hooker corner in Prince Albert, right by Pineland. I don't know . . . Which one's from Prince Albert? You are, right?

A Member: — No, I'm not.

Ms. Birdsall: — Okay. Who's from Prince Albert? Or is someone here?

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — . . . but none of us are from Prince Albert.

Ms. Birdsall: — Okay, never mind then.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — So you can tell us though.

A Member: — But tell us.

Ms. Birdsall: — Okay. I lived . . . I worked at a house that was

right on the corner. I used to walk around . . . I had, you know, windows out. And then I got kicked out of there because too many fights and too many johns and . . .

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Where in Prince Albert were you?

Ms. Birdsall: — I think it was 10th Avenue and 9th Street. It was right by Pineland. I mean Pineland is . . . there's, like, Pineland here and then there's the snakepit. I mean, it's hooker territory. Right by downtown.

The deciding moment was I had nowhere to sleep and I was going to sleep in the park. And the night before, I had gotten beat up and I was sick and I couldn't take it any more and I left town that night. I went and I picked up my children from their grandma's and I left. And I probably got to Lake Lenore in . . . probably about 5 o'clock in the morning. It was just . . . that was the time to leave.

But I did go back and I did work occasionally for money and stuff. That was, when I left Prince Albert, was November — November of '98. But I had gone back and I had worked and stuff.

When my son got burnt . . . My son got burnt by a woman who was high and that was a moment that I never worked again after that, because I lost it. I couldn't handle it. My son was burnt bad. It was done on purpose. He was burnt from the waist down and both arms, and he was only 14 months old. And then well, then I tried to kill her. That sounds really bad. I wanted to kill her. I never got my hands on her but I would have killed her if I did.

I ended up in the psych ward and then I ended up in detox. I knew that if I did drugs again, if I shot up or if I did anything else, that I would lose my mind. So since I wasn't doing drugs and stuff I didn't really need to hook. And besides that you can kind of get by. I'm not rich or anything. I'm quite poor, thank you very much. But I'm honestly poor, not working every night.

After something really bad happened to my kid, that's when it was finally all over. And it should have happened . . . I should have quit a long time before that, but I didn't. It had to be something really, really awful. And that's how I quit.

Mr. Yates: — Thanks very much for your presentation, Nona; it's very, very moving. You had talked about the types of . . . and made a couple of references to types of people who were johns. And we are struggling with the various aspects of this problem and one of them is of course johns. Is there any common characteristics or traits to the johns that you have . . .

Ms. Birdsall: — There's nothing solid about all of them. Most of them are older, not really older I'd say, 30 and above. And then you get the ones that are 80, 90. Most of them have very little money and are really cheap. I'm sorry, they are — they're all cheap.

They all think that what they're doing isn't wrong. Basically they all think that what they're doing is not wrong, and there's some kind of thrill in it for them. The thrill of evading the

police I guess, or paying someone to sleep with you, I guess that could be thrilling, I don't know.

They weren't all bad guys. Some of them were quite normal. Some of them were quite screwed up. And I wouldn't wish them on my worst enemy, but there was nothing really solid about all of them. There's doctors, there's lawyers, there's judges. I've slept with judges; I know there is. I don't care what people say, trust me, they are.

There's people from every brand of life that do this. A professor at the University of Saskatchewan . . . I think it was . . . some university anyways. Well I slept with him. Sorry, that sounds really bad. He was john. And there's all kinds of people. Luckily I can't remember all their faces.

Mr. Yates: — From your experience, what type or recommendations would you make to us to deter johns or to . . . you'd have a better understanding than . . .

Ms. Birdsall: — Fine them; put their names in the paper; humiliate them. I'm sorry, but that's about the only thing that will work. You have to hurt them to get them stopped. Fine them; call their wives; take down the licence plate; call their families. It sounds foolish.

I'm sure you wouldn't get a call and say, oh your husband was driving around hooker street or he got picked up picking a hooker. It might sound really awful and it will probably destroy families, but maybe he won't do it then. If you fine them, well they have money to pay for the hookers, you know. Tough luck if you get fined.

And for people that are picking up hookers that are under age, you wouldn't . . . I don't know how to say this. No fine is big enough, nothing is bad enough. Because if it was your daughter, if it was, you know . . . and it could be. Trust me, it could be. Can you put a price on a 15-year-old's innocence? They might not be all innocent but they, they don't know what they're doing — they're only 15. They're stupid. I was 15 once and I was quite stupid, you know. I thought I knew everything though. I thought I was the brightest person in the world and I wasn't. So you can't really put a price on that.

I mean I wouldn't . . . Oh, if someone ever touches my daughter, I don't know what I'll do. I don't want to think about it.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much. You said you don't have anything going for you. You've got lots going for you. You're a really strong girl.

I have a number of questions. The first one is how's your son though?

Ms. Birdsall: — He's okay. He's a very sickly boy. I was addicted to a very stupid drug when I was pregnant with him. I was addicted to Gravol. I took a hundred a day. I was quite addicted to it. If you take enough, you hallucinate, you feel really drunk. And so he has problems from that.

He has lung problems. He has pneumonia right now that he

basically has 24/7. He gets pneumonia let's say at least three times a month. His burns are healed really well though. There's scars but they're just a discoloration in his skin. They said it was basically a miracle because there was no skin left on his legs. Well there was blotches of skin but basically . . . And he healed fine and he can have children and he is one of the best kids ever.

Ms. Draude: — Well I think that your son has a good mom.

Ms. Birdsall: — I'm trying.

Ms. Draude: — When you were with johns did they ever talk to you about their fear of being charged?

Ms. Birdsall: — Yes. They don't have a . . . well actually they don't have a fear of being charged. They, mostly all they tell me — well when I was with them — was for me to watch out for the cops. They really don't have any fear of being picked up or whatever because I've never seen a john being arrested and I worked the streets for six years.

I've been arrested. I got caught you know — just once though. Still I got caught. The cops did a really good job there. They fooled me way beyond . . . the john that picked me up was a cop. I got busted. He also busted probably about 12 other girls that night. He was a real job. You just have to, I mean . . . so I got a \$30 fine and a year probation. Big whoop. I hadn't been in trouble before that. I mean I had been in trouble and they never caught me. I wasn't too worried about it.

But the johns don't really have any fear. They call the cops down a lot but they don't have much fear.

Ms. Draude: — Should pimps be charged as well?

Ms. Birdsall: — If you can catch them.

I charged my pimps. It got thrown out of court. He put a gun to my head. He paid someone to attack me with a hockey stick; he broke my arm in two places. He held my daughter once for . . . I had to come back with a \$120 for him. He had my daughter. It wasn't that he said that he had my daughter; he just had my daughter, you know. And the charges got thrown out of court. I went there for a restraining order and they said we have to charge these people and it got thrown right out. And nothing was done.

So if you can catch them, go ahead.

Ms. Draude: — When you talked about there being such a lot of johns around, and you talk about young girls and we know that there's young boys as well, did you see them?

Ms. Birdsall: — I met a man in detox that was a prostitute when he was a child, but I've never . . . where I worked there wasn't any boys. No, there wasn't at all any boys.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. And I think that when you say that you don't have a future. Do you know you just handed us something that lots of people could never write and think and do. You should start thinking about what you would do with this ability.

Ms. Birdsall: — Sure.

Ms. Draude: — I'm not . . . I'm serious.

Ms. Birdsall: — No, no, I have files and files of writing. I've been thinking about it. It just hasn't gone anywhere.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Nona, I mean the last six months have got to have been really tough for you. You've been describing some of the very difficult situations that you faced. Sorry, you go ahead and say what you were going to say and then I'll continue.

Ms. Birdsall: — No, go ahead. I was just going, um.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes, I understand. I do that all the time.

But what I was going to say was that, you know, one of the things that that our committee wants to do is try to see if we can put in place some better services that will help young girls and women who have faced the kind of experiences that you've gone through, to heal and to be able to move on with their lives. And that's obviously a very, very difficult process to go through.

But I'd like you to just maybe share with us some things that you think would make a difference if they'd been there for you. And one thing I particularly want to ask you about . . . it's kind of a two-part question, because I want you to tell me generally what would help. You know, what would make it better if there were services there that aren't there right now.

Ms. Birdsall: — Well, the services suck right now. I'm sorry, go ahead.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes. So I want you to tell us about that.

And the other thing that I wanted to do is ask you about, like, I'm very conscious of the fact as we talk to more and more women who struggle with this that, you know, having access to finances when you decide to leave the involvement of one kind or another in the sex trade, is very tough. Suddenly you've got no money. Now as you said if you can get off drugs then you also need less money, but you still need money.

Ms. Birdsall: — Oh yes.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — So I guess the other thing I'm wondering about is employment and . . . so services and employment. You know, what could government do, in your mind, that would help people to be able to get off the streets, stay off the street, and truly move on with a good life.

Ms. Birdsall: — Well I don't think there's many hookers out there that have much of an education. I have my grade 8. I guess we need more education. I don't have a job. I don't see me getting a job any time soon. I can work. I can work probably really good. I just don't have any opportunities for work. With

my son being so sick, too, I have a hard time getting babysitters. Plus with my past, I've ripped off a few babysitters, never paid them and stuff and people remember that. It's not like I can pay them what I owe them now, because that's not going to happen.

And for the services by Social Services and stuff? They suck. I'm sorry, I don't know how else to put it. It's awful.

My parent aide, I won't say her name or anything, right, but my parent aide, when I told her I had Hep C, the day I found out I had Hep C, she told everyone — everyone. I mean people are looking at me like, oh my God if I touch her I'm going to catch this disease.

My brother at my wedding, at his wedding, I was drunk, fell down and cut my knee, and he had everyone check for Hep C. And, you know, people's ideas about hookers and stuff, I guess they can't really change because most of the ideas are right. But we are not all just pieces of scum. Even the pieces of scum aren't just pieces of scum. They have hopes, they have dreams, and they've all been crushed.

No, right now welfare is more of a problem for me than any help at all. They are causing more problems than they help. They don't understand. It's not like they've ever had drug problems. They don't know anyone that has drug problems. And, sorry, but there's not many hookers around Humboldt. There is; you know, there probably is, but it's not a big thing here.

They just don't understand. They have to understand. They have to work with you. They have to support you. They have to realize that when you go through things like that, you are going to freak out every once in a while. You're going to sit down and you're going to cry your eyes out. There are going to be times when you just want to be alone and they can go away. There are times when you feel like you're going to go nuts and you just have to get out. And you can't get out.

I mean most hookers have children. Luckily my children aren't johns' children. I know who their fathers are. But it's hard, because I mean most hookers are also alone. They don't exactly have men following them around all over the place after they quit. So you're all by yourself. You have all the stresses of everyday normal life and you don't know how to handle it because you've never had a normal life.

It's hard being straight. It's really hard. Drugs are like a haven; they protect you from all the booboos out in the real world. It's kind of like a daydream too. You just stay in a state of daydreaming.

People have to understand — the people that work with you have to understand. There has to be some kind of training. Or even if you just had one person to be there for these people, that have been there — like who have been down and low and know it's awful.

Like after, let's say after a person's recovering and stuff, get them to go and help these other people to . . . and pay them. There can't be volunteer services here because no one's going to do that — to get them to go and help these people. Because

they understand. They know that there's going to be relapses. There's going to be nights where you pull your hair out and you're going to be screaming and crying and smashing whatever you can get your hands on. Nights when you would do anything, anything for drugs — you would do anything, anything at all. You wouldn't care if you had to hitchhike halfway across Canada to get some drugs, you'd do it.

And people have to understand that, because the Social Services now, they have no idea. They've never, I mean they've never done drugs. They have never been hookers. They have never done any of this and they don't understand. No one . . . I mean anyone that hasn't been there can never totally understand, totally grasp it. Trust me, you just can't. There's just too much to grasp.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — No, we believe you completely.

Ms. Birdsall: — But people try to understand. The people that are working with me now, they think they understand. They have all these illusions, and they don't have a clue. They're clueless. I'm sorry, they don't have a clue. And they expect me to screw up.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — So, Nona, you need someone to understand, and what you're telling us is someone that has recovered from drug addiction and street prostitution or street trade, sex trade . . . you need . . .

Ms. Birdsall: — Whatever.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — You need someone that has recovered.

Ms. Birdsall: — Most drug addicts kind of know the street life, so someone that has recovered and understands.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And that's so important to you because the fact is if they don't, you don't have the ongoing support that you need when you're going through your hell.

Ms. Birdsall: — They don't know what's going on. I mean okay, there's withdrawal for how many weeks? You know, that's not it. You know there's so much after that.

These poems weren't just written when, you know, I was going through withdrawals and when I was working the streets. Most of the poems were written in the last few months, you know, because it's still there. The feelings are still there. Everything is still there.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Nona, we have about five minutes left, and then you know we'll have to wrap up in that time. But you and I have talked so much and there's so much that I'd kind of like you to expound upon.

Ms. Birdsall: — I could talk for hours.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — I know, I know you could, Nona. And that's great, because you have a lot to offer.

I want to ask you one question. When you were talking with me before, you mentioned that there were some of your friends that were all out on the street. Basically, they're making money because they're poor and because they need money for drugs, etc.

And you showed me a picture of a 10- and 11-year-old girl, somewhere in the age range that was sitting with the rest of the girls that were hookers, okay. And what would you say should be done to help those 10-year-olds, you know, so they don't end up getting to the point where they're addicted heavily, and so they don't end up like you are — like what happened to you.

Ms. Birdsall: — Arrest them. Lock them up. Do whatever you have to. Get them off the streets. I don't care if you . . . I really don't care if you put them in a room with locks on all doors. Whatever, you know. You have to get them off the streets because they think they're all smart. And the girls, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 — they're all stupid. Okay. I was there, and I was brilliant for my age, and I was so stupid.

You want attention. You want this. You're still a child. You're still having all these childish feelings and you're just getting it really in the wrong ways. You have to do something, you have to throw them, throw them in jail. Do whatever you have to. Well not in jail jail, you know. No. You know, take them, put them in — I don't know what they're called — group homes that you know are basically lockdown. Do whatever. Because they'll run away, they'll keep running away, they'll keep running away, and people will give up. That's a person. That's a child. You can't give up.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Right. Thank you.

You talked with me also, Nona, about . . . like one thing that really, really hit me hard was when you mentioned that you were trying so blooming hard right now to move into the straight life. And because you know that you're going to die in the other life, and that it's not really helping you to become the wonderful, sort of experience the wonderful life that you could.

But you talked about your loneliness, and you said, you know, the people in the community are rejecting you, basically. And you talked about going out on Halloween and as soon as they found out who was behind the mask as such, they changed their demeanour right away.

So that tells me that there's . . . you know, I think about what the presenter that was here just before you said, that there are a lot of women in rural communities who need support, who need to have something to alleviate their loneliness. And do you think that it would help if you had a continuum of care as far as sort of a friend that you could trust, someone that had been through there, someone that genuinely cared about you so that you could . . .

Ms. Birdsall: — That would make probably a huge, huge difference — extremes amount of difference. Because I sit at home. And that's what I do, I sit at home and I talk to my children. They're two and five, okay. It gets kind of boring after a while, and I've been doing that since March. Talking to the walls, whatever, I talk to myself a lot, sorry. And I write.

And oh yeah, if there was someone around, because the only thing you think about is all the bad things when you're all by yourself, and you think about . . . that's all you think about is all the bad things and the solution is you get high and you feel way better, like, way better. See I still dream about it. And I need someone there to help, to even just to listen and to have . . . where they can't go and tell everyone everything you're saying. They're like a friend.

But it's hard to get new friends because all the people I know are straight now, and all the other people I know and trust and love are all junkies. And you know I'd love to change them and all this, but it's not going to work.

So I have no one. I have my children and they get boring to talk to after a while.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Well you're pretty strong to hang in there as it is and, hopefully, Nona, things will change in that regard in the future. I talked with you a little bit about it when you first arrived and I think there are good things going to happen there.

And just as an encouragement and an honest one I'd like to concur with what Ms. Draude has mentioned. This kind of material, these poems you wrote, this is extraordinarily wonderful. There is potential here for you to make a living doing this, and everybody says poets don't get paid an awful lot but you could compile your story.

Just one more thing before you go. I want the committee to know from what you've mentioned before just how much you're trying to live on a month now, and just to relate to them. You mentioned to me that your social worker would like you to get a car and so on, and so you're struggling with how to do that on a few bucks. So can you just tell them . . .

Ms. Birdsall: — I get 215 a month from Social Services. That's not including my rent and my bills. They pay that, yes, but I get 215 a month and they told me that I have to — have to — have to get a vehicle. Of course I have to get my driver's licence which the lessons are — what? — 200 now, plus I have to get into Humboldt to get the lessons so I'd have to pay someone. But they're not going to pay for any of that. They want me to get a car; they want me to get my licence, everything on this 215 a month.

Until September I started getting the kids' family allowance. Until then I was living off 215 a month with two children and they knew I wasn't getting the family allowance. For my son welfare was still getting the family allowance. And they knew I wasn't getting it.

So 215 a month? Can you imagine living off that with two kids? Sorry, groceries are a bit more expensive than that. Diapers are a bit more expensive than that. Milk, formula? Yes, right, 215 goes a long ways.

I'm doing better now though but I still can't afford a car. I can't afford to even drive . . . pay someone to drive me into town. When I take my son to his doctor's appointments I'm supposed to have . . . you know, I'm supposed to be able to go to

Saskatoon to a specialist and come back but then I have to pay someone to take me to Humboldt which I usually pay them 20 bucks. Catch the bus there, catch the bus back, pay them to pick me up. I mean out of 215 that's a big bite of cash up there. It's something that just has to be done, you know, and it's really hard.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And you had indicated to me that your social worker suggested you move into Saskatoon but you don't want to do that because . . .

Ms. Birdsall: — Because I'll be a junkie. I'll be working the streets within a week. And I know that. I accept that. I know that I can't move back to the city right now. Not for a long time. I can't even go visit there really because it's so easy to just go out there, get picked up and make cash, go party and forget. It's so easy, you know. And everyone always needs money. There's never enough money.

And I've thought about it, thinking well my daughter's birthday's in a week and I'm broke. But I'm not going to. But it would be really easy to do. And then I'd work, and I'd make the money for her birthday and then I'd have to get stoned and then I'd be broke and then I'd do it again. And over and over again. That's how it starts.

I started working to buy a pack of diapers. Six years later, you know. No.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Well thank you, Nona. I can't tell you how much we appreciate you coming here today and assisting us. And we would just like to thank you also for the poems that are really very reflective of your struggle and your life, and your dreams and your hopes also. And the hope of the committee is that we can come up with some strategies that will help out in the future. So thank you, thank you very much.

I'm not sure . . . Mr. Prebble, is there something else that you wanted to say?

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — No, I just want to thank you as well. I had some other questions that I'm not going to ask because of our time constraints, but this was a really, really important presentation for us to hear. Thank you.

Ms. Birdsall: — Good. If any of you want to talk to me further, you could probably get my number from Arlene. And I have . . .

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes, and Randy's got your number too, I assume, does he?

Ms. Birdsall: — Yes, call me.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes, okay. And we'll be thinking about you in the months ahead.

Ms. Birdsall: — I hope so.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — And I hope that the next six months are a bit easier than the last six have been.

Ms. Birdsall: — Sure would be nice. The past few years have

been hell. Hopefully the next two will be pretty good.

A Member: — We hope so.

The committee recessed for a period of time.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — If we could have the committee members maybe take their seats, I think we've got everyone here. And, Cst. Zwarych, we would like to thank you very much for coming forward today and presenting to our committee the information that you have and so on. And we trust and really believe that it's going to be very helpful in our deliberations as to what kind of recommendations we bring forward to help the sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

And before we get started, constable, we'd like to have introductions here. And I think that it's appropriate that the members would introduce themselves. So I just wanted to reiterate, I think you know my name, Arlene Julé, because I'm the MLA for the area. And this is our Co-Chair — we're co-chairing the committee — Mr. Peter Prebble.

And I just wanted to add at this moment that this is the first time that there has been a co-chairing of a committee in Saskatchewan. And we agreed upon that, agreed to put partisan politics aside for the benefit of the children in the province. And I'm really very heartened by that and I know Mr. Prebble is too, as well as all committee members.

So I'm just going to let the other members of the committee introduce themselves.

Mr. Harper: — Ron Harper, MLA, Regina Northeast.

Ms. Jones: — Carolyn Jones, MLA, Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Yates: — Kevin Yates, MLA, Regina Dewdney.

Ms. Draude: — June Draude, MLA, Kelvington-Wadena.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And one other member of our committee, before we introduce the staff, one other member of our committee that is absent today is Mr. Don Toth, and he's the MLA from Moosomin. He couldn't get here because of the road conditions.

But we have with us also support staff that has been instrumental in recording the proceedings, as well as our technical adviser. And maybe I'll just let them introduce themselves also.

Ms. Woods: — Margaret Woods, the committee Clerk.

Ms. Klein: — Donelda Klein, *Hansard* operator.

Mr. Bond: — Kerry Bond, broadcast services technician.

Mr. Pritchard: — Randy Pritchard, technical adviser.

Ms. Wells: — Kathy Wells, *Hansard* office.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay, so we're just going to ask

you to go ahead and feel very comfortable with doing your presentation in whichever way you feel that you'd like to do it.

Mr. Zwarych: — Okay. To begin with, I've been stationed in Regina for nearly seven years, North Battleford for 12, Elbow for nearly six, and I'll be starting five in January here in Humboldt.

Presently the sex trade in Humboldt is not that prevalent. When I first came here we did have one incident, that was nearly five years ago, where a father was pimping his 15-year-old daughter. And I intercepted that.

To this day she is still on the streets but not here; she's in Saskatoon. And she is actively involved in the criminal field. She is just as active, if not more, to this day. She, from what I gather, she enjoys her trade. She has no intentions of quitting. The excitement is there. She's a young gal and the challenge is there and the money is there.

I have sent out a little circular to some of the people that I communicate with here in this area and I asked if there is any trade in this area at this moment. And all indicators are that there is not. There are indicators out that there are some girls on the streets, in the streets of Regina, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Prince Albert that originated from Humboldt.

When I was stationed in Regina it was not unusual for me to be checking vehicles out in the countryside surrounding Regina. That was our area. It was not unusual for me to come across four or five vehicles per shift in which there could have been prostitution or not. But it was quite prevalent and that not only included girls but also boys as well.

In North Battleford it wasn't as prevalent. It was predominantly native and basically the younger gals from the ages of, I would say, from 14 to about 18. In Elbow there was nothing — absolutely nothing at all.

And in Humboldt we found . . . I found just this one. Last year Social Services moved in . . . or there was a gal from Vancouver that was a street worker. She moved to Saskatoon. She was trying to clean up her act so Social Services moved her to Lake Lenore. It was only a matter of a week or two before somebody figured out who she was and the trade picked up right where it left off in Vancouver, and there was some complaints raised.

I took the issue with Social Services that something must be done and immediately, otherwise charges will be laid. And it was almost overnight they moved her out of Lake Lenore and she's back in Vancouver. So we just moved the problem from here to somebody else's lap.

I'm also aware of . . . I'm from Rose Valley by the way — which is about an hour, hour and 15 from here — originally. One of the girls I went to school with, she was a very nice-looking girl and she was working the streets of Saskatoon. Her dad is a john. And I don't know what happened after but there was one day he was out looking for a girl and he got teamed up with his daughter. So what happened after that I don't know. I never did find out and I never did hear of her

name following that. So maybe that shocked her into going straight. I don't know.

I'm aware of a young lady from Archerwill which is about an hour and a half from here, just south of Tisdale. She's been active in the prostitution field since she was about 10 years old, and as it turned out, as she had . . . or her mother was a prostitute out of Archerwill. She had a john and she had a girl as a result of that. The girl was raised in Archerwill and she followed her mother's footsteps.

As luck would have it the father of the daughter, that he fathered, he was from Kelvington. He had a son back in Kelvington. As luck would have it these two got together, the daughter and the son got together, and I found out afterwards they did marry. They fell in love and they married each other. Once the truth came out that did not last very long.

In my experience, the girls that I have dealt with are of lower intelligence — I'm sorry, that's not the correct phrase I should use — they did not achieve the academic standings of you and I. They do have the ability . . . or some of them do have the ability to reach university standards, but they have not been given the opportunities. They have come from the lower end of the income scale and that is way before the poverty line, of all the girls that I have known.

Now as far as penalties are concerned. I firmly believe in attacking the problem as opposed to attacking the person. I don't think the street worker is the problem. The problem stems from demand and supply. The demand is there for the girls or the boys or for the street worker to be there. I think the problem should be attacked by means of attacking the supplier or . . . which is the johns.

I don't think the problem will be totally eliminated but I think it can be controlled. And I think if you attack the johns in some manner, you would control the problem. The problem is more prevalent in the larger centres as opposed to the smaller centres — Saskatoon and most definitely Regina, as opposed to Humboldt.

If a street worker was to move here, granted she'll have business for about a week, but no more simply because the community itself would not put up with it, and plus the embarrassment of the johns within the community.

So the larger the population base, the bigger the problem you're going to have. The small towns will provide the product; the big towns will inherit the problem.

Any questions?

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Yes. I was just wondering, constable, whether you could give us some indication of whether you believe that the incidents of sexual abuse as in the home, in homes, is a sort of relating factor or a contributing factor to young people ending up on the streets?

Mr. Zwarych: — I have taken several sexual assault courses throughout my career, and I've handled the majority of them when I was stationed in North Battleford and about half of them

here in Humboldt.

About 15 years ago a survey was done — and I don't know by whom — but at that time 25 per cent of the Canadian children were abused from within the family. And since then that has now risen to a one-third on the average. I have found that that has no correlation with the sex trade through my experience with the street workers.

When I first came here, I took part in a one-year investigation in which a 69-year-old farmer sexually abused all of his grandchildren and all of his nieces. And we have received convictions on multitude counts and he received penitentiary time. I have kept in touch with the victims and not one of them has been involved in the sex trade on their own.

I have been involved in other sexual assaults here and the victims are not involved in the sex trade from these incidents. And, likewise, from North Battleford, the victims have not engaged in the sex trade.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay. You indicated that you have kept in touch with some of the victims of sexual abuse in a home, or in homes rather. What are the overall detrimental effects, or do you find that there are any, from experiencing that sort of activity?

Mr. Zwarych: — The detrimental effects suffered by the victims ranged from suicide to criminal activity on a minor scale, and to the point also of self-seclusion, of being a hermit.

Some of the victims caught themselves, obtained counselling, and now lead near normal lives. This one girl was last sexually assaulted when she was 12 years old; she's now 45 and she still has nightmares of the occasions. But she has a normal job, she has a family, and she has a good husband. But she still needs counselling to this day.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Just one more question and I am going to certainly turn the questioning over to the committee members after that. Constable, do you . . . are you able to give us, from your knowledge and experience, somewhat of an indication of what kind of services that children that have been exploited in the sex trade — you'd indicated to us that you worked in the city — so what kind of services or help do you think that they need in trying to leave the streets? Or what could . . . if government were to provide some services, what kind of services and how would those services be delivered?

Mr. Zwarych: — When I was stationed in Regina and North Battleford, what we would do is just supply names to Social Services and they would try to take issue with the problems. With the girls that I know that are in the sex trade, that is not going to be enough. They simply have not reached the bottom end of the scale like the gal that was here earlier. Someday they will and I don't know what the end result will be.

What Alberta had in mind or practised was to put the street worker in custody and into intense counselling. I think that would be the proper step to take at this time. I don't know where that is in the judicial system as far as rights are concerned on their behalf, but I think that would be the proper

step to take.

They must be removed from that environment and placed in a proper, warm, caring environment. And also, they must be shown that they can achieve their goals sooner or later.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you.

Mr. Zwarych: — All that's going to take time and above all it will take money and proper staffing. To do so you must have a good tax base and Saskatchewan doesn't have that tax base.

I don't know how, where the money can come from; I have no idea. But I think that would be the proper way to do it.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I'm going to turn it over to other members of the committee first. June, did you have any questions?

Ms. Draude: — Yes, I do. There was a couple of things that you said that I found really interesting because we've met in a number of places around the province now, and you felt that child abuse wasn't really a stepping stone to prostitution.

Mr. Zwarych: — No. On the cases that I have observed, no, they are not.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. And that socio-economic background usually involved people with lower economic standing.

Mr. Zwarych: — Yes.

Ms. Draude: — And we've heard that maybe that wasn't the case in other areas. So maybe it just depends on which . . .

Mr. Zwarych: — . . . which area you're coming from. The girls that I do know of have come from say grade 2, 3, 4, and 6. Generally not more past grade 8. And they come from families where they virtually can't afford their power bill.

Ms. Draude: — The other thing that I think is interesting is, as soon as there was the availability of a prostitute in the area, there was immediately someone . . . the demand was there.

Mr. Zwarych: — The demand was there. It was instantaneous.

Ms. Draude: — So now then that means the johns are coming in from the smaller centres into the cities. And also the young girls or boys are going into the city as well if they intend to go into the trade.

Mr. Zwarych: — Oh yes. That's very interesting that you brought that up. When I was stationed in Elbow where there is no problem, such a problem as that, the young boys all go to Saskatoon or Regina to find the girls.

I've heard young individuals — 18, 19-year-old boys — making their way down to the Mustang Ranch down in the States and spending their money there.

Ms. Draude: — The young lady that was in here previously said that she thought the only thing that she could find that was sort of a common thread between most of the johns that she'd encountered was they were mostly over the age of 30.

Mr. Zwarych: — Yes. Yes, she is right.

Ms. Draude: — You'd indicated that you thought that the Alberta law was perhaps one that could be looked at. If you were thinking outside of the box and thinking something that you would do, not just following somebody else's example, do you have any other thoughts on it?

Mr. Zwarych: — Well the problem has to be attacked, not the person. You have to deal with the johns in some shape or fashion; whatever works for the area or for the province, then that's what should be implemented. Whether it's seizing their vehicles or seizing some of their assets or seizing . . . for instance, if they use their vehicle for picking up the girl, seize that. And also the publication of their names. I can't think of anything else that we can do.

Ms. Draude: — In a small community, when you think that the johns are going from here into Saskatoon, that means that they must be a little . . . they want to keep some, their privacy.

Mr. Zwarych: — They want to keep their privacy, yes.

Ms. Draude: — So publishing their name in a small paper would probably be quite detrimental to them.

Mr. Zwarych: — Oh for sure. Oh for sure.

Ms. Draude: — Probably even more so than in a larger centre where no . . .

Mr. Zwarych: — Where nobody knows anybody, yes.

Ms. Draude: — I really don't have any more. I just wanted to clarify some of the issues you talked about.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you, June.

Ms. Jones: — You mentioned that there likely is not any street work going on in Humboldt. You said that the community wouldn't put up with it. I think this is what you said.

Mr. Zwarych: — That's about it, yes.

Ms. Jones: — But does that mean that the johns would not be able to have anonymity? I mean is that kind of not putting up with it or what do you mean by that comment?

Mr. Zwarych: — Humboldt is still a small . . . well, tomorrow it becomes a city.

Ms. Jones: — Yes, congratulations.

Mr. Zwarych: — Thank you. Humboldt is still a very, very small city. In fact it's still a very small town. Whatever happens at the north end of Humboldt, the people at the south end know about it.

If a hooker moved into Humboldt, everybody would know about it and all the johns or all the guys would stay away from her just to keep their names out of public view. It's just as easy to spend 5, 7, \$8 to drive into Saskatoon and pick up a street worker there. And there you're perfectly safe as opposed to doing it here.

Ms. Jones: — Then how do you explain the business immediately being transferred to Lake Lenore which is even much smaller than Humboldt?

Mr. Zwarych: — Yes. The intent, I believe, by Social Services was to give the girl a new start. Somehow she was found out as to what she did in her past life and all of a sudden johns start coming around.

These aren't individuals from Lake Lenore. These are individuals from Naicam, Wadena, Wynyard going there. Word spreads very quickly.

Ms. Jones: — So they would still, you think . . . I mean a lot of small towns know a lot of small-town people, so you still think that when they came from that far that they would enjoy the anonymity that they need in order to use the services of a prostitute?

Mr. Zwarych: — Yes.

Ms. Jones: — So what happens is the johns come to the city and your young girls come to the city and therefore Humboldt is free. But they still, there still has to be something that made those young girls go to the city. And I would like, if you have any idea in the world, for you to share what that might be. What do you think is the root cause if you will of . . . I mean I don't need to know why the johns go to the city. I think we know why. How to stop them is another thing. But what makes these young girls that are growing up in a tight community, obviously what I would consider a caring community, to take up street life in the city?

Mr. Zwarych: — Well, what would make a girl from Humboldt do that? I have no idea. The one girl that I did catch in the act, where her father was pimping her, the father was doing it for the money and he started his daughter out quite young, and she had no choice in the matter. And now everybody's living in Saskatoon so it's Saskatoon's problem.

But what would make, as for an example, the young gal from Rose Valley to go to Saskatoon and do it — and she was a brilliant student; she came from a good farming family — what made her do it, I have no idea. None whatsoever.

Ms. Jones: — So you don't see anything systemic that jumps right out at you?

Mr. Zwarych: — No, no.

Ms. Jones: — Okay.

Mr. Zwarych: — There's no sole purpose for them to do it unless, you know, they're picked up physically by somebody saying, okay we're going to do it for the money. Here's what

the plan is, here's what my plan is, here's what you're going to do, and this is what's going to happen.

Ms. Jones: — Do you think there's any possibility or have you any evidence of recruitment of young girls from other centres, somebody coming to Humboldt, wooing them, courting them, taking them back and pimping them?

Mr. Zwarych: — There's nothing to say that's happening here. Nothing at all. I knew that you were coming, I knew this in about two weeks advance — two-and-a-half weeks — so I specifically asked if there is any trades here in Humboldt and if there are any that are doing it in Saskatoon. And yes, there's some going on in Saskatoon but nothing in Humboldt.

Ms. Jones: — Thank you.

Mr. Zwarych: — As far as recruitment, I'm not aware of any whatsoever. We would hear of it very quickly.

Ms. Jones: — You feel confident that you'd hear very quickly if that was happening?

Mr. Zwarych: — Oh yes. Oh yes.

Ms. Jones: — Good. Thank you.

Mr. Yates: — Just a quick question. We heard earlier today about a unique problem that we hadn't heard yet in presentations in rural Saskatchewan — I'm not saying in Humboldt but in general in rural Saskatchewan — where young girls were going out with much older men and it was becoming a sort of a social norm in rural communities and that often resulted in an exchange of other things other than actual money for sexual favours.

And then we had an example used of a business person expecting a young girl to work for him — to, you know, give favours both to him and to some of their customers and those type of things. Are you aware of those types of things in your community or the surrounding communities?

Mr. Zwarych: — No, no. I'm not aware of any.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. So nowhere is that in your community?

Mr. Zwarych: — No.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — I wanted to, just further to Kevin's question, Marwin, I wanted to ask you about . . . We've heard now a number of times in different rural centres — I'm thinking Meadow Lake, La Ronge, Lloydminster, and today again in North Battleford; I'm sorry, today again in Humboldt — we heard concerns about frequent occasions where drugs and alcohol are exchanged for sex, which is kind of a commodifying of sex, albeit money isn't being exchanged but drugs and alcohol are.

We've also heard about bush parties where young teens are invited and there's quite a number of older men there. Are you aware of these kind of incidents happening in this area?

Mr. Zwarych: — Not around here. We have our share of bush parties but they are basically kids amongst kids. And yes, there is sexual activity amongst kids but that's, you know, there's no exchange of money or anything of that nature.

We do have the odd older group going. You know, 25- to 30-year-olds hanging around with teenagers at bush parties, but the teens around here seem to control that. And they tend to stay . . . you know, they'll have them there, but they'll draw a line and say okay, this is where the line is and you don't come across it and they seem to control that fairly well in this area.

And as far as drugs for sex around here, I don't . . . well, there might be, but it's not of any magnitude.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Right. Okay. I think you've addressed . . . most of the other questions that I was going to ask have been addressed by others, but I think other committee members have covered off and you and your comments have answered other questions that I had.

But I do want to . . . I think you've outlined for us very clearly some of the things that you'd like to see done to stop the johns and you've identified that it's really the johns that are the principal problem.

Mr. Zwarych: — Yes.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — And again, that's a theme that we've been hearing around the province. So I think it's really important to have it affirmed today.

What's your sense about the magnitude . . . To what degree, I guess, do you feel johns are travelling in from rural communities into Saskatoon, Regina, maybe North Battleford, to seek out sex with younger girls? Are we talking about dozens? Are we talking about hundreds? Do you have a sense of that?

Mr. Zwarych: — No. No, I don't. I know there is a migration, but to what point I couldn't tell you. I'm sorry, I can't help you with that.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Yes. No, I understand.

Mr. Zwarych: — But, I do know there is a migration.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble): — Right. Well, I want to thank you very much and pass this back to Arlene in case she has other questions.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Yeah. Cst. Zwarych, I just wanted to know if you had any statistical evidence of how many sexual assaults are reported in the home atmosphere and so on that involve children under the age of 18?

Mr. Zwarych: — Here in Humboldt?

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Yes. Or, actually, within your jurisdictional area.

Mr. Zwarych: — Yes. There was a survey done with

gynecologists. This was approximately 20 years ago and for every one case that we get, there's usually another 10 that go undetected.

We just about . . . I'm not sure, eight years ago — this is a little bit before my time — we had picked up a school teacher for a sexual assault and to this day we are still feeling the effects of this in the court system. We don't know how many victims he's had. It ranges anywhere possibly from as low as five to as high as 70, 80 victims. And to this day I feel . . . I'm the local court man here and I go to court all the time and practically all the kids that are before the courts are one of his victims. Some of these kids are now in Saskatoon and they're now giving the Saskatoon courts a run for their money.

And again, I have spoken to parents that have just started to come forward saying, yes, my child was a victim of this individual. Here are the problems that we are now having. And these are now several years later, and the problems are just unbelievable. And they're following the same footpaths as other kids have had but in earlier years. It's just that they're starting to come out a little bit later, that's all.

We have had kids with 90 per cent averages and super athletes with promising scholarships, all of a sudden, next week, they're totally out of control. And it's to the point where the police have to become involved and remove the child from the home life and move him elsewhere for the protection of the family and for the protection of the child.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — And is that due to the fact that they had been sexually assaulted then, when they were young or at some time in their life?

Mr. Zwarych: — All the way from . . . all the way from attempts of sexual assault to actual sexual assault. Each person is different in how they react to a sexual assault. If an individual has made a pass at a younger . . . say, of a 30-year-old making a pass at a 12-year-old, that sometimes may affect that child to the point where that child will go ballistic and lose control. And we've lost it. And I've had individuals where young boys that have been sexually assaulted and very little repercussions. So each individual is very, very different.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Okay, can I ask you just one more question? In relation to the gravity of the matter of sexual assault, be it in the home, on the streets, wherever it may happen and regardless of who the offender is, how do you feel about the penalties meted out? Do you think that this . . . I know that I have understood from some of the information I have that oftentimes the sexual abuse of children on the streets or people that have engaged in that, that have been the perpetrators of that, this is treated as a summary offence. Basically it's treated as a very minimal offence in the courts, by the judges.

Mr. Zwarych: — It can be, yes.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — So I would ask if you give just your personal view on how you think this criminal activity should be addressed and how it should be treated.

Mr. Zwarych: — I just dealt with a matter in the courts this

morning where a young lad went hunting for some migratory birds. And he had a provincial permit but he did not have a federal permit, and so he was charged accordingly. And as a result, the minimum fine under The Wildlife Act was \$500, through a voluntary penalty. But the federal, where we charge them federally, the fine was anywhere from a \$1, or from zero up to \$50,000. And that far exceeds the penalty of what an accused could get for sexually assaulting a young child, a person that cannot protect himself.

My own personal view is I firmly believe that if an individual has been charged for a sexual assault, then the option should be left up to him. I'm not sure just where the state of Florida is on this matter. But they were toying quite heavily in that field of chemical castration where, if you are convicted of a sexual assault, you will go to a penitentiary and you will be injected with chemicals that will make you totally inactive. And I think that's the road that we should be taking on perpetrators charged with sexual assault.

Now I have talked to . . . like the individual that I sentence . . . or that we put away for six years for sexually assaulting his grandchildren and his nieces. He's 68 years old, well he's 70 years old now, and he has a female intake worker that works with him as a counsellor and he's put the moves on her and tried to get her into bed with him.

He'll be due for release probably in a year, year and a half, and I don't know what's going to happen. The people in the surrounding area know who he is, and therefore they will tell all their kids: you stay away from him. And that will happen. All the kids will stay away from him until he dies.

But if he moves to Saskatoon or Regina, nobody is going to know who he is. And he just loves children.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you. That was a strong statement but I very much appreciate it. I think that we have to be sending a strong signal out that this is not to be tolerated at all.

All right, unless there are other committee members that have further questions, we would like to thank you ever so much for coming today and adding to the wealth of information that we have already. And it certainly is good for us to be able to hear from people in the rural areas because initially the problems seem to be concentrated in the cities, but we're finding out that there are some contributing factors. And there's, like you mentioned, the migration factor and so on are all part of the bigger problem. So your testimony will certainly be of assistance to us. If you'd like to add a concluding comment?

Mr. Zwarych: — I would like to see a study done where 1,000 individuals, both male and female, if they had the opportunity to find a street worker and not be apprehended, and whether it's free or money be exchanged, I'd like to see a study done as to how many of those individuals would take that opportunity and go through with the act of sex trade. I think it would be a very interesting study.

I think you'll get a very true picture and I think you will have a very high ratio of individuals taking advantage. That's just my

feeling. I've talked to psychologists throughout my career and basically the male species is geared for reproduction; it makes no difference whether any money is exchanged or not, it's going to happen.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — So I have to ask you a follow-up question with that. I just must do that.

So healthy relationships, of course we all know that your sexuality is part of who you are as a human being, but there are healthy relationships. So why would you think that so many people are diverting to an unhealthy relationship?

Mr. Zwarych: — That I don't know. That I couldn't, I can't . . . Grass is greener on the other side. That's all I can say. I don't know.

The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé): — Thank you very much. It's a hard one to answer, no doubt. Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 5:22 p.m.