



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

## **Hansard Verbatim Report**

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

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The committee met at 1:30 p.m.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Good afternoon, everyone. We, as the committee, would just like to extend a great big thank you to the witnesses today.

We have with us right now Staff Sgt. Chris Kaiser from the North Battleford RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police). Welcome, Sergeant.

We are indebted to you for coming here today to present the committee with your knowledge, your understanding, and with your views. And it is people like you in Saskatchewan that are making a big difference by coming forward and offering what you have to the Legislative Assembly, and especially in this circumstance . . . with this issue rather, with the sexual exploitation of children.

We view this as a priority issue and we're glad that you've come forward to basically speak for this issue so that the awareness of what's happening with children will be raised and to help us with our recommendations in the future.

Before we get started, I'm just going to ask the committee members to take a moment to introduce themselves to you. I think that some of them have, prior to us sitting at the table, have talked with you, but we'll just go through that one more time. And I'll start with my Co-Chair to the left of me here.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Staff Sergeant, I'm Peter Prebble. I'm the member of the legislature for Saskatoon Greystone and, as you know, Co-Chair of the committee.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — And just to mention to you, Sergeant, that my name is Arlene Julé and I'm the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Humboldt.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Kevin, we'll turn it over to you again.

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

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

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

**Ms. Draude:** — And June Draude, the MLA from Kelvington-Wadena.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — And absent today is Don Toth. He's the MLA from Moosomin and he's snowed in.

We also have some wonderful support staff with us today and we're just going to take a moment for them to mention their names so that when you see them you'll recognize and know who they are.

**Ms. Klein:** — Donelda Klein, production manager at *Hansard*.

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

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay, and just sitting up here.

**Mr. Pritchard:** — I'm Randy Pritchard, technical adviser.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — And at the back of the room, we have two very important people with us. If they would just . . . maybe if you could just turn around, Sergeant, and . . .

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

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

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. Thank you, everyone. Sgt. Kaiser, we're just going to ask you to get really comfortable in that seat and relax, and please feel free to proceed in whatever way that you feel comfortable.

**Mr. Kaiser:** — On the matter of sexual exploitation, I have been in the Battlefords since 1999. I have 28 years in policing in Saskatchewan and this was my 14th posting in 26 years, so I've gotten to see a good deal of rural Saskatchewan.

One of the issues that we're concerned with that's in the city of North Battleford in dealing with children, one of the issues is sexual exploitation. We have not identified any overt public display of exploitation, sexual exploitation of children. We have received information from time to time that persons may be engaged in sexual activity on the street. But we have never . . . when we've researched it, asked questions; we have not been able to identify that to any particular person or group.

And we believe that the exploitation of children in our community, or one area is the sexual abuse issue. I've run some figures and our sexual assaults per year total are running 100 for 1997, 85 for '98, 88 '99, and so far this year 73 reports are confirmed reports. There are many more other reports of these instances but due to the young age of the victims, of the reported victims, and the lack of any evidence prevents us from taking any action. In other words, there is a third party claim and there's nothing that we can gather to factually support this claim.

I don't know what the committee is looking for and maybe the committee can ask some questions at the appropriate time to get specific answers.

In this community here we have a large social problem. Poverty and lack of education, lack of employment opportunities, the breakdown or the lack of strong families, these are just several issues that I have observed. And as a result of our investigations we keep coming across the same theme that contribute to the exploitation of children.

One area that is a great concern of mine is that people who come into the community move in and have no contact with any government agency. They may not have contacted Social Services. Their children may not go to school. They reside with other people and they stay in the community and at some point move on and repeat this process in other communities.

One day the children are young adults and they lack the necessary skills to work in our society; to read, to make a job application. And during this time, without contact at school, they lack social skills and many of them suffer because they are outside of the loop. They may not have received proper medical attention through their developing years and may have some other affliction.

As I said, we have not received anything from the community that we can confirm that there is an overt sexual trade involving children. We know, from the large number of young mothers, teenagers that we deal with, that the sexual world is expanding and they see this through many different functions in the media.

So I don't have much more to say. If there is some questions I can answer, I certainly will.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. Thank you, Staff Sergeant.

The Chairs will allow the committee members to ask some questions first, if they should have any, and we will then pose our questions after that time. Yes, Kevin.

**Mr. Yates:** — Yes. I'd like to start by asking: is there any evidence in the community of the exchange of goods for sexual favours? We've heard, as we've travelled around the province, various presenting problems in different communities. And one that we've heard, where there have been issues of poverty and socio-economic issues in the community, that there were instances of young girls exchanging sexual favours for a place to live, clothes, food, alcohol, those types of things, which isn't on the street but nonetheless damaging to those children and children as young as 12, 13 years of age.

Is there any of those presenting type issues in your community? Because it fits the profile we've heard from other communities that have had those type of socio-economic . . .

**Mr. Kaiser:** — Well I believe that that is going on. We have a very transient community. People without money will do what they can to survive. We know of different locations in the city where young people . . . somebody's renting and other people are using that house as their place to stay over. And how do they survive? I would assume that in the nature of mankind that this activity goes on.

One of the other areas I didn't go into that may fall into this is not only the sexual trade but the crime that results from those issues that you raised — trying to get food, trying to get shelter. I think it's all part and parcel.

But as to specifics, to the numbers or who, I couldn't tell you, but we know that it's going on in the community. It's just not out on the streets where there's a place to drive to or a location where they can contact people. I think it's mainly amongst the younger people.

**Ms. Jones:** — I'm wondering if you have any reports or evidence or incidents or suspicion of people coming to your city to recruit people to the street life. In other words, do you have strangers in town and then young people missing, taken to Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Regina, to work the streets?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — Yes, a lot of people come into North Battleford. We're on the Yellowhead; the casino is a draw to far and wide. We find that many of our runaways, the ones that are identified to us, the parents or the guardians tell us that they've gone to Prince Albert, Saskatoon, they've gone to Regina, and they may be staying with friends.

We have not had a report of individuals coming to the community to recruit girls to our office. However, we do know that there has been approaches by gang members to recruit, actively recruit, in the community. They haven't established a large following but the pressure is on and we're getting that information from people in the corrections system and we're getting it from people who were on the streets. They are concerned about the gang pressure as well. And if gangs come in, then other types of crime — recruitment, prostitution — will follow and flourish.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Thank you. Carolyn, did you have any other questions?

**Ms. Jones:** — Not right now, thanks.

**Mr. Harper:** — Thank you very much for coming in this afternoon. In your opening presentation you said that you have been stationed in other communities in Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Kaiser:** — That's correct.

**Mr. Harper:** — From your experience, was there any activity, sexual activity, trade activity, in other communities in Saskatchewan that perhaps is not prevalent here?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — Well I think the same thing has gone on. I've been stationed from Carlyle in the southeast to Uranium City. And people who want to engage in that activity associate with liquor outlets where people congregate when the fair's on in town, when there are specialized meetings. We know of individuals who are picked up in other communities for solicitation or communication for the purposes of. I believe that those aren't isolated; they just don't drive to one community to carry on this type of activity.

It is apparent wherever I've been that the poor or the people who have, feel they lack the necessary tools to function in society have used whatever is available to survive. And one of the ways is the sex trade and crime.

**Mr. Harper:** — In those communities that you've been stationed in previously, was there sexual trade going on? What I'm saying is: it's visible in communities such as Regina and Saskatoon and was it visible in any of the communities that you were previously stationed in?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — No it hasn't been. I would just say that I have been involved in rural policing for my entire service. It's easier in a large city than it is in a town of 400 people.

**Mr. Harper:** — By far. Thank you.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Kaiser, thank you very much for your presentation, and I have just a couple of questions.

You talked about the number of sexual assaults being between 80 and 100 in the last few years. Can you tell me what the total population or the total area is; the number of people that that would be out of?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — The city of North Battleford is under 15,000. The town of Battleford is just over 5,000, and the rural communities plus the city and town, we estimate it through the municipal governments at about 45,000 people.

**Ms. Draude:** — Okay. You'd indicated that you'd heard that there were children or people going into the cities — Saskatoon, Regina, and P.A. (Prince Albert) — and working in the sex trade. Do you also know if there are johns from this community going in there, into the cities?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — We don't have any personal knowledge of that. There are . . . As I said in the opening, I can only speak in generalities, I don't have any specifics. But if you are . . . you know in mankind's history, people will go where their interests take them. Let's put it that way. And in this community here, I'm sure that covert prostitution goes on. In other words, people meet in an establishment or some . . . but not on the street. But it's very hard to carry it on in public in an area or in a town or a city this size. So I'm sure there are people going to the larger centres.

**Ms. Draude:** — Yes, people prefer to be anonymous. We had someone witnessing to our committee a while ago, someone that had worked on the street, and she called it the trade of supply and demand. So maybe that's a term that we can relate to.

The people that you had . . . the sexual assaults that you had dealt with, is there ever any fear of the penalties that are involved in sexual assault, with the perpetrators? Do they ever talk about it?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — I don't believe that there's a fear of the penalties. One of the issues in some of the sexual assaults, of course, they are on . . . the victims know the people who assault them. So it's not that often we . . . I know of only one instance of a stranger and literally a, what they call a forced assault where they . . . a lightning or blitz attack where they actually just picked two young women at random and took them by force. The rest of the time they either meet at parties or they've known people for a long time.

**Ms. Draude:** — In these number of people in these sexual assault cases is there any prevalence in the difference . . . economic or social classes of the people that are involved?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — The number of victims, I don't have a total number here. A large portion of the victims are spread throughout the structure of society — from the very poor to the very educated.

**Ms. Draude:** — So it's right across the board. You don't see any big difference in the economic class of the people.

**Mr. Kaiser:** — No.

**Ms. Draude:** — Okay.

**Mr. Kaiser:** — But it only comes out in the reporting. Many people . . . if a victim is a person of educated, well means, they . . . there's a split as to who reports crimes. Some things are kept from society. Other things, if you have a large contact with different social agencies, the chances of it getting reported are higher. So if you're in contact with your church, you're in contact with Social Services, you're in contact with your doctor, these type of things, people tend to report them more often because they have to reach out and be able to touch someone. If someone feels isolated or throughout . . . and those people exist throughout the different economic structures of society, they may not come forward.

**Ms. Draude:** — Okay. I just have one last question. Have you seen any increase in the number of sexual offences since . . . when it comes to the gambling that's allowed or that's increasing?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — I have no knowledge that the sexual assaults and the gambling are connected.

**Ms. Draude:** — Okay.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Thank you, June. Just before Mr. Prebble and myself present our questions, I'm just going to make sure that the committee members are satisfied that they have posed all the questions they wish to. Okay.

Sergeant, thank you very much for what you have brought before us today so far. I just wanted to take you back for a moment to Ms. Draude's question regarding the fear. I think maybe what she was alluding to and certainly at least what I would like to ask you is, is there a level of fear by perpetrators of the penalties incurred upon them if they are caught and convicted of sexual abuse? Especially, are they aware of the penalties for difference offences? For instance offences against children that are 14 and under? I mean this is statutory rape. I believe that probably more awareness needs to be put out there to the public in this regard.

You've had sexual assault charges. I don't know whether or not those have ended up, you know, what has been done with them? I don't know in the courts what these people have faced as far as penalties. But when people are charged, are they aware that there is penalties that might really quite shock them? Are they afraid of penalties? Do they have any fear of those penalties?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — Well I believe they are fully aware of the penalty involved because they always want to mitigate the circumstances, okay. They don't come out and say yes, this is what happened. They always try to make it appear in their best light and maybe that's human nature. The penalties are obvious. They are well-known in the community. The penalties are in the paper. If someone is convicted of an offence the media get the information out to the community.

Are they intimidated by it or is there a penalty high enough that would prevent it? No. Their actions . . . As an example, we have a person who openly admits that they're involved in indecent acts and it involves school grounds. And this person says, I

have a problem and it's going to get worse. So here is a person who is involved in a crime of indecent acts involving school kids and other females persons and admitting to us that yes I do this and, you know, I need some help because it's only going to get worse. The penalty doesn't seem to mean anything.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — So I'm just going to follow this up and I respect that if you give me an answer to this it is, you know, at your own discretion. It would be your personal opinion. And if you would share with us your personal opinion I would appreciate it.

In view of what you've just said that many perpetrators of a crime of sexual abuse and sexual indecency, that kind of thing, inappropriate sexual behaviour with younger children, they simply are clearly saying yes, I know what I'm doing, I'm going to keep doing it. What does that tell you about our penal system and what kind of recommendations would you put forward as far as . . . Would you, if you had the opportunity as a person in this world who could speak to the judicial system, what would you tell them about the level of penalty for this kind of crime?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — A person involved in a crime against another person, they should be properly assessed. The root of the problem determined. If this person is to change, they should receive treatment, which is mandatory, compulsory. Should this person fail to do so or keep repeating, the only purpose of the current penal system, at the end of the day, is that society has its rules and its norms and the people on this board, municipal elected officials, have a duty at the end of the day to protect the rest of society.

Should you not be able, for whatever reason, to be out in public because you are a predator, you are an offender; I think the state has a responsibility, that government, those people elected to represent society, to deter you by placing you in an institution where you cannot cause any more victims.

And every day that is a terrible decision to make. I do not believe that sentences, which allow predators to go back into our society, is a valid sentence. There are many people in the practice of psychological and health issues and other issues that are there to deal with people. But the costs to society of victims . . . I deal with victims from the '50s, and they sometimes surface because they were victimized by an individual and now their children are victimized by the same person.

So at the end of the day there is a cost, there is a price to pay to live in society. And if you can't abide by society's norms and rules, if you're a predator you cannot change or will not change or for whatever reason, the rest of society — the penal system should be there to protect us. We don't have anything else right now. I hope something is discovered but at the end of the day there is an obligation to protect the rest of the people in society.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — So I'm just going to mirror a little bit of what you said so that . . . I want to make sure I'm hearing you correctly. You indicated from what you said that you felt that perpetrators should have some counselling, etc., as far as rehabilitation. Do you mean that once they are incarcerated, or do you mean that there should . . . you would

like to see something set up for perpetrators to have counselling outside of incarceration? Or do you believe after first or second offence conviction, for instance, of a repeat offender that they should ordinarily and necessarily be incarcerated without question? I'm just wondering . . .

**Mr. Kaiser:** — When a person commits a crime against another person of a violent nature — sexual assault is probably one of the worst — that person should be assessed. You see one of the problems is the role of the police is to identify the person, gather the evidence, and bring them before the judicial system. Once in that system that person should be assessed by qualified people and determinations made as to the likelihood of re-offending.

If a person requires a year of treatment, that year of treatment may be incarceration, but treatment. You can't leave until a decision is made. We currently do not have that in our system.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate you bringing that message forward to us because it makes it clear, you know, what we have and what we don't have, and what gaps there are, and what kind of initiatives need to be maybe taken in the future.

I just have one more question. When you referred to the number of assaults that you have in North Battleford and area, you did allude to the number of 100 . . . were you referring to the sexual assaults being assaults towards children that are under the age of 18, or is that just a generally right across the board?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — That's the . . . all sexual assaults.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. Have you been able to break that down at all as to how many sexual assaults were committed against children under the age of 18?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — No we don't keep statistics in that fashion.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. Maybe from some of our further witnesses we might be able to get a better idea of that. That's quite important for us to know.

So just one last question to you as a police officer — we have . . . yesterday when we were in Humboldt we asked the police officer there, in view of the justice system right now and in view of the kind of penalties that are put forward, what alternative measure, if you could, would you introduce into the penal system and actually we had kind of a . . . It's going to be transcribed into *Hansard* anyway, so I'm going to tell you what this police officer said. He said well, you know, some time ago . . . Rather I think he said in the US (United States), in one of the states in the US right now, there is chemical castration that takes place and for anybody that continues this kind of activity.

And I'm not too sure whether or not he was speaking kind of lightly of this or whether it was a bit of a joke or not, but he seemed very quite serious. Because he said oftentimes many authorities come forward and say that pedophilia is incurable, and so the only measure sometimes to protect children and people in our societies are measures such as this and maybe should be taken.

So I was just was wondering if you would care to comment on that?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — The role of the police in society is to . . . the preservation of life, then protection of property, and investigation of complaints. Those are sort of the three function drives.

If we are to do a better job, then it is incumbent upon all the other agencies involved to do better jobs. If you find a person, identify a person who is a offender, and in the many of the classes and courses I have taken dealing with this subject is that there may never be a cure so there has to be protection of society.

At the end of the day, there is no simple answer and these people who are offenders on society of that nature have to be cared for, but possibly in a setting that does not allow them in contact with the rest of society. And many issues . . . I'm sure that many psychological profiles and issues is done that sexual offences may not be the physical act but may be the mental act to cry for power and control. And this is one method that they use, so maybe chemical castration would not change the person's mind.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. Thank you very much. I'm going to turn the questioning over to Mr. Prebble.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Staff Sergeant, most of the questions that I had have been asked by other members. But I do have one area that I'd just like to follow up on and that is with respect to charges as a result of sexual assaults.

What's been your experience with respect to the ability to lay charges in cases of reported sexual assault? Because I sensed from your earlier comments that it was difficult getting sufficient evidence often to lay charges, either because of the age of the children or for other factors. But what's your experience in terms of how many actual charges get laid and then how many convictions occur?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — To charge a person in our country you have to have reasonable, probable grounds, which is a greater burden of proof in the criminal courts than in the civil courts. Civil court is the balance of probability, reasonable and probable grounds, beyond a doubt. The police can only act on the information that they find or is disclosed to them.

We believe the victims, when charges are laid, you know, it goes hand in hand. A person claiming to have been assaulted, as an example I gave you in the early '50s, physical evidence was gone, but it's still the person there. The end result in convictions is how the evidence comes across at court and the victim . . . victims have been intimidated, have had . . . undergone psychological changes in their personality from the stress and the pain, and they may not come across as a clear . . . or come across clearly or very competently in court.

But at the end of the day, that is a decision for the judges to make when hearing all the evidence, but it is incumbent upon the police to do their best job investigating it and getting that forward. And there are . . . I think there are very few cases that

we can't proceed, because there is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Pardon me?

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Are you saying there's very few that you can't proceed or . . .

**Mr. Kaiser:** — That's correct. Because in those cases it is a matter of lack of evidence, lack of credibility, or in the case of young people, they won't or can't communicate the incident to us. But that does not prevent us from doing the best job we can. Because at some point in the road, children will later come back and say, this happened to me and nobody did anything.

I don't know if the committee is aware that files involving sexual assaults are kept by the police for a minimum of 20 years before they're archived. So these investigations that we do are going to be around a long time, so people . . . victims will have access at the later point.

**Ms. Draude:** — You said you keep the files for 20 years. Are they kept in a paper file or are they available through technology so that they're available if a person moves to another location?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — Well the Mounted Police, we're just sort of past the horse stage; we're still keeping paper. They're all kept in paper form.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — So are those files transmitted to other locations if, in fact, the victims move?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — No, they're retained by the unit that . . . where they originated.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. Are there are any files, to your knowledge, that are transmitted to other locations if you know that perpetrators move?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — No, not investigational files. I know that if a person has been identified and moved to a new location, if they are under some type of legal obligation to report to an agency such as probation, Correction Service Canada, that information will get transmitted to the local police force.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — I just wanted to clarify a little more on the 80 to 100 sexual assaults per year. In . . . are those all incidents . . . are those simply the reported incidents, or are those incidences in which there was actually some charges then that were subsequently laid?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — No, those were reported incidences where investigations were conducted.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Right. And then of those, how many charges would be laid on average in a year?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — I don't have that information with me, but I would hazard that three-quarters of those charges resulted in some type of court procedure or, at the minimum, if there was any doubt, a contact with the local Crown prosecutor's office.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — So three-quarters of the

hundred, there would be . . .

**Mr. Kaiser:** — Say 75 of those matters would proceed to a point where if the charges were either laid or at least had gone to a consultation with the Crown prosecutor, many of these instances if they are old or they're very young, we have to have a . . . there are so many technicalities and issues with the law, and the law changes with every new court ruling, that we have to consult. And it may not proceed from that point. Because there always has to be the likelihood of a conviction. It's not that we disbelieve people, but there just may not be the evidence for a conviction.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — And then roughly what percentage of that hundred result ultimately in a conviction?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — I don't have those facts. I don't know. I mean we've had . . . to be open with you all, I mean we've had cases thrown out because the tape recordings from the preliminary hearing have been lost. And we have to go back. We just get a notice saying well, the Crown stayed the charge because the tapes of the prelim are lost. I mean I just don't know.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Quite a system.

**Ms. Jones:** — I was just wondering if you have any . . . do you have a method of communication with the RCMP or city police in other areas so that perhaps if a predator was spotted, questioned, perhaps apprehended, but quite often in stings or in prostitution investigations, the police will approach a john. I mean they don't see the actual exchange taking place but they know who's on the strip, who's contacting who.

Do you have a way, any sort of a network with other communities where you may be apprised of people from your community going to other communities to procure services or to be predators under a larger amount of anonymity, and indeed if you don't, do you see that as a helpful thing? Is there something that could be a better communication link between communities so that johns would be more easily identified and an eye kept on them?

**Mr. Kaiser:** — When it comes to persons trying to purchase sex, I don't believe that there is a communication between communities. The police community, the RCMP have data banks where we record our everyday occurrences that is available to be accessed by other RCMP detachments.

In other words myself, Chris Kaiser, I go to Churchill or I go to Burnaby and I come in contact with the police and I say I'm from Saskatchewan, they can go in and check and say, well, he's been involved with the police, or he had his house broken into in North Battleford.

But they can also go in and find that Chris Kaiser was charged with impaired driving in North Battleford. Or they can check my criminal record.

The only thing that is consistent throughout the policing community are two things right now: The Canadian Police Information Centre, our CPIC system, which is the repository for criminal records, where we add our warrants and our

probations and our prohibitions. Those awaiting trial can be entered as an accused person.

The other system is ViCLAS (Violent Crime Linkage Analysis) which is a system developed in Canada by the RCMP and it is now used internationally. And it is a system of tracking predators and offenders, known and unknown. But unfortunately they track them by the offences that they commit. So there's a trail of victims behind most of those entries.

**Ms. Jones:** — I guess I asked because it seemed to me that it would be useful if the Saskatoon police approached a potential predator and identified him as someone from your community; if there would be a way that they could just informally say, you know we questioned this person on 20th Street or 2nd Avenue or whatever — keep your eyes open.

**Mr. Kaiser:** — At that level, what that comes down to is the individuals involved in policing being concerned or wary of the individual to provide that information back either through their department or directly to, say between Saskatoon city police and North Battleford RCMP. But we do not have an interconnected file system or referral system.

As I say, the only two things we have in common for information is ViCLAS and the Canadian Police Information Centre computer system which all accredited police forces have. The relaying of information such as you described takes place but not on a formal level. It is . . . I've gathered this intelligence and now I'm passing it on to you and you can do with it as you wish. That is what takes place; what you're talking about.

**Ms. Jones:** — And is it quite common? I mean do you do quite a bit of it or is it a . . .

**Mr. Kaiser:** — As the person climbs the scale of crime, the more serious crimes they commit, the more information is relayed. And so traffic offences aren't relayed, provincial violations aren't relayed. As the person enters the Criminal Code, if it's minor infractions it's not relayed, but as the person progresses up in crime, that information is more readily relayed. People set priorities when dealing with information.

**Ms. Jones:** — Thank you.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Well, we'd like to thank you Staff Sergeant Chris for coming to be with us today and for giving us all of the information that you have from the police in North Battleford. And we value your input today and look forward to talking with you in the future if need be. So thank you very much.

**Mr. Kaiser:** — Thank you.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — We have a second presentation scheduled for this afternoon and it's from the street outreach workers here in North Battleford. Marcella, would you like to come forward and Craig, you were also going to present I believe. So Marcella Ross and Craig White and anybody else from your organization who you'd like to have join you at the front, please come forward.



**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Some of the committee members are just asking for a three-minute break so if you could just bear with us for a moment please.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Sure, why don't we do that then.

**The committee recessed for a period of time.**

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Marcella and Craig, we want to formally thank you for coming before us. We really, really appreciate you being willing to present to our committee and we're looking forward to your presentation very much.

I know you, Marcella, you were here when committee members introduced themselves. Craig, I'm not sure if you were. We could do maybe . . . if our staff forgive us that we don't do . . . if we don't do a full round of introductions but we're a bit behind schedule here. But maybe we'd have committee members introduce themselves and tell you which constituencies we represent and all that sort of thing. Why don't you start, Arlene?

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — I'm Arlene Julé and my constituency is Humboldt.

**Ms. Draude:** — June Draude, and I'm from Kelvington-Wadena.

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

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

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — And we have missing today, Mr. Don Toth, and he's the MLA from Moosomin in the southeast part of the province. He's bogged down with snow at this time.

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

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Pardon me, Kevin.

**Mr. Yates:** — I was beginning to wonder if you'd forgotten me.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — I represent Saskatoon Greystone. Anyway, we're really looking forward to your presentation and why don't we go directly into it. So we look forward to your comments. Marcella?

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you for inviting us and letting us present. We do have a lot of concerns in the Battlefords when it comes to our young people. Concern for Youth has been here since 1990. We've been in operation here in the Battlefords, and we are a community-based prevention organization. We work with youth on the streets and with the homes; work with several different agencies that can help our youth in the community. We work with all types of issues pertaining to our young people in the Battlefords.

Our concern is the safety of our young people on the streets — male and female — making sure that they are safe. We try to do

something in a positive way for them. If we see that they're going in the opposite direction, we try to bring them back in, draw them back in to do something positive and to get them back on the right track.

We work very closely with the parents and the caregivers so we are aware of the home situations. We know right away if there's an alcohol problem or if there is abuse in the home, or if the youth is just being a typical youth trying to impress their peers.

When we talk about prostitution, what is the meaning of prostitution? In the encyclopedia it says: to offer indiscriminately for sexual intercourse especially for money or a woman who engages in promiscuous sexual intercourse for money or a male who engages in sexual practices for money.

Children in the sex trade sometimes do not just do it for money. They do it in exchange for food, shelter, cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs. Johns come in all forms and from different backgrounds, but one thing is the same: they do not feel good about themselves or their own sexuality so they choose young people who don't know anything about sex, and they find these young people on the streets.

What's the difference between a john and a parent who abuses their own children? There is, just because they have access through the courts to say that their children have to go with them.

The youth in the sex trade have either been abused at home or have been groomed by an adult for the sex trade — a pimp or someone in the sex trade or an abusive parent.

Concern for Youth has not seen any prostitution in the Battlefords as it is seen in larger cities, but we do hear of sexual activities amongst our young people. There is prostitution but it is not visible. There's prostitution with the older 23-year-olds and up, behind closed doors. We also hear some homes that take our young people in for sex in exchange for drugs. These homes are watched and addressed and reported. Some of our young people are taken to larger cities and we have stopped some of our youth from being taken.

When we receive reports, we go right to the source and we deal with the issues. Concern for Youth has, this is one example, had reports of a 12-year-old hanging outside the bars offering herself to older men. We met with the bar owners and we told them about the girl and they agreed to work with us. We did visits with the home and made the girl aware that we know about this and it was stopped. She never went back near the bars and never tried to make any more contact with older men.

Another report we had came to us about a young girl approaching cars outside the bingo hall. We did observations on that also and it took us a while. But when we did the observations, we found that these young people had parents that were playing bingo in the bingo halls and it was right outside of a bingo hall with a pool hall down in the bottom, and the kids were down there playing pool also. So it wasn't like they were hanging out offering sex to anybody. Cars that were being pulled up were from the group of kids, but it was a parent picking up the youth. So it wasn't kids getting into cars for the

sex trade.

We do a lot of follow-ups and we do a lot of checking and, like I say, we go right to the source. When we find out that there is something happening, we go to the source right away and then we find that it's not really prostitution. It's not what the people are seeing.

We've thought about this a lot and we talked about, you know, prevention, what can happen, you know if our young people are approached. Craig and I, our main goal is to protect our young people, and if we ever saw a john approaching a young person, we would intercede in that. We would not let that happen. And he would be dealt with very severely with the RCMP.

Our young people that we work with are from . . . well any ages from 5 to 19, and we work with approximately 50 kids a month. We have them in prevention programs. We have them going into . . . keeping them in school. Just working constantly with our young people with homes and with the schools and agencies.

**Mr. White:** — Also, we help out other organizations here in town develop programs where we see that there's been a gap being missed — contact with other agencies that started up gym programs, boxing programs. Wherever we can see a gap in something we'll approach another agency and help to fill in that gap.

**Ms. Ross:** — We thought about solutions too, to the johns. Do you want us to give those now?

Okay. Prevention programs are valuable in our community. We need more of those. We need more people that are out on the front lines working with the young people and right on the streets.

If a young person is prostituting themselves, the workers would intervene and take steps to help that youth to look for more positive direction in your lives. Awareness and support would be given to that youth with the use of community resources.

We believe that mandatory rehabilitation for offenders would probably help and deter the johns or the offenders.

More prevention programs and outreach workers are needed in this community — in all communities.

More education and awareness in the communities would be helpful — a very helpful tool for our young people and I think also for our agencies. Some agencies don't really know how to prepare the awareness and education to the young people. I believe the schools should have that as a tool.

More safe houses in the communities would help the youth trying to get out of the sex trade where peers and offenders could not have access to them.

And once the johns are caught they should be ordered by the court to go to rehab and treated as a pedophile with their pictures published and posters distributed in each community, just like the ones for the missing children, because they are in

fact abusing our children and the communities need something to work with to protect them.

Why should the offender's identity be kept secret? That's the one thing we don't understand. But I think they should have their pictures plastered all over billboards, wherever. Or will the offender's name be erased as those of the pedophiles? I don't think those should be. I think they should be published, not erased.

And what does the john or the pimp or the abuser or anyone in authority have the right to ruin a young person's life. When a youth says that they do not want to go with a certain adult, listen to them. Error on the side of caution.

When a youth is used and abused they have to live with it the rest of their lives. Some are lucky and receive counselling but some cannot deal with it and see only hopelessness and commit suicide. Those who cause that youth to reach that point should have to answer to the courts.

In closing we'd like to say that all the youth are receiving a mixed message through the media and through the courts. Without a shadow of a doubt the offender's rights are held higher in regards in the courts than our young people.

Our children's voices need to be heard so that we can prevent our youth from being introduced into the sex trade. The measure of our society is how we listen and treat and protect our children. To legalize pornography sends a mixed message. Protecting the perpetrator sends a mixed message. And they were not asked to be put in this. What I would like to see is the government to make these people accountable for their actions and listen to our children, to what they're saying because we are listening to what they are saying.

Thank you.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Marcella, thank you. Craig, did you have any other comments that you want to add to Marcella's?

**Mr. White:** — With concern for youth, and part of our job is to be on the streets with the kids, get to know the kids. It's a long-term position where it takes a lot of time to gain the trust of the youth.

Helping other agencies here in town . . . because of our mandate we're not allowed to do programming. So where I see, you know, a gap I will go to other agencies and help them develop programs, which I stay involved with throughout the program. By doing that, getting the youth into a, you know, a neutral situation where there's no pressures, they don't have to be there, they don't have to sign in, they can leave when they want, where there's workers, positive role models, such as myself and other workers that we have in our community that run these programs, the youth get to trust you, get to know your familiar face. Whether they befriend you or not, you are still someone that they may feel that much more comfortable about coming to you to disclose some information that they wouldn't be comfortable going to otherwise.

That's where . . . I mean we're starting to get more and more community programs, free programs for youth that, you know, they don't have the financial resources to enter — like hockey, different things.

In some ways we see that we're getting discouraged. Different agencies are getting discouraged on opening these programs because the funding isn't just right or, you know, the name of your organizations isn't just perfect. Where, you know, where do we turn when we're having them kind of problems.

You know, we go to Social Services and we get our mandate put back in our . . . you, know this is your mandate, this is what you do. Well what if that doesn't work? You know this is one of my problems where I'm looking at some of the mandates and stuff that people follow — Social Services — they don't work and you have to work around them to make them programs work.

And as a street worker I'm out there with the kids all night. You know I'm their first line of offence at three in the morning, it's not like they can call Social Services. But the kids, you know, the kids that I know and know me — even some of the ones that don't like me because I still am an authority figure although I'm, you know, on their side, I'm not an enemy — I'm the only one person basically in town at three in the morning other than the RCMP that these youth can turn to. That's where we need more people doing the same jobs.

Thank you.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Thank you very much, Craig. That's much appreciated. I'm going to turn some questioning over to the committee members but before I do that I just want to commend you on your proactive stance with your concern for youth, it's absolutely fabulous.

It's one of the first times in the rural areas that we — I guess we'd call North Battleford a rural area — that we've heard of such proactive intervention actually on behalf of youth. To tag, obviously you tag kids that are in danger and you intervene immediately. So that's so commendable and I really can't say enough about how great I think that is.

And, Craig, we certainly hear your work is so important in conjunction with Concern for Youth and it seems like you're doing everything you can.

I've just noted some of your comments about your problems with Social Services and . . . (inaudible) . . . case programs are not working and, you know, your need to try to work around things and so on, so that you can be of help to the kids. That's wonderful. Positive role models are really very important. And I hear you also when you're saying that you need more workers involved in outreach.

So I'm just going to turn the questioning over to some of the committee members then.

**Ms. Jones:** — Our previous presenter talked about families that move in and out of the community without ever having any contact with a government agency, and by that I took it to mean

including schools, and in fact he said they don't go to school. Would you have any idea how many people . . . how many children of school age in your community there would be that are not in school?

**Mr. White:** — Myself, just from my day-to-day workings with the kids, I can run into two or three youth a day that don't attend school. They may have been registered in passing in a school or may not have been registered at all in schools. I would say I see 10 to 12 youth a week that are just not, plain and simple, just not in school. And there's nothing being done to get them back in school.

We work with a lot of these families and intervene trying to get the youth in school; trying to be a liaison between the family, the youth, and the school system or the RCMP, but some of these youths just won't go. And when you have a 12-year-old that just plain and simple refuses to go and doesn't matter how many times you bat your head against the wall trying to get that youth help, he's still not in school.

As far as an exact number, I couldn't give it to you. But I know there's at least 10 or 12 kids a week that I see that don't go to school. And whether that's because they're in transit or that they're living here, but there doesn't seem to be a way to force them . . . to be able to have that authority to get them back in school.

**Ms. Jones:** — So when you say you see 10 or 12 kids a week, are these the same 10 or 12 week after week? Or are the 10 or 12 kids different kids each week?

**Mr. White:** — It's a continuously changing thing. Along with the kids that we work with on a weekly basis . . . I mean a lot of the kids we'll continue working with for two or three months at a time, but there's always a turnover in there of new kids coming onto the docket. Kids that were getting back in school or move out of the community or end up in jail unfortunately — there's always that turnover where we're getting the new kids coming up.

So no, it's not always the same kids. A lot of the same will continue on for a period of time, but that turnover eventually weeds them out and there's always somebody to take their place.

**Ms. Jones:** — Is there an average age group or do they range right from, say, grade 1 to . . . I mean after 16 I guess they don't have to attend school. But are these younger children or teenage children?

**Mr. White:** — The range would be probably from 9 up to 16, from 9 years old to 16. That's where we see the most as far as missing school goes. That would be the age range.

**Ms. Jones:** — And would you know from talking to these kids, are they kids in care? Are they in their own home or are they in some sort of care?

**Mr. White:** — Both. Most of the kids that are in a care facility because, you know, there's a little stricter authority figure and somebody there that is actually caring for them, we find them

going to school more and not missing as much.

The ones that are missing, you know, and are just not going are usually kids that are in a family member's home, maybe not the mother, maybe a grandmother or an aunt, we find that more in that situation — the kids just don't go. There's nobody there to force them to go, nobody there to encourage them to go. And that's where we, you know . . . where the children take control over the caregiver and they're the ones making the decisions. Like, no, I'm not going to school, plain and simple; there's nothing you can do to make me go.

And some of the situations, the caregiver/family member — most of the time a family member — doesn't have the control over the youth. And they do turn to other organizations and we will work with them, different organizations here in town we'll try to work with them, but you know it's not always possible to get that youth in school.

**Ms. Ross:** — If we do have a youth that the school is working with and they phone us and they say, well this child has not been in school for a week then we will do the home visit and find out what's going on, like, in the home. And if we find that that youth is taking counselling or whatever, we will get that group together and we'll do some mediation with that group and we'll set up a plan. And oftentimes that works.

But we have a lot of young people right now that are very transient, coming in off the reserve into town, staying with grandma for a while, register, then all of a sudden they're gone and they go back to the reserve again. So like it's really a transient community like Chris said.

And sometimes the kids just, you know, don't have that parent at home to say that you have to do this. They're not very, very strict; like they're just . . . they let the kids do whatever they feel like doing. And so if you don't have the parents and they're not working with you then it's hard for us to get them in school.

But if we can get that parent working with us, then we have something to work with — like the school, the parent, and then us.

**Ms. Jones:** — Do I hear you correctly that you work with about 50 kids a week?

**Mr. White:** — A month.

**Ms. Jones:** — A month. And then 12 . . . 10 to 12 are kids in a week that aren't in school?

**Mr. White:** — Well that's myself. A lot of the kids that I work with on a daily basis are not regular . . . kids that are regular in school. You know, they're kids that I see out on the streets from 9 at night till 2 in the morning, where they don't have a curfew or somebody they cares whether they're coming home at a certain time or not.

We have younger youth that, you know, although the youth might wake up in the morning and want go to school, mom's still, or dad's still, or uncle's still in sleeping and doesn't bother to get up with breakfast or anything like that to help them out,

well they'll just turn around and go back to bed. You know, there's no encouragement there.

Schools will contact us. We'll stop at the homes. And a lot of times we can get the kids you know. Lot of times, it isn't just the kids. The kids are willing to go if they have the support system around them in the home setting, that they would go.

A lot of the youth I work with are frequently missing school on a regular basis, yes.

**Ms. Jones:** — So what percentage of the kids do you think then that you work with would not regularly be in school?

**Mr. White:** — Out of the 10 to 12 to 15 youth I work with a week, probably five of them youth per week are regularly not in school.

**Ms. Jones:** — So, close to 50 per cent.

**Mr. White:** — Yes.

**Ms. Jones:** — So, it's a huge problem, kids not going to school.

**Mr. White:** — Oh yes. Yes.

**Ms. Ross:** — There is an education Act, actually that, you know, that the parents can be, you know, taken to court if they don't send their children to school but it's not effective. It doesn't work.

**Mr. White:** — It's not enforced.

**Ms. Ross:** — It's not enforced. Yes, so I don't know how you would get those parents to do something to make sure that their kids go to school. I know, like if it was my child, I would say okay, now you're going to school today and that's, you know . . . if you're not going to be in school, well, I'm going to take you to school and I'm going to sit there with you. But these parents don't do that. They just let them do whatever they want to do.

**Ms. Jones:** — I've been aware of that law for a long time, but I'm not aware of whose responsibility it is to enforce it, are you?

**Mr. White:** — No I'm not myself.

**Ms. Ross:** — Well, actually the school can do something. But by the time you do all the paperwork and everything, it's . . . And then when they go to court, then at the courts and they say well, you know, there's not a whole lot you can do really, you know, with the kids. It's up to them I guess if they want to send their kids there. I think they're leaving it back to the parent to enforce it.

**Ms. Jones:** — I'll have to pursue that in another forum. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Yates:** — Yes, a very good presentation. I've a number of questions. I want to start along the line I asked the former witness about the exchange of sexual favours, or whatnot, for

sustenance, a place to live, alcohol and other needs, perhaps clothes. Kids involved . . . you'd mentioned that there are kids that you believe are involved in that environment here. Are those kids that fit into the same pattern as those not attending school, that they're . . . actually have some sort of parent in the community? Are these kids without any supports within the community? No grandmother, no uncle, or aunt . . . what is their environment, I guess, that they're getting involved in that type of situation in?

**Ms. Ross:** — There is some that just don't have . . . like again, you know, the parent's home. They're either at, you know, at bingo or more into the casino, the bingo, not so much the bars any more, but into the gambling. And so the kids are left alone a lot, on the street a lot. They go home and there's no food there, you know, for them to eat. So they have to, you know, find a place where they can get the food. A lot of them too, get into the drugs and they're taken in and I really don't know if . . . I haven't really seen it myself, where . . . but I've heard that the young kids have to go and steal for these people and bring it back to them and then they're given drugs for it.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay. Will these kids be of the same age group that aren't attending school, basically the 9 to 16 group?

**Ms. Ross:** — Yes.

**Mr. Yates:** — Well, hypothetically, this committee can make a number of recommendations, or any recommendations that they would see fit to the Legislative Assembly. Whether or not they come into being is part of a much larger body.

But if we could do something to deal with the types of problems you're facing in your community, which is different than the actual sexual exploitation of children in Regina, Saskatoon, P.A., but it's still . . . there's a form of it there, and it has a number of characteristics with children not attending school, being forced to, for basic life needs, to become involved in that environment, what do you think that legislatively or policy-wise the government could do to deal with that situation in your community?

Like there's a number of aspects of it — a lot dealing with the home environment and the lack of parenting. But just crystal balling it, what would you recommend that we could do to help those say 50 kids in your community, or 60 kids that you're talking about that you have regular interface with there?

**Ms. Ross:** — Well I think making the parents responsible for their own kids, for one thing.

**Mr. Yates:** — How would we do that though? Like what would you recommend as a tool to do that? It's easy . . . Do you want to take it the next step?

**Ms. Ross:** — I've gone to Social Services and said you're paying those people to stay home and look after their children, you know. Take the money away but . . . and give it to the kids or give them a trustee or something. It's a harsh thing, but I think it's the only thing that's going to work. These people are using those kids' money for things other than kids, and so I have a really hard time with that too.

When we have to go look for food for a family because they don't have any food and they just got their cheque, there's something wrong.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay.

**Ms. Ross:** — I've gone to homes where the kids come home for dinner and there's absolutely nothing in the cupboard for them, and I've had to go out and go and get food for them. And to me that bothers me. These kids were taken in care at one time, but they were given back. These kids get to know for a little while how good it is to have three meals a day and a clean bed and a clean home to go to. And then they're put back into a home where, you know, they have to go through the same thing again with no food, and it's really hard to see, you know, kids go through that.

So I don't know. Just maybe getting the money to the kids some other way than through the parents that gamble, you know, something like that would be . . . would help, or training for the parents, teach them how to be parents.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. I just want a follow-up question to Kevin's question and your suggestion of trusteeship for the funding that should be going to the children's needs. That hasn't come forth to this committee, but I have talked to other people in communities throughout the province who have also brought that suggestion forward and suggested that, you know, I followed up further to that then. And I said well, who would you recommend these trustees could be?

And it was recommended that there was a number of very responsible people sometime on church committees or so on that work with community already in some way or other, and it might be willing to take trusteeship. So I just wanted to let you know that there is that, that thought coming forward from other communities.

**Ms. Ross:** — Yes.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Kevin, you had other questions and then, June, I'm sure you have questions.

**Mr. Yates:** — Yes. I had a couple of questions regarding the education situation, because if you have a continuous cycle here, as you know, where kids are growing up in an environment, they're not going to school, that tends to move down through the generations, the pattern forms, and those behaviours carry on generation to generation.

Taking the same sort of crystal ball and looking at what is possible to do in your mind knowing your community, what things would you recommend or are there things you could recommend that would help encourage or get these children back into the school system?

Again, perhaps this time let's look at the parents aren't capable of doing it. Are there other things that you think in your community that could be put in place to get these kids back into the school system so that they have a better chance than perhaps even their parents had at success?

**Ms. Ross:** — I think we need to have some tools for the kids, you know, to go back to school. And I think maybe having some counsellors be able to work with the kids. I guess I'm having some problem here answering that because the kids that we have that are on the streets are coming from those homes that, you know, their parent isn't responsible.

And we'd like to work with homes. We'd like to keep the homes together. But I don't know what else you'd be able to do. Because these kids can't go to school if they're hungry, and they can't go to school if they're not dressed properly because kids are very mean. You know, they tease you if you have holes in your shoes or holes in your pants. Well nowadays I guess maybe the holes in the pants don't really matter because they cut new jeans anyway.

But, you know, like it's just certain clothes that kids wear, sometimes just aren't good enough. And a lot of times too because of the age of the kids. They don't fit in that class. They're too big for the school, for the classroom that they're in because they haven't gone to school and because they've lost grades.

I don't know what legislation could do about that.

**Mr. Yates:** — Well I'm not even thinking so much of legislation. Let me give you an example. Would it be helpful perhaps to have a social worker in the schools to actually follow up on a daily basis? Those types of things that may mean a shift in policy direction from having maybe social workers that report to the Department of Social Services working out of each school each day, that type of stuff?

**Ms. Ross:** — They do that. We have that.

**Mr. Yates:** — You have that type of program already in the community? Okay, that's not universal across the province. So I'm looking for some sense of what things within the existing system or looking at new policies would help encourage kids to get back into school.

Perhaps give them those supports in a way different than they have them today, if they can't get them from the family at this point. Because the training of parenting skills to parents is a very detailed and long-term process. You can't start that and expect to change it overnight. But looking at ways to encourage particularly those younger kids . . . if you can keep them in school and prevent them from leaving school, they have a much greater chance of success.

I was looking for your ideas, seeing as you work with these kids in the community, have a better understanding of some of the things you would recommend we might look at.

**Ms. Ross:** — I know for us, if we could do programming that would be an ideal thing. Because the kids that we work with come to us for a lot of advice and we are able to help them that way — help them to keep them in school. We know exactly what's happening in the home. We know how to deal with that.

So I think the programs are very valuable to have, even if it's a floor hockey program. Those kids are coming there. We knew

when kids were hungry. We knew what was happening in the home. And those kids come and talk to us all the time.

So I think we need to have programs like not only . . . like our programs weren't only activity programs; they were also educational. So that's really important.

We talked about staying in school. We talked about . . . We had speakers in, you know, talking about health, about food, nutrition — all those things — and, you know, the kids loved those speakers that came in.

We had sports people coming in, eh?

**Mr. White:** — Especially when you have food for them.

**Ms. Ross:** — Especially when we had food. It was wonderful. We had the program and we'd cook up like chili con carne with buns and you wouldn't believe the kids that we had. But the money ran out and we had to close the program down and that last day was the saddest day of our lives I know when we had to, you know, finally say goodbye to them.

But I think we need to have those kinds of things. But it has to be year-round, not just in summer.

We run two teen centres in summertime along with boys and girls club, and we find here that the young people are sad at the end of August because we have to close those programs down because now they don't have a place to go. They go there; they have, you know, they have games. They have people to talk to and I think that's the important thing.

I know our community has been asking for a community drop-in centre for all the youth to go to, where they can sit down with their friends and have a pop, a coffee, whatever, you know, with a little snack bar, and also have activities around. And I think those are the things that we need to, you know, have for our young people is a place of ownership for themselves. And I think that's where we're going to reach them, at that level.

**Mr. White:** — With, in that situation, having the right role models and the positive support is the key to that.

Also with your question, you know, we deal with kids from all financial backgrounds. Unfortunately more youth with, you know, people that are on assistance with Social Services. We always get back in . . . I mean forcing the parents to take more responsibility for the youth; I mean it's not a new issue. It's been around a long time.

With a lot of the youth, you know, their families are on assistance and they don't have the food in the frig and they don't have the resources because the money isn't reaching the youth themselves. You know, is there a way that Social Services or, you know, the assistance agency can put more pressure on that parent to be a more responsible parent?

Myself as a street worker, I can't put the pressure on that parent. I can advise that parent. I can help them with issues that they're going through, but I don't have any authority to say you

know, plain and simple, you got to smarten up here and become more responsible with your youth. You know we don't have that authority. In an assistance situation like that where they're receiving money through the government, doesn't the government have some say in that?

**Mr. Yates:** — Potentially they do and those are the types of things we're looking at, changes, you know; looking at the problems and seeing what type of changes may be able to be made in the system to help these types of problems. That's what we need to hear.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you very much Marcella and Craig. I don't know how much bigger North Battleford . . . or much smaller North Battleford is than, say, Prince Albert. Maybe, if you don't know, maybe one of the committee members do. But I don't believe it's a whole lot smaller, is it?

**Mr. White:** — Well we have about 18,000 here in the Battlefords, 18 to 20,000 in the Battlefords, so we're probably half the size of P.A.

**Ms. Draude:** — About half the size of Prince Albert. And I know that the mandate of our committee is to deal with the sexual exploitation of children. And so I'm absolutely amazed and I congratulate the city that you don't have the same problem that the other city does have. And I don't know if this is a chance to blow your own horn, but do you think that working with the children the way you do is making a difference in it?

**Mr. White:** — I definitely think it, especially the long-term workers. Marcella has been with Concern for Youth for 10 years. I've been about three and a half years myself. And part of working with the youth is not just new workers coming and going every six months. You become a part of the youth's life. You help them make decisions from little things to colossal problems in their lives.

Mind you, you know a youth, a problem that is disastrous to that youth might not be all that serious to an adult, and being able to talk to that youth and help the youth work through that problem instead of turning to other methods. I think the prevention that Concern for Youth and other organizations that are working with the youth in the streets and in the homes as someone to talk to, somebody to vent on, somebody they can tell anything they want and know they're not going to be criticized for what they are saying, that you're going to listen to them.

At the end of the conversation, sure you're going to give them maybe some constructive criticism or help them see a different direction that they might take and hope that they make the right decision. And I think that does have a part to do in the youth not falling into sex trade or other vices in our society that is so readily available to them. Prevention I think in programs like ours is still the best cure and also the cheapest.

**Ms. Draude:** — That was going to be my comment. Also one of our mandates is to make recommendations about what we would do. Well we can see that perhaps this is a stitch in time kind of scenario where we can do some prevention by funding

groups such as yourselves because you know the children.

I was amazed when you say there's 50 young people that you work with on a monthly basis. That number of children you'd know them by their first names, and they'd know you by first names. So maybe this is the only type of personal, real close interaction they have with a role model and someone that they trust. So maybe it's one of the issues we should be looking at.

You said that . . . I think it was Marcella said that if you have a concern you can go to the RCMP and it's dealt with severely. This is going to be tough, but explain yourself.

**Ms. Ross:** — Well I know that we have some good officers. We're governed by a board of 16 individuals and they come from a range of different agencies. RCMP are one of them. And we do know that any time we use our police officer on our board he knows what our issues are out there. And I do know that they would do everything they could to help our young people. And that's why I believe that they would do everything to get that person to court.

We have young people that have reported to us about an older person trying to touch them or whatever. They come to us and tell us those things so we deal with it right away, and we let the police know, and those people are taken to court. So there are charges that are laid and that. So it's not like they're getting away with it, because once they tell us and we tell the police and we work together on that.

**Ms. Draude:** — I should have asked the police when he was still here, but I know that there's cases where the RCMP talk to them and then there's the next step where they actually go to the court system. I guess they don't always go to the court system, but obviously they are dealt with in a manner that is . . . do you know if they always go to the court systems?

**Ms. Ross:** — They have gone to court. We have . . . why I'm saying that is because we did have a case where a young person came to us and we had been watching this individual for some time. And my other co-worker that I had before Craig was watching him. And they had a hockey team. And I was always afraid to let our young people go with him because I knew, you know, what was happening there, but couldn't prove anything. But this young person came forward to my other co-worker and come and told him, and that person was charged, you know, for . . .

**Ms. Draude:** — So do you keep track of the number of times that you go to the police with a concern and the number of times there's actually charges laid?

**Ms. Ross:** — We have statistics, but I don't have them here.

**Ms. Draude:** — Just roughly, can you give us an idea? Is it half the time or 90 per cent of the time?

**Ms. Ross:** — Charged? Well out of the ones that I reported, three of them I think were.

**Ms. Draude:** — Out of?

**Ms. Ross:** — Out of five. I think it was five.

**Ms. Draude:** — Okay. And the other comment that you made was you said there was more education needed and that's, I don't know, within the school system is one example, but there's education beyond the bounds of the building. What are you . . . do you have any proposals or suggestions?

**Ms. Ross:** — Well, with the programs that we have, like there was education, you know, being taught, like through the Concern for Youth when we had our teen centres. And I think that's important for us to be able to have that kind of information.

We have started a resource centre with Concern for Youth, and there is a resource of videos. And we tell all the agencies if there's anything that you need out of there, you come and borrow that stuff and, you know, present to the kids because the kids need to be aware.

So the Red Cross actually is doing some. I believe the Metis societies right now, they have some of the resources. I think they're going to be presenting here. But they have a centre. They deal mostly with the Metis kids though. And then you have the friendship centre who works with the status kids. And the places that we need to reach those kids are in those centres.

**Ms. Draude:** — This sounds like there's a number of agencies and maybe is it if you're a new kid in town, do you know which agency you should go to? And if I was Joe Blow in your coffee shop here in North Battleford, would I know about the Concern for Youth program or is it . . . like that's what I'm getting at, how do we get . . .

**Ms. Ross:** — If your child is having problems? If your child is having problems in school, the Concern for Youth would come up in the schools. And they also . . .

**Ms. Draude:** — Would they come to you . . . would you, as Concern for Youth, go to the parent and advise them that there's a concern?

**Ms. Ross:** — Yes.

**Ms. Draude:** — Okay.

And my last question is, I had a question about drugs in Battleford and you had indicated that there was, and of course there is everywhere. Do you consider it a big concern in Battleford?

**Mr. White:** — Well I think it's a big concern everywhere.

**Ms. Draude:** — But is there a large number or large percentage of your children or your young people involved in . . .

**Mr. White:** — I don't think our community would be much different than anywhere else. I mean, it's a big concern everywhere and we know it's happening.

Right now, I think the solvent abuse is even a little bit down from what it used to be. It's not as talked about as it used to be.

You know, you don't see it as much. I'm not saying it's not still happening; we know it is. But I think it has dropped, in our community anyway. Maybe not a lot but to some extent.

The smokable drugs — marijuana, hash, stuff like that — it's out there. And we know that the kids are getting it, whether they're buying it, stealing it from their parents or whoever unfortunately. You know it's readily available, yes. It is a problem because it is so available.

**Ms. Draude:** — I guess the reason I brought it up is because you talked about the transient population here and often that means that, maybe not more use but you don't know the people as well. So that's why I was wondering if there was a concern.

**Mr. White:** — I think there's always concern.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you very much.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Thank you, June. Do we have anyone . . . Ron?

**Mr. Harper:** — . . . little questions here. You had indicated that in your experience you have dealt with families on Social Services who have not been able to demonstrate the ability to manage their money. Is there any agency that does act as a trustee for those people who are identified in that situation?

**Ms. Ross:** — I believe the friendship centre does now have a trustee. They have just started that though. So I don't know of any other agency that would but I would like to see an agency like that developed in our community that does just that and concentrate on just that.

**Mr. Harper:** — And in your experience, how many families — or I should say a percentage or how many — a definite number of families that would fall into that category of not being able to manage their money would you say you have in the community?

**Ms. Ross:** — Probably about . . .

**Mr. White:** — I would say a large percentage.

**Mr. Harper:** — By large, what do you mean — 50 per cent, 75 per cent, 30 per cent?

**Ms. Ross:** — Fifty per cent anyway — easy. If not more.

**Mr. Harper:** — Then based on that percentage, can you give me a sort of a ballpark number — would this be 50, 500, or what would you say?

**Mr. White:** — I couldn't give you a number on that. I really couldn't.

**Mr. Harper:** — I'm just trying to figure out why, if there was a significant number of families that demonstrated this in the past, why an agency wasn't developed to be a trusteeship before now.

**Ms. Ross:** — I don't know. They couldn't answer me that



either. Because you know for me, like I said, it bothers me when I go into a home and there's no food or when we go home and there's no parent there either. We pick up kids at night and we take them home. And if there isn't a parent home, then we have to try to find somebody that can look after those kids. We're talking five- and six-year-olds.

I don't know. I think they just need to do something in this community. I've been here 10 years and I'm just getting a little frustrated. I used to have black hair when I first started but it's grey.

**Mr. Harper:** — In one year, how many times would you intervene with a child and take him home to find no parents there? How many families would that involve in a year?

**Ms. Ross:** — How many times a week? Especially for your time?

**Mr. White:** — I'm thinking four times a month where there's a situation where you get to a home and there's no supervision adult.

**Ms. Ross:** — Or there's alcohol in the home and then we can't leave the kids.

**Mr. White:** — Yes, four times a month. So, you know, 36 times a year, just roughly.

**Mr. Harper:** — Good. Thank you.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Thank you. I just wanted to make mention to you that it has been brought to our attention by some of the police in Saskatoon, and actually the whole community of Saskatoon in a sense, that there is a definite link between truancy and children getting involved in the sex trade. And that has been established.

In Saskatoon there are about 11 to 1,200 children between the ages of seven and 17 that are not going to school. And so there has been some follow-up done and there is the link. Because if you're not in school basically, you're going to end up being influenced by people on the streets that are dangerous to these children and they get sucked into drug trade and the sex trade.

And so I think we need to put a great deal of onus on education. And part of prevention and intervention is to identify things like education that are needed, not only education of the children but education of parents and so on.

And I just wanted to ask you, first of all commend you, gosh I'm just so impressed with this Concern for Youth group because 16 agencies that are working together is really ... you've taken some forward action on this and you've got this established.

Now there is, from what we've heard of presenters to this committee, there was some suggestion about a wraparound process that has taken place or at least they're working on that kind of a process in Saskatoon and Regina. And it basically means that there would be an interagency support of youth that are in difficulty. There would be the inclusion of parents in this

support group.

And so all of these supports would wrap right around the whole family and identify if the parents are in trouble with addictions, etc., or poverty, whatever the case may be, so that all of these agencies could work together to support the whole family.

Now you'd mentioned that you're trying to work with families and that, gee whiz, Social Services has ... you know, there's a social worker in the schools that does talk to them and so on but it's just not working. Has anyone discussed the probability of having an elder from, for instance, the bands that is brought in to work with that family, basically to keep them on track to help them to come to some truths here and to deal with it? Have you had that kind of help?

**Ms. Ross:** — We are working right now with the agencies. There's several agencies involved, especially education. And they are talking about a wraparound program here. And right now we have expanded our two schools, the Avalon and the Phoenix project. And we also have another school now that is working with young people that cannot function in the regular school system, and so we're talking about the wraparound program through there. And that's just in the works right now and so we'll have to see how that goes. And I really believe that it's a good system. I believe it's going to work.

**Mr. White:** — We do have elders in position in some of the schools here in town.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — It seems to me that your recommendation about the trusteeship might jolt some people into some realization that they ... if they are not managing the money for the benefit of their children, well that they won't have access to that money any more and there might be a change in attitude in regard to that. So I appreciated that recommendation coming forward.

Marcella, I just wanted to take you back to some of your comments on, you know, the whole justice system and so on, the court system. You had mentioned that youth are getting a mixed message, not only from the media, but that it's becoming kind of obvious that offenders' rights are protected more so than children, protected and discussed and taken into consideration in the courts more so than the children's rights. I happen to agree with you, and I think a number of people throughout the province are voicing that opinion right now.

I'm just wondering whether or not you have had any experience with youth that have come to you and saying that they weren't believed, that their voices weren't heard, those kind of things. And what you would recommend to — if you could — to the court system about, you know, what changes need to be made here.

**Ms. Ross:** — Well, I know when young people, you know, talk about sexual abuse that they're told either they're not old enough, they don't know what they're talking about, they're not old enough to be able to go to court, you know, for themselves. And to me, that ... the youth that's going through the abuse should have that voice, you know, before a judge, and not told that it's okay, you know, just go back with that perpetrator and

whatever's happening to you until you're old enough to tell us exactly what's going on.

You know, like, the child can be six years old. They know that something's wrong; and I think that they should be able to go before a judge and the judge should say, like, we believe you. Because if that child at six years old is being told to keep going back with that abuser until they're 12 years old, for six years that child is not being heard. You know, so that's what I'm saying, they need to be heard, you know, the . . . I think, you know, a child's cry in our society needs to be heard.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — That takes me to another one of your comments that I really appreciated and was really, you know, a wake-up call. And that comment that you made was, you know, what is the difference between a child being . . . or is there a difference between a child being sexually abused on the streets by a john that is maybe not of their family or a child abused in their home by their father? Basically a father, mother, raping their own children. So is there a difference in the final outcome of that child?

I guess, you know, not so. They're learning a behaviour and not only that, they're experiencing violence against them. And I just think that that's something that should be duly noted as to, you know, the severity of the situation regardless of where a child is being abused.

Unfortunately on the streets, you know, there is absolutely so much more negative influence happening and children can get into a lot more trouble in one night and actually their lives endangered much more so.

But I appreciate your comments. I'm going to . . . I've done a lot of writing here, but from which you have offered us, and I agree very much with the positive role model aspect. I think that a lot of people now . . . and whether we like it or not, we have to admit that there are families that are just unable to nurture and to guide children because they don't have the skills, they don't know how. So we're at a place in our history where we do have to have mentors and positive role models wrapping around these children. And I commend you and Craig on your work with that.

More people, you had mentioned, in outreach for intervention. And I really appreciate the quality of intervention you're doing on the streets. You're not obviously just out there to say, you know, watch out. You're intervening and you're offering children alternative measures that they can take alternatives to make sure that they're in a healthy situation rather than in a dangerous one, and that's really commendable.

I'm going to just pass over the questioning to Mr. Prebble at this time.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Just before I begin with questions, I'm just wondering if there's anybody else who'd like to make a public comment this afternoon is here now? Is there anybody else who would like to come forward after? Because I think we just need to be conscious of time if there is someone else who'd like to speak. I'm not seeing anyone, so in that case I think we're scheduled to go to 4:30 and we may as

well continue our discussion.

First of all, are there other committee members who have other questions they'd like to ask? Okay. Well what I'd like to do is ask a number of questions around I think some important decisions that our committee will need to wrestle with when we're making recommendations to the legislature and, you know, we'd be grateful for any advice that you might be able to offer on these.

One is that we will need to make some decisions . . . You emphasized earlier the importance of addressing the question of the johns, and you were making some suggestions in that regard. If I recall correctly you were saying, you know, let's think about publishing the photos of johns. Let's not send a mixed message to kids about, you know, predators, pedophiles being able to get off with their crime.

In Manitoba, as you may know, the government has seized the vehicles of johns. And I'm wondering what your feeling about that is? Is that something that you think we should do in Saskatchewan? Should we follow the Manitoba approach, as some people who've testified before the committee have suggested, and essentially seize the vehicles of anyone who is believed to be picking up children for the purposes of sexual abuse?

**Ms. Ross:** — I think that would be something that would help deter, because I'm sure that if the john is married, would not want his family to know, you know, that he's out there trying to pick up young, young people. I think it would deter it. I would like to see that.

**Mr. White:** — Well, I mean, taking a car away, it's a tangible thing, you know, you're taking away some of the finances. Not with just that, I myself would like to see it become more of a public outcry. Lists that are sent around from agency to agency on, you know, who's committing or who's been convicted of these crimes, whether they're in my community or not, I would like to know about it, you know, if I ever come across that situation, that person.

I would like to see the information more available to the agencies dealing with the day-to-day problems so we all have more of a, you know, a complete understanding of what's going on and not . . . the confidentiality Act unfortunately hampers a lot of our agencies in a lot of ways so we can't share the information that we'd like to. You know we share as much as we can but especially when it comes to sex offenders and johns of the sex trade. Anything like that, I would like to see the information be more available to all agencies.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Thanks, Craig, and Marcella, for those comments. I also . . . another suggestion that has come forward on the kids, I'm just wondering if you have any specific proposals on the question of addressing kids not in school.

I just want to say that, like Arlene and some of our other committee members, I'm very impressed with the sort of tapping the problem at the source approach that you've taken. It's a little easier to do in a smaller community as you'll

understand. I think that's one of the great things about living in North Battleford or Prince Albert versus Saskatoon, but you've demonstrated how it can be done really effectively.

Are there other steps that you'd like to see the province look at with respect to children not in school. For instance one suggestion that has come forward is the idea of a provincial registry whereby children who aren't in school would be tracked from community to community. And using health cards, as families move around, one could always tell if a kid is in a particular community and isn't in school.

I'm not asking you to specifically comment on that, but I'm wondering if . . . I mean feel free to comment on that but if you have other suggestions about how we can address the issue of kids not in school which is so closely linked to the question of children on the street becoming involved in one element or another of the sex trade, you know, we'd be grateful for those thoughts.

**Mr. White:** — Well I agree with the registry that you're talking about where it's more . . . keeping a better track of the youth in transit going from community to community. Also, you know, I don't know if there's a perfect answer to keep the kids in school. I know the schools are involved, social workers, elders starting to come into the school systems now.

**Ms. Ross:** — I think the wraparound will help.

**Mr. White:** — Yes, it's all going to help. The wraparound program, I think, is a really good one. Also with some way to have the enforcement, and not only the enforcement but who was to enforce that these kids if they're under the certain age where they have to be in school, if they're not in school, who is responsible? Is it the youth itself or is it the parents? But where do we have the authority to work on with that? Right now we don't have that authority, you know.

And whose responsibility is it? Is it the RCMP? Is it social assistance? Social Services? Is it the service agencies? You know, you can ask the schools and they won't be able to answer that question either. You know, whose authority is it, and is it being enforced? No, it's not.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — So your suggestion is that the legislation needs to make it clear whose responsibility it is to enforce the provisions that are currently in The Education Act, 1995.

**Mr. White:** — Yes.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Yes, well these are important points. I wanted to, on the larger question of sexual abuse of children, not necessarily on the street but in the community. I mean clearly once you get outside of Saskatoon and Regina and Prince Albert, you know, again and again the theme that our committee has heard is that the issue isn't so much overt sexual abuse on the street, it's covert sexual abuse, usually behind closed doors, somewhere in the home, or by someone else that a child knows. Or as you've talked about, the exchange of material benefits for sex.

And I'm wondering on those fronts, whether you've got any suggestions about either changes to the law that you'd like to see, or steps that could be taken to prevent the kind of abuse that is occurring in your community, over and above what's being done now. And whether there are things that the provincial government can do to help in that regard.

That's a tough question, I know.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Could I just add to that?

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Yes, by all means.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Let's just put it really simply and clearly. If you were a judge in the court and you had the right to mete out a penalty to johns and pimps that were convicted of sexual abuse or exploitation or rape of their children, what would you, if you had that power, what would you think the penalty should be?

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — That's a bit of a different question. But it's fine. No, no, no. It's just fine. You go ahead and ask that question.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — But you coupled . . . I thought you coupled two things together there.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Yes, I wasn't trying to couple them together but it's . . . I'm glad you asked the question, so let's hear the answer.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. I just . . . Well yes. I'm sorry. I thought you coupled two . . . (inaudible) . . . together there.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Not at all.

**Ms. Ross:** — I think what I would do if I was the judge, I would have that john and the family in the same room and then see what happens.

But I would deal with that john very severely. I would give him, you know, some time in jail to think about what he's doing because that is a child. Johns usually are older men, and these are little kids out there. I don't know if this, you know, if these johns have families of their own or whatever, but I don't know if they would appreciate somebody going after their daughter or their granddaughter, you know.

I guess if I was a judge, I would . . . I'd be a very strict judge, you know, give him some time to think about what he's done.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Yes. I apologize, Peter, for that intervention.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — No, not at all. Don't apologize.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — I did think that you were asking sort of a dual question there.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — But I think this is related to

the question. But what I was trying to get at is it's definitely the courts who are one vehicle for dealing with this and that's crucial obviously.

I'm wondering beyond that, at the community level, what other resources . . . well what other initiatives you can envisage — if you had the resources to undertake them, or some organization in the community had the resources to undertake them — what other initiatives can we take beyond the meting out of penalties in the event that this sort of thing happens, to try to prevent sexual abuse occurring . . . sexual abuse of children occurring, whether it's in the home or in the larger community, by . . . usually by other people that children know?

I mean most of this abuse is not, as you pointed out, is not being meted out by people that children haven't met before. These are usually . . . the abuser is usually someone the child knows.

And I'm wondering if you've got any thoughts on — other than what the courts do — what can be done at a community level to prevent this from happening. Because the reality is most of these cases aren't getting to — no, I shouldn't say most of them — a lot of these cases are not getting to the court anyway. They're not being dealt with at a court level.

**Ms. Ross:** — I think mediation would be, you know, one way of looking at it and some counselling. Having him agree, you know, to take counselling and not . . . He'd have to go to counselling until he figured he was helped. It would have to be a mandatory thing.

**Mr. White:** — Also I'd like to see more information among the community when you have a convicted pedophile or a sex abuser or a john. I never did like that term john but, you know, having that information more available to the agencies that are working on the streets with the people in the homes, and be able to know what's going on. You know some social service may have or the RCMP may have different files on people that are in our community.

Now myself as a street worker out there with the kids, with the community, I would like to know more of . . . You know I don't know where that sits with the human rights Act, but I would personally like to know who is the offenders. That way at least I have something to go on.

**Ms. Ross:** — That's what I'm saying. What rights do the children have if the johns have rights and the pimps have rights? Where are the kids' rights, you know? And I think we need to know and have a visual picture what this person looks like because johns come in, like I say, a lot of different forms and we don't know what we're dealing with.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Do you feel that a sex offender registry would be beneficial to the police and agencies in the community if you could get information?

**Ms. Ross:** — Yes.

**Mr. White:** — Yes.

**Ms. Ross:** — We'd need to be able to access those names. We

have our own base of pedophiles and things like that we watch for but it would be good to be able to go to a place to get those.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — But the transient, and the moving from one community to the other that you'd have knowledge of that happening. Okay, thank you.

**Ms. Ross:** — I know one community where the parents . . . The pedophile moved into a community and he went and he was trying to get one little girl out of the backyard, her own backyard, and her dad came out and saw what was going on and him and his neighbour went around and, you know, gave this pedophile a licking. Well they got charged for it. But now what would have happened to that man if he had turned around and took that child out of that yard and hurt that child? What would happen to him? Is his rights going to be, you know, like . . . it's just maddening when you see, you know, that kind of thing happening.

But the mothers themselves from that community are watching his house 24 hours and that has to happen too. But they're not going to let him get away with anything. Now he's saying what about my rights? Now I have a right to live in this community. Well, you've abused those rights, you know.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — I'm looking at the time and I have a number of other questions but I'd like to drop them if you don't mind just out of courtesy to everybody here in terms of wrapping up on time.

I just have one other question though that I do want to ask. And that is just to clarify what . . . As you know one of our mandates is particularly to focus on children who are being sexually abused on the street. And essentially what you said to us is this isn't happening in an overt way, but it is happening. There is some instances of exchange of material benefit for sex.

And I'm wondering how often you're seeing that . . . or hearing about that or knowing that it's happening in the case of families in the community. Now if we're looking at the exchange of sex for alcohol, drugs, a residence, food, cigarettes, etc., how . . . what's the extent of that in the Battlefords?

**Ms. Ross:** — Probably about . . .

**Mr. White:** — I don't know if I could put a number to that. I might go two or three months without hearing of an incident. I'm not saying nothing has happened, it's just that I hadn't heard of it. Or somebody involved . . . (inaudible) . . . But then you might hear of two incidents in a week.

You know there's no pattern to it.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — So this just kind of comes up three or four or five times a year. It's not a . . . it's not widespread.

**Mr. White:** — It's not widespread.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — But it happens every few months.

**Mr. White:** — I think it happens a lot more than we know unfortunately. You know, we might only hear of it six or seven times in a year but it happens more. We know it does, it just . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well yes, exactly . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Yes of course.

**Ms. Jones:** — I'm just wondering, in your opinion, if that might be . . . is there any sense that this is, that somehow it's been normalized so the kids don't report it to you.

**Mr. White:** — Yes. And also a heavy intimidation factor.

**Ms. Jones:** — I'm sorry.

**Mr. White:** — An intimidation factor from the offender. In a certain situation that I worked with just recently, the problem with the girl going to the authorities was the intimidation factor of the offender and the threats towards the family if she, you know, went to the authorities.

Now in this situation, there was a heavy . . . And this girl has a history of being sexually assaulted and didn't get anywhere in the court system in the first place. Ended up with some psychiatric evaluations. The offender basically ended up getting off.

The intimidation because he was a friend of the family. It took a lot of soul-searching for the girl and a lot of talking with different people to finally convince her that it was the right thing to do by going to the authorities. I mean by going to the authorities for this girl, she's inviting the intimidation and inviting possible harm coming to her family.

It's not an easy decision for these kids to make. Whether they're 10 years old or 16 years old, that intimidation factor I still think — and the fear and the guilt of the act happening itself — hold them back more than anything else. And that's where we don't hear about it. I'd say a lot of cases never even surface or surface 20 years down the road. It's frustrating.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Marcella, and Craig, we should draw this to a close but we want to thank you for a really important presentation. And thank you for taking a lot of time to answer our questions very carefully. We really, really appreciate it. And I'm sure that all members of the audience who were listening found it to be a very significant contribution to our work. Thank you.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — And I would just like to add to that our deepest gratitude. Thank you very much.

**The committee recessed for a period of time.**

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Committee members, please take their seat at the table, getting started . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . our presenters this evening and tell you that we're very, very happy to have you here and we do appreciate your co-operation in bringing forward some of your testimony and your knowledge to help us out with furthering the cause of helping to prevent the sexual exploitation and the sexual abuse

of children on the streets.

And we have tonight with us, Michelle Sperle. She's the executive director of Battlefords and Area Sexual Assault Centre. And also, Cst. Jackie Towler, a board member.

So just before we proceed we're going to have the committee members at the table introduce themselves to you. And I'm Co-Chair of the committee. My name is Arlene Julé and I'm the MLA for Humboldt, Saskatchewan, for that constituency. And the other Co-Chair — that doesn't seem to be here at this time — is Mr. Peter Prebble and hopefully he'll be turning up fairly soon.

Just over here, we have?

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

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

**Ms. Jones:** — And Carolyn Jones, the MLA for Saskatoon Meewasin.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. We also have Mr. Ron Harper who will most likely be joining us a little bit later.

And missing tonight is Don Toth. He's the MLA from Moosomin and that's in the southeast part of the province and he's bogged in with the snowstorm. So, unfortunately, he can't be with us.

We also have some very capable and dedicated support staff that are with us tonight from the Legislative Assembly, from *Hansard*.

**Ms. Klein:** — Donelda Klein.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. And we have a wonderful technical adviser here with us, Randy Pritchard.

We also have some other people at the back of the room that are support staff to the committee. And if you could just maybe speak up and let these people know your names?

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

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

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Thank you very much. Sorry . . . Meta . . . go ahead, Meta.

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

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Thank you very much.

So, we're going to just ask you to go ahead, as you feel comfortable doing so, and to give your presentation to the committee.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Okay. I decided to set my prepared statement

aside because I'm a speed reader and I just go way too fast and nobody can understand it anyway. So I thought what I would do is just tell you a little bit of what we do and what we're presently working with and then let you ask questions.

This is our 20th anniversary of the Battlefords and Area Sexual Assault Centre this year, so we've served the community for a good, long time. We are presently running at two and a half staff — two counsellors, one halftime admin assistant.

We do individual counselling . . . First of all, I should say that we work pretty much exclusively with people who have been sexually abused, their families, friends, anybody affected by the issue. We also work with people who are suspected of being abused.

We do individual counselling. We run groups. We run a 24-hour crisis line. We do prevention and education. We provide court and hospital support and court orientations.

Right now, in terms of children, half of our client load are kids. Last year 40 per cent were children. This year we're running about 50 per cent and our stats are up by about 10 per cent. So we're seeing even more children now.

Most of the children that we're seeing have disclosed sexual abuse, although some of them are suspected of being abused. And a large number of them are referred to us because they're acting out in sexually inappropriate ways. Most of these kids are between the ages of six and nine years old.

Now I don't know what's going on there but it's become, I would say, quite a concern.

What we've had to do recently is to start referring a lot of the kids who are acting in, we call it, sexually inappropriate ways. You know, they're under 12 so they're not chargeable and we don't like to consider them offenders. And I think they deserve every chance to be given, you know, basically the counselling that they need. But since . . . with two staff we can't keep up with these kids, we've started to refer them to child and youth services. So if they haven't disclosed sexual abuse and they're acting in sexually inappropriate ways, we have started to refer them over there. So basically that's what we're seeing.

In terms of the counselling, a lot of the kids are with us for a long time. They respond really well to counselling. They're enthusiastic.

I guess one concern I have is that a lot of the kids, we lose touch with them because a lot of them are in foster care. If they've been moved to another home or if they've been returned home, a lot of times we lose track of them. Because we only have two staff we can't do a lot of follow-up, and that's, you know, really hard to do. But even if we do follow up, sometimes it's hard to track them so we're losing a lot of the kids in the system, and it's not good.

In response to all of the problems that we've had with the kids and all the work that we've been doing with it, one thing that we found is that most of the kids we work with lack boundaries. They just have no sense at all of their space or anybody else's.

So what we did was we developed a pamphlet — and it's a very simple concept — it's called *My Personal Space*, and we have had a terrific response to this.

Moose Jaw Transition House has actually just requested 2,000 copies. They've gone out all over the province and they're becoming quite popular. We've had a lot of success in just teaching kids about their space, about getting people to honour that, and to honour other people's space, and we've had a lot of success with these kids, just teaching them prevention and education.

So I guess one recommendation I would make is to expand the existing prevention and education programs. With two staff it's hard for us to get out. We serve a hundred mile radius around the Battlefords, so it's really hard for us to service our whole area. And I think more prevention and education would definitely, you know, help that problem.

I am seeing kids who do end up on the streets in Saskatoon. They run away. I am actually working with an 11-year-old who has run away to Saskatoon twice and been found on the streets. A lot of what contributes to that is, you know, the foster care issues, being moved from home to home, the poverty, the addictions that these children are dealing with, the total instability in their lives. It's just unbelievable, you know. They have no structure and no stability. So I think that's a lot that puts them at risk.

So the one recommendation would be to expand the prevention and education. The kids are really responsive to it. It's amazing how successful that is.

Another recommendation I would make is to give more funding to existing services. There's people in this community who are doing wonderful work with children and they're stretched; they're overextended, you know. If there was more staff in some places it would be far easier to serve the needs of the families that are in crisis right now.

So other than that, is there anything else you'd like to know?

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Do you have something to add to this, Jackie? Did you want to present some of your information also?

**Ms. Towler:** — I think Staff Sgt. Kaiser spoke with you this afternoon as a representative of our office, so I'll just leave what he said.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. All right. Very good. Thank you. I'm just going to open up some questioning to committee members that are here. Are there any committee . . . Kevin, you have some questions.

**Mr. Yates:** — When you talked about 50 per cent of your clients were children, what number of clients would you have a year? Just to get some feel for what we're dealing with numerically.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Last year we had 569 new people come in and 40 per cent of them were kids so 65 . . . No, wait. What's 40 per

cent? Oh no, that's way off.

**Mr. Yates:** — Forty per cent of that would be about 230 kids.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes. I was thinking of the primary victims. Out of the primary victims that we deal with, there was 173 out of the 569 are primary victims, people who have disclosed sexual abuse. And out of that number, 40 per cent — 65 — of them were kids.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Of the actual victims. But we're dealing with more children than that.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay. When you're talking about victims, are we talking in the home, are we talking outside the home, a mixture? I'd like some feel for what type of sexual abuse. Where? What type of problem, contact.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes. Right now 97 per cent of the people we see were abused by somebody they knew. So it's happening in the homes; it's happening in relatives' homes, acquaintances. A lot of the teenagers we're seeing are dealing with dating violence situations but a lot of them are dealing with past sexual abuse and usually by somebody that they know.

**Mr. Yates:** — You had talked about one young girl that you knew that ran away to the streets in Saskatoon that was 11 years old. Is that the only case that you've come across?

**Ms. Sperle:** — No, there's been a number of them over the years.

**Mr. Yates:** — How were they recruited? How do they find out about it? Do you have any background knowledge of why they ran to Saskatoon, how they became aware? It's not probably normal for an 11-year-old to know, as an example, that there's a market for 11-year-olds in the city of Saskatoon so there has to be some sort of communication to make them aware of that.

**Ms. Sperle:** — In this particular instance this girl went with another girl. So it's friends.

**Mr. Yates:** — An older . . .

**Ms. Sperle:** — An older girl, yes. And actually . . .

**Mr. Yates:** — So you're not aware of pimps or somebody actually coming here and recruiting or procuring girls to go to North Battleford or . . .

**Ms. Sperle:** — No, we don't have a lot of experience or knowledge regarding that. There's been some rumours over the years, but just of prostitution in North Battleford; but I've never had any direct evidence.

**Mr. Yates:** — But I'm talking about somebody coming here and recruiting girls to go to Saskatoon.

**Ms. Sperle:** — No, never heard anything, which is good I think.

**Mr. Yates:** — Next question I . . . Just one more, if you don't mind. We have some experience this afternoon or some discussion this afternoon about older male — predominantly male — individuals in the city allowing younger girls to live with them for, you know, food, clothing, and safety, those types of things. And although it's not the exchange of money for sexual favours, it's the exchange of needs for sexual favours. Are you aware of those types of things in the community?

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes.

**Mr. Yates:** — Any idea to what extent the problem . . . how great the problem is? And are there any patterns in that behaviour that we should be aware of?

**Ms. Sperle:** — Actually that is a pattern of behaviour. I mean, if you look at child sexual abuse, oftentimes the offender will bribe a child to do sexual favours. They will give them things in order to do that. That's a standard, classic way of getting a child to do that. So I mean the extent of the problem is huge.

**Mr. Yates:** — I guess what I'm trying to ascertain or find out here, is there any common precipitating events or those types of things that you can pinpoint a way to tackle the problem, specifically in this community versus any other community? Or are there any particular characteristics of the problem?

**Ms. Sperle:** — Of dealing with the problem of young girls living with older men?

**Mr. Yates:** — Right. You know, how does it come to be in this community. I want to know . . . I'm trying, through this series of questions, to find out — where in other communities where we've had this revealed to us and brought forward — if there are different precipitating issues or characteristics? Is the problem the same where we have it in these communities or is it different? Does it need to be looked at or tackled differently? Those types of elements of the problem.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Well, you know, in terms of tackling the problem, I think there does need to be more intervention for these kids. I mean there are so many things that are causing this. If the girls are responding to those kinds of offers then obviously they don't have any kind of a home life and there's no stability. And I'm, you know, guessing there has been some kind of abuse or there's addictions in the home or there's poverty and there's no structure. And so, you know, one thing is to start doing intervention with the families in crisis.

And the other thing is to maybe go further. You know, I was reading your book that you were looking at having actual places, like addiction centres where the kids could go, stable places if they don't have stable homes to go to. You know, alternatives I guess to those kinds of things.

But education is a big one. Like educating them that it is abuse. That it is . . . it's not okay, you know. Did that answer?

**Mr. Yates:** — Yes.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Just as a follow-up to that. I'm not too sure exactly if that did answer your question, Kevin, but

what I was thinking at the same time is when Kevin mentioned the word characteristics, do we have an indication in this area that there are more Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal children that are needing to have some basic needs met that would exchange sexual favours for some basic needs like shelter, food, etc.

**Ms. Sperle:** — I haven't got too much experience with that. I mean I'm seeing mostly kids, young kids under 12, so I wouldn't know. Are you talking about older girls, like how, what age group about?

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — No, I'm just talking about whoever they are. Are the higher incidence of them Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal or is it just a mix of both?

**Ms. Sperle:** — I'd say it's probably a higher incidence of Aboriginal.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay.

**Mr. Yates:** — Can I just ask a follow-up question?

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Sure, go ahead.

**Mr. Yates:** — When I was talking about characteristics, when we're talking about children moving in with adults, are we . . . from your experience, is this older kids — 12, 13, 14, 15 . . .

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes.

**Mr. Yates:** — Are we talking 7, 8, 9? Those types of things would determine differences perhaps between communities and how you deal with the problem. Are we dealing with those in lower socio-economic situations? Are we dealing with . . . In one community we had some people talk about some young children do it for the thrill, you know, get involved in certain things for the thrill of it . . . And so to try to get some feel of what some of the underlying issues are here and whether we're dealing with very young kids or older children.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes, I would say between the ages of 12 to 14 or 15, somewhere in that age. I haven't heard of a lot of kids moving in with older men who are younger than that. Most of the kids younger than that are in foster homes or homes or whatever. I haven't had any experience with younger than that.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. Other committee members with questions? June.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you. You said you had 569 victims which probably . . .

**Ms. Sperle:** — Five hundred and sixty-nine clients.

**Ms. Draude:** — Clients, yes.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Actually 173 are primary victims.

**Ms. Draude:** — Okay. That goes with my question. What's a primary victim?

**Ms. Sperle:** — They've disclosed sexual abuse.

**Ms. Draude:** — So the rest of them have just come forward.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes. Some of them are family members that we deal with. Some of them are suspected victims.

**Ms. Draude:** — You said you have a 24-hour crisis line. Do you keep stats to see how well it's used?

**Ms. Sperle:** — We haven't kept them too well lately.

**Ms. Draude:** — Is it used during the evening, during night?

**Ms. Sperle:** — Oh, yes.

**Ms. Draude:** — So it's staffed?

**Ms. Sperle:** — I was on a call the night before last. When our volunteers don't take call, we cover call and I was on a call actually for two kids who had disclosed sexual abuse on . . . what was the night before last? What's today . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Sunday night, thank you. Sunday night.

So yes, we are busy on the crisis line too. A lot of people call or the RCMP will call to go to the detachment or we go to the hospital to respond to . . .

**Ms. Draude:** — So do you think that this is working well? Are you glad you have it?

**Ms. Sperle:** — The crisis line? It works well but it's hard to keep it manned. The volunteers are hard to come by in this community so it's really difficult to keep it staffed and it's just . . . that part is hard.

**Ms. Draude:** — You expressed concern that you don't have the staff to follow through with . . .

**Ms. Sperle:** — With the kids?

**Ms. Draude:** — Yes, what would you want to . . . just to see how they're doing? If your work has helped?

**Ms. Sperle:** — We would want to see where they've gone. Because if they've responded to counselling and they've only been in for one or two sessions then they aren't finished, basically. So we would want to know where they are and why aren't they coming back. Because the kids don't make that choice. Their caregivers make that choice.

**Ms. Draude:** — You had indicated that additional dollars for prevention would be on your list of priorities. So is there any way to prove that this is going to actually help. Rather than spending money on the band-aids afterwards, should we be spending money on . . . would a recommendation be that we spend money on prevention?

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes. I guess, I guess the only way that I know that it works is through personal experience in the successes that we've had with the kids in teaching them. It's like I was telling Arlene — or Ruth Hagerty I guess I was telling her — the simple concept of teaching your children about their space can make it more successful. If the child is able to stand up for



themselves and to say no, to run away, to get themselves to a safe place, it can make a big difference in a child's life.

A lot of what we're seeing is children abusing children on playgrounds, in homes, all over the place. And if you can get a child to . . . for example, I have two children I'm working with right now. They're brothers. One is eight and one is six. Sorry, four. The eight-year-old was abusing the younger one and actually abused another younger sibling than that, a two-year-old. So what I did was, I taught him personal space. I taught him it wasn't okay to do that. I mean we spent two or three sessions going over that. He now slaps away the younger child's hands. The younger child is now trying to touch private parts of everybody in the family. And so he's stopped doing that and now we're trying to teach the younger child to stop doing it. It just spreads like wildfire, you know.

**Ms. Draude:** — So it sounds like it's from the same family so then it isn't being taught by the family, by the parents?

**Ms. Sperle:** — Well, it's complicated. They're in a foster home right now and they were like that when they went into the foster home.

**Ms. Draude:** — And you said the pamphlet . . . and I can't remember the name of it, it looks interesting.

**Ms. Sperle:** — It's just *My Personal Space*.

**Ms. Draude:** — Is that being distributed through the schools?

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes. We're going to be starting a campaign. Actually we're going to be putting posters up in the schools and having the pamphlets available there.

**Ms. Draude:** — So do you have any difficulty or . . . When you're working with the education system, is there a protocol you go through? Are they happy to see you come or is there . . .

**Ms. Sperle:** — We do presentations upon request.

**Ms. Draude:** — So how are you making them aware that you even have it, just by sending them the brochure?

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes. We've been taking them in. Whenever we have presentations we take them in or we ask to go in. What we actually did when we first developed this pamphlet was we got the kids in some of the schools to name this little stop sign guy here to get the schools interested in it. So we had a contest where they had to name it and we got some of the elementary schools involved in it. So we will just ask them if we can give them to them.

**Ms. Draude:** — So when we look at the mandate of our committee which is exploitation of children through prostitution, are you just saying that you're not aware of the direct prostitution — children standing on the corners — but it's happening more within the homes or within . . .

**Ms. Sperle:** — Sexual abuse is happening within the homes, yes.

**Ms. Draude:** — And you also talked about children exchanging sexual favours for necessities . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Pardon me? I mean, you're aware that it's happening but under a different guise, maybe not with exchange of money.

**Ms. Sperle:** — I'm aware of children sexually abusing each other, yes. Children abusing children.

**Ms. Draude:** — Okay, but not . . .

**Ms. Sperle:** — Not exchanging favours or anything, no.

**Ms. Draude:** — Okay.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Carolyn, did you have any questions?

**Ms. Jones:** — I don't think so, thanks, Arlene.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. I just wanted to talk about again the sexual abuse of children in the homes because we have had some indication from other hearings that we had throughout the province that oftentimes a learned behaviour by the children, or not recognizing that in fact they are being abused, leads them to believe this is normal behaviour. And then as their lives progress they end up, you know, doing these same sort of . . .

**Ms. Sperle:** — Sexual acts.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — . . . sexual actions with people that progresses throughout their lives. Sometimes they do end up on the streets of the cities and so on and then comes the involvement with drugs and that whole cycle and so on continues.

I'm wondering, do you know of any programs or in fact does your sexual assault centre have maybe a program that helps men or women who are sexually abusing their children? Is there any sort of initiative being taken to address that?

And, you know, at one end of the spectrum we're certainly hearing of some really fine work that is being done to help the children. And I'm just wondering whether or not there is any initiative being taken to dealing with teaching parents who would abuse their children about the seriousness of this issue and how criminal an activity it really is and the consequences of this behaviour?

**Ms. Sperle:** — There are treatment programs for people. But I mean, you know, you're talking about something that is a criminal act. And so I mean, first of all, they're arrested, and then if they're convicted, then, you know, they have an opportunity a lot of times to be put into a treatment program. But in terms of . . . we don't deal with that.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — So, for instance, if a child phones you on the crisis line and they tell you in their own terms that they are being sexually abused by a parent, is there . . . are there measures taken, to your knowledge, to address that parent and to charge him, that you know of?

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes. Whenever we have the information, we make the report to the RCMP and they investigate it, or Social Services does. Yes.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. Are the charges followed up with some sort of measures, to your knowledge, convictions and so on that would at least see that the child . . . the parent doesn't have any more relations with that child?

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes. Well they'll . . . Yes. The child is usually removed from the home if the offending parent isn't. So they'll either remove the child or they will remove the offender from the home. One or the other.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — So from the statistics you've given us, there are 65 children that were reported last year. Then, you know, what follows then, according to your prior comments just a moment ago, where that if 65 children were sexually assaulted and let's just say half of those by their parents, are there half of those parents that are looking at charges against them?

**Ms. Sperle:** — I'd say half of the parents would be pretty high. I think that would be pretty high. That would be a high estimate in terms of parents — you know, one or the other parent. I think, you know, you'd probably be looking at a lower statistic than that.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — About?

**Ms. Sperle:** — At a lower statistic than that in terms of the parent.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. So maybe 15 to 20.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Are you satisfied that those parents that are actually raping their own children or such, are being dealt with properly in the courts?

**Ms. Sperle:** — It depends on whether the child is able to carry through with the disclosures, whether they feel comfortable talking to the RCMP. It depends on a lot of factors.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay.

**Ms. Sperle:** — If you would say . . . if you're asking me if I'm comfortable . . .

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Not comfortable, but are you satisfied that something is being done?

**Ms. Sperle:** — I am, in . . . to the extent that it can be done. It's an unnatural circumstance to take a child, especially a child under the age of six, and plunk them down in front of a police officer and say, okay, now tell them what happened. Oftentimes they aren't willing to do that. So what can end up happening is that the child will be returned to the home and nothing will be done. There's always that possibility.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — So, for instance, the child has

disclosed to you when they phone in on the crisis line.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Well that rarely happens. Usually they don't call the crisis line, but . . . Yes, I mean if we get a disclosure, we report it to either Social Services if it's a protection issue, or the RCMP, or both. Usually both.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. You've mentioned some recommendations that you have regarding prevention and education programs, and we thank you very much for those. Those are valuable.

Do you have any recommendations as to legislative measures that the Legislative Assembly might take as far as changing laws or adding to laws or making amendments to laws or whatever, that might deal with the perpetrators of sexual abuse?

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes, that's a good question. I hardly ever work with the law because I work with the kids. You never think about it in those terms.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Yes. I recognize that this isn't really, like, your area. Certainly not your . . .

**Ms. Sperle:** — It's not even something that I think about, you know.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Not even your responsibility. But I'm just kind of thinking that I know certainly that in your work, you're very concerned and caring and that oftentimes you must have thoughts that gee whiz, you know, are we doing everything we can.

**Ms. Sperle:** — I have lots of . . . yes, lots of them. I guess, I guess just something that would make it easier for the kids to disclose. You know, I think we've gone too far this way, you know. So some way of just making it easier for the kids to be able to tell what happened.

I know that the RCMP are doing the best they can. They have specially trained people. They have, you know, all of the resources — better talk nice especially since I have one beside me — I mean they have everything that they need in terms of that but it's still an unnatural situation. And there is so few convictions in terms of these children when they disclose.

So I don't know what would solve that. I rack my brain trying to think of what could make it better.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. I have just one more question and Mr. Prebble has joined us so he may have some further questions.

Have you had any disclosure to you of young people that are traumatized or that have been violated due to gang rapes.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Yes.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. Is there an increasing incidence of that and . . . Yes, I'll just ask you that question first.

**Ms. Sperle:** — I would say just from my experience I would say yes, we're seeing an increase in them. We're seeing more of this happen in party situations where people are drinking. It seems like, you know, as soon as a girl passes out then that's when it's most likely to occur. And yes it has increased. Yes.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. All right, I thank you very much.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Thank you. I want to apologize for not being here during your presentation.

**Ms. Sperle:** — No, that's fine.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — I'm very sorry that I missed it. I did enjoy hearing the response to the questions but because I didn't hear the presentation itself I don't think I'll ask you questions. It wouldn't be fair to you.

**Ms. Sperle:** — Can I leave you our pamphlets so that you have copies of them?

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — We would love to have those. Thank you.

**Ms. Sperle:** — I've brought them. Okay, thanks.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — If you'd just like to leave them at the end of table, we'll pick them up. Thanks a lot.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — We'd like to invite our next presenter to come forward. Lance, would you come forward. Good to see you, Lance. Greetings.

**Mr. La Rose:** — How are you doing, Peter?

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — I'm doing very well. Lance is representing the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan. And I should introduce you formally, Lance — Lance La Rose — who I've known and had the opportunity to work with for a number of years. It's really nice to see you. Welcome.

**Mr. La Rose:** — It's good to see you again, Peter. I don't know if this is going to pick up my voice or not. I'll move a little closer. And actually . . .

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Lance, were you here when committee members introduced themselves or would you like members to . . .

**Mr. La Rose:** — Yes, I was here. I just sort of want to make a minor correction. Peter is partly right. I'm here representing the Metis Nation but I'm also here representing the Metis and First Nations youth in the Battlefords. They talked to me and they've asked me to come here and sort of tell their story and hopefully we can work together to make some change.

So I guess with that I'll start. I'll read a little bit and I guess some of it I will sort of take off the top of my head.

I want to say good evening to all the members. It's an honour for me to be here. And it's good to see Randy. I'm a little

disappointed. When Randy asked me to be here he said he'd wear that pink dress that he wore at that last party and he's not wearing it. So I'm a little disappointed, but that's okay . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'll forgive him. Pretty in pink. I had to do that — he's always doing the same thing to me.

I guess my position with the Metis Nation is I'm the social justice director with the Metis Nation, Western Region A1. As well I also have the health portfolio as well as the youth portfolio, so I sort of dabble in a few different areas.

What I'm here to talk about tonight is, as I indicated, our Youth Empowerment Centre that the Metis Nation has in North Battleford and to talk about many of the things that the youth are going through.

In the past year our Empowerment Centre staff have worked with and listened to, or counselled, youth that have been dealing with some form of sexual exploitation. We have 243 registered members in our Youth Empowerment Centre. These are Metis and First Nations youth and also some non-Aboriginal youth.

And what we do at the Empowerment Centre is mainly that we try to empower the youth. We try to give them a sense of belonging and well-being and personal power. We do that through cultural programs. We have a couple of different cultural programs. We have the older kids' programs. These are for kids from the ages of — depending on how mature they are — 10 to around 17. And then we have the little people's cultural group as well that sort of prepares the younger kids for the older group. And they do a lot of cultural-related activities and crafts and arts and these sort of things and some story telling.

Twenty-six females, ages 12 to 17, have talked about sexual abuse, date rape, verbal abuse, physical abuse. And you might ask what these stats have to do with sexual exploitation of children through the sex trade? In 10 of these cases the victims were picked up by older men and paid for sex, not knowing what they were getting into or realizing that they could get paid for the things that have been happening to them at home. A lot of these children are abused at home. They begin to realize that they can sort of turn this to their benefit. It might be a new bike, or Nikes, or something of that nature and they learn that very young.

And in many cases of the sexual abuse, it was direct family or relatives or even step-parents or stepbrothers or sisters that have been abusing. Nine males, age six to thirteen, have reported verbal abuse, physical abuse, and eventually sexual abuse. And in most cases again it was relatives, and in two of the cases, it was abuse by friends that themselves had been abused and learned that to abuse means power.

It's taken us a long time to sort of get the trust of these kids to the point where they begin to disclose these abuses, these offers, to our staff. We've reported them to the RCMP and there's really nothing they can do unless the kids come forward and give a statement.

And these kids won't give statements. They know that nothing is going to happen. They know that already. Some of these kids,

as I said, are eight and nine years old. They already know that to open their mouths is only going to mean that they're going to be yanked, usually stuck in a foster home, or torn from their families. And they won't speak up. They'll talk to our staff but that's as far as it will go.

Approximately 48 youth have reported to the Empowerment Centre staff that older men have circled the area around our building. Our building is located at 1091-103rd. It's just almost right in the downtown core of North Battleford. And they've approached them for sex and offered them money.

These kids have reported this over and over for months. And these pedophiles have offered to take some of our youth to round dances on far-off reserves. And some of these kids are really struggling to regain their cultural identity. And so to them something like a round dance or something cultural is really powerful to them.

I call them pedophiles; I don't know another word for them. And they know this and they prey on that. So they offer to take them to these round dances, and oftentimes that's usually when something happens. They'll either make an advance, touch them, or make an offer that they could make it worth their while.

In one case, the known abuser has been charged. He was out on bail. He befriended a youth that was attending one of our cultural programs at the centre. He then convinced this youth to bring some young girls along with him to his house. Some he took as well again to a round dance where they felt safe, they felt it was okay to go to a round dance.

And what we feared most that would happen has happened. These girls are now separated from their families. Their lives are shattered. They're either again in a foster home or have been sent off with other family members. They're uprooted from the communities. And they won't speak up because they know what will happen if they speak up.

I'm going back a few years, but one case of an elderly gentleman, he used the kids' love of hockey and a hockey program that one of our local organizations had started for underprivileged kids. And he used that to lure young boys into his grasp. They trusted him. He'd drive them to and from practices and he'd buy them, if they didn't spit on the sidewalk or if they didn't smoke, he would buy them a hamburger or maybe buy them tape for their sticks. And he'd reward them in that way. And he used that trust the kids had. He sexually abused quite a few of these kids.

This gentleman was nominated and voted citizen of the year in North Battleford. He was charged eventually with, I guess, sexual assault of boys. He got probation because he was a contributing member to society and he was a member of clergy. Kids know that and the kids are pissed at that. They know he got away with it.

In a more recent case, a gentleman by the name of Father Beaudet, a retired priest, he'd been driving around our centre — yes, I use his name and I'm going to continue to use his name — he's been driving around our centre for many, many months

stalking kids, trying to get them into his car to go for a drive, making offers to these kids. We report it to the police. There's nothing they can do until this old man does something to one of these kids. They pulled him over outside our building one night, you know, checked his registration, that sort of stuff, and let him go because there's nothing they can do until he hurts one of our kids.

One of our older girls had had enough. She said that's it, you know. I'm getting this old bastard. She stood outside the building. The guy drove around, drove around, which he usually did, 12 to 15 times a night. He would drive around our building and pull over, roll his window down trying to lure a kid and away he'd go.

He pulled over, rolled his window down, and she walked up to his car. She snapped his picture. She had a camera. She took his picture. She wrote down his licence number. She brought it to me. I phoned the police. The police came. They said, now we got him, way to go! You got his picture and you wrote his licence number. Way to go! We'll nail him.

When it came time for this young girl to give her statement, she said, no, I won't give a statement. So I asked her why. She said because they won't do nothing. Two reasons: one, he's a white guy; and the other reason, he's an old man. They won't do anything. He'll get away with it.

I brought this to the officer. He guaranteed me no, we just charged an old guy, we'll nail him. We got him. You got his picture, you know. You got his licence number. We got him.

So I talked to this young lady and I talked her into giving a statement. She gave a statement.

So when I was doing up this report to present to you — I know that you had asked for them beforehand so you could read them and have questions — I was waiting to hear what happened to this old guy. Well at 4:30 today, just today at 4:30, I learned what came as a result of this.

As I indicated, the guy is a priest, he's a retired priest. He's living in a little house just by the Don Ross. It used to be the St. Thomas College and they had a priest residence while it . . . I guess it still belongs to the Catholic Church. And he lives there.

So, what they did is they brought their big guns from Saskatoon, along with their lawyer, and they sat with the police and the guy denied, denied, denied. And they said well, what we'll do — they knew he was guilty; they knew he did this before — they said what we're going to do then is we're going to move him out, south of Battleford, to the Oblates' residence and take away his keys. He can only drive with permission.

I talked to that young girl before coming here and she just looked at me. She said, I knew it. The old bastard got away with it and I knew it. Why did you make me talk to that cop? I said because I really truly believed it was going to make a difference. Nothing happened.

They also offered to move him to Saskatoon to the Oblate's residence in Saskatoon. Well he would do the same thing in

Saskatoon. I know that. Kids know that. So I told the officer that's bull, that's not enough. You got to nail . . . you got to charge this guy. Well he then offered to get a peace bond. That's not going to stop him. The guy is a pedophile. He's a sexual abuser of children. He's not going to change until something is done. The kids know that. The kids know. They tell me, they look me in the eye and they say we know that. There's not a damn thing you can do to change that.

And it's not going to change, you know, until people like you, each and every one of you, the lawmakers and the police, people that uphold the law, until they do something about it to make that change.

We recently had a meeting with the supervisor of child protection and Social Services here to work out some sort of protocol, you know, so when these kids disclose . . . These kids tell us, you tell them and we'll deny it and you'll never see us. Because they know, they know nothing is going to happen. They know that. In their heart of hearts, they know that because it's been proven to them over and over and over again. They live with that all the time. That's their reality. That's their fear and it's real. It's real to these children.

That's why many of these kids won't come forward, they won't disclose. They'll talk to our staff because they know that our staff care. They know. Our staff are on duty 24 hours a day. These kids call them at home to talk.

And I know when we met with the supervisor and we talked to the RCMP. Are we obligated to report this? Yes. But is it going to make a difference? No. We can report it. The kids will clam up. They'll deny it. They'll deny having said anything.

We brought an instance of physical abuse forward and the children disclosed that; again, because the person was upstanding and recognized in the community and they're doing a wonderful job, nothing was done. These kids know that. So why the hell are they going to talk about sexual abuse? They know what's going to happen. They're going to get yanked for their protection. The laws don't protect them and that's their reality.

And this is what the kids asked me to tell you. That if you can make a difference, then you'd better damn well get off your ass and make that difference. That's what they want to see. They want to be able to . . . They do. They want to be able to come forward and say this is happening to me and know that something is going to happen and somebody is going to get charged, that they're going to be taken from the danger. Not from their families but from that danger. That's what the kids want to see.

And they do blame people like you, they do blame the lawmakers, and the law enforcers for things not happening.

I wanted to bring some of the kids with me tonight. I even offered to do in camera and they said no. We'll tell you, you tell them, because if we go there they're not going to really listen to us and we might jeopardize the results. They're tired.

So that's sort of what I came here to talk about today, the

message I came to bring on behalf of the kids, not just the kids in the Battlefords, I know this is going on all over the place. You know, a lot of these kids run away, a lot of these kids end up in Saskatoon or Calgary or Edmonton, especially the girls. They know they can make a buck. They know that they can survive, all they've got to do is spread them. They know that, you know — 12, 13, 14 years old, they know that. And that's what our society taught them.

So I guess that's sort of my report. I appreciate the opportunity to be here.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Thank you very much, Lance for presenting that to us and for making us aware in a very graphic and honest way about what is happening.

I reassure you that many other young people in this province that are on the streets and being victimized in this way and treated in such an awful and ugly manner in this way have indicated to us, too, that they have definitely pinpointed problems with law enforcement and with the judicial system really hitting the perpetrators of this. Rather it seems that all the efforts to change things and penalize people for this are placed on the backs of the children who are being victimized.

So I thank you for that, and I'm going to turn questions over to committee members.

**Ms. Jones:** — Thank you. And thank you for your presentation. Sorry, I'm all nasally here with a bad cold.

There's something I'd like you to help square away for me. I believe I heard you say, and I know we've heard it in other places, that the children are afraid of being taken away from their families or being wrenched from their family, and that, I assume, is one reason why they won't disclose.

On the other hand I believe that I heard you say 97 per cent are abused by someone they know and, in many cases, family members. So how do you square the abuse and where it's taking place and the resistance to being taken away from the abuse. I find that hard to grapple with.

**Mr. La Rose:** — Well, it's a four-letter word — it's called love. There's also another word — it's called loyalty to their family. Regardless of what's happening to a lot of these kids, they'll remain loyal to their family.

I know it's difficult to, you know, I guess to grasp or to understand, I guess. But unless you've been there, you know, it's difficult to understand why they do want to stay, why they remain so loyal to their abusers. For a lot of these kids that's all they have.

**Ms. Jones:** — Well, I mean I understand that family loyalty runs deep and it's a bad substitute for love to have sex imposed upon you at a very young age, but as a legislator, I mean the kids obviously want us to do something about perpetrators.

Now perpetrators are not only strangers — in many cases they're families. So I mean you can't just prosecute people who don't belong to your family who abuse you. The natural result of

better and tougher and more enforceable legislation, hopefully, will be that they will also disclose and bring the familial perpetrators to task as well.

So you know, do you see some conflict in that? Do think that we'll only be having charges pressed against strangers and not against family?

You know, it's a very difficult issue to square. I mean the kids don't want to be abused, and yet they're not willing to come out of a situation of abuse. So that to me is . . . I mean I know that it occurs and I believe that it occurs, but I find it really hard to deal with. And how do you . . . When you make a law and you make it enforceable, I mean it's enforceable for all. So it's going to put you in a position as well. If the kid discloses a familial abuse, if you're required to report, I mean you're going to have to do it against the family as well as the stranger.

**Mr. La Rose:** — Well, and I agree with that. I do. I come to you today with a dilemma — not a lot of answers, you know, unfortunately. I agree that the law has to be the same for everybody, you know, even family members.

In my message, I guess what the kids are . . . I know what the kids are telling me is that they need to have some proof that something is going to happen. You know, that the law is going to actually be on their side. They're not going to come forward against mom or dad because a lot of these kids, as was indicated by the previous presenter from the sexual assault centres, a lot of cases these kids go back into the home. If they can't prove anything, they place the kids back in the home. Many of these kids don't want to go home — that's why we have a lot of runaways.

But they're also not going to come forward because they know that nothing's going to happen, because usually what's going to happen is they'll end up out of the home.

I know it's a Catch-22 — I guess damned if you do and damned if you don't, you know. But this is sort of their reality.

**Ms. Jones:** — So you feel that if the children had more faith in the justice system and that their story would be taken seriously and that some result would come to the parent as a result of their disclosure, that they would disclose?

**Mr. La Rose:** — I believe they would.

**Ms. Jones:** — Or would they clam up?

**Mr. La Rose:** — I believe they would. That's what they're telling me. They're saying why should we if nothing's going to happen? You know, a lot of times the word of the kid isn't going to be taken, you know, as again . . .

**Ms. Jones:** — So you think there's a reluctance because if their disclosure results in an unsuccessful prosecution that they'll suffer even further repercussions at home?

**Mr. La Rose:** — That's probably true.

**Ms. Jones:** — Yes. Okay. It's a very difficult issue to square.

**Mr. La Rose:** — And I agree. I certainly agree with that.

**Ms. Jones:** — I'll leave it at that for now, June. Perhaps something else will pop up as we go along.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay, thank you.

**Ms. Jones:** — I'm sorry — Arlene.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thanks very much for the presentation, Lance. You have put squarely in front of us, as many other witnesses have over the last several weeks, the real complex and difficult issue: how do we, through legislation or even through policy, deal with an issue where on one hand you have children who are at risk and clearly at risk — in no way are we looking at saying that what you're telling us and what we've heard from many, many other sources is not true — with the complex problem of the family and that loyalty to the family.

And even though that they're being abused in many cases, those family members are their emotional support. And that closeness between family even with the abuse is something that they feel they need.

So although you've brought the problem to us and we've heard it, it's a very complex one because those kids are not going to be happy being taken out of that environment in many cases. At the same time, they can't live in that environment safely. So it's a matter of not just dealing with the individual children's problem, or child's problem of being abused, it's having to deal with the entire family to create a safe environment. And not a very easy situation.

With that in mind, what type of recommendations would you make to us knowing the family environments of some of these children or knowing about the family environments in more detail than we would? To sort of square that circle, I guess.

It's very similar to the question Carolyn asked you. But we do need the advice and experience of people like yourself when we sit down to look at what we might be able to do in the future and make recommendations to understand as much as we can about the environment, the types of families, the problems in the families perhaps, to take a holistic approach to it. Because it's very, very difficult for a young child to leave their own home, not have that immediate emotional support; regardless of what the parents have done, they are still the parents. And we've heard that evidence before brought forward.

What would you recommend knowing the environment, knowing the families perhaps in some cases? How would you recommend tackling it?

**Mr. La Rose:** — Well there are a couple of things.

One of the things that the Metis Nation is doing in working with Social Services is we're working towards developing support homes. And I know Peter's quite familiar with that because we sort of worked on that in Saskatoon as well.

We're working directly with extended family, so if a child is being abused in the home either by mom or dad or whomever,

they can be removed from that home but still have that family connection by being placed with other family. They still have that family support. They still have that connection with their sibling family, their immediate family.

And you see, we've been working quite closely with Ruth Seine and her managers and supervisors to sort of get this off the ground in the Battlefords. We've sort of done one series of training and we're looking at doing more. We're looking at the present foster care program and looking at redesigning it to suit Metis and First Nations families — you know, our culture, our traditions, our traditional way of doing things.

Historically the elder, like the grandparents . . . we have many families here in the Battlefords that the grandparents are still raising third and fourth generation families, you know. They have many, many other children in their home that they're raising. That's . . . historically that's how we lived.

So that's, I guess, one way of addressing that. I truly believe that if it's mom or dad or a sib they need to be . . . they need to be charged. The other thing is is that the, you know, the punishment has to be equal to everybody.

Because there's an old pervert out there that's 76 years old molesting children. He's old enough to get it up for these children, he's old enough . . . he's still . . . he can still be charged. He shouldn't be too old to charge and that's what's happening with some of these old guys. They're getting away with it because they're too old to charge. They're sure not too old to go after these babies, you know, but they don't look at it like that.

Because a person is a member of the clergy or is a Catholic priest, they're using that to get these babies for whatever reason. It shouldn't make a difference, it shouldn't make a difference.

You know and the law should be very, very clear on that and stand on that. I said particularly this case where this Father Beaudet you know, he got a slap on the wrist. Took his keys away. He could drive with permission, so when he gets permission, where's he going to go? Right back to where the kids are. I can guarantee it, you know.

You can get a restraining order. Well a restraining order isn't going to do a damn thing to these pedophiles.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — I'd just like to comment on a follow-up to that. Generally priests have a superior. Generally they have a bishop over them, or whatever. Have you ever questioned the bishop as to what the bishop thought maybe should be, you know, what they should do about . . .

**Mr. La Rose:** — I didn't have that opportunity because he . . . because as I said, I just learned about that around 4:30 today. But I'm definitely going to pursue that.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — I was just wondering if that initiative had been taken by anyone at this point, okay.

Then I'll just turn the questioning over to June Draude.

**Ms. Jones:** — Can I just ask on that and then I may want to come in later. Was this part, like was this a pre-trial? Had they already gone through trial, or was this kind of like a pre-trial judgement.

**Mr. La Rose:** — This priest? No, he wasn't even charged.

**Ms. Jones:** — Okay. So he came up before the courts, at all?

**Mr. La Rose:** — No, didn't even go in the courts.

**Ms. Jones:** — Just the police talked to him and said how be you do this.

**Mr. La Rose:** — I don't know who the boss is in Saskatoon that came down, one of the bigger priests with their lawyer. They were here.

**Ms. Jones:** — So they cut a deal.

**Mr. La Rose:** — They knew that . . . they knew it and they cut a deal. And the kids knew they would. They knew that. They cut a deal. Well they moved him out to the oblate's place. It's just south of Battleford. It's only about a mile and half; take away his car keys. He can drive with permission.

**Ms. Jones:** — Thanks, I'll . . .

**Mr. La Rose:** — But you can rest assured I definitely am going to pursue that.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Lance, you had a powerful presentation. You talked about . . . out of the number of young people that came forward there was 10 girls who were actually victims and they were paid for sexual favours, and you also said there was nine boys. The ratio is staggering compared to the testimony we've heard in other areas. Just about 50/50, I mean that's really different than what we've been hearing. I'm wondering why there would be such a large difference.

**Mr. La Rose:** — I don't know. That's something that baffles us as well.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Just to clarify, please forgive me if I am butting in inappropriate like that. I had understood Lance somewhat differently. I'd understood him to say that there were . . . I'll just go back and look at the exact numbers. Lance, you can give them to us.

But my sense was that there were 26 females and 9 males — that was the ratio. But of the 26 females, there were 10 females that were actually picked up by older men and paid for sex, whereas in the case of the boys . . . whereas the 26 represents overall sexual abuse. So there were 26 girls who were sexually abused; 10 of them were kind of sexually abused by johns. There were nine boys who were sexually abused. So it's not . . .

**Mr. La Rose:** — Some of the girls, as I indicated, were taken to round dances and other things. They use cultural events to lure these kids as well, and these kids are starving for that.

**Ms. Draude:** — So there was 10 girls who were actually picked up by johns. Am I correct?

**Mr. La Rose:** — Ten girls out of 26 . . .

**Ms. Draude:** — And how many males?

**Mr. La Rose:** — Nine, yes. There were 48 . . . You're not actually keeping real accurate stats of the . . .

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — But the nine boys weren't picked up by johns, were they?

**Mr. La Rose:** — No they were . . . well you could call them johns if you want or call them what you want — they were sexual abusers.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — They were abused though, they were sexually abused. And there were 26 girls sexually abused, and nine boys.

**Mr. La Rose:** — Yes . . . either touched or . . .

**Ms. Draude:** — Okay. When you said repeatedly that they knew nothing was going to happen, and when they said they knew nothing was going to happen, it meant the whole case would just be dropped so it was just wasting their energy and their breath. And so that's why they didn't want to do it.

**Mr. La Rose:** — And creating possible backlash to them. Why put themselves through this when they know that nothing's going to happen. When we ask them that, what do you mean nothing's going to happen? Well they're not going to get charged. Who's going to care? Like we're just slimy little Indian kids, little half-breeds. Who cares about us? Nobody cares about us.

**Ms. Draude:** — So at the age of 6 and 8 and 9 and 10 and 15, they knew already that it didn't pay to talk about it.

And the other thing that . . . today we've had a number of witnesses from Battleford and we've asked them about actual prostitution, johns circling, johns stopping, picking up the young people.

And we were told that there wasn't actual prostitution happening here in Battleford. That there was child abuse for sure and it leads to prostitution, and perhaps prostitution in the bigger sense of the term, when you don't use money but whatever else. But did you tell us that there are actually, in your opinion, there are johns circling the block?

**Mr. La Rose:** — Well, and again I guess call them what you will, whether you want to call them — sexual predators or pedophiles or johns — they use whatever they can to get these kids to do whatever they can get them to do whether it's offering money or hamburgers or you know.

Like I don't use the term prostitution because these kids aren't standing out there asking. You know they're not actually pedalling. These predators are there, you know. They know where the kids are; they know where they hang out. You know,

if they're not hanging around here, they're by 7-Eleven. They know where they are, they know.

Like this one particular . . . this priest he had five different vehicles. The kids knew every last one of them. They knew who he was. They knew he wanted it.

But to actually call it prostitution. No, I call it sexual abuse. I wouldn't call these guys johns; they're pedophiles. These are children.

**Ms. Draude:** — I think you're right. I think we should stop using that name.

**Mr. La Rose:** — Absolutely.

**Ms. Draude:** — We should use the name pedophile — call it the way it is.

**Mr. La Rose:** — They're child molesters and child rapers — that's what they are. The kids know that. That's what they call them. I don't think there's been one kid that has talked to us that has called anybody a john. They call them an old pig or an old pervert or an old bastard or an old raper. Because that's what they are and the kids know what they are.

You know there are many . . . there are actually probably 12 or 15 houses in North Battleford that the kids . . . (inaudible) . . . These guys are pedophiles and the kids know that but they score.

**Ms. Draude:** — They what?

**Mr. La Rose:** — They score. They get some. You know, they either get to drink there or they get to do whatever you know. Call that prostitution? I guess you can. But they're not. I don't care. You can call them johns to paint them pretty, and that's what ticks the kids off most is when you try to make it pretty. It's not. These guys are molesters.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you.

**Mr. La Rose:** — And I don't mean to be so graphic or . . . this is what the kids asked me to say. They said you've got to tell them this stuff. This is our reality.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Thank you, Lance. What you've clarified very succinctly is that the people that are initiating this activity are the offenders and society gives them many names; it just depends how you view them. And those children have come out and they have used their language through you.

This sort of summarizes what a number of people in the province are saying. We need to put the onus on the children as victims and the people that would perpetrate this activity, in whatever fashion they do, as the offenders and that the onus should be put on the offenders to answer to this.

Too often the children have been the ones who have been targeted by the law as having to pay for this situation in society, and it's certainly coming to be recognized by a number of people, as I mentioned, that we have to sort of change our focus



here and understand who it is that should be targeted and made to account for this horrible activity.

I wanted to ask you, Lance, you have mentioned that you're with the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan, and I know that there is within Aboriginal people — First Nations as well as Metis people — that there is a lot of onus being put on the restorative justice programs. So I'm going to ask you, within your region have there been any initiatives taken to deal with the situation of sexual abuse in the home through some sort of a program that would restore the trust of the child, you know, to trust their parents again, to help parents understand that abusing their children sexually and so on is really very detrimental to their life and detrimental to a wholesome lifestyle for the whole family?

So has there been any kind of initiatives taken or any kind of . . . anything done, I guess, to address this whole problem through restoring peace and harmony in the family and through education and possibly counselling, as well as counselling leading to maybe addiction rehab and so on?

**Mr. La Rose:** — Okay. Not directly through restorative justice. We've had some ongoing discussion with the healing foundation, you know, through the recent . . . or initiative with the . . . through the foundation. We have a couple of proposals in.

We actually have one that actually deals on that very thing, is helping families to heal, you know, the generations of sexual abuse. For a lot of these families it is a learned activity; you know, it's normal because of the abuse that they faced in residential schools, and it's carried on from generation to generation.

So yes, we are addressing that but not through the restorative justice model, through the healing, the healing foundation, and other healing models.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. So you're addressing it and you mention there has been some discussion surrounding this.

**Mr. La Rose:** — Yes.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Have they been actively pursuing some programming to deal with this? Have there actually been . . .

**Mr. La Rose:** — Yes. We have, we do have a couple of proposals, you know, that I guess we're waiting to see whether or not they'll be funded.

The problem with that is having to show the direct, the direct link to residential school abuse, okay. And that's sort of where we're at right now, is struggling with the healing foundation committee, you know, to, I guess, to convince them that yes, it is directly linked; it's directly related to abuse at residential schools. And that's the only, sort of, the only projects that they fund.

We haven't pursued it through Justice.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Is there a possibility with the funding that you get, the Justice portion of funding that you get, that you might use some of the money — I guess just sort of reroute it or whatever — to use it for . . .

**Mr. La Rose:** — You mean right presently?

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Yes.

**Mr. La Rose:** — We don't get any funding from Justice.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay.

**Mr. La Rose:** — We get a little, a little tiny pocket from Social Services.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. All right. I'm mentioning that because I talked with a Metis woman in Regina, and she indicated to me — she had worked up North — and she indicated to me that, as she was telling me stories of sexual abuse and so on within homes and the cycle and intergenerational residential schools, the whole pot of it, she had mentioned that when children were taken to a medical centre and it was determined that, you know, of course they were there and there was a lot of damage done, that she went in as a counsellor to talk with the child.

And the child indicated that yes, it was a family member that had done this but they didn't want any more trauma; they didn't want any more pulling their families apart. You know, the abuse was terrible but there was something more terrible, and that's having no one around that you even know and they didn't want to experience that.

And so this counsellor had told me that she counselled the whole family and that there was success — success stories coming from that — where the parents being the perpetrators came to know and understand and certainly stopped their activity. And I found a great deal of hope in that because we often are told that pedophilia is a disease that cannot be cured. And so I listened very intently to what she had to say.

And so I'm wondering . . . you know, when I asked you this question earlier, it was whether or not something like that could be incorporated to work with families so that the healing could be done without further damage to the family.

**Mr. La Rose:** — And that's definitely part of our plan, part of our five-year strategic plan of course is eventually to get there.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay, thank you. Peter, did you have any questions?

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Yes, I do.

Lance, thanks for a really important presentation. This isn't the main area I wanted to ask questions about but I'm just — sort of further to what June has said — I'm struck by what I think are two very different messages that we heard today.

Because this afternoon basically what we were hearing is there's no sexual abuse happening on the streets in the

Battlefords. And these are from good people who preceded you, both the Concern for Youth organization and the RCMP who I think honestly believe that there isn't.

But I think what we've heard you say this evening is that there is, and this is obviously looking at it from a different perspective. That, from the point of view of the Metis community in the city, there is sexual abuse happening on the streets and it's in the form of men circling around places like your Empowerment Centre and being willing to offer kids sex for money.

And so I think . . . and this happens in other communities as well, where there's kind of different perspectives on this. Which tells me how tough it is to get a handle on this because these are all, we're talking here about all good people who are giving their perspectives. And maybe after today there could be some more conversations in the community about trying to get a handle on exactly what's going on.

And that's what we're struggling to do in the province as a whole. Because we find outside of Saskatoon and Regina and Prince Albert, we get different messages about whether sexual abuse on the street is happening or not, again depending on one's own experience that one brings to bear on the problem.

But just to clarify: what I clearly hear you saying is that sexual abuse of kids on the street is happening in the community.

**Mr. La Rose:** — Absolutely.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — I wanted to ask you some questions about the protocol that you're thinking about developing with Social Services and what the larger provincial policy implications of that might be. And also some questions about what's happening in terms of the negotiations with Social Services on family home arrangements that would allow extended family members to look after children where the parental situation is an abusive one, and what kind of progress is being made in terms of funding for these arrangements as well as in identifying the extended family members.

But on the protocol first of all. Do you have any suggestions for us about how sexual abuse protocols in various communities should be reformed to make it easier for children to feel that their reports are being acted on and to make the reporting process easier? And just what sort of protocol changes would you like to see?

**Mr. La Rose:** — That's sort of a tough one. I guess just the act of following through with charging. Once the kids begin to see that and know that things are actually happening, people are actually being charged, regardless of their age or their community background, you know. Once that begins to happen, I know that I actually feel we'll probably be flooded with more and more disclosures.

I also think that once we see that these sort of maybe safety nets — you know, if we're able to set up these extended family homes, places that these kids can be placed rather than being yanked out of their family environment and put somewhere else — I believe that too will have an impact on these kids, whether

or not they'll begin to come forward more.

You know, as far as the protocols, like I said that's something that we're struggling with because we know that we're bound by law and we have to report it, but it's not going to go anywhere, you know. We're building the trust of these kids. We're trying not to damage these kids in any way. We don't want to make the situation worse, but we don't want to ignore the situation. So it puts us in a hell of a spot. And these kids are coming forward more and more, the more relaxed they are. And that's the reality that they deal with all the time.

One of the recent programs that we just sort of came out with is a drama, like putting together a drama club. Well here's what these kids want to do. They thought, well we'll do two different things. They want to do a video. Of course the girls want to do one on hookers. And the boys, there was going to be a bunch of falling down drunks, you know; they want to be hanging around a dumpster, drinking out of a bag. That's sort of their reality, you know.

When given an opportunity to do something, you know, to have an impact, this is where their hands are at because that's . . . So we try to do things to encourage that. Well let's change that, you know. Like let's maybe give it sort of an upbeat thing — well my, you know, here you go again. Now you guys are saying we can do whatever we want. We want to do this and you're not letting us, you know; you're trying to make us do something else. So then we say then, do your video the way that you want to do it; you're right, we have to respect that.

So the same with when kids begin to disclose, you know. They're saying, you're telling us we can trust you, we learned to trust you, we tell you something, and you run off and tell somebody, and then it screws us up, you know.

So that I know we're breaking some laws, and we probably are, you know. We're probably crossing some very fine lines, and I'm sure we are. But we're doing it with the best intentions, and we truly believe we're protecting these kids as much as possible, you know.

I know there are lots of people out there that disagree, you know, and they say what you're doing is damaging. Can it be any worse than what's really going on?

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Right. On the question of extended member family homes. This has been . . . I know you've been working on this now for, you know, four or five years. How many homes are established now around the province and in the Battlefords area?

**Mr. La Rose:** — We haven't really been real successful. What we're doing right now is we're still I guess dealing . . . meeting with, you know, with Metis and First Nations families and sort of setting up the process. I guess it's kind of the same thing, you know, that when I speak of children, you know, the kids not really trusting.

We have a lot . . . With Metis and First Nations families, as you probably well know having dealt with a lot of the families in Saskatoon and other places, that same trust isn't there, you

know. We have a lot of families that still look at Social Services as people that come and govern your life and take your kids, you know. Same with health, when they talk about the health nurse. They're going to come and take my kids, you know. They see maybe a cockroach and they see bugs or something, all of a sudden, you know, the kids are going to be yanked.

That's still a reality. I mean it's year 2000, it's a new millennium, but it's still there. You know that's sort of the reality. We're doing what we can to bust through that, you know, to assure these people that when they come forward to be a support home, you know, that we're going to do everything possible to support that and to ensure that they're treated with the dignity and that respect.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Has the province . . . has an arrangement been worked out now in some locations in Saskatchewan where the province is willing to provide funding in a way that's acceptable to, you know, the Metis Nation so that you can . . . so you got some financial support for these homes? Like is that, is that . . . is there an agreement in principle on this funding or is there . . . and is there any examples of these homes being funded?

**Mr. La Rose:** — An agreement in principle. We have a social development coordinator with the Metis Nation. We have the funding locally here, or regionally rather, you know. Ruth was . . . (inaudible) . . . But the money that she found was alternative measures money, youth alternative measures was being used. We're trying to move forward an all-measures program but we can't, because there's no money because the money is being used for our social development program. Money is tight.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — So there's no budget item on this either within the provincial budget or a line budget item for you within your organization?

**Mr. La Rose:** — No. No, we just kind of scrape from year to year. And we've had a budget for the last four years, and I think that budget is sort of decided at the end of the year. Well we still have this one pot and it stays consistent, you know, like there's no . . .

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Because if we're going to get these extended family member homes set up, there's got to be funding for them. There's got to be a financial arrangement for them. Would you agree, Lance?

**Mr. La Rose:** — Absolutely. Yes, absolutely.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Yes, because otherwise we're not going to go anywhere with this.

So essentially you're saying to us we've got to get some financial resources in place for these homes. And I guess the struggle for you is identifying who is going to . . . which extended family members are willing to do this work.

**Mr. La Rose:** — We also have to make sure that the family is healthy as well, you know that we're not moving the kids from one situation to another. So that's the other part of that, you know, that dilemma, I guess, if you want to call it that. You

know, that we have to make sure that if, while doing this process we have to make sure that we have healthy families as well, you know, within that family structure to make sure these kids are actually going to be safe.

We do have many healthy families and we are working towards that now. I know Mary Ann has been doing recruiting for quite some time. You know, we making some headway. It's a slow process. It's certainly understandable. That's our reality.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — Yes, exactly. No, it's difficult work. Are there other questions?

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — I'm just wondering, Lance. I can hear and feel and know your frustration that sometimes the police do not enforce the laws that are at hand. They don't take the opportunity to take some measures that would make sure that pedophiles, obviously in this case, are dealt with in a more meaningful way that would protect children in the future.

Have you ever had the opportunity to talk to the police about this very problem and ask them why in fact they do not take the measures that you and other people like you would see fit?

**Mr. La Rose:** — Because it's difficult to prove in a lot of cases.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Have you spoken to them?

**Mr. La Rose:** — Yes, we've spoken to them.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Yes. So they say it's difficult to prove?

**Mr. La Rose:** — Well it is. It's difficult to prove. And if the kid won't . . . particularly if the kid won't give a statement, you know. And if the kid sees . . . And I know that what just happened is going to be very damaging and I know that without a fact. It's going to be very damaging.

So when I talked to the young lady she said I knew that old bastard was going to get away with it; you know I knew that. Why did you make me talk to him? I said, well I didn't make you but having convinced you, I'm sorry for having done that, I said, but I truly believed it, you know, when I talked to that officer and I believe he said that.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — To your knowledge has this priest had any prior convictions of sexual abuse and have . . .

**Mr. La Rose:** — I'm just recalling the conversation with the constable and he said, yes; he of course knows. He's done it before, you know. He denied it. He kept saying that's not true; it's not true. But Saskatoon knew damn well too because they were here with their lawyer. You know, they knew what was going on.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — So he had prior charges . . .

**Mr. La Rose:** — I believe he . . .

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — . . . but to your knowledge had he been convicted?

**Mr. La Rose:** — I don't think he's ever been charged. I think he's gotten away with the same thing over and over and over. That happens. That happens.

I'm going to take a risk and disclose. I grew up with that myself in the Catholic Church. I grew up with a priest the same way. The same kind of guy. Nobody believed me. So I know where these kids are coming from when they say that nobody's going to believe it; nobody's going to do anything about it.

Citizen of the year. Think about that. Molesting little boys. That's their reality.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Yes. Well it's something that, you know, I have reiterated over and over again in the legislature and throughout the province and so have other members, that the protection is of the perpetrators; and we're trying to hammer home to the judicial system that this is what's happening and that whole attitude has to change.

You know, that whole ... We have to recognize what's happening here and how it's more and more detrimental to our children as time goes on and to society as a whole as time goes on because people are refusing and reluctant to do anything about changing that attitude. So we thank you for bringing it forward again tonight.

I'm just going to ask, are there any other committee members that would like to put forward any questions yet? All right, Carolyn.

**Ms. Jones:** — I'm sorry, Lance. I kind of keep grilling over and over again. I'm still very, very concerned and have been ever since the beginning of this process about the family that abuses.

And I would like to, in my mind at least, be able to draw a distinction between what we refer to as pedophiles and something that seems to be systemic, endemic — whichever, whatever you want to call it — because of abuses that they've suffered; the family just considers child sexual abuse a normal activity.

And I'm wondering what rate of success do you think we could hope for?

I mean if fathers, and mothers, but I mean I think we predominately recognize it to be a male offender — majority male offender — if they simply don't see it as a really wrong activity, do you see hope for some sort of an educational program that would educate them that it is a wrong activity? I mean as we've said, we normally think of pedophilia or pedophiles as incurable individuals. And yet it seems to me that if it's a matter of kind of a social norm that if you can change the social norm, then you can get rid of a lot of the problem. Do you think that there's a hope of working with parents in the Metis nation and First Nation communities to do some sort of an education program? To do something that would act as a preventative measure or a restorative measure?

**Mr. La Rose:** — Any kind of prevention program I am, like anyone else, are all for it. I believe that through some type of a healing process, some kind of a healing program, much like the

one we discussed earlier with helping the whole family to heal. It's most times that when a family faces a crisis that's when they begin that healing process. Whether it be a death or someone going to jail or whatever the case may be; or alcoholism or drug abuse — it's when they meet with that crisis, that's when the healing begins.

So yes, some kind of prevention program — absolutely. But I think some kind of a healing program; a healing process has to begin.

**Ms. Jones:** — So you think that perhaps a charge and a conviction might begin that healing process?

**Mr. La Rose:** — I think it would be a beginning. And there's definitely going to be a lot of hurt and a lot of turmoil, absolutely. At least this way it may be shared with the whole family as opposed to hiding it and keeping it a secret.

**Ms. Jones:** — Thanks.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Well Lance, we'd like to thank you. I'm sure that Peter is going to put that into his own words but I'm ever so grateful for you coming forward. And it does take a great deal of courage to specifically speak about some incidents that are actually happening in and around your community and specifically speaking of people that need to be taken to task. And we are certainly going to take into account everything that you've said and everything that you have recommended to us. And I thank you so much for coming forward and being part of the presentations. Thank you.

**Mr. La Rose:** — I appreciate that.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — It's wonderful to see you Lance. You bring a lot of experience to this presentation today. We've had a chance to work together on lots of different occasions but you bring a wealth of experience to the Battlefords and to this issue so thank you.

**Mr. La Rose:** — Thank you and I appreciate the opportunity and thank all of you.

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — I was going to suggest we take a five-minute break but just before we do, because I think we need to make a decision about whether we're adjourning or whether there's other presentations, is there anyone else this evening who would like to make a presentation? We do have a ... Sorry, I didn't realize there was.

Arlene, you're on top of this. So we do have another presentation and I'll let Arlene introduce that. But we'll take a five-minute break first, and thank you.

**The committee recessed for a period of time.**

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — The committee has been requested by an attendee here to be able to present to the committee and talk with the committee about some of her concerns. So we'd ask Ms. Joan Bryant to come forward to the witness table. And we welcome you, Joan, and thank you very much for being willing to come forward and to speak to the

committee about some of your . . .

**Ms. Bryant:** — There's Joe Citizen — well I'm Joan Citizen.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Joan Citizen. Okay, Joan, we'll just ask you to just proceed.

**Ms. Bryant:** — Just a couple of comments as I heard the speaker before, is that this citizen of the year trial, I actually attended the trial as a concerned citizen because I am always concerned about children. And there was no one else there. And I found out later why people didn't come was the same thing, is that they knew nothing was going to happen. And this had been going on for years.

And you know, these kind of things happen — the police have a lot of complaints about a certain person but they never have enough evidence. So that's exactly what Lance had said. You know, you have to have a lot of stuff to be able to charge someone and get it through the court system. And then when they do — because they had plenty of evidence on this fellow — but then the judge just says, oh well, you know, he's too old and you don't want to put him in jail and dah dah dah dah.

And then when the judge did say he ordered him to go for counselling, the Crown counsel gets up and says, oh, I think that he'll just do that anyway; you won't need to put that in the . . . I almost got up and said something then and they'd have thrown me out.

So I am concerned about the children and I think that there's . . . it's a difficult thing; I know it's very difficult.

When I lived in Washington State, the state had a program that they had just started then, when you mentioned about keeping the families together. When the perpetrator was in the family and, as you had mentioned, it's most often the male; so if the father was the perpetrator, then they had a special . . . they took . . . had special counselling for the whole family. And the father . . . well first I think they talked to the father first and had him, you know, acknowledge and admit and say that he wanted to keep the family together. Because they found that incarcerating these people was not helping society.

So they had them all together for counselling and the father, you know, apologized to the daughter — just using that as an example — and then they agreed to what they were going . . . what the plan was going to be to keep the family unit together and prevent this from happening again. And, of course, it didn't all happen in one session.

But the interesting thing was that this lady that was a friend of mine, her and her husband both worked in this program and she said the hard part was the mother of the family was the one that kept denying that it happened. And so they couldn't get her . . . they were having more trouble getting her to co-operate in keeping the family unit together and preventing this from happening again, which was quite a surprise to me because you would expect it to be the opposite. So it was.

But they felt that it was working and they were, you know, being able to stabilize a lot of families and keep them together.

But as far as on the streets, I don't know. I'm a volunteer with victim services, have been for five or six years, and we mostly get the reports that happens to girls at parties and things like that and we don't get a lot of incest reported to us but maybe the Sexual Assault Centre does. I'm just not sure.

But my big concern was, tonight when I came, was I feel like our children are falling between the cracks in the system. I mean, I think that . . . you know, we have the Sexual Assault Centre and we have the police and we have Social Services and we have all those things. It's like a sidewalk. But there's these cracks in between where a lot of the kids, you know whatever is going on with them, is not . . . doesn't belong to Social Services, it doesn't belong to the Sexual Assault Centre or whatever. And there's just . . . You know, I think we're losing a lot of kids through the cracks, so to speak. I don't know how to describe it otherwise.

You know each . . . mandates here and here and I think that we need to join and maybe have a little collaboration more in the mandate so that they aren't just left there. And I don't have any specific examples I could tell you but . . . you know, like the school, the school does so much, and Social Services does this, you know. All these agencies have their protocol. But somewhere in between their mandates, there's these cracks where the kids fall through and not just because they're small. So I think that . . .

And the other thing I was concerned about was our . . . I'm sure that your own idea, too, is to, you know, improve our society. And I do feel that something should be done for children of divorce or victims — they are the victims. And children are often pawns in this game of divorce and, you know, they really need counselling.

It's a big loss for them to lose their family and I really feel that those children need counselling. It's a grief. It's just similar to a parent dying, not that they don't see them but I mean their family has died. The family is not there any more. They've lost their family as a unit. And I really feel a need for something like this too, so these children will feel that they're normal and they won't feel it's their fault because often one of the parents will tell them that not realizing how damaging it is to the child. And also, sometimes, kids that aren't from divorced families don't understand kids that are.

And so I think that if they could . . . you know, if they could have some counselling, I mean, even a few sessions of . . . and I mean you could have a group. You could use group therapy, because there are so many divorced children of divorced families.

And also, you know, grief. There really isn't anything — I've done, as a volunteer, grief support group here quite often — but there's really nothing for children. And I think that along with the divorce that, you know, grief counselling, this type of group therapy for children. And, you know, the parents are already running a taxi with their children and so I don't think I had thought of trying to do something for children. But in the evenings you can't expect parents to take children somewhere and pick them up again. They're already doing that in all cases.

So I don't know anywhere you could put it; maybe into the school system, with school counsellor. Instead of doing the one-to-one, would it be more effective to have group therapy? Because a lot of these children in the schools, you know, have similar problems. And rather than just doing the one-to-one to those that really exhibit the most problems, you know, to have a group and that it's an okay thing to do. It's not . . . to take away the stigma from the children. And I think that's basically all I thought about.

And so I just had read this quote that said: you know, a snowflake is one of the most fragile things that nature has made, but look at the power of them when they stick together. And I think that if we all stick together, we can create a better society for our children to grow up in.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Thank you very much. That was very helpful, Joan, and we appreciate having your comments and some of your experience come forward to us today. I'm just wondering if there are any committee members who have questions or comments that they would like to make.

**Ms. Draude:** — We appreciate your coming forward. It's really nice to hear, just like you said, citizens listening and coming forward, and thank you very much.

**Ms. Jones:** — I just thought I'd follow up on the . . . there's a little confusion left in my mind from your comments and Lance's about whether there was an actual charge laid against your citizen of the year. You referred to it as a trial.

**Ms. Bryant:** — Oh yes, it was a Queen's Bench trial. Yes, there was a charge laid.

But the interesting thing was, because most of the children, in fact all the children that he had been taking . . . giving rides to, were Aboriginal children or Metis, you know, and it had been going on for years. And some of the kids told their parents but the parents didn't believe them. And initially when the first boy went . . . his mom took him to the police to tell the story, well then these other parents initially had told this woman too the same thing had happened. But none of the kids would say anything.

So it went to court on the testimony of only one 14-year-old boy, and it had gone on for a few years with him. But he was totally ostracized because I spoke with his mother, in fact more than once, and she said that his friends and the . . . he had to even quit playing hockey. He was so ostracized and so . . . and had such a stigma from the other children who were sexually assaulted too, because they weren't going to go and tell.

And so this was . . . and this boy spent the whole time, and you know how long it takes to go from the preliminary to Queen's Bench and everything else, and this boy was having a very hard time at school and the community because he had reported it and he was going to testify.

**Ms. Jones:** — This was my confusion. I've confused this case with the priest that was referred to.

**Ms. Bryant:** — Oh, okay. Sure.

**Ms. Jones:** — So this is the person who received probation. In the other case, there was no charges laid.

**Ms. Bryant:** — Yes, yes.

**Ms. Jones:** — Okay. I'm sorry. That was . . .

**Ms. Bryant:** — That's okay.

**Ms. Jones:** — That was my confusion.

**Ms. Bryant:** — Hey, you get into this legal stuff — most of it is confusing.

**Ms. Jones:** — Anyway, thank you for coming forward.

**Ms. Bryant:** — Okay.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — I'm just quite interested in what you had mentioned, Joan, about the need for children of divorce to have counselling. And, you know, when you really think this through, there's a lot of things that can happen if children do not have proper help and counselling in a timely fashion.

Because if they get more and more disturbed and life becomes more traumatic for them, they often become more vulnerable to dangerous forces out there and can end up on the streets. And so what you're talking about is some of the things we need to be aware of to prevent that from happening, and so it's very relevant to what we're doing here.

I've also heard of many people saying that children of divorce are not receiving counselling the way they should. Now we have private counsellors, but of course that often . . .

**Ms. Bryant:** — That's only the ones that are, you know, that are acting out and showing problems. A lot of them, the problems are all internal and they need counselling probably more than the ones that are . . .

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — It just reflects on, you know . . .

**Ms. Bryant:** — It's preventative. I think it's good . . . I think it would be good funding spent on preventing a lot of these things.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Right.

**Ms. Bryant:** — I think we need to start at the grassroots and do a little preventative thing. Let's prevent these problems before they come, instead of trying to fix them after we have them.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Exactly. There's been studies on the role of the schools now and how the roles of schools actually are expanding. There have been a lot of talks and in some areas there are integrated services within the schools. There is, you know, some problems surrounding territory, funding, and that kind of thing. But I think there's certainly some progress being made in that area.

So we value your suggestion of this counselling in schools for the children of divorced parents and I . . .

**Ms. Bryant:** — And grieving children too. If a parent or a sibling has died, you know, there's a lot of problems for a child, and a lot of the parents don't have the funding to go for private counselling and there isn't all that much free counselling out there.

And I think that school counsellors, I know have always been a premium because they have to cover so many schools, etc., whereas I feel like the . . . that the money would be better spent on these counsellors if they did group therapy. Because they could do, you know, they could do several groups if they were too large a group, you know. Instead of just doing two or three students, if you could do 20 or 30, that would be, I think, a better way to expand the policy.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Okay. Thank you. Peter, do you . . .

**The Co-Chair (Mr. Prebble):** — No, I don't. I think these are very positive suggestions, Joan, and I thank you very much for them. It's a good way to finish off the evening, with a bit of a broader look at both the issue and the overall well-being of children who are in crisis of one kind or another. So thank you very, very much.

**Ms. Bryant:** — And I think, like, I've got Hillary Clinton's book that's entitled *It Takes A Village* and it takes the whole province because we don't have that many people.

**The Co-Chair (Ms. Julé):** — Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 9:25 p.m.