

## Winnipeg's Visible Sex Trade

People who find themselves trapped in Winnipeg's visible sex trade are some of the most vulnerable people in our society; they are usually facing issues of poverty, past and present abuse, drug and alcohol addictions and mental illness. British Columbia's Opal report pointed out the following:

"Many strategies are required to address the underlying causes of vulnerability and marginalization, police do have a central and unique role to play within the overall network of strategies required to reduce the violence perpetrated against vulnerable and marginalized women. Policing approaches that listen to, learn from, and respond to the safety needs of marginalized women will contribute to effective crime prevention. By actively engaging women in developing safety-enhancing measures, police can contribute to their empowerment. Every contact that vulnerable women have with the police and the justice system is an opportunity for empowerment through active offers of assistance and intervention. Positive interactions, even small ones, can assist in reversing the course of isolation stigma and sense of helplessness".

Very few people enter the sex trade willingly, most enter to just survive, and this is commonly referred to as "survival sex".

Sex trade workers are further victimized by those who exploit them; the john's who purchase sex (Exploiters), gang members/pimps and drug dealers who capitalize on their vulnerability and addiction.

Sex trade workers often find themselves at odds with members of their own community as they usually work within the community that they live. Community members themselves do not see sex trade workers as fellow citizens but view them as a public nuisance. The end result is the community pressure on the Police Service to address these issues.

Prior to the last decade the Police Service focused its enforcement initiatives on the sex workers. In the last decade WPS enforcement initiatives have shifted towards a more balanced enforcement approach. This approach ensures that the same level of enforcement addresses both the Exploiters (John's) and sex trade workers.

We know that the johns (exploiters) who go to known sex trade areas trade predominately live and work in other areas of our city. These Exploiters travel to the areas with ambiguity for the sole purpose of exploiting members of these communities. It is exploiters (John's) money that fuels the gang/drug/sex trade and violence. It is for these reasons that greater attention is required in the identification and apprehension of the exploiters

During the last decade enforcement efforts have seen averages of 80 arrests for both the exploiters (johns) and sex trade workers. When enforcement initiatives are conducted they do alleviate sex trade activity albeit for short periods of time. When enforcement initiatives are reduced or stopped the activity quickly resumes as it was.

We have seen that sex worker focused enforcement ultimately moves the sex trade activity around a given neighborhood or in some cases moves it to an entirely new neighborhood.

As mentioned most of the sex trade workers in Winnipeg are dealing with underlining issues of drug/alcohol addictions, history of abuse, and/or mental health issues. Arresting sex workers does not address the underlining issues resulting in most sex trade workers returning to the streets shortly after release.

Arresting sex trade workers ultimately creates an “us versus them” mentality and intensifies their mistrust of the Police. Instead of seeking our help they avoid Police at all costs. Many sex workers fear reporting crimes perpetrated against them to Police out of the fear that they will be arrested.

In order to improve communication, trust and safety for sex trade workers in our city and improve our ability to detect and arrest their exploiters a new approach is needed. As mentioned in Opal:

“Policing approaches that listen to, learn from, and respond to the safety needs of marginalized women will contribute to effective crime prevention”.

As a result we need a change in our philosophy towards sex trade workers. We need to be sensitive to sex trade workers and the circumstances which have brought them to where they are. We need to use our Police discretionary powers to better serve them to ensure their safety is our number one concern.

In order to achieve a shift in philosophy our Police Service should use their discretion when deciding to charge sex trade workers for any offence in relation to prostitution related offences under section 213 CC. Our Service’s primary goal should be the wellbeing of the sex trade workers and the detection and apprehension of sex trade exploiters. When dealing with sex trade workers we should present them with other alternatives such as engagement in outreach programming.

In order to reduce the street level prostitution activity in our communities we require a more robust exploiter (John) focused approach. A persistent enforcement strategy aimed at the sex trade exporters is required in order to deter anyone from coming to these areas for the purposes of exploitation.

It should be noted that enforcement that targets exploiters, as opposed to sex trade workers requires additional time, resources and planning. However, arresting and identifying exploiters tends to have a significantly greater impact on changing offender behavior compared to the arrests of sex trade workers. Most exploiters have had limited law enforcement involvement and as a result this contact in some cases has a profound effect on them. It is estimated that less than 3% of exploiters (john’s) arrested in Winnipeg for buying sex in the visible sex trade are re- arrested for the same offence. There are a numbers of reasons why re- arrest is low such as; enforcement tactics used, they are truly staying

out of the areas or they have sought other venues to purchase sex i.e. Escorts, Massage parlors, strip clubs and bath houses.

A New Strategy in Winnipeg is needed, it should be one that targets the exploiters while recognizing the vulnerable position that sex trade workers are in. It should promote the development of trusting relationships between Police and sex trade workers. It should strengthen our current relationship with outreach programs currently assisting sex trade workers here in Winnipeg. Our Police Service will more than ever need to rely on our community partners in order to successfully help sex trade workers exit the sex trade.

The Winnipeg Police Service should adopt a new philosophy to combat the sex trade issue in our city with enforcement initiatives targeting exploiters coupled with social responsibility and community collaboration to address the social issues faced by the sex trade worker's. This new philosophy would rely on and strengthen existing partnerships our Police Service currently has to reduce the effects of exploitation and abuse.

## A NEW PHILOSOPHY

### FIVE OBJECTIVES:

1-Creating a safer environment for sex workers by building trusting relationships between Police sex trade workers and the community, Establishment of Anti-Exploitation Team

2-Restore community cohesion in the communities affected by sex trade activities

3-Partnering with Community Groups, Government, NGO's and Social Agencies to develop viable exit strategies for sex trade workers specific to the circumstances here in Manitoba

4-As a Police Service come together to identify/ Arrest and Deter exploiters from sexually exploiting women children, and the transgendered persons who find themselves trapped in Winnipeg's visible sex trade.

5-Change the name of the Vice unit to the Counter Exploitation Unit, the vice unit name has moral and judgmental connotations attached to its history. Counter Exploitation Unit best describes the goals of our new philosophy.

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## 1-Creating a safer community by building trusting relationships B/T Police and sex trade workers (Anti Exploitation Team)

In order to achieve this goal the Winnipeg Police Service should use its discretion when deciding to charge sex trade workers for any offence in relation to prostitution offences under section 213 CC. Our Service's primary goal relating to the sex trade should be the wellbeing of the sex trade worker, should a charge of sec 213 be laid our members will no longer place them on geographical restrictions as most sex trade workers live within the area's they work.

Sex trade workers who are found to be committing an offence under section 213 will be detained and before determining if they should be charged with an offence they should be provided with alternatives to arrest. While dealing with sex trade workers officers will ensure they are treated with dignity and will provide them with the opportunity to enter into immediate intervention. These initiatives require partnerships with the various government and non-government organizations that currently assist sex trade workers.

This shift in philosophy will improve communication and create trusting relationships B/T the Police and sex trade workers. This trust and confidence in police will allow for sex trade workers to report crimes committed against them without fear of being arrested and judged. It will reduce the marginalization for those caught in the sex trade and assist sex trade workers in leaving the sex trade.

I am recommending that two full time members be assigned to the Vice unit compliment to form an Anti-Exploitation Team. This team will be responsible for proactive initiatives where they will have daily interaction at the street level with sex trade workers. Their objectives are to foster relationships with sex trade workers and develop a conduit B/T them and the Police Service. The Anti-Exploitation Team would work hand and hand with other outreach agencies that are assisting sex trade workers in the community. Their duties would include discussing safety plans and with the sex trade workers as well as assisting sex trade workers in reporting violent crimes that have been perpetrated against them. The Anti-Exploitation Team will assist Police with intelligence gathering to ensure we have an early identification of violent offenders, exploiters and other offenders who are preying on sex trade workers. Other intelligence would be generated relating to gang and drug activity which could be passed along to other units with in the Service.

The Anti-Exploitation Team will be responsible identifying any new trends occurring in the sex trade in real time. They will be responsible for identifying underage sex trade workers on our streets and finding them a place of safety. The Anti- Exploitation Team will be responsible to identify potentially exploited persons who may be at risk of becoming a missing person or victim of foul play due to their vulnerability.

The Anti-exploitation Team will ensure that our services and resources will be available to sex trade workers on a daily bases.

I recommend that the Anti-Exploitation Team incorporated the duties of Project ID which is currently delivered out of the Sex Crimes unit. Project ID obtains the voluntary DNA and other information from sex trade worker. This information is confidential and only used should they go missing.

**See below Restore community cohesion in the communities affected by sex trade activities**

## **2-Restore community cohesion in the communities affected by sex trade activities**

Vice members along with the Anti-Exploitation Team and Community Support Units will utilize the enhanced relationship with the sex trade workers to speak to the sex trade workers ability to coexist with the community they live and work in. We will ensure that our members encourage cooperation and mutual respect B/T sex trade workers and the communities they are in. Sex trade workers will be asked to respect the children in the community by not working in and around schools, parks and residences. These issues will be addressed on an ongoing daily bases encouraging understanding from all parties involved.

The Anti-Exploitation Team will be a conduit between the sex trade workers Police and community they will partner with other helping agencies enhancing community safety and cohesion. The Team will be responsible in educating the community and sex trade workers with respect to each other concerns, rights and obligations.

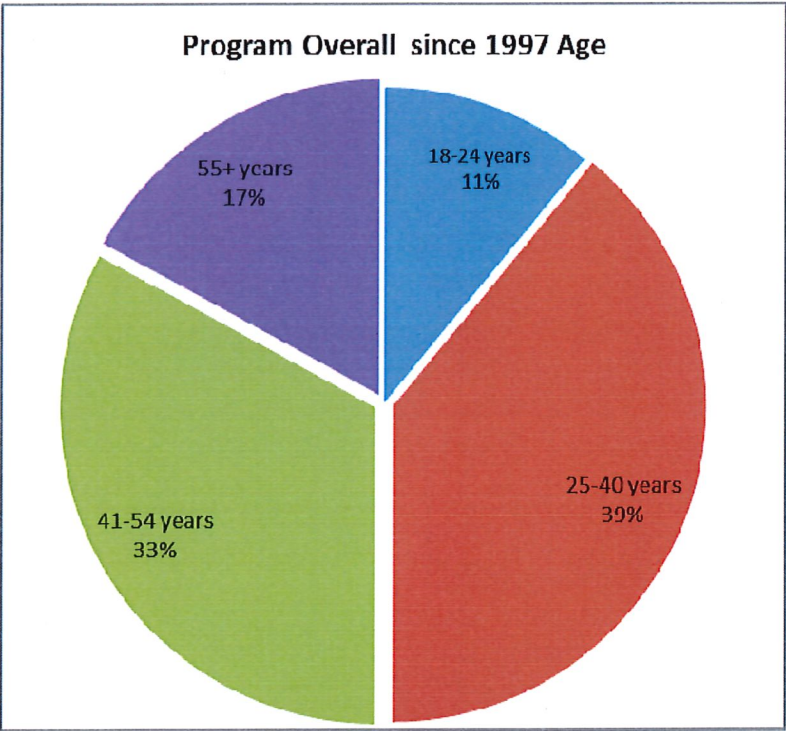
Specific issues of concern can be addressed by community members and brought to the attention of the Vice Unit in a timely fashion.

## **3-Partnering with Government, NGO's and Social Agencies to develop and deliver viable exit strategies for STW's specific to the conditions here in Manitoba**

The Police, Manitoba Government, Aboriginal Community, and other social service agencies will need to partner and develop a made in Manitoba approach to assisting sex trade workers in exiting the sex trade. Outreach and other social programs may need to be adjusted or bolstered to facilitate service delivery and assist with getting sex trade workers into programming.

Partnerships will need to focus on short term and long term resources for sex trade workers. Ultimately to reduce the overall involvement in the sex trade issues such as addictions, mental health, education, housing will need to be addressed. There currently are several committees' that meet relating to the sex trade that could be utilized to forage ahead with this strategy.

4-Identify Arrest and Deter exploiters from sexually exploiting women children, and the transgendered who find themselves trapped in Winnipeg’s visible sex trade



Vice Arrest stats 2000-2012

RE: Section 213 cc

	STW:	Exploiters:
2000	82	68
2001	156	88

2002	119	45
2003	136	76
2004	82	17
2005	154	58
2006	113	48
2007	93	65
2008	166	57
2009	70	62
2010	48	58
2011	101	77
<u>2012</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>66</u>
TOTAL	1400	785

The Police service should ensure that the Exploiters traveling to these communities for the purposes of exploitation are identified and arrested whenever possible. The message to the Exploiters needs to be loud and clear that if they attend to these communities for the purposes of exploitation they are going to be identified for who they are and subject to arrest.

In order to achieve these goals we will require sustained enforcement initiatives targeting the Exploiters in the most effective areas of our city. The Vice unit in conjunction with GP, community support units will need to maintain constant pressure on Exploiters attending these areas to be successful.

Sex trade enforcement initiatives should primarily focus on the Exploiters with a number of tactics being utilized:

- Traditional undercover operations
- Traffic enforcement combined with sex trade education
- Disc stops
- Overlap projects focusing on exploiter identification and arrests
- Media strategy to provide information to the community relating to our progress in combating exploitation in our City:



- Arrests of Exploiter's both buyers and procurers
- Vehicles seized
- Offence notices issued
- Spot checks or exploiters identified
- Sex trade worker assisted

### MEDIA STRATEGY:

- Will explain our new Philosophy and focus on the sex trade and exploitation issues in the city. We will make efforts in educating the public as to the realities of the sex trade and sex trade workers
- Will educate the public on many of the programs implemented to assist sex trade workers in our city
- Will educate the public as to the harm caused by the exploiters
- Will educate the public as to the exploiters role in the marginalization and exploitation of the most vulnerable segment of our society.
- Will ensure the community and exploiters are aware of our commitment to stopping the sexual exploitation taking place in our communities.
- Will advise the community of enforcement action taken by our Service in addressing the demand and exploiters of the sex trade.

Sgt. Gene Bowers 2013-06-04

<b>Exhibit: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls</b>		
Location/Phase: <u>Parts 2/3 St. John's</u>		
Witness: <u>Chief Danny Smyth</u>		
Submitted by: <u>Kimberly Carswell</u>		
Add'l info: <u>P02-03 P04 P0401</u>		
Date: <u>OCT 18 2018</u>		
<b>Initials</b>	<b>I/D</b>	<b>Entered</b>
S3		72