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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP

ON YOUTH EXPLOITED

FOR THE SEX TRADE

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JANUARY 1993

Adsum House to open doors to prostitutes

By CHARLENE SADLER
The Daily News

Halifax's Adsum House will become the province's new safe house for older prostitutes, and a separate safe house for those under 16 will open by February.

These are two recommendations to be implemented from the report *Youth Exploited for the Sex Trade*, released yesterday by Attorney General Joel Matheson.

A provincial task force on prostitution produced a total of 25 recommendations, but not all will be acted upon, and many of them are not new. Faced with limited government funds, task force members researched old reports, resurrected past proposals and examined parts of laws never enacted.

One such law, which empowers social services to confine youngsters to a home for counselling, will now be enacted as the genesis of a \$2-million fa-

cility, said Community Services Minister Roland Thornhill.

Other recommendations, such as decriminalizing prostitution, got a chillier response from Matheson.

The task force recommended an advisory group apprise the government of initiatives into decriminalizing prostitution and research into pros and cons.

"I don't think that (legalizing prostitution) would be considered. It's certainly not something I'm entertaining," Matheson said after a press conference.

New ideas

Task force members got input from prostitutes, their parents and people in social services and the criminal justice system. The report was done in three months, under the guidance of Kit Waters, director of policy, planning and research for the Solicitor General's Department.

"The working group undertook its task against the backdrop of unspeak-

able violence perpetrated against young people," the report says.

New ideas were raised. Matheson said he would recommend the creation of a new Criminal Code section that would severely punish customers of prostitutes under age 14.

"I see little moral difference between a man who purchases the services of a juvenile prostitute and a man who sells her services," he said.

He will make the recommendation at a meeting of provincial justice ministers this week.

A local group of anonymous prostitutes and former prostitutes maintained their stance that a \$500,000 safe house would waste taxpayers' money.

But they supported recommendations that offered support to outreach programs and improved education in school and parent support groups.

Adsum House, which houses homeless women, is now being renovated to handle the extra people.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Provide funding to community-based programs, including churches, service clubs and school groups, that reach out to the street culture.
- Establish a secure treatment facility by enacting a law under the Children and Family Services Act.
- Add to the school curriculum a course called Personal Safety and Decision-making, in which students would explore issues such as family violence, street safety and substance abuse.
- Establish street-based drop-in centres where youths can get food, coffee and psychiatric help without hassles.
- Establish a parent-support group.
- Remove economic incentives to enter prostitution through stay-in-school programs.

N.S. boosts war on sex trade

By Barry Dorey
POLICE REPORTER

The province announced Tuesday it will pump nearly \$2 million into metro's fight against juvenile prostitution.

At a news conference at Province House in Halifax, Community Services Minister Rollie Thornhill said the province will split the bill — estimated at \$3.5 million this year — for the effort with Ottawa.

The announcement came as a provincially appointed committee that studied solutions to juvenile prostitution released its report.

Creation of a treatment centre, development of early intervention and outreach programs, and the promise of tougher penalties for johns highlight the report of the Working Group on Youth Exploited for the Sex Trade.

The Department of Community Services will spearhead implementation of the report's recommendations.

The provincial government has not yet approved the spending, but Mr. Thornhill said he expects it will soon.

The big news was a \$2-million annual commitment for a secure treatment centre, which Mr. Thornhill said could be set up within six months. The centre will provide intensive counselling and physical and psychological treatment, and serve as a longer-term residence so former prostitutes have a chance to straighten out their lives.

Legislation authorizing the province to hold youths for treatment has been passed, but it has never been proclaimed, said Mr. Thornhill.

There are no facilities in Atlantic Canada equipped to treat women who have suffered years of abuse and degradation in a life of prostitution.

The proposed treatment format is similar to Toronto's system for helping young prostitutes. In that city, the girls are stabilized and protected at Moberley House,



Darren Pittman/Clark Photographic

Community Services Minister Rollie Thornhill, left, Attorney General Joel Matheson and Kit Waters, chairwoman of a working group that studied juvenile prostitution in metro, field questions from reporters. The working group's recommendations were released Tuesday at Province House in Halifax.

then referred to other counselling, treatment and education facilities in the network.

Mr. Matheson also vowed to get tough with customers who hire young hookers.

He hopes meetings with other provincial attorney generals will result in a new Criminal Code section dealing with prostitutes under age 14.

The law already provides tougher penalties for buying sex from those 18 and under.

"I see little moral difference

between the man who purchases the services of a child prostitute and the individual who sells her to him," said Mr. Matheson.

"We will certainly be exploring every way to ensure the full force of the law is brought to bear," hopefully doubling the maximum penalty to 10 years in prison.

The province has already responded to another of the report's key recommendations — a safe house for prostitutes willing to testify against their pimps.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- \$2-million-a-year long-term treatment centre.
- Safe house for prostitutes who testify against pimps.
- Street-based resource drop-in centre.
- Mobile crisis and outreach service.
- Training program for teachers to help them recognize recruiting attempts by pimps and learn how to steer young people away from street life.
- Recognition of Adsum House as a safe place for prostitutes over 16 years old and provision of more resources to the shelter.
- Retention of advisory committee to implement report.
- National public awareness campaign

Plans call for such a shelter to open in metro by February.

Mr. Thornhill also announced the appointment of Trevor Townsend, director of child and adolescent services, to oversee the effort.

Mr. Townsend will select two teams — one from government and one from the community — to prioritize and implement the changes.

Committee chairwoman Kit Waters said early intervention, such as a national public awareness campaign and training teachers to identify young people at risk, hopefully will prevent youngsters from being drawn into a life on the street. Adopting these measures would impede recruiting at schools by pimps and reduce the incentive for teens to hit the street for cash, she said.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the young men and women, the parents and
the service providers who shared their
experiences with us.

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A. BACKGROUND

In September 1992 the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force charged four men from the Halifax-Dartmouth Metro area with several Criminal Code offences, including kidnapping, assault and living off the avails of prostitution. A number of young Nova Scotian women, believed to have been coerced into prostitution, were found by the Toronto police force.

In response to a concern about the existence of an alleged pimping ring involving people from Nova Scotia and targeting young women from this province, the Chiefs of Police of Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford and the Commanding Officer of "H" Division, R.C.M.P., established a Joint Forces Operation (JFO), on September 27, 1992.

Although the establishment of the JFO was an acknowledgement of the pivotal role that law enforcement must play in combating this serious problem, police were quick to identify the need for a community-based support network to assist young prostitutes to leave the streets. The Solicitor General agreed that a comprehensive plan must be developed to help young prostitutes escape from the violence and exploitation that characterizes street prostitution. On October 7th, the Minister announced the establishment of a Working Group on Juvenile Prostitution, composed of representatives from government and community-based organizations, with a mandate to make recommendations for the establishment of a "pathway of support" for young prostitutes.

B. MANDATE

Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Youth Exploited for the Sex Trade (as the Working Group prefers to be known), are as follows:

- Review models which have been implemented in other Canadian jurisdictions to assist prostitutes to leave the street.
- Identify programs/services which are currently available to assist prostitutes who wish to leave the street.
- Define gaps or duplication in service.
- Develop a strategy for providing a "pathway of support" for prostitutes, identifying mechanisms for improved cooperation and collaboration between community-based and government agencies.
- Recommend appropriate funding mechanisms to ensure the provision of the required programs and services.
- Recommend preventative strategies to reduce the number of youth who are exploited for the sex trade.
- Prepare an action plan for submission to the Solicitor General by December 31, 1992.

C. MEMBERSHIP

The following individuals were appointed to the Working Group by the Solicitor General:

Andrea Currie/Sarah Shaw
Stepping Stone

Robert Kells
Policing Services
Department of Solicitor General

Inspector Ed Dennis
R.C.M.P. "H" Division

Derrick Simmons, Youth Representative
North Preston Community
Development Association

Debi Forsyth-Smith
Advisory Council on the
Status of Women

Paula Simon, Victim Services
Department of Attorney General

Rick Gilbert
Youth Secretariat

Trevor Townsend, Children &
Adolescent Services
Department of Community Services

Roger Godin
Breakthrough Co-op Ltd.

Gerald Tynes
Cole Harbour District High School

Linda Heseltine
Phoenix House

Carol Wambolt
Adsum House

Allister Johnson, President
North Preston Community
Development Association

Kit Waters (Chairperson)
Department of Solicitor General

D. METHODOLOGY

Within the constraints of the narrow time frame for the deliberations of the Working Group, efforts were made to speak to individuals who had direct knowledge of juvenile prostitution. We had the opportunity to speak to parents whose children had been involved in prostitution, to women and female youth formerly and currently working as prostitutes, to operators of residential centres whose clientele has included many juvenile prostitutes over the years, and to individuals offering preventative programs to students in elementary, junior high and high schools. Some Working Group members were able to speak to men who had worked as pimps.

The extensive and varied expertise of the members of the Working Group itself provided great insight into an understanding of the problem, and contributed greatly to the formulation of preventative and remedial initiatives.

Contact was made with police agencies in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary and Ottawa to elicit information about the response of those cities to juvenile prostitution. A representative of the Working Group travelled to Toronto to interview staff of Moberly House, a Children's Aid "Street Youth Reception Centre", originally established to serve juvenile prostitutes and other children at risk.

The Working Group also reviewed relevant literature, including reports of parliamentary committees and task forces which had previously examined issues surrounding juvenile prostitution.

Although we regret that the time frame did not permit more extensive consultation, we understand that the seriousness of the events responsible for the creation of the Working Group demanded that recommendations for action be formulated without delay.

E. UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

The majority of adolescent prostitutes are initially homeless or neglected. Once separated from their families, few have access to legal means of support.

The histories of adolescents who have adopted prostitution as an acceptable survival option are varied. Although many come from families which are physically, emotionally or sexually abusive, others (albeit the minority) appear to have been raised in supportive family environments. The literature suggests that some young people who have been deprived of the necessities of life turn to prostitution as a way to avoid a life of poverty. Economic gain can be a motivator for those from all socioeconomic classes; few opportunities for young, unskilled adolescents exist that can rival prostitution for quick and frequently substantial economic benefit and what is perceived by many young people as a chance to control their lives. The fiction of such "empowerment" (neutralized as it so frequently is with drug abuse and control by pimps), is probably not well appreciated by the young person who "chooses" prostitution as an occupation.

Although conflicting evidence is presented in the research findings¹ as to the prevalence of a history of early sexual abuse among juvenile prostitutes, it is clear that a significant proportion leave their homes in an attempt to escape such abuse. The trauma of such experiences severely affects the normal socialization process, isolates the adolescent and results in loss of self-esteem.

Emerging from the literature and from interviews with service providers is a picture of adolescent prostitutes that is remarkably similar to the general population of children who are living on the streets. Home, for whatever reason, is an intolerable place to be. The choice of life on the street (the constant search for shelter, food and companionship) for individuals with little education and no marketable skills for mainstream employment frequently results in involvement in illegal and marginal activities. Prostitution becomes a survival tactic; a symptom of the overall problem of homeless youth and other children at risk.

The Working Group was made aware that the adolescent prostitute has unique needs due to the requirement for protection from the abusive behaviour of pimps and johns. For the most part, however, the services they need are those common to all street youth; i.e. accessible medical services, substance abuse treatment, crisis counselling and ongoing support, shelter, life skills, job training and education re-entry programs.

Adolescent prostitution is not a new phenomenon in this province, nor are the tragic details revealed following the Toronto arrests in September 1992 unprecedented. In May 1986, the City of Halifax, in response to public concern about the murders of three young prostitutes, established an Advisory Group on Prostitution and Related Issues. The Advisory Group made a number of recommendations for the improvement of service delivery to women and youth who work as prostitutes on the streets of Halifax.

In 1987, the National Advisory Committee on Juvenile Prostitution, under the sponsorship of the Children's Aid Society of Halifax, Health and Welfare Canada and Justice Canada held a national consultation on adolescent prostitution. In 1990 a follow-up to the original consultation was held in Halifax, the recommendations from which are contained in the document **"Does Anybody Care?"**.²

The thorough work that was done by these two committees was invaluable. The themes which emerged in their reports are as relevant and urgent now as they were then. The Working Group has adopted a number of the recommendations contained in the report, regretting that a lack of response has made their restatement necessary.

The mandate of the Working Group relates specifically to the establishment of a "pathway of support" to assist young people to escape from the violence of street prostitution. The term "young people", as used in this report, refers to individuals under 19 years of age. Although we appreciate that adolescent males work as prostitutes and are exposed to violence on the streets, the information gathered by the Working Group pertains solely to young female prostitutes. We believe, however, that our recommendations will also benefit young males exploited for the sex trade.

We also acknowledge that homeless youth and those coerced into prostitution come from many regions of the province. Consequently, our recommendations providing preventative strategies are applicable to the province as a whole. Due to the fact that most of these young people migrate to the Metro area, recommendations related to specific service needs will focus on this area only.

Although we believe that implementation of our recommendations will provide adolescent prostitutes with a realistic opportunity for escape from the sex trade, we acknowledge that a comprehensive strategy for eradicating juvenile prostitution must target pimps and johns. While clearly outside the mandate of this Working Group, we would nonetheless urge the justice system to pursue recommendations such as those contained in the Fraser Committee³ which call for severe penalties for those procuring young people for sexual activity, living off the avails of juvenile prostitution or purchasing services from juvenile prostitutes.

F. PREVENTION/EARLY INTERVENTION

Any initiatives designed to prevent the entrance of a young person into prostitution must address the issue of why some young people perceive that entering the sex trade is the best (or only) option available to them. As one service provider stated, *we need to find out why a child would go with a pimp rather than try out for the basketball team.* The reasons are many and complex, and yet it is important to try to understand them if preventative initiatives are to be effective.

"Does Anybody Care?" referred to three factors which contribute significantly to the process of entering prostitution:

- "1. The powerlessness of young people;
2. The sexual abuse and family violence that many youth involved in prostitution have suffered in the past and presently experience; and
3. The homelessness, poverty and harsh economic problems faced by young people on the street."² (page 20)

Through its research and consultations, the Working Group has heard and read references to each of these factors and is convinced that they each contribute to the problem of youth being exploited for the sex trade.

The recommendations which follow are presented as building blocks for a preventative strategy which seeks to divert children at risk from entering prostitution. The recommendations recognize the key role that schools play in reaching young people with preventative messages and making the earliest interventions with youth at risk. The need to support public education, peer helper and professional training initiatives is also reflected.

1.0 Public Awareness

Commitment to a strategy for helping street youth and other children at risk depends on a concerned and knowledgeable public. Sustained commitment cannot be equated with the hysteria quickly aroused (and just as quickly extinguished) as a result of sensational coverage by the media. The media, in partnership with government and community agencies, have a responsibility to provide the public with accurate information about the problem of the growing population of street youth.

Recommendations:

- 1.1 Develop a campaign through the mass media (similar to the anti-smoking and seat belt campaigns), to raise public awareness about children at risk, adolescent prostitution and the culture of street life and its inherent risks. There should be a national and provincial component to this campaign. Health and Welfare Canada should assume responsibility for the campaign with appropriate provincial government departments as co-sponsors.
- 1.2 Government should support community-based organizations to enable them to expand their efforts in such activities as speaking engagements to service clubs, church groups, school, ethno-cultural organizations, etc., about issues related to youth prostitution and street culture.

2.0 Education System

The school is a focal point for the activities of children, and as such provides an effective vehicle for the delivery of preventative programming. It has been recognized by other provinces, and increasingly in Nova Scotia, that the school can serve as a "hub" for the co-ordination and delivery of mainstream services such as education, health, child care and recreation. The school is also probably in the best position to link these main-

stream services with specialized services such as crisis intervention, mental health treatment and, possibly, family therapy to provide a support network for children and families at risk.

The Working Group was also made aware that our schools are being used by pimps and recruiters as a source for locating new prostitutes. A multi-pronged strategy for foiling such recruitment attempts will consist of providing all students (from grade primary on) with instruction on personal safety; training teachers to recognize the signs of recruitment/coercion; and supporting the establishment of peer helper programs so that young people can assist each other to avoid the dangers associated with street prostitution.

Recommendations:

- 2.1 Encourage and support the establishment of schools as a major resource for education about juvenile prostitution and early identification of and intervention with youth who are at risk of entering the sex trade.
- 2.2 Support the establishment of Teen Health Centres, such as the one currently operating at J. L. Ilsley High School in Halifax, at all high schools in Metro.
- 2.3 Support the establishment and continued development of peer helper programs so that youth at risk will have the option of talking confidentially to an empathetic peer who is trained to deal with a disclosure of this nature.
- 2.4 Ensure that teachers are trained to deal with students about issues that could put them at risk, in a non-judgmental and empathetic way.
- 2.5 Resources should be created to assist the schools to address this topic in an informed, empathetic and non-judgmental way. Creative approaches that speak to students at their level (employing technologies such as video and theatre, and the

use of appropriate resource people from community agencies), should be used in order to ensure that the resources are as accessible and relevant to as many students as possible.

- 2.6 Develop a component within the curriculum of the Personal Development and Relationships (PDR) course called Personal Safety and Decision-making. In addition to addressing topics specific to the sex trade, this program would help develop critical thinking and decision-making skills by exploring issues related to family violence, street safety, substance abuse and suicide.⁴ Age-relevant material should be presented from grade primary on.

3.0 Professional Education

Vulnerable children are often exposed to a variety of service providers who are mandated to address specific concerns which may be health-, social welfare-, or justice-related. It is essential that each of these professionals understands their role and that of their colleagues in dealing effectively with children who are in danger of becoming involved in prostitution.

Recommendation:

- 3.1 Develop a multi-disciplinary training module targeted to police, teachers, school administrators, peer helpers and frontline youth workers on issues relating to youth being exploited for the sex trade. The training module would include the following:
- legal issues pursuant to the Children and Family Services Act and the Criminal Code
 - sensitivity to the issue
 - how to respond to disclosure
 - knowledge of resources for support and referral.

4.0 Role of Government

Services for youth are spread over a number of agencies, delivered by all three levels of government and community-based organizations. Within this fragmented system, it is not surprising that some of our children, unfortunately those who are the most troubled and in the greatest need of care, fall between the cracks. The Province has taken some significant steps toward providing a more integrated response to children's needs. The creation of a joint Health/Community Services appointment to the position of Co-Director of Child and Adolescent Services is a good example. There remains, however, a need for a focal point within government for all youth-related matters to ensure that concern for the well-being of children is paramount.

Recommendations:

- 4.1 While recognizing that problems associated with youth exploited for the sex trade are multifaceted and require an integrated, collaborative approach by several government departments and agencies, the Government of Nova Scotia should identify a lead department with respect to this issue.
- 4.2 The Government of Nova Scotia should address the need for stronger advocacy for children and youth within government. Further study is required to determine if there is a need for an independent Child Advocate and if that need could be addressed by enhancing the role and resources of the Youth Secretariat.
- 4.3 Because economic considerations play a role in enticing young Nova Scotians into the sex trade, support must be provided for stay-in-school initiatives, youth employment programs and community economic development programs. Only through long-term strategies such as these will the economic incentives for entering the sex trade be minimized.

G. THE PATHWAY OF SUPPORT

For some children, preventative programs are too late and the "choice" has been made to eke out an existence on the street. For some, survival means petty theft or the drug trade; for others, it means prostitution. It is to these young people the Working Group turned its attention - to create a pathway of support for them.

Before we proceed to present our specific recommendations, some general comments are offered. With few exceptions, the elements of the pathway are relevant for all street youth - as noted previously, the needs of juvenile prostitutes are shared by other young people who are homeless.

These needs vary in intensity from child to child and from time to time, resulting in a requirement for a continuum of care from the least intrusive service to that which provides maximum safety and security.

Some excellent services are now provided to youth in the Metro area. However, the Working Group learned that overspecialization in some cases, lack of co-ordination between the agencies, and the virtual absence of services for some age groups mean that the response to children in need is inadequate. This problem is not new. To quote the Commission on Emotional and Learning Disorders in Children (Celdic Report, 1970):

"If we were asked to put into a word what distressed us most, we would say divisions. We divide our services; health, education, welfare, corrections. We provide these through different levels of government ... and through public and private endeavour. The people who provide the service are divided. There are many different professions and they all speak different languages. Their tribal jargon serves to separate professions from each other and from other potential helpers. No single factor has caused us more concern than the picture of different professions struggling to establish their own power base, distrustful of each other, refusing to show their so-called "confidential" information and in this division frequently foiling the child."

In 1993, this quote is as applicable as it was 23 years ago.

Over and over again the Working Group heard that age-specific legislation and services are problematic to those who would deliver coherent, effective programming to adolescents. The fundamental distinction of under 16 versus 16 and over results in widely varying funding mechanisms for services and differential program access for adolescents who may have identical needs.

5.0 Early Access to Support

Curb-side youth (those who drift between living at home and on the street), and entrenched street youth are frequently those who have been through the formal system of care, but have not been helped. To mainstream society, they are "lost" children for whom the safety net has provided no safety.

These adolescents have multiple needs because of their abusive family histories or due to the dysfunctional living situation they find themselves in. These needs include adequate housing, food, alcohol/drug treatment, other medical treatment, skills training, educational upgrading, job placement, etc. Because of their previously unsatisfactory experience with the child welfare system, these adolescents are highly suspicious and cynical of further involvement with traditional services.

Recommendation:

- 5.1 Establish a street-based, drop-in resource centre in the Metro downtown core, as recommended in a proposal submitted by Phoenix House to the Departments of Community Services and Health in 1992 for a crisis resource centre.

Some essential characteristics of the resource centre are that:

- it provides a "hassle-free", non-judgmental environment
- program development is user-directed
- it provides a referral service, programs, food/coffee
- it is operated by a community organization
- it provides services of a psychiatric nurse on-site

The Working Group endorses the street work-outreach approach practiced by Stepping Stone, which provides such services to adult prostitutes. However, no similar resource exists for those under 16 years of age. It is felt that the hassle-free nature of the centre may encourage the young people to take advantage of the referral service, and in so doing, assist the process of exiting street life.

6.0 Resources for Youth at Risk

Young people who live on the streets are prone to crises. They may suffer from acute episodes of mental illness, drug overdose or physical attacks from pimps, johns or others. At these times, they are at greatest risk, but are also most likely to reach out for help. Unfortunately, sometimes their inappropriate or aggressive behaviour alienates them from existing support services, and as a result, many continue to fall between the cracks. A recurring theme emerging from our discussions with parents of young prostitutes was the frustration they experienced in not being able to access appropriate services when they were in crisis.

Crisis services are fragmented at best and generally do not exist at all for youths 16 and over, particularly if these individuals are not in care under the Children and Family Services Act. The Department of Community Services and the Children's Aid Society of Halifax operate emergency duty systems, independent of each other. The Department of Community Services emergency service primarily serves the City of

Dartmouth and Halifax County, while the Children's Aid Society of Halifax services Halifax City proper. Crisis teams made up of staff from both child welfare and mental health do not exist, which makes it virtually impossible to access a mental health professional after regular working hours unless the young person is taken to the emergency department at the Izaak Walton Killam Hospital.

The Working Group examined a proposal submitted by the North End Community Health Centre to the Department of Health in April 1991 for the establishment of a crisis intervention service. The objective of this service is to *"provide immediate access to assessment and intervention services, by professionals trained in crisis intervention and management practices, for persons in or at risk of imminent crisis, including self-destructive or violent behaviour."* Although the proposal does not target youth specifically, it is felt that the type of services identified (i.e. mobile service offering assessment, intervention and resolution on site; transportation; immediate service delivery; and follow-up referral to other established services) are those which are required to address the needs of youth in crisis.

The need for this service has been acknowledged by government and community agencies, with formal endorsement being provided by the Victoria General Hospital, Halifax Infirmary, Camp Hill Hospital, Halifax Police Department, Y.W.C.A., Halifax County municipal services; City of Dartmouth Social Services; Family Service Association, Adsum House, Exodus House and Metro Turning Point Centre. Substantial resources are currently being expended on the emergency duty system maintained by the Halifax Children's Aid Society and the Department of Community Services. Implementation of the mobile crisis and outreach service will provide a more cost-effective and integrated response to those in crisis.

Recommendation:

- 6.1 Support the North End Community Health Centre proposal for the establishment of a mobile crisis and outreach service. Additional resources will be required to include youth in this service.

Although we believe that services/facilities already existing in the community can address many of the needs of these young people in the medium- and long-term (albeit with some enhancements to be discussed below), there is a need for the crisis intervention unit to have access to short-term accommodation. This facility would be used for assessments and immediate interventions required by those in crisis. The Working Group was informed that the needs of the young women for short-term crisis accommodation were very similar for those under 16 as for those 16 to 18. Accordingly, we believe these beds should be available for the use of any youth in crisis under 19 years of age.

Recommendation:

- 6.2 Establish short-term accommodation for young people (under 19) in crisis for use by the crisis intervention unit. This unit should be housed with the resource centre.

7.0 Continuum of Care for Adolescent Prostitutes

Life on the street for the adolescent prostitute poses many risks and dangers - from the negative effects of drugs to the threats of violence and actual abuse at the hands of other prostitutes, johns and pimps, to verbal harassment from the public. Virtually every piece of research⁵ regarding prostitution in Canada speaks to the high incidence of violence experienced by both male and female prostitutes.

There is no one safe place - no one program or structure that will heal all wounds and guarantee freedom from the violence of the streets. The Working Group believes that what can be offered instead to these troubled youth is a network of support and safety - a continuum of care. Many components of the network now exist but require greater co-ordination and, in some cases, more resources to be truly effective. Fortunately, few of the elements are missing altogether and thus, the Working Group is optimistic that the continuum of care can be assembled without undue delay.

With the establishment of the Joint Forces Operation, a number of young women came forward and agreed to provide testimony against the pimps with whom they had been involved. Their actions were generally motivated by a desire to escape from the violence on the street. Their co-operation with the JFO has put them at severe risk from intimidation from the pimps and the possibility of reprisal. Due to their young age and their recent life experiences, these young people are extremely vulnerable and very frightened. The young women themselves, service providers working with them and the police have all identified the need for a place of safety where they can be protected and also receive support and counselling.

We have been told by other jurisdictions, notably Toronto, that the need for a place of protection for juvenile prostitutes is variable over time. For instance, a police crackdown which results in the successful prosecution of pimps can significantly reduce the number of young women working on the street in a particular area.

Although the Working Group believes it is essential to establish a place of safety for the young women who have agreed to serve as Crown witnesses, it is also necessary to maintain flexibility. Both the physical location and the program may change in response to evolving needs. We must be in a position to divert resources to these programs when the current crisis subsides.

The place of safety must be secure, have immediate access to police response and provide counselling support by those who are specially trained to address the needs of this population.

The Working Group was told by those currently providing counselling to the prostitutes under 16 that this group should be housed separately because they have unique needs, can be disruptive to others in care and, moreover, have been known to be involved in the recruitment of other adolescents to prostitution.

Recommendation:

- 7.1 Ensure that the "safe house", announced by the Ministers of Community Services and Solicitor General in November 1992 meets the requirements as outlined above.

Adsum House provides emergency accommodation to women 16 years and over who require shelter for any reason. However, insufficient resources have made it difficult for Adsum House to deliver the intensive supervision and counselling required by young prostitutes. The Working Group believes that this residence can serve as a place of safety for some prostitutes 16 and over if they are provided with additional staff resources when circumstances dictate.

Recommendation:

- 7.2 Recognize Adsum House as a place of safety for prostitutes 16 and over with the allocation of additional staff resources, as required (see also Recommendation 7.7).

The recommendations above address the situation where young prostitutes have come forward voluntarily to seek protection.

Where a child under 16 is involved in street prostitution and is resisting placement in a residential facility/group home, it is difficult to prevent the young person from continually running back to the streets. At present, the only secure facilities for youth are those designated as places of secure custody under the Young Offenders Act. Police are loathe to charge adolescents for Criminal Code prostitution-related offences, as they consider the young prostitutes to be victims of the sex trade as opposed to offenders. In any event, convictions for these charges would virtually never result in a disposition of secure custody.

The Working Group believes that juvenile prostitution is a social problem as opposed to a criminal justice problem, and therefore requires a child welfare response. The drafters of the Children and Family Services Act were obviously convinced of the need for secure treatment for children whose behaviour is out of control and who constitute a danger to themselves or others. Sections 55 - 60 of the Act enable the apprehension of a young person and the placement in a facility which provides secure treatment "beds" as designated by the Minister. In implementing the secure treatment provisions of the Act, there is a need for a two-tier system: the designation of secure treatment beds within existing residential facilities and the establishment of a secure treatment facility. Having beds designated as "secure treatment" within the place of safety (Recommendation 7.1) would authorize the holding of the young prostitute so apprehended. Few would argue about the propriety of apprehending a 14 year old girl (with or without her consent) for the purpose of removing her from the clutches of a pimp. Although this Section appears in the Act, it has not yet been proclaimed because of the lack of secure treatment beds.

Recommendations:

- 7.3 Proclaim Sections 55 - 60 of the Children and Family Services Act.
- 7.4 Designate secure treatment beds in the place of safety referenced in Recommendation 7.1.

Once the young person is stabilized and able to make a commitment to a program to assist her in putting her life together, movement into residences such as those operated by the Association for the Development of Children's Residential Facilities can occur. Movement between these houses can assist in protecting a young person and intensive one-on-one counselling can begin to address their complex problems.

In some cases the young person may be able to move on to reside with foster parents who are specially trained to deal with children who have multiple problems. For others, the provision of In-home Services (a program which involves the child and her family) may open the door to permit the young person to reunite with her family.

Recommendation:

- 7.5 Provide a program of in-house service, offering short-term intensive counselling to young people and their families.

In order for this continuum of care to function effectively, it is essential that a program of case management be instituted. While each of the services described above may be internally successful, they will ultimately be useless if a child falls between the cracks; between exiting one component of the continuum and entering another. It is also essential that professionals working within the various components of the continuum utilize each other's expertise and the resources of their respective agencies to ensure that the needs of the individual are met in a holistic and comprehensive way. Otherwise the individual is at risk of exiting the child welfare system by virtue of turning 19 without having his or her needs met.

Recommendation:

- 7.6 Institute a program of case management to ensure that appropriate care is provided to children at all stages of the needs continuum.

The Working Group was concerned with the lack of resources (programs and facilities) available for homeless youth who are 16 to 18. Repeatedly, we were informed of the magnitude of the problem, and the frustration resulting from an inability to deal adequately with this growing population. The Children and Family Services Act acknowledges this requirement at Section 19.1 which states, "*A child who is 16 years of age or more but under the age of 19 years who is not in the care of the child's parent or guardian and has*

a special need as prescribed by the regulations may enter into a written agreement with an agency or the minister for the provision of services to meet the child's special needs". Although this section of the Act has been proclaimed, insufficient resources have prevented the implementation of the required programs.

Recommendation:

- 7.7 Implementation of Section 19.1 of the Children and Family Services Act be considered a number one priority of the Department of Community Services as resources become available.

8.0 Support for Parents

The Working Group were told of the frustration felt by parents watching their daughters engage in what they perceived as self-destructive behaviour. In some cases the frustration was magnified by what they regarded as an inadequate response by the system. Although we believe that the recommendations contained in this report provide a more effective pathway of support for these young people, we believe there is a need to support families too.

Recommendation:

- 8.1 Support the establishment of a parent support network to encourage parents to draw support from each other and to provide a focal point to which agency personnel can direct information regarding their children.

9.0 Ongoing Co-ordination and Consultation

The Working Group recognizes that while some immediate measures can be taken to address the needs of youth who have become involved in the sex trade, other responses by government and community organizations will have to be implemented over time. We believe that a firm commitment to establishing new, and supporting existing services for juvenile prostitutes and other homeless youth is needed if the causes of the problem are to be addressed. In particular, we believe that a new funding mechanism for Phoenix House and Adsum House is required to allow those organizations to fulfil their mandates more effectively.

The government-community consultation process begun in October (with the establishment of the Working Group), has been a positive initiative in itself in that it has provided focus and collaboration in an area where resources are dispersed and co-ordination is lacking. Just as the preparation of this report was enabled by the collaborative effort of government departments in partnership with community organizations, so too will its implementation benefit from ongoing consultation.

Facility and program responses that are developed to address the needs of adolescents generally and young prostitutes in particular must be flexible in order to reflect changing demands. It is essential that a mechanism be established to facilitate community involvement in decisions regarding the allocation of resources.

Recommendations:

- 9.1 Establish an ongoing advisory body to support the work of government in implementing this report, continuing to monitor the needs of youth involved in the sex trade, and promoting integrated response by community and government. Principal contact with government and administrative support would be provided through the lead department (Recommendation 4.1) or Youth Secretariat (Recommendation 4.2).

- 9.2 The Terms of Reference for the above-mentioned advisory body should include the responsibility for monitoring initiatives related to decriminalization or legalization of prostitution, conducting appropriate research and advising government about the inherent advantages and disadvantages of such measures.

H. CONCLUSIONS

All children have a fundamental entitlement to freedom from physical harm, sexual molestation and exploitation, neglect, emotional harm and abandonment. As a society, we have a collective responsibility to care for vulnerable children; those who have been deprived of a nurturing family environment.

The Working Group undertook its task against the backdrop of unspeakable violence perpetrated against young people. These events and information provided to the Working Group about the plight of other homeless youth added a sense of urgency to our discussions.

Although the mandate of the Working Group directed our focus to the needs of the young prostitutes, we were reminded frequently over the past few months and recognize that these young people are but one element of the problem of youth prostitution. The Joint Forces Operation, a policing initiative separate from this Working Group, has targeted pimps for prosecution. A truly effective strategy to address this problem must target johns as well as pimps. We urge that an initiative be undertaken to apprehend and prosecute those who purchase the services of juvenile prostitutes. This initiative, in terms of commitment, must model the JFO efforts focused on the apprehension of those procuring young people for sexual activities or living off the avails of juvenile prostitution.

We have formulated our recommendations within the context of a fiscal reality of restraint, in full appreciation that funding for new programs is severely limited. We believe that many of our recommendations can be implemented through the reallocation of resources and through improved co-ordination of existing programs.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

PREVENTION/EARLY INTERVENTION

1.0 Public Awareness

- 1.1 Develop a campaign through the mass media (similar to the anti-smoking and seat belt campaigns), to raise public awareness about the children at risk, adolescent prostitution and the culture of street life and its inherent risks. There should be a national and provincial component to this campaign. Health and Welfare Canada should assume responsibility for the campaign with appropriate provincial government departments as co-sponsors.
- 1.2 Government should support community-based organizations to enable them to expand their efforts in such activities as speaking engagements to service clubs, church groups, school, ethno-cultural organizations, etc., about issues related to youth prostitution and street culture.

2.0 Education System

- 2.1 Encourage and support the establishment of schools as a major resource for education about juvenile prostitution and early identification of and intervention with youth who are at risk of entering the sex trade.
- 2.2 Support the establishment of Teen Health Centres, such as the one currently operating at J. L. Ilsley High School in Halifax, at all high schools in Metro.
- 2.3 Support the establishment and continued development of peer helper programs so that youth at risk will have the option of talking confidentially to an empathetic peer who is trained to deal with a disclosure of this nature.
- 2.4 Ensure that teachers are trained to deal with students about issues that could put them at risk, in a non-judgmental and empathetic way.
- 2.5 Resources should be created to assist the schools to address this topic in an informed, empathetic and non-judgmental way. Creative approaches that speak to students at their level (employing technologies such as video and theatre, and the use of appropriate resource people from community agencies), should be used in order to ensure that the resources are as accessible and relevant to as many students as possible.

- 2.6 Develop a component within the curriculum of the Personal Development and Relationships (PDR) course called Personal Safety and Decision-making. In addition to addressing topics specific to the sex trade, this program would help develop critical thinking and decision-making skills by exploring issues related to family violence, street safety, substance abuse and suicide. Age-relevant material should be presented from grade primary on.

3.0 Professional Education

- 3.1 Develop a multi-disciplinary training module targeted to police, teachers, school administrators, peer helpers and frontline youth workers on issues relating to youth being exploited for the sex trade. The training module would include the following:

- legal issues pursuant to the Children and Family Services Act and the Criminal Code
- sensitivity to the issue
- how to respond to disclosure
- knowledge of resources for support and referral.

4.0 Role of Government

- 4.1 While recognizing that problems associated with youth exploited for the sex trade are multifaceted and require an integrated, collaborative approach by several government departments and agencies, the Government of Nova Scotia should identify a lead department with respect to this issue.
- 4.2 The Government of Nova Scotia should address the need for stronger advocacy for children and youth within government. Further study is required to determine if there is a need for an independent Child Advocate and if that need could be addressed by enhancing the role and resources of the Youth Secretariat.
- 4.3 Because economic considerations play a role in enticing young Nova Scotians into the sex trade, support must be provided for stay-in-school initiatives, youth employment programs and community economic development programs. Only through long-term strategies such as these will the economic incentives for entering the sex trade be minimized.

THE PATHWAY OF SUPPORT

5.0 Early Access to Support

- 5.1 Establish a street-based, drop-in resource centre in the Metro downtown core, as recommended in a proposal submitted by Phoenix House to the Departments of Community Services and Health in 1992 for a crisis resource centre. Some essential characteristics of the resource centre are that:

- it provides a "hassle-free", non-judgmental environment
- program development is user-directed
- it provides a referral service, programs, food/coffee
- it is operated by a community organization
- it provides services of a psychiatric nurse on-site

6.0 Resources for Youth at Risk

- 6.1 Support the North End Community Health Centre proposal for the establishment of a mobile crisis and outreach service. Additional resources will be required to include youth in this service.
- 6.2 Establish short-term accommodation for young people (under 19) in crisis for use by the crisis intervention unit. This unit should be housed with the resource centre.

7.0 Continuum of Care for Adolescent Prostitutes

- 7.1 Ensure that the "safe house", announced by the Ministers of Community Services and Solicitor General in November 1992 meets the requirements as outlined above.
- 7.2 Recognize Adsum House as a place of safety for prostitutes 16 and over with the allocation of additional staff resources, as required (see also Recommendation 7.7).
- 7.3 Proclaim Sections 55 - 60 of the Children and Family Services Act.
- 7.4 Designate secure treatment beds in the place of safety referenced in Recommendation 7.1.
- 7.5 Provide a program of in-house service, offering short-term intensive counselling to young people and their families.

- 7.6 Institute a program of case management to ensure that appropriate care is provided to children at all stages of the needs continuum.
- 7.7 Implementation of Section 19.1 of the Children and Family Services Act be considered a number one priority of the Department of Community Services as resources become available.

8.0 Support for Parents

- 8.1 Support the establishment of a parent support network to encourage parents to draw support from each other and to provide a focal point to which agency personnel can direct information regarding their children.

9.0 Ongoing Co-ordination and Consultation

- 9.1 Establish an ongoing advisory body to support the work of government in implementing this report, continuing to monitor the needs of youth involved in the sex trade, and promoting integrated response by community and government. Principal contact with government and administrative support would be provided through the lead department (Recommendation 4.1) or Youth Secretariat (Recommendation 4.2).
- 9.2 The Terms of Reference for the above-mentioned advisory body should include the responsibility for monitoring initiatives related to decriminalization or legalization of prostitution, conducting appropriate research and advising government about the inherent advantages and disadvantages of such measures.

REFERENCES

1. See, for example:

Julia Barry, "A Comparative Study of Youth Prostitution" (unpublished thesis), Dalhousie University, 1986.

Debra Boyer and Jennifer James, 'Easy Money: Adolescent Involvement in Prostitution', in S. Davidson (ed.), Justice for Young People. Tucson: New Directions, 1982.

Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youth (Badgely Committee), Sexual Offences Against Children and Youth. Ottawa: Supply & Services Canada, 1984.

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Christopher Earls and Helene David, "Early Family & Sexual Experiences of Male & Female Prostitutes", Canada's Mental Health, Dec. 1990 (7-11).

Ayala Pines, 'Sexual Child Abuse as an Antecedent to Prostitution', Child Abuse & Neglect, 1981, Vol. 5, 407-411.

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Standing Committee on Justice & The Solicitor General, Fourth Report, Ottawa: Supply & Services Canada, 1990.

2. Proceedings of the Follow-up Consultation on Juvenile (Adolescent) Prostitution, Does Anybody Care?. Halifax: Children's Aid Society of Halifax, 1990.
3. Special Committee on Pornography & Prostitution (Fraser Committee), Pornography & Prostitution in Canada. Ottawa: Supply & Services Canada, 1985.
4. A more comprehensive list of topics might include the following: communication, violence, family violence, relationships, family relationships, dating behaviour, peer pressure, harassment/intimidation, drugs and alcohol, street safety, sexual decision-making, date rape, teenage pregnancy, teen stress/anxiety, AIDS/SIDS, sexual orientation, suicide, loneliness, self esteem, values, friendships, role models, discernment, fantasy/reality.
5. See, for example, in addition to references in (1) above:

Nick Falcon, Street Prostitution: Halifax. Ottawa: Supply & Services Canada, 1989.

Cynthia Manderson, Street Prostitution in Halifax. Halifax: Atlantic Institute of Criminology, 1988.