



31 May, 2016

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous & Northern Affairs
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of the Status of Women,
The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

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Re: Sexual Exploitation and Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to commend you on the launch of the National Inquiry and to call your attention to the link between sexual exploitation and missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We ask that the causes and consequences of gendered, racialized and sexualized violence be examined and included in the National Inquiry.

As we highlighted in the letter to Minister Wilson-Raybould earlier this month (in regards to the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act), members of our group are confronted with the appalling realities many Indigenous women and girls in Canada face on a daily basis, and we recognize the overlap between commercial sexual exploitation and missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. As a group who works to be intentional at listening and learning from Indigenous voices and leaders, we in the Working Group on Human Trafficking in Canada know that Indigenous women and girls are at a higher risk of facing violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking than non-Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

Many Indigenous groups and organizations have gone to great lengths to highlight the intersection between the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in the sex trade and their increased risk of becoming murdered or missing. The Native Women's Association of Canada in particular has done exceptional work in drawing attention to these issues. Dr. Dawn Lavell Harvard, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada, has called for an Inquiry process that investigates and examines stories of Indigenous women prostituted on ships between Canada and the United States.¹ Earlier this year, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA), and the Canadian

¹ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/inquiry-must-validate-stories-of-indigenous-women-prostituted-on-ships-nwac-1.3394386>

Journal of Women and the Law (CJWL) hosted the Symposium “*Murders and Disappearances of Indigenous Women and Girls: Planning for Change – Towards a National Inquiry and an Effective National Action Plan*” and subsequently released 22 recommendations² regarding the design of the national inquiry. Recommendation 8 calls for a systemic focus that examines many factors including: “the sexualized stereotyping of Indigenous women and girls, and the impacts and consequences of sexual exploitation and trafficking on their lives.” In addition, Recommendation 11 focuses on sexual exploitation and calls for the following:

“That the national inquiry’s analysis of gendered, racialized and sexualized violence include an examination of sexual exploitation and trafficking of Indigenous women and girls, and their causes and consequences.”

We urge the government to demonstrate strong leadership and action, in partnership with Indigenous communities and leadership, to listen to Indigenous women, courageously uncover the causes, and develop holistic and responsive solutions.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you and to engage in the public inquiry process, to learn from others, and contribute to a successful inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



Jennifer Lucking
Chair, Human Trafficking in Canada Working Group

cc:

Hon. Rob Nicholson, Justice Critic, Conservative Party of Canada
Murray Rankin, Justice Critic, New Democratic Party of Canada
Rhéal Fortin, Interim Leader, Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, M.P., Leader of the Green Party of Canada

The Rev. Canon Dr. Alyson Barnett-Cowan, President, Canadian Council of Churches

The Canadian Council of Churches is the largest ecumenical body in Canada, now representing 25 churches of Anglican, Eastern and Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Free Church, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, and Historic Protestant traditions. We are one of the few ecumenical bodies in the world that includes such a range of Christian churches. The Canadian Council of Churches was founded in 1944.

² http://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/NWAC-FAFIAsymposium_22reccommendations_2016_EN.pdf