

# ROUND TABLE ON CHILD SEX TOURISM<sup>1</sup>

## ROUND TABLE ON CHILD SEX TOURISM



December 6, 1996 Vancouver, Canada

SUMMARY REPORT



### **STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA**

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## Backgrounder

### ROUND TABLE ON CHILD SEX TOURISM

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- **Child prostitution affects more than one million children in Asia<sup>1</sup>**
- **200,000 to 250,000 children are involved in prostitution in Thailand**
- **200,000 to 500,000 children are involved in prostitution in China**
- **thousands of child prostitutes are exploited in Cambodia and Vietnam**
- **500,000 child prostitutes exist in Brazil and thousands more are exploited in Latin America and Africa.**

The Honourable Hedy Fry held a Round Table with members of the tourism industry and non-governmental organizations in an effort to develop strategies that protect children from child sex tourism. The Vancouver Round Table focused on international issues while a subsequent Round Table will focus on domestic youth prostitution.

#### **What is the “commercial sexual exploitation of children”?**

Commercial sexual exploitation of children is the use of a child for sexual purposes in exchange for cash or in-kind favours between the child her or himself, the customer, intermediary or agent and others who profit from the trade in children for these purposes.

#### **Child Sex Tourism - Scope and Impact**

Commercial sexual exploitation today is an industry built on the abuse of power that buys and sells and in other ways treats children as sexual and economic commodities rather than human beings. Its scope is transnational, its impact transgenerational.

#### **Where does child sex tourism exist?**

Commercial sexual exploitation of children exists in virtually every country in the world. It connects small villages with large urban centers, developing countries to each other and to industrialized countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Although it is very difficult to get accurate estimates of the incidence of child sexual exploitation, 1994 estimates are available from UNICEF and End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT).

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## **Who are the victims?**

Although the vast majority of exploited children are girls, victims include a growing number of boys. They are most often children from poor families who come from urban and rural areas. The majority are between the ages of 8 and 18, although there is evidence that the fear of AIDS is causing a greater demand for ever younger girls. These children are deceived, kidnapped and sold. They are also runaways or children who turn to prostitution on their own to survive, to improve their standard of living or to increase their access to consumer goods.

## **Who are the perpetrators?**

Those responsible for sexually exploiting children represent a wide variety of behaviors, origins and motives. They constitute a wide range of customers, intermediaries, recruiters and other perpetrators who profit from the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The vast majority of customers are locals inhabitants for whom sex with a child may often be a question of availability rather than preference. During the last decade, however, international tourism for sexual purposes has grown and consequently in a number of countries an increasing proportion of the exploiters are foreigners.

## **Profound and Permanent Damage to Children**

The negative impact of commercial sexual exploitation of children is profound and often permanent. For those who survive, and many don't, it may cause irreparable damage to their physical and mental health. Child victims are inadequately protected because of loopholes in legislation and a lack of law enforcement. They are often treated as criminals and left with little recourse other than to re-enter a vicious cycle of abuse and exploitation, which escalates the risk to their very existence.

## **Society must take responsibility**

Although it may be tempting to place the blame mainly on criminal syndicates, to reduce exploiters to pimps and individual perpetrators, to disparage the children themselves as promiscuous or sexually irresponsible, no sector of society can escape responsibility for the sexual exploitation of children.

## **What can be done by Canadians to protect children from sex tourism?**

The Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), the Honourable Hedy Fry is taking the initiative to bring organizations to the table to discuss the protection of children from child sex tourism. This involves bringing members of the travel and tourism sectors and non-governmental organizations together to consider strategies for public education. We must go beyond legislation, and therefore, the involvement of the private sector is a key component in combating this problem.

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## Actions for discussion at the Round Table on Child Sex Tourism

Members of the tourism industry and non-governmental organizations met in Stockholm Sweden at the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in August 1996. At the tourism workshop, they developed recommended actions to increase public awareness and prevent child sex tourism. Suggested actions for discussion included:

### General

1. Support stronger laws and more active enforcement of laws against commercial sexual exploitation of children. Support better reporting of criminal activity using a "Crime Stoppers" model.

### Airlines

2. Show short video clips during flights referring to the dangers of child sex tourism.
3. Have short messages on inserts.

### Airports

4. Have posters or photographs with strong messages in arrival halls and VIP lounges.
5. Involve customs and police officers, e.g. to insert informative leaflets in passports.

### Tour Operators

6. Distribute "No Child Prostitution" messages in printed material such as itineraries.

### Travel Agencies

7. Inform clients of legal and health risks at their destination and of the danger of prosecution in their country of origin (extraterritoriality).
8. Print full information and warnings in brochures about every country where the problem exists and distribute "No Child Prostitution" posters.
9. Discuss the issue of sexually suggestive advertising using children.
10. Better educate travel agency staff.

### Hotels

11. Display warnings against child sex in hotel lobbies and rooms.

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## Round Table Summary

The Honourable Hedy Fry, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women) met on December 6, 1996, in Vancouver with representatives of the travel and tourism industries and non-governmental organizations to discuss measures to protect children from sex tourism. This round table focused on international issues and specific actions aimed at preventing the sexual exploitation of children.

Ms. Lynn Smith, the Dean of Law at the University of British Columbia, facilitated the round table discussion with 24 participants. Please refer to the Appendix for a full list of participants.

In her opening remarks, Dr. Fry indicated that the federal Minister of Justice recently introduced amendments to the Criminal Code (Bill C-27) to allow for the prosecution of Canadians who sexually exploit children while travelling abroad.

After considerable discussion and acknowledgement that individuals and organizations around the table have a role to play in protecting children from sexual exploitation, the following suggestions were raised as possible actions:

- Recognize and understand that working to eradicate child sex tourism is about protecting children, not about censorship.
- Support safe houses, group homes and other youth programs to protect children, in recognition that poverty is one of the root causes of child sex tourism.
- Initiate research to better understand the causes of child sex tourism, with particular emphasis on how tours are organized and who profits.
- Support victims of child sexual exploitation by asking them to participate in an international conference to share their suggestions for concrete solutions and prevention strategies.
- Support programs that encourage information sharing to improve enforcement against those who sexually exploit children.
- Encourage world tourism organizations to provide their employees with training concerning the protection of children from sexual exploitation. Produce materials to educate travel professionals about the issue.
- Produce a brochure for wide circulation as an insert in travel documents, or distribution through hotels, airports, taxis, travel agencies and other venues.
- Add information to travel advisories from Foreign Affairs and International Trade about the risks and consequences for those engaging in child sex tourism.
- Print a warning of the legal consequences of child sexual exploitation on the inside back cover of passports.
- Consider asking an international service club to take on child sex tourism as an international project.
- Consider recruiting an internationally recognized celebrity as the spokesperson for this issue to raise public awareness and support for the protection of children from sexual exploitation.

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## Conclusions / Next Steps

In concluding the round table discussion, the Honourable Hedy Fry thanked participants for their contributions and for their commitment to taking action against child sex tourism.

Next Steps:

- follow up in the spring of 1997 to ask round table participants to report on their actions to date;
- a Round Table on Youth Prostitution in Canada will be held by the Honourable Hedy Fry in 1997.

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## APPENDIX

### PARTICIPANTS LIST ROUND TABLE ON CHILD SEX TOURISM

#### ORG.

**Hon. Hedy Fry, P.C., M.P.**  
Vancouver Centre  
Secretary of State  
(Status of Women)  
(Multiculturalism)

University of BC  
Lynn Smith  
**FACILITATOR**  
Dean of Law

**Air Canada**  
Al Thompson  
Vice-president  
Corporate Affairs

**Air Transat**  
Shawn Edmonds  
Sales Director  
Air Transat Holidays

**Vancouver Intl Airport Authority**  
Gerry Bruno  
Vice-president  
Marketing & Strategic Planning

**Uniglobe Travel**  
John Henry  
Vice-president  
International Dev.

**Japan Travel Bureau**  
Hidi Nishi  
Exec.Dir.

**Advantage Coastal Travel**  
Marsha Taylor  
President

**Tourism Vancouver**  
Rick Antonson  
President

**ACTA, Cdn Tourism Assoc.**  
Hugh Campbell  
President

Susan Snider

**Cdn. Tourism Com.**  
Scott Meis  
Director

**End Child Prostitution In Asian Tourism**  
Pauline Hedmann

**Street Kids Intl**  
Anne Sutherland  
Program Officer

**Philippine Women's Centre**  
Jane Ordinario

**UNICEF**  
Nancy Dickson  
Chair for BC

**Media Watch**  
Shari Graydon  
Past President

**Vancouver Police**  
Geramy Field  
Sergeant  
Sexual Offence Squad

**B.C. Public Service Rep. YOUTH**  
Cherry Kingsley

**Canadian Fed. Of University Women**  
Phyllis Scott  
President

**The WestEnder Kits News**  
Ted Townsend  
Editor

**Lynda Zavitz**  
Canadian Airlines



# ROUND TABLE ON CHILD SEX TOURISM<sup>9</sup>

**Bonnie Taylor**

Representative

Canadian Union of Public Employees

**John Paterson**

Ministry of Children & Families (Observer)

**Agnes Lui**

Program Officer

Status of Women Canada

(Observer)

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<b>KEY CONTACTS (Status of Women Canada)</b>
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Special Assistant to the Hon. Hedy Fry

Ms. Heather McKinnon  
Legal Policy Analyst

Ms. Kathy Kennedy  
Communications Officer