

Ex 24.11

## **Recommendations to Consult and Amend Bill 251, Combating Human Trafficking Act**

### **Deputation from the No Pride in Policing Coalition.**

My name is Jamie Magnusson. I'll be speaking on behalf of the No Pride in Policing Coalition along with Gary Kinsman who is also providing a deputation today. Together, our deputations represent a Part 1 and a Part 2. I will begin with Part 1 and Gary will continue with Part 2 when it's his turn.

We are opposed to Bill 251 and the broader 5-year anti-human trafficking strategy that has a budget of \$307 million dollars. At a time when communities locally and globally are calling for defunding the police and abolishing policing institutions, this legislation moves in entirely the opposite direction. Bill 251 involves inflating police and surveillance budgets, expanding police powers, and integrating policing and police/carceral logics into human services. Police will have powers to apprehend and detain 16 and 17 year old youth, and swoosh youth into 'carceral like' residential housing for forced, psychiatrizing 'rehabilitation'. In this moment when Indigenous communities are reeling from the history of residential institutions, this move on the part of the provincial government is offensively tone deaf and brash.

Bill 251, which conflates sex work with human trafficking, proposes legislation that will further criminalize and endanger sex workers, and especially migrant sex workers and those who are from Black, Indigenous, Asian and racialized communities. Further, it outlines a cross-government action plan bringing the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services into greater cooperation with police services, the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Attorney General. This effectively extends policing and carceral logics into youth and other social services, criminalizing young people, especially from Black, Indigenous and racialized communities. This will have devastating impacts particularly on queer and trans Black, Indigenous and racialized youth who have been ousted from their family homes and are trying to survive free of confinement, surveillance, regulation, criminalization and stigmatization. This move effectively extends and intensifies carceral state logics into human services dealing with queer/trans and racialized young people. The NPPC recognizes the violent implications of this move with regard to our Queer/Trans racialized communities, and those within our communities who are struggling economically and socially during the pandemic. Often expelled from their families and fleeing from stigmatizing social services, under the new legislation queer/trans youth would be further targeted for police harassment and criminalization.

Bill 251 and the 5-year anti-trafficking strategy should be withdrawn immediately. The only way that human, labour and migrant rights, will be defended is if Bill 251 is defeated. The only way that poverty, lack of immigration status, and lack of access to affordable housing, health and social services can be addressed is through defeating Bill 251

We are instead calling for the funds to be invested in strategies that we know work to secure the safety of our communities, including Black and Indigenous and racialized domestic and migrant sex workers, the unhoused, and our queer/trans youth – many of whom are criminalized and living precariously having been ousted from family homes. We are requesting that this budget be

invested in sustainable infrastructure for self-determined communities. The years of disinvestments that have resulted in tearing down public housing and shutting down human services needs to be reversed. Children/youth and families require access to housing, food security, and economic security, politically shaped through by an ethic of care. Their safety and wellbeing require publicly funded community centers, schools, libraries, health services and community programs to cultivate and enhance talent such as visual arts, literature, music, dance, sports. Whereas carceral capitalism is invested in the disposability of lives, sustainable self-determined communities are invested in life-making.

Furthermore, what Bill 251 calls for has nothing to do with what people who have survived trafficking have been calling for. We contrast what Indigenous trafficking survivors have been asking for versus what Bill 251 delivers.

Laura Hall, an Assistant Professor, in the School of Indigenous Relations, at Laurentian University in Sudbury, who has done support work and research with Indigenous survivors of trafficking gave the NPPC express permission to use the following quote:

“State-sanctioned anti-trafficking work has been funneled into policing and narrowed from what trafficking survivor groups were saying in 2015-2016. Policing *is* a problem. They don't do their jobs when it comes to actually finding the people who have done harm to Indigenous women and Two-spirit people and they also *are* violent to Indigenous women and Two-spirit people. If we give them more powers, obviously what we're doing is narrowing the scope of our prevention work while funneling much-needed resources away from Indigenous people and toward state agencies like the police.

Prevention is about creating safety, shelter, and community-care for Indigenous trafficking survivors. This means housing, not policing. Land access, not policing. Culture-based addiction treatment, not policing.

Policing does harm to Indigenous trafficking survivors, and Indigenous communities more generally, who then get caught up in the arms of the state. 'Protection' work, 'wellness' checks and so on, funnel Indigenous people directly into state services including CAS (child welfare) and obviously prison.

Empowering Indigenous people to do our own justice-based work, to take care of each other and ourselves, should be at the center of our social response, and not more policing and criminalization.”

Bill 251 is diametrically opposed to what survivors have been asking for. We therefore call for a refusal to pass Bill 251 and instead for the funds that were to be allocated to it to go instead to Indigenous and other community-based agencies and projects providing housing, culturally based addiction treatment and harm reduction and other social supports, and access to the land for Indigenous people. To give more funds to the police who are a major danger to Indigenous, Black and racialized communities, to sex workers and poor and homeless people more generally, is to move in the entirely wrong direction.

The No Pride in Policing Coalition supports Black and Indigenous communities in advocating for redirecting police funds to invest in sustainable infrastructure for self-determination with respect to community-based health and wellbeing. We support the wisdom that children and youth are best served by investing in self-determined, adequately funded communities rather than police services.

Bill 251 moves entirely in the opposite direction of what affected communities are demanding, which is to re-direct funding from policing to communities.

We call on Toronto City Council to oppose Bill 251 and if it is passed provincially to refuse to allow its provisions to be implemented in the City of Toronto.

### References

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Ontario's anti-human trafficking strategy 2020-2025. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-anti-human-trafficking-strategy-2020-2025>