

Human Trafficking

Detective Cindy Cybulski
HT Support Specialist Simone Bell

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Our community,
our inspiration



OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE
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Mission Statement

The HTU is a unique unit that is very involved with community agencies that provide services to victims of HT or that can help us identify victims.

Mission statement

We value the safety, security, and well-being of victims/survivors of Human Trafficking. Survivors choose whether to participate in the criminal justice system or to receive support to exit.

We seek to minimize re-traumatization and treat everyone with compassion, dignity, and respect.

Our goal is to empower survivors, hold traffickers accountable and prevent further victimization.

Investigations

Reactive

- Follow-up on complaints brought forward to police.
- School, parent/guardian, group home, community partner.
- Internal sections at OPS; sexual assault, intimate partner violence, guns and gangs, drugs.
- Other police jurisdictions across Canada (this is occurring more frequently).
- Weekly follow-ups with police agencies across Province and Canada.

Proactive

- Undercover investigative probes conducted on advertisements for sexual services.
- These investigations focus on victims that are not reporting, nobody advocating for them.
- Unit focuses on juvenile/young advertisements.
- Projects focused on the demand. Purchasers. Typically referred to as “johns”.

Our Approach

- *Meetings at an agreed upon, safe and comfortable location.*
- *Officers wear plain clothes and do not have visible police identification.*
- *Trauma based approach. Health and healing come before a statement.*
- *Medical/health will always supersede a statement.*
- *Clothing and basic needs readily available from community partners.*
- *Always offer resources.*
- *Work together with service providers.*
- *Make the court process as comfortable as possible by providing access to therapy dogs, transportation, meals, support and advocating for testimonial aid.*

Recent Investigation

Recent Investigation

- In the summer of 2024 reports were received that a 17-year-old was trafficking other 14-year-old youths. Investigators spoke with several youths who denied being trafficked.
- HTU investigators conducted an undercover operation and confirmed the 15-year-old was working in the sex trade. The youth maintained that she was working on her own accord. Investigators confirmed that the 17-year-old, now 18-year-old was still engaging with the 15-year-olds.
- Investigators used different investigative techniques to push forward with the investigation. They received information that the 18-year-old was travelling to Quebec with two 15-year-olds. An immediate second undercover operation was conducted. The 18-year-old was arrested and charged with human trafficking and drug related offences. The 15-year-olds were located and brought to hospital. HTU believes there are additional victims. The investigation is ongoing.
- During this investigation a large number of internal and external partners were utilized, OPS crime analyst, youth section, surveillance section, Gatineau Police, Children's Aid Society, foster homes, CHEO, CBSA ALERT Alberta and community organizations.
- HTU recognized that this was an investigation that required more resources than we had. The HTU is moving toward being more equipped and resourced to conduct these investigations. They are imperative when files involving youth who are not coming forward.

HTU Staffing Environment

Current environment HTU operates

- 1 team, 4 investigators and 1 Sergeant, smallest HT team for the size of our police service
- 1 crime analyst
- 1 victim specialist
- Two-week rotation of days and afternoons

Police Service	Numbers	Surveillance
O.P.P. IJSF	3 teams of 5	Yes
Peel Police	3 teams of 5 (15)	Yes
Toronto Police	2 teams of 9 (18)	Yes
Halton Police	1 team of 6	Yes
Durham Police	2 teams (6)	Yes
Ottawa Police	1 team of 5	No

According to Stats Canada Toronto makes up **20%** of all human Trafficking cases in Canada. Ottawa is second which accounts for **9%** of all police reported cases Canada wide. When we look at this statistic per capita Ottawa has a higher incident rate of **4.78** incidents per **100,000** residents whereas Toronto's per capita rate is **3.76** incidents per **100,000** residents.

Imbedded Human Trafficking Support Specialist

The role of the HT support specialist is to provide compassionate, sympathetic and consistent care and support to HT victims.

Work in unison with the HTU while protecting the confidentiality of survivors.

Engage in proactive probes and provide court support.

Referrals come from internal reports and external community partners.

Services are provided through a lived experience lens

Extra Support Provided by HT Specialist

- Assists with our workflow, able to triage and flag things to team, when we are off, can action the safety piece immediately.
- Flags names of individuals at risk of HT and liaise with HT CAS for safety tables.
- Provides feedback and their view for media releases, police website content, policy changes, unit mandate, verbiage .
- Provides letters for housing .
- Another layer of accountability within our team.

Internal and External Supports

Internal

- Youth Section
- Intimate Partner Violence Unit
- Sexual Assault & Child Abuse Unit
- Missing Persons
- Drugs
- Guns and Gangs

External Community supports

- Children's Aid Society
- Public and Catholic School Boards
- Voice Found
- Wabano
- TI
- CORATH (Robert Smart)
- You Turn

Human Trafficking Unit Priorities

Priority 1
Cellblock files

Priority 2
Youth at risk of trafficking
In the “grooming stage”.

Priority 3
Proactive Work- Education
& Investigative Probes

Survivor Quote- “ I wish police had identified me during a hotel proactive approach. I felt trapped and did not know what was happening to me. If a victim centered team had helped me understand what was happening to me and the resources available, I feel I would have exited my situation sooner.



Thank You

- Ottawa Police Human Trafficking Unit Email: humantrafficking@ottawapolice.ca
- 613-236-1222 ext. 5005
- Ottawa Police Hotline: 1-800-292-1168