



Public Safety
Canada

Sécurité publique
Canada

The Rev. Amanda Currie
acarr@presbyterian.ca

Dear Ms. Currie:

Your correspondence of January 3, 2021, regarding increased vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic, was forwarded by the Office of the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, to the Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada. I am responding on behalf of Minister Blair in my capacity as Assistant Deputy Minister of the Community Safety and Countering Crime Branch.

Recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of human trafficking and online child sexual exploitation among vulnerable populations, the Government of Canada remains committed to working with partners to protect victims and prosecute those who harm them.

Public Safety Canada leads Federal efforts to combat human trafficking and protect victims and survivors under the *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking*, which includes an investment of \$57.22 million over five years and \$2.89 million ongoing. The Strategy is aligned with the internationally recognized pillars of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership, and introduces a new “empowerment” pillar to enhance supports for victims and survivors of human trafficking. These efforts build on a previous investment of \$14.51 million over five years and \$2.89 million per year ongoing to put in place the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline.

Launched in May 2019, the Hotline is a national, multilingual, 24/7 service operated by the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking (CCEHT). The Hotline can be a lifeline for victims who are especially vulnerable during this global crisis. Through ongoing discussions with the CCEHT, as well as other non-governmental organizations and Provincial and Territorial partners, Public Safety Canada is monitoring how human trafficking has changed over the pandemic and how we can keep working together to fight it and support victims and survivors.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) online is an equally heinous crime and a serious concern for the Government of Canada. Since 2011 *An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service* (the *Mandatory Reporting Act*) has required Internet service providers to report online child pornography to the designated reporting authority. The Act also requires that the provider report to local law enforcement in situations where there is a belief that the providers’ Internet service is being used, or has been used, to commit a child pornography offence.

Canada

In addition, in 2004 the Government created the *National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet* (National Strategy). The National Strategy was expanded in 2009, bringing the total investment in fighting CSE online to over \$18 million per year for Public Safety Canada, the RCMP and Justice Canada. In 2019, the Government of Canada announced an additional \$22.24 million over three years to enhance Public Safety Canada's efforts to coordinate and oversee Federal efforts; support law enforcement capacity to combat CSE; enable the reporting of CSE to proper authorities; support victims by facilitating the removal of imagery and videos; increase public awareness and reduce the stigma from reporting; and work with digital industry to find new ways to combat this crime.

As the lead department on the National Strategy, Public Safety Canada works closely with the RCMP, Justice Canada and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (C3P). The RCMP's National Child Exploitation Crime Centre is the national law enforcement arm of the National Strategy and the central point of contact for CSE investigations across the country, and internationally when the victim or offender is Canadian. Justice Canada develops legislation and provides training, legal advice, and support to National Strategy partners. C3P is a non-governmental organization that operates **Cybertip.ca**, a national tip line where Canadians can report suspected cases of CSE and through which information is forwarded to the appropriate authorities. C3P also provides public education and awareness materials, as well as support and referral services. In addition, C3P operates Project Arachnid, a web crawler tool to identify CSE material and send take down notices to service providers. To date, Project Arachnid has processed more than 126 billion images, and more than 6.4 million notices have been sent to Internet service providers requesting removal of CSE material. Canada also collaborates with international partners in combatting this crime.

The Government of Canada continues to monitor the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable populations and is committed to ensuring at-risk populations and victims and survivors of these crimes have access to the critical resources and supports they need to keep them and our communities safe.

Thank you for writing on these important issues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Talal Dakalbab', with a stylized, cursive script.

Talal Dakalbab
Assistant Deputy Minister
Community Safety and Countering Crime Branch
Public Safety Canada