

Operation Northern Spotlight

Numerous charges have been laid by police following the second installment of a coordinated, national investigation to suppress human trafficking.

Last week as part of Operation Northern Spotlight, members of 26 police services prearranged to meet with people suspected of partaking in the sex trade, potentially against their will, at urban locations across Canada. During the coordinated investigations over a two-day period last week, police charged nine people with 33 offences. Police were also able to ensure the safety of 18 people who had been working in the sex trade as a minor or against their will, including a 12-year-old. 167 officers and support staff combined to interview 257 people -- including 255 women -- and offer them information and contacts with community-based support agencies where available.

Charges include Exercise Control, Make Child Pornography, Distribute Child Pornography, Forcible Confinement, Trafficking in Persons, Material Benefit Resulting from Trafficking in Persons, Withhold or Destroy Documents, Living off the Avails, Assault, Utter Threats, Obstruct Police, and Failure To Comply with Court Orders and Conditions including Breaches of Recognizance and Probation. In Ontario municipal police jurisdictions, operations were supported, where appropriate, by members of the OPP.

The following police services participated in this phase of Operation Northern Spotlight:

Barrie Police Service, Brantford Police Service, Durham Regional Police, Halton Regional Police, Hamilton Police Service, Kingston Police Service, RCMP ? Kitchener, London Police Service, Peel Regional Police Service, Peterborough-Lakefield Community Police Service, Port Hope Police Service, Toronto Police Service, Waterloo Regional Police Service, Windsor Police Service, OPP, Calgary Police Service, Edmonton Police Service, Lethbridge Alberta Law Enforcement Response Team [ALERT], Regina Police Service, Saskatoon Police Service, Winnipeg Police Service, RCMP Exploited Persons Pro-active Strategy (EPPS), Gatineau Police, Ville de Quebec Police, Halifax Regional Police, and RCMP Halifax.

In January 2014, Durham Regional Police coordinated Operation Northern Spotlight which focussed on hotels and motels along major thoroughfares in 30 cities and towns across the country. Police from 26 jurisdictions interviewed hundreds of young women ? some as young as 15 ? and found many were subjected to threats of violence, extortion, drug dependency or other forms of coercion by their adult male controllers. 342 females were interviewed and offered support.

?Operation Northern Spotlight demonstrates the success that all police services can achieve when working together and coordinating our limited resources. Canada's police leaders remain committed to fighting human trafficking through intelligence-gathering, working with our law enforcement and community partners to support victims, and continuing our enforcement efforts,? said Deputy Commissioner Scott TOD, Provincial Commander of OPP Investigations and Organized Crime

?Human trafficking victims are often from extremely vulnerable populations. These victims rarely identify themselves to authorities. The sharing of information and community partnerships are critical to effectively respond to this kind of crime. We also refer victims to appropriate community-based resources, where available, for assistance,? Detective Superintendent Dave TRUAX, Director ? OPP Criminal Investigation Services