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**WOMEN'S LEGAL  
EDUCATION & ACTION FUND**  
**FONDS D'ACTION ET D'ÉDUCATION  
JURIDIQUE POUR LES FEMMES**

**Final Remarks - Appearance Before the House of Commons Standing Committee on  
the Status of Women**

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Rosel Kim, Senior Staff Lawyer

Good morning. My name is Rosel Kim. I'm a senior staff lawyer at the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, also known as LEAF. I'm grateful to appear today from what is now known as Toronto, which is on the traditional lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Wendat, other Anishinabe and the Haudenosaunee nations.

Founded in 1985, LEAF is a national charitable organization that advocates for the substantive equality of all women, girls, trans and non-binary people. We do this through litigation, law reform and public legal education that is feminist and intersectional. As an organization with a mission to advance substantive gender equality, LEAF is committed to ending the exploitation of women, girls and gender-diverse people.

Thank you for inviting LEAF to participate in this important study. I want to make three main points in my opening remarks today.

First, effectively addressing the exploitation of women, girls and gender-diverse people requires responses that aim to address systemic oppression, such as colonialism, racism and transphobia, among others. A systemic approach to ending exploitation also requires acknowledging the negative impacts of state actors and actions. For example, Elene Lam from Butterfly noted how police can serve as a source of violence for Black, indigenous and racialized sex workers, and how encounters with the police can lead to negative consequences like detention and deportation for migrant sex workers.

Taking this into account, measures to address exploitation must be grounded in anti-oppression and respect the agency and self-determination of everyone involved. As Krystal Snider from Womenatthecentre remarked before this committee, saviourism and victimization language used by organizations and law enforcement doing anti-trafficking work can lead to trauma and revictimization for victims coming forward.

Second, trafficking and sex work are not synonymous and must not be conflated. Part of the work to stop conflating sex work with trafficking must include decriminalizing sex work. As you heard from Sandra Wesley from Stella, the term "trafficking" has been

used to refer to multiple concepts that range from physical, sexual and labour abuses as well as child sexual exploitation. This conflation has the effect of obscuring the sources of marginalization and vulnerabilities that I identified earlier.

It also has resulted in harmful consequences for sex workers. Anti-trafficking measures that rely on policing and criminal sanctions do not address the sources of marginalization or inequality faced by people who are vulnerable to exploitation. Instead, they often make things worse, especially for sex workers who are targeted and pressured through these initiatives.

You have heard from groups like the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform and Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition about how conflating sex work and trafficking has resulted in targeted harassment and surveillance of sex workers by law enforcement and anti-trafficking investigations. These harms are compounded by current criminal laws that criminalize sex work. Criminalizing and characterizing all sex work as exploitative make it difficult to identify actual instances of exploitation. It also excludes sex workers from protections against labour exploitation that are available to other workers through employment and labour laws.

Finally, it is important to provide actual social and economic supports to people who are vulnerable to exploitation. These supports include income supports, social supports, affordable housing and health supports that are accessible and barrier-free. These social and economic supports should be accompanied by changes to laws to remove vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers. For example, LEAF has called to repeal immigration regulations that prevent migrant sex workers from obtaining status or being allowed entry into Canada.

In sum, ending exploitation requires a systemic approach grounded in anti-oppression, distinguishing trafficking from sex work and providing concrete supports to eliminate sources of marginalization.

Thank you very much. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.