



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **MORE THAN 100 MEN CHARGED IN FOUR-YEAR JUVENILE PROSTITUTION INVESTIGATION**

Investigators with the York Regional Police Human Trafficking Team have completed Project Raphael, a four-year investigation that led to the arrest of more than 100 men attempting to purchase sex with children.

Project Raphael began in 2014 as one part of the York Regional Police strategy to combat child sex trafficking. The strategy involved:

1. Rescuing victims
2. Identifying and charging those who traffic children
3. Identifying and charging those who attempted to purchase sex with children

In four years, investigators have charged 104 men who all made arrangements to purchase sex with a child who was portrayed to be between the ages of 13 and 16. All of the men responded to online advertisements for escorts then negotiated the purchase of sex for prostituted children. The men charged in this investigation range in ages from 18 to 71 years old, with most being from across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), but some came to York Region from other provinces.

To demonstrate the scope of the demand for prostituted children, in just three days of this investigation in 2017, the Human Trafficking Team investigators arrested 19 men who believed that they were purchasing sex from either a 13-year-old or 14-year-old child.

Of the 104 cases placed before the courts, 40 of the cases have been resolved, with 64 still before the courts. Of the 40 cases resolved by the courts, 32 of the accused plead guilty, four went to trial and of those four, three of them were found guilty and one man was acquitted. Five cases of the 104 were withdrawn.

Members of the Human Trafficking Team are continuing their aggressive efforts in combating human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of women and underage girls. In many cases, those involved in prostitution are forced into the sex trade through violence, threats of violence, coercion and trickery. York Regional Police is committed to investigating all incidents relating to human trafficking and providing assistance to victims. Investigators are willing to speak with anyone involved in the sex trade who may be looking for a way out or who may require assistance to escape these dangerous circumstances.

This project has been made possible by a grant from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Anyone with further information is asked to contact the York Regional Police Vice Unit at 1-866-876-5423, ext.7817, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS, leave an anonymous tip online at [www.1800222tips.com](http://www.1800222tips.com), or text your tip to CRIMES (274637) starting with the word YORK.

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