

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment releases final report



The Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment released its final report Dec. 10.

As a member of the committee, I am pleased the final report has been released.

This is the third Select Committee I have participated in, including the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and the Select Committee on Developmental Services.

After months of hearing from survivors, family members, advocates, as well as health care, justice and social support workers across the province, the committee has suggested 67 recommendations to address the issue of sexual violence and harassment in Ontario.

The committee was brought forward in a motion by my Progressive Conservative colleague, MPP Laurie Scott, Nov. 24 after news broke in the fall of 2014 regarding several high profile cases of sexual violence and harassment, including Jian Ghomeshi, Bill Cosby, as well as two Members of Parliament. The committee, comprised of members from all-three parties in the Legislature, included Scott and I as the representatives of the PC Caucus.

The committee's final report presented 67 recommendations that touch on several ministries, including the Ministries of Education; Attorney General; Training, Colleges and Universities; Francophone Affairs; Aboriginal Affairs; and Health and Long-Term Care. All the recommendations listed in the report were made through consensus from all-three parties. This is a very unique quality of select committees and an important part of our legislative process, which allows members of all-three parties in the Legislature to collaborate on finding ways to address systemic problems in our province.

I was also pleased to see the final report include recommendations to combat human trafficking. My colleague Scott, as Critic for Women's Issues, has been working hard on this matter, including bringing forward a motion that received all-party support to establish a province-wide anti-trafficking task force. If implemented, the taskforce would create a unit in which police officers, Crown prosecutors and social workers would work together to apprehend criminals and assist victims of human trafficking. The issue of human trafficking is happening right in our local communities, and many of the victims of human trafficking in Ontario are children from across the province. These children need help and they need it now.

The committee's final report recommends that the government work on a province-wide strategy to combat human trafficking and promote more collaboration between services in order to help trafficking survivors. If you would like to learn more about how human trafficking affects individuals and our communities I strongly suggest reading Julian Sher's book titled *Somebody's Daughter*. I would like to thank all members of the committee for coming together to combat these issues that affect many Ontarians. Together we have accomplished something that will hopefully benefit our province for years to come. I urge the government to immediately implement the recommendations made in the final report, to help those who have suffered and are currently suffering from sexual violence and harassment and to help put an end to this systemic problem.

If you are interested in reading the full report and the recommendations please visit my website at www.sylviajonesmpp.ca