

Algonquin students working to end human trafficking

SOPHIE DESROSIER, OTTAWA SUN

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The forgotten victims of human trafficking

Human trafficking was at issue Thursday as service providers and students from Algonquin College attempted to find answers to a growing problem.

More than 100 service providers and students took part in the event, Not For Sale: Mobilizing our Community to Support Victims of Human Trafficking, in attempt to network and share ideas for key players involved in ending human trafficking as well as offering survivor support.

One of the students involved, Caitlin Corbett, 22, believes while most know what human trafficking is, how to handle survivors is still being figured out. She says the event was an opportunity for organizations like PACT Ottawa (People Against the Crime of Trafficking Humans) and the Ottawa police to get together and learn about other services offered, and brainstorm better plans to fix the problem.

Keynote speaker psychologist and clinical traumatologist Jacqui Linder from Edmonton shared believes that a step in the right direction is to legalize and even support our sex trade workers.

"Not everybody wants to be saved," said Linder. She believes some people are happy as sex trade workers, and those people should be turned to for guidance and direction in how we can better help the actual victims of human trafficking, forced into the trade.

"My hope today is to get a bunch of thinkers in one room," Linder told the Sun. "My openness to critique is a willingness to hear from people who see things differently than I do, what I might be missing."

"I really want us to get it right this time around," she added. Linder's speech generated some criticism with her plan, but she invites it.

After lunch, attendees got to hear from a survivor of human trafficking. Simone Bell shared horrific stories of her time in the business, and how she got through every day.

"It's like you're dead inside," she recalled. "And thank God for that. Thank God you can't feel what's being done."

Bell stresses the need for 24-hour resources for victims, which isn't currently available in Ottawa.

"There's absolutely no room for error when it comes to this. One little mistake and you've lost that victim," she told the Sun. "You'll never see them again."

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