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Press Release



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## Tourisme + Enfants + Sexe Tourism + Children + Sex

c'est **criminel**, partout  
it is a **crime**, worldwide

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## The Quebec tourism and travel industry says "no" to Child Sex Tourism

Montreal, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010. After an information forum on Child Sex Tourism coordinated by the International Bureau for Children's Rights (IBCR), Thomas Cook and SkyLink Voyages on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009, agencies from the tourism and travel industry decided to act by forming a committee. In close collaboration with the Bureau, representatives created a banner with the objective to dissuade potential abusers and encourage travelers to report suspicious behaviours while abroad.

Ms. Colette Girard from Jolivac explains her commitment to the campaign: "During the forum, my colleagues and I were shocked to discover that men who have sexual relations with children or adolescents on their trips are mostly "average Joes" who believe that they can do whatever they want in another country without any form of consequence. **If we can influence even one individual with this campaign, we will have accomplished our goal in protecting children.**"

The participants at the forum, including Vacances Tours Mont-Royal, Voyages Incursion, Jolivac, Thomas Cook, Canandes International Tours, Sunwing, Tours Chanteclerc and SkyLink Voyages have all asserted their concern about the issue and are actively incorporating the banner into their different channels of communication (email, contracts, itinerary, website, etc.) in order to disseminate the campaign.

IBCR is pleased that this proposal came from the private sector itself and believes that these partnerships will lead to further joint initiatives. One of the main recommendations of the World Congress III against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents was to reinforce the collaboration between governments, NGOs and the private sector in the fight against sexual exploitation. The IBCR is particularly grateful to Jolivac for their role in the committee and their enthusiastic partnership throughout the developmental stages of the campaign.

It is important to the Bureau that this first step in the fight against Child Sex Tourism be followed by others. "We plan on enforcing this educational campaign using informative pamphlets that will be distributed in airports and the consulate offices of the main travel destinations visited by Quebecers. If funds allow, we look forward to producing an in-flight video about Child Sex Tourism. Simultaneously, the IBCR will continue developing projects in these destinations in order to change the social tolerance surrounding this issue and hence close the circle of sexual exploitation," declares Marco Sotelo, Programme Manager for the Prevention of Child Sex Tourism at the IBCR.

### **A Growing Phenomenon**

According to a study by law professor Benjamin Perrin from the University of British Columbia, **at least 146 Canadian citizens have been charged with child sex offences overseas between 1993 and 2007**. Offenders, mostly men, usually travel from a rich country to a developing region such as Latin America, an area which is growing in popularity and replacing Southern Asia as the main destination for sex offenders due to its low cost and close proximity.

Contrary to popular belief, the majority of tourists abusing minors abroad are not pedophiles who are only interested in young children. Rather, they are so-called "situational" offenders who have sexual relations with children because the opportunity arises through prostitution or family members. Although most abusers would not do this in their daily lives, they utilize their anonymity and the favourable exchange rates of destinations to engage in sexual acts with minors. Consequently, a high proportion of exploited minors are between the ages of 12 and 16 years old. Victims are both girls and boys.

In Canada, an extraterritorial law allows for the pursuit and prosecution of Canadians who commit sexual abuse on children abroad. Despite the recent convictions of Donald Bakker from British Columbia as well as Armand Huard and Denis Rochefort from Quebec, Child Sex Tourism and its consequences remain fairly unknown amongst the Canadian population.

- 30 -

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*For more information, please visit the International Bureau or Children's Rights' website at [www.ibcr.org](http://www.ibcr.org)*