

## TOUGHER PENALTIES FOR CHILD PREDATORS ACT

by Loretta P. Merritt

Sexual abuse of children is a worldwide epidemic that must be fought on a number of fronts including legislation. On March 27, 2015, the *Tougher Penalties for Child Predators Act* was passed. This legislation amends a number of other pieces of legislation in an attempt to toughen laws against perpetrators who prey on children. The Act amends the *Criminal Code of Canada* to increase mandatory minimum penalties and maximum penalties for certain sexual offences against children, to increase maximum penalties for violation of probation orders and peace bonds and to require courts to impose consecutive sentences on offenders who commit sexual offences against children.

It also amends the *Canada Evidence Act* to ensure that spouses of the accused can be forced to testify as witnesses for the prosecution in cases involving child pornography. This legislation amends the *Sex Offender Information Registry Act* to increase reporting obligations of sex offenders who travel outside Canada. Finally, it creates the *High Risk Child Sex Offender Database Act* to establish a publicly accessible data base that contains information that a police service or other public authority has previously made accessible to the public with regard to persons who are found guilty of sexual offences against children and who impose a high risk of committing crimes of a sexual nature.

Since 2006, the Government has been taking active steps to protect children. Some of these steps including making it illegal to provide sexually explicit material to a child for the purpose of facilitating a sexual offence and increasing the age of consent from 14 to 16 years as well as enacting legislation to make reporting of child pornography by internet service providers mandatory and making it illegal to use computers or other telecommunications to agree with or make arrangements with another person to commit a sexual offence against a child. These new amendments certainly further demonstrate the Canadian Government's commitment to this important issue.

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