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'Not able to escape': 7 suspects facing 65 charges in Manitoba human trafficking probe

Video:

<https://globalnews.ca/video/10613901/7-suspects-in-manitoba-human-trafficking-probe-face-65-charges/>

By: Sam Thompson

July 9, 2024

Manitoba RCMP say an investigation into **child exploitation** and **human trafficking** that has led to the arrest of seven people, who face 65 charges between them.

The investigation began, police said, when a 15-year-old girl was spotted walking around Portage la Prairie with an older man. She was later found with another girl the same age, who RCMP say were part of a Portage-based human trafficking ring.

An adult woman allegedly befriended the girls and suggested they hang out with her 'friends' in order to get drugs and money.

Investigators said the teens would perform sexual acts for drugs and cash from the man, and that nude photos were sent back and forth between adult men and the 15-year-olds, facilitated by the woman.

"When the youth arrived with the adult female, there would be an adult male present, who would provide drugs in exchange for sexual acts," said Insp. Shawn Pike.

“On many occasions, the youths were locked in a location by the adult female, who remained throughout the entire interaction. These youths were not able to escape.”

Ten search warrants between Feb. 2 and June 4 led to the arrests.

Police also seized a large quantity of meth, cocaine, and 13 guns over the course of the raids. The charges for the seven suspects run the gamut from child luring to sexual assault to drug trafficking.

The investigation is ongoing, and RCMP say they believe there are more victims, including a younger girl – age 13 or 14 – who has yet to be identified.

“If you think this is not happening in your community, you are wrong,” said Const. Kirandeep Hira of the internet child exploitation unit.

“This is human trafficking and it is happening all over Manitoba. We all need to do our part to protect those victimized by traffickers. If you see something, say something.”

Anyone with information is asked to call police at 204-984-3219.