

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT OF DONNA FRENCH
(September 2018)

I am the mother of Kristen French (“Kristen”) who was abducted by Paul Bernardo (“Bernardo”) and Karla Homolka (“Homolka”) on April 16, 1992. Bernardo and Homolka took Kristen to their home in St. Catharines, Ontario, where they committed unspeakable criminal acts against our daughter, resulting in her murder on April 19, 1992. Kristen’s body was discovered on April 30, 1992.

This victim impact statement is submitted on behalf of myself, and my husband and Kristen’s father, Doug. It is also supplemental to the victim impact statement we gave at Bernardo’s sentencing hearing before Associate Chief Justice LeSage. We understand that having been made an Exhibit at the sentencing hearing, you are in possession of our previous victim impact statement.

We have had an opportunity to read Debbie Mahaffy’s victim impact statement and we agree and adopt everything she says as it relates to (i) the extreme danger Paul Bernardo represents to public safety; (ii) the findings and conclusions of Associate Chief Justice LeSage confirming this fact; (iii) the implications of Bernardo’s book; (iv) the absence of any cure or meaningful treatment for offenders like Bernardo; (v) the unfairness over the fact that the privacy rights of a serial psychopathic murderer, sexual predator, sadist and rapist outweighs our interest and the public interest to proper disclosure of information addressing issues of public safety; (vi) the need for this Honourable Tribunal to first address Bernardo’s dangerous offender designation before the traditional parole considerations for people convicted of first degree murder and

sentenced to life imprisonment and (vii) the direct link of all of this to how this impacts us as victims in a significant way. Therefore, to the extent reasonably appropriate, I will not address these issues or repeat what has been so ably stated by Debbie.

Preparing this victim impact statement has been painful and gut-wrenching. I understand that a parole system is necessary in our justice system and I understand that it applies to all offenders at large and not specifically for offenders like Paul Bernardo, but it is painfully unthinkable to me that Bernardo's parole eligibility did not change by a single second, a single minute, a single day as a result of his brutal and unspeakable murder of Kristen. It so diminishes Kristen's life. I appreciate that in response to Canadians' outrage and indignation over this fact, that the Parliament of Canada amended the *Criminal Code* to lengthen the parole eligibility for serial murderers like Bernardo, however the legislation is not retroactive. Therefore, while Bernardo is "eligible" for parole, the current law which would not make him eligible and represents the public interest, must be taken into account. Bernardo should not benefit because of the timing of his murders.

As I contemplate how to express how the loss of our daughter has affected our family, I'm left feeling so inadequate. How does one describe such immeasurable pain so as to give even the slightest understanding of the overwhelming sadness, the emptiness and pain we feel even after 26 years of dealing with our loss?

For those who say that time heals, I say, there is nothing further from the truth when the wound affects the entire core of a family. What time does do is help one to learn to live with this pain as

best as possible. So our family has worked at putting our lives back together even though the pieces don't fit together like they should. We will never know if our medical problems are a result of the trauma we endured, however we do know it has changed our lives forever and where we are in life today is largely due to our inconceivable loss.

The constant everyday reminders that we deal with, like children walking to school, Kristen's friends getting married, having children and rejoicing in life's joys, the fact that our grandchildren will never get to enjoy the love and attention of their Aunt Kristen. These thoughts have to be stored away in the back of our minds while tender thoughts of every day Kristen lived are cherished. This is very difficult to do, but must be done in order to endure each day without her. Each day is a challenge to maintain our belief that life is a wonderful gift that must be enjoyed to the fullest. The details of what Kristen endured in her final days are black images that will be with us the rest of our lives.

Though Kristen is no longer with us in bodily form, Kristen is **always** with us spiritually. The goodness she showed during her short life is so great that it totally overrides anything evil. Kristen's spirit lives eternally and is an inspiration to our family and everyone who has been touched with her courage and strength.

One of the hallmarks of psychopathy is a complete absence of any empathy, remorse or guilt. Psychopaths thrive on dominance, control, violence and instilling fear. They are masters of deception and manipulation and therefore possess a dangerous and deceptive charm. They are cunning. They are often intelligent and well spoken. They are frighteningly narcissistic with a

grandiose sense of power and self. They have a callous disregard for other people's lives. Psychopathy is often mitigated by referring to it as an anti-social personality disorder. However labelled, psychopaths are dangerous.

Bernardo has never accepted responsibility for his sadistic and unspeakable criminal behaviour. He has never expressed any remorse. He has no insight into his crimes and any suggestion to the contrary by Bernardo is self-serving, disingenuous and done as part of a performance to manipulate the system for parole purposes.

In closing I'd like to say what was told to us by FBI profiler, Chuck Wagner, and that is **"the best judge of future behavior, is past behavior"**. The dread that courses through me when remembering this statement is, if this is true, then how will anyone ever be able to explain to the family of the next victim that their loved one is dead because a "dangerous offender" was released from prison?

I too will end with the words of Justice LeSage **"you [Bernardo] require [jail] [and] in my view, for the rest of your natural life"**.

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