

## Libel Notice Served on Toronto Star Over Defamatory Coverage of La Passerelle-I.D.É.'s *Sans Visage* Program

**Toronto, Ontario, April 17, 2019** – Today, a notice of libel was served on the Toronto Star following its publication of a defamatory article on April 7, 2019 about La Passerelle-I.D.É.'s *Sans-Visage* program.

In the article "*Rosedale couple's bogus program to rescue sex workers: \$1.5 million of your tax dollars at work*" the Toronto Star and its reporter Kevin Donovan knowingly misrepresented the nature, founding purpose and program content of *Sans Visage*, a legitimate, government-approved program intended to assist vulnerable Francophone women of colour.

As Mr. Donovan knew prior to publication, *Sans Visage* was developed to support young immigrant and racialized Francophone women who are at risk of economic dependency. This program was never designed for sex workers and was never put forward as such. Rather, its purpose is to empower at-risk women and girls by providing them with access to critical employment and social services as well as leadership skills. Both the purpose and program design were clear to the federal government in the original application for funding and when the grant of \$1.5 million over 5 years was received from Public Safety Canada's Crime Prevention Action Fund.

"The Star's wilful disregard of La Passerelle-I.D.É.'s record of over two decades of work in the public interest, for the sake of a sensational and highly damaging article based on the manufactured falsehood that *Sans Visage* is about the sex trade, demonstrates an utter blindness to principles of fairness, balance, and responsible journalism," said Peter A. Downard, Partner and Senior Litigator at Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP.

Other falsehoods in the articles include the insinuation that participants' identities were somehow used – they were not – and that the organization had not accounted for its expenditures of federal funding – it had, in detail. Again, Mr. Donovan was aware of all of this ahead of publication.

“The Toronto Star’s reckless disregard of the truth and its false narrative in how it reported on La Passerelle has been incredibly difficult for us,” said Léonie Tchatat. “The wilful disregard of the facts and the tone of inexplicable racial and anti-francophone bias is most disappointing coming from a publication like the Toronto Star,” she added.

“The personal attacks, the innuendos about our personal financial situation and the publishing of details of our private lives have resulted in threats and real danger to us and to our children,” said Tchatat. “We are proud of the work of La Passerelle-I.D.É and we will address these falsehoods head-on as we rebuild the reputation of our organization, which will continue to serve a critical need in the community.”

La Passerelle-I.D.É. has operated successfully for over two decades. The organization has received grants from governments and departments to administer its programming, including employment training, social integration and economic development programs. La Passerelle-I.D.É. successfully runs over a dozen signature initiatives and has been an important partner to governments and organisations who share a vision of successfully integrating francophone immigrants and visible minorities in Canada.

For more information, please contact:  
Myriam Bentoumi  
Email: [myriam@passerelle-ide.com](mailto:myriam@passerelle-ide.com)  
Phone: 416-934-0588 ext. 230