

**Source:** <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/labour-trafficking-manitoba-1.7482646>

## **Non-profit aims to prevent labour trafficking in Manitoba's migrant-reliant trucking industry**

Initiative will educate workers on how to report suspected forced labour

By: Arturo Chang, *With files from Felisha Adam*

Posted: March 13, 2025

A Manitoba-based charity that supports survivors of human trafficking hopes to raise awareness about the issue of labour trafficking among workers in the increasingly migrant-reliant trucking industry.

The Joy Smith Foundation has partnered with the Manitoba Trucking Association (MTA) and local police in a campaign to better inform victims on how to report attempts to coerce them into unsafe working conditions through deceptive recruitment practices, withheld wages and threats of retaliation.

The foundation said Thursday the push will include educational billboards, posters and flyers over the next few months to inform professional drivers, trucking company leaders and the public about the signs of labour trafficking.

"Education truly is our greatest weapon," said CEO Janet Campbell.

"If people understand the issue and they understand what to do if they're ever confronted, they then become empowered to take action and disrupt this from happening."

Federal data shows Manitoba businesses in the trades, transport, equipment operation and related occupations were [cleared to hire 1,467 temporary foreign workers in 2023](#) — an increase of nearly 1,300 per cent from 106 five years earlier.

## **Program criticized**

Canada's temporary foreign workers program has been criticized as being open to abuse, including labour trafficking. A recent Amnesty International report condemned it as "inherently exploitative," arguing it violates [Canada's commitments to international law](#).

"Those individuals are coming to our country to find a better life," Campbell said. "They're not familiar with our customs, they're not familiar with our laws and the immigration process, they're really uncertain that in fact, they are even being victimized."

Campbell says employers are heavily involved in workers' immigration process because they are usually the ones who help bring them to Canada, and that creates a sense of trust employers can exploit to manipulate people into doing things such as turning in their passports or convince them speaking out will get them deported.

Campbell said forced labour incidents are rarely reported because victims aren't aware the authorities can protect them.

### **'We're trying to get ahead of the situation'**

A total of 43 human trafficking incidents were reported in Manitoba from 2013 to 2023, according to Statistics Canada. However, 4,543 cases were reported across the country, including 2,914 in Ontario.

There was only one reported incident in Manitoba in 2023.

"We're trying to get ahead of the situation," said Rachelle Baker, chair of the MTA's human resources council.

"We hear stories every day and specially working with recruiting and bringing new drivers on. It's stories that you wouldn't think would happen in Manitoba or in Winnipeg, but it's happening all around us."

Robert MacKenzie, board chair with Winnipeg Crime Stoppers, said the campaign is about letting know people they can come forward to the authorities without fearing retribution.

"If you see something, say something," he said.