



## **Joy Smith Foundation Launching Initiative to Combat Forced Labour in Manitoba**

*For Immediate Release*

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Winnipeg, MB - Labour trafficking is a hidden and urgent issue in Manitoba, with victims often coerced into unsafe working conditions through deceptive recruitment practices, withheld wages, and threats of retaliation. While labour trafficking exists across various industries in Canada, The Joy Smith Foundation is proud to announce an initiative focused specifically on supporting the trucking industry, where vulnerabilities to trafficking have been identified.

Announced on Manitoba Human Trafficking Awareness Day (March 13), the initiative aims to raise awareness and empower workers, industry leaders, and the community to recognize the signs of labour trafficking and take action.

“This initiative is the first of its kind in Canada, showing what’s possible when communities and industries unite against human trafficking,” says Janet Campbell, President and CEO of The Joy Smith Foundation. “Labour trafficking has been hidden in plain sight for too long. By focusing on the trucking industry, we’re taking a crucial first step in exposing this crime. But real change requires everyone—industry, law enforcement, and communities—protecting everyone’s dignity and freedom from injustice.”

“Unfortunately, labour trafficking and immigration abuses are real issues in the trucking industry. Many new drivers are forced into unsafe working conditions without proper training or necessary skills.” says the Manitoba Trucking Association. “Those who condone these practices compromise human rights, labour standards, and safety, undermining the trucking industry at the expense of individuals who deserve much better. The Manitoba Trucking Association is proud to partner with The Joy Smith Foundation to eliminate these practices, ensuring a better quality of life for those affected by these injustices.”

The initiative will launch a campaign with multilingual education materials, digital outreach, and industry-specific resources aimed at informing professional drivers, trucking company leaders, and the public about the signs of labour trafficking. The campaign will also highlight how individuals can report suspected cases of labour trafficking safely and anonymously through Crime Stoppers.

“Winnipeg Crime Stoppers is proud to partner with the Joy Smith Foundation on this new campaign.” says Robert MacKenzie, Winnipeg Crime Stoppers. “By collaborating our efforts,

we can raise awareness, support survivors, and help bring traffickers to justice. Human trafficking is a crime impacting Canadians from coast to coast. This partnership strengthens our shared commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals and making our communities safer for a stronger Canada. Winnipeg Crime Stoppers will pay cash for any tips that lead to the arrest of human traffickers. Tipsters never have to reveal their identity and your anonymity is guaranteed. The message is simple, see something say something.”

“Human trafficking can happen to anyone at any time,” says founder, advocate and former Member of Parliament, Joy Smith. “We know that labour trafficking targets the most vulnerable among those seeking a better life in Canada. It is incumbent on us to ensure our province is leading the fight to prevent modern day slavery here.”

The Joy Smith Foundation, in partnership with the Manitoba Trucking Association and Crime Stoppers, is committed to addressing the systemic issues that facilitate labour trafficking in Manitoba. This new initiative builds on the foundation’s previous successes, including the 2023 national [“See the Trafficking Signs”](#) campaign, which focused on preventing youth from being lured into the sex trade.

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#### **About the Joy Smith Foundation**

The Joy Smith Foundation works to provide access to information so that every Canadian man, woman and child is educated and empowered to stay safe from manipulation, force, or abuse of power designed to lure and exploit them in the sex trade or forced labour.



#### **About the National Human Trafficking Education Centre**

The National Human Trafficking Education Centre provides courses for teachers, parents, front-line responders and all Canadians who want to play a role in the prevention and intervention of human trafficking. Instructor-led and online courses range in length and are easily accessible through the Centre’s portal. Visit the National Human Trafficking Education Centre for more information and to register for a course.

## Quotes from Law Enforcement Partners

### Winnipeg Police Service

Labour trafficking can happen in industries such as agriculture, hospitality, construction, domestic work and trucking. It is a serious crime that involves forcing, coercing, or deceiving individuals into exploitative working conditions. Victims often face threats, debt, bondage, abuse, and inhumane living or working conditions.

The Winnipeg Police Service is committed to protecting vulnerable individuals from exploitation and is actively working with community organizations, labour groups, and government agencies to raise awareness, provide support services for victims, and strengthen enforcement efforts.

“Together we can shine a light on this injustice of labour trafficking and fight for the rights of every worker” says Inspector Darryl Ramkissoon of the Winnipeg Police Service, Specialized Investigations.

### RCMP

“Human trafficking is present in all of our communities. We are continually looking for ways to educate the public and our most vulnerable people, to prevent, disrupt and hold exploiters accountable for these horrific crimes,” said S/Sgt Tara Clelland, RCMP Major Crime Services. “Our RCMP Human Trafficking Unit is committed to continued collaboration with our various community partners, and law enforcement agencies to intercept, investigate traffickers and protect victims. Manitoba’s Human Trafficking Awareness Day is an excellent opportunity to initiate conversations and talk about what trafficking in humans really looks like.”

### Quick Facts

Labour trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery that is prevalent in Canada and particularly in Manitoba. It often targets temporary foreign workers, international students, and newcomers to Canada who are seeking employment. The [Global Slavery Index](#) suggests that approximately 69,000 people are living in modern day slavery in Canada.

Recent data reveals troubling trends within the trucking industry in Manitoba:

- 39% of trucking companies that participated in the Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) program between 2019 and 2023 are no longer operational, leaving the fate of hundreds of recruited foreign workers unknown.
- Small trucking companies (with fewer than 15 trucks) hired an average of 192% of their fleet size through foreign labour, demonstrating a heavy reliance on LMIA permits.
- Many victims of labour trafficking do not recognize their own exploitation or lack access to the resources needed to seek help.

