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MTA joins Joy Smith Foundation in campaign against labor trafficking in trucking

By: Today's Trucking

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The Manitoba Trucking Association (MTA) is partnering with the Joy Smith Foundation on its new initiative aimed at addressing labor trafficking in the province's trucking industry.

Announced on March 13 — Manitoba Human Trafficking Awareness Day — the initiative will raise awareness, educate industry stakeholders, and provide resources to recognize and report cases of labor trafficking. This campaign will include multilingual educational materials, digital outreach, and industry-specific tools to inform professional drivers, trucking company leaders, and the broader community.

The initiative will also work with Winnipeg Crime Stoppers, which will offer cash rewards for anonymous tips leading to arrests of traffickers.

"Labor 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," said Janet Campbell, president and CEO of the Joy Smith Foundation, in a news release.

"Unfortunately, labor 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," MTA added. "Those who condone these practices compromise human rights, labor standards, and safety, undermining the trucking industry at the expense of individuals who deserve much better."

Labor trafficking often targets temporary foreign workers, international students, and newcomers to Canada seeking employment, said founder, advocate, and former Member of Parliament Joy Smith. “We know that labor 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.”

In Manitoba, concerns have been raised about the trucking sector’s reliance on foreign labor. The data cited in a news release reveals that early 40% of trucking companies that used the Labor Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) program between 2019 and 2023 have since shut down, leaving hundreds of recruited foreign workers uncertain. Meanwhile, small trucking companies (with fewer than 15 trucks) hired an average of 192% of their fleet size through foreign labor, demonstrating a heavy reliance on LMIA permits.