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Manitoba campaign to raise awareness about human trafficking in trucking industry

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The Joy Smith Foundation has launched a new campaign to raise awareness about human trafficking in the Canadian trucking industry.

It was launched this week to coincide with National Trucking Week, alongside partners the Manitoba Trucking Association and Winnipeg Crime Stoppers.

“Protecting drivers means protecting our communities. By addressing labor trafficking in trucking, we can stop this crime and make Manitoba’s roads safer for everyone,” said Janet Campbell, president and CEO of The Joy Smith Foundation. “By working alongside the Manitoba Trucking Association and Winnipeg Crime Stoppers, we are ensuring drivers, companies, and communities know the signs of trafficking and how to act.”

The theme is ‘Know the signs. Report the crime.’ The campaign will spread that message via billboards, posters and digital resources, pointing to traffickingreport.ca, a central hub for educational materials on labor trafficking in trucking.

“The trucking industry has a long and proud history in Manitoba. However, the recent addition of labor trafficking is a significant black eye for us,” said Aaron Dolyniuk, executive director of the Manitoba Trucking Association.

“At the industry level, it results in untrained drivers, poorly maintained equipment, and a race to the bottom for driver compensation. Unfortunately, the real damage comes at the individual level: drivers who are forced to work without proper training or for legal wages, and unsafe roads for everyone...This campaign will provide valuable information to our industry members about the signs of labor trafficking, as well as resources available to combat it. No one should be forced to work in such conditions, and we look forward to the day when a campaign such as this is no longer needed.”

Drivers are being asked to keep their eyes peeled for the following:

- No Freedom to Leave – The individual is not free to leave their job or workplace. Attempts to do so are met with threats, coercion, or punishment.
- Documents Withheld – Passports, IDs, or work permits are confiscated or controlled by the employer.
- Unpaid or Stolen Wages – Drivers do not receive their promised wages. Pay may be stolen, unfairly deducted, or withheld entirely.
- Extreme Work Hours – Drivers may be forced to drive longer than industry standards allow, sometimes under pressure to falsify records.
- Unsafe Work Conditions – Drivers are made to work without required industry safety training or protective equipment (gloves, boots). Trucks may be unsafe or unfit for the road.
- Poor Living Conditions – Drivers may be forced to live in overcrowded, unsafe, or unsanitary conditions often controlled by the employer.
- Fear and Intimidation – Drivers may show signs of fear or anxiety and avoid talking about their job or living conditions due to threats or monitoring.
- False Promises or Debt – Drivers may have been lured with false promises, or are trapped by debt from recruitment fees, forced to keep working to pay it off.

Visit traffickingreport.ca for educational resources, the Joy Smith Foundation says. To report suspected labor trafficking, contact Winnipeg Crime Stoppers (204) 786-8477 or 800-222-8477.