



The Centre
Canadian Centre to
End Human Trafficking.

2025 Ontario Pre-Budget Consultation Submission

Submitted by The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

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Human trafficking is a complex policy challenge. Traffickers target individuals who are disproportionately impacted by broad socio-economic issues, such as poverty, addiction, discrimination, domestic violence, and experience in the child welfare system. After leaving their trafficking situation, survivors often depend on services from across the public service to rebuild their lives. This means that addressing human trafficking and supporting survivors requires a whole-of-government approach.

Ontario has been a leader in prioritizing and investing in anti-trafficking initiatives. The Centre applauds the work that has been undertaken under the province's 2020-2025 anti-human trafficking strategy. However, more work is needed if we are to end human trafficking in our time. The 2025 budget provides an important opportunity for policymakers to build on previous successes and to address ongoing gaps.

This policy brief highlights three areas where Ontario could make a significant impact in the lives of victims/survivors. They are:

1. appropriately funding Ontario's renewed *anti-human trafficking strategy*;
2. increasing investments in the housing and shelter system; and
3. expanding protections for temporary residents.

1. Increase funding for the forthcoming anti-human trafficking strategy.

Ontario's *Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy (2020-25)* outlined four priorities to address human trafficking: raising awareness, protecting victims, supporting survivors, and holding offenders accountable. With this came a \$307 million investment over 5 years. We call on the Government of Ontario to increase funding for the new anti-trafficking strategy (expected in spring 2025). This will allow the province to build on its considerable progress while addressing ongoing gaps. More specifically, Ontario should:

- 1) Invest a minimum of \$360M over five years in the new anti-human trafficking strategy. This amount sustains the original investment when factoring in the average 4.07% inflation rate between 2020 and 2024.¹ Additional monies should also be set aside to fund the next three recommendations.

¹ Bank of Canada (2025). *Inflation Calculator*. Accessed online at: <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>



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- 2) Mandate and fund anti-human trafficking training for Service Managers and other social service providers to help identify the signs of trafficking, support survivors, and prevent human trafficking.
- 3) Adequately fund the operation of specialized services for human trafficking victims/survivors in all sectors (i.e. housing, healthcare, mental health and addictions, etc.). This funding should be sustainable rather than project-based.
- 4) Establish grants that empower marginalized groups to collect data on human trafficking that is occurring in their communities, including how it is perpetrated, discussed, understood, and the cultural supports that could assist survivors.

2. Invest in housing and shelter supports for human trafficking survivors

In 2024, more than 80,000 people in Ontario experienced homelessness.² That is roughly equivalent to the population of Peterborough and represents an increase of more than 25% since 2022.³

Growing evidence demonstrates strong linkages between housing precarity and human trafficking. Lack of access to secure and safe housing creates significant emotional, financial, and physical vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit. Once in a trafficking situation, survivors' inability to access secure housing is the most significant barrier to leaving; far too many are forced to remain with their traffickers or seek out other unsafe and exploitative situations.

Between 2019 and 2022, the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline received 3,059 calls related to human trafficking across the country. Shelter and housing supports for victims and survivors were the most requested referrals on those calls.⁴ Unfortunately, Hotline staff regularly find it difficult to connect survivors with immediate, short-, and long-term housing due to gaps in policy and programming. For example, we hear from survivors that cannot access certain shelters or housing programs because they are considered 'out-of-region.' This NIMBYism limits

² Association of Municipalities of Ontario (2025). *Municipalities Under Pressure: The Growing Human and Financial Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis*. Accessed online at: <https://www.amo.on.ca/sites/default/files/assets/DOCUMENTS/Reports/2025/2025-01-08-EndingChronicHomelessnessinOntario.pdf>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking. (2023). *Human Trafficking Trends in Canada (2019-2022)*. Accessed online at: https://www.canadiancentretoendhumantrafficking.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Human-Trafficking-Trends-in-Canada-2019-2022_Data-ENG-FINAL.pdf



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survivors' ability to leave areas where they've been trafficked because many are denied access to social programs in other parts of the province.

An increased commitment to funding a range of housing options across the housing and shelter system, as well as a commitment to building sector capacity to support victims/survivors, is necessary to address the housing gaps that harm trafficking survivors.

The Centre calls on the Government of Ontario to:

- 1) Commit long-term funding for the development and operation of housing options (emergency, transitional and permanent supportive) specific to survivors of human trafficking.
- 2) Fund the transportation of human trafficking victims and survivors to shelters, including between regions. This is particularly needed in Northern Ontario.
- 3) Increase Ontario's social and affordable housing stock to make safe and secure housing more accessible.

3. Enhance measures to protect temporary residents from abuse

Canada has seen a dramatic increase in the number of temporary residents - Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) and international students – that it has accepted over the past decade. Their contributions to the economy are considerable. These temporary residents keep entire industries competitive and many businesses simply would not survive without them. Although the federal government operates and oversees the immigration programs under which they come to Canada, the provinces have a significant role to play in reducing the risk of labour trafficking and improving outcomes for temporary foreign workers and international students.

The Centre calls on the Government of Ontario to:

- 1) Increase funding for the Ministry of Labour's Divisional Intelligence Unit to increase its capacity for:
 - a. Conducting proactive labour trafficking investigations;
 - b. Establishing multi-sector partnerships that support people impacted by labour trafficking; and
 - c. Releasing public reports on the status and outcomes of labour trafficking investigations.



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- 2) Ensure the licensing and registry framework for temporary help agencies and international education recruiters has sufficient financial and human resources so that comprehensive monitoring and enforcement activities can be undertaken.
- 3) Increase the resources to monitor recruiters and employers that hire TFWs and international students to ensure compliance with federal and provincial legislation. This should include stricter consequences for violations, exploitation, and financial abuse, including higher fines.
- 4) Increase provincial funding for settlement agencies and ensure it includes programs and supports for temporary residents, specifically international students and migrant workers.
- 5) Develop and standardize oversight mechanisms for post-secondary institutions to ensure international students know their rights and how they can access services and supports if they are being exploited.

About The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

Founded in 2016, [The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking](#) (The Centre) is a national charity dedicated to ending all types of human trafficking in Canada. We work to mobilize system change by collaborating and working with various stakeholders, including survivors, all levels of government, frontline service providers, and private sector businesses to advance best practices. The Centre supports the anti-human trafficking movement through education and awareness, policy development and advocacy, research and data collection, convening and knowledge transfer.

In May 2019, The Centre launched the [Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline](#) (the Hotline), providing a confidential, multilingual service, operating 24/7 to connect victims and survivors with immediate and localized support, including social services and/or law enforcement if they so choose, as well as receive third-party tips from the public.