



Canadian Centre to
End Human Trafficking

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The Honourable Adrien Sala, M.L.A.
Minister of Finance
Government of Manitoba
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB
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Re: 2026 Pre-Budget Consultation Submission

Dear Minister Sala,

Manitoba was once a national leader in the fight against human trafficking. The launch of the 2002 Sexual Exploitation Strategy and the subsequent implementation of Tracia's Trust placed the province in a strong position to deter trafficking and support survivors (Government of Manitoba, n.d.). Indeed, the province's approach served as a model for jurisdictions across Canada.

Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. Years of underfunding and policy drift have left Manitobans increasingly vulnerable to exploitation. During recent visits to the province, front-line service providers consistently reported that the government is failing to manage the dual crisis of human trafficking and missing and murdered Indigenous women, youth and 2SLGBTQI+ people. At present, it is not clear how the province intends to address these complex and overlapping issues.

Bold action is needed — today.

While the government launched a process in 2025 to renew the province's anti-human trafficking strategy (Government of Manitoba, 2025), the 2026 budget provides a vital opportunity to address the crisis that is occurring within Manitoba's borders.

The provincial government must take immediate steps to prevent human trafficking before it occurs and to support survivors with the care they need and deserve. These steps should include:

1. Renewing and strengthening the province's anti-human trafficking strategy;

2. Ensuring social supports are available to adult survivors;
3. Investing in capacity-building grants and program funding to support the growth and sustainability of the anti-human trafficking sector.
4. Focusing more resources and attention towards anti-labour trafficking initiatives, and;
5. Embedding lived experience at the centre of the province's strategy to end chronic homelessness

1. Renewing and strengthening the province's anti-human trafficking strategy

A renewed, comprehensive, and well-funded anti-trafficking strategy is desperately needed in Manitoba. This framework must serve as a unifying tool, aligning all government (e.g., departments of justice, labour and immigration, housing, addictions and homelessness, families, etc.), and front-line efforts to address root causes, support survivors and hold perpetrators to account. A central component of this approach must be the continuous engagement of individuals with lived experience to inform all relevant legislation, policies and program decisions.

A series of promising practices have been implemented across the country that can inform the government's approach. For example, Ontario and Alberta have developed their own dedicated strategies that allocate resources towards:

- survivor engagement;
- dedicated legal supports for survivors;
- well trained Crown attorneys and law enforcement units;
- education and awareness initiatives, and;
- support for front-line service agencies.

While Manitoba has implemented some of these measures, shifting towards a comprehensive approach that adapts promising practices from across the country will ensure the government is better positioned to address exploitation.

Our work across Canada has made one thing very clear: provinces that have dedicated strategies and embrace innovative approaches are better positioned to lead prevention efforts and support victims and survivors. Therefore, we believe that it is critical that the Government of Manitoba prioritize the renewal and expansion of its anti-human trafficking strategy in the 2026 budget.

2. Ensuring social supports are available to adult survivors

A critical gap in Canada's anti-human trafficking response, and one that plays out daily in Manitoba, is the absence of social supports for survivors over the age of 25.

According to the summary report, Adult Readiness and Aging Out of Child & Family Services Care in Manitoba:

[w]hile Manitoba has an extension of care/Agreements with the Agreement with Young Adults program (AYAs) that includes financial support, youth express that it is not enough money to ensure their basic needs are met. Additionally, once a person in care reaches the age of majority, services and supports are discontinued effective their birthday unless they enter into the agreement until the age of 21. If a person refuses or discontinues their agreement at any time, they cannot opt back into the program. (Futures Forward, 2023, p. 21).

While some of our stakeholders have indicated that supports are available for adult survivors, our engagement in the province suggests services are not meeting the demand.

As part of a continuum of care, it is imperative that programs and services are available and accessible to adult survivors. We call on the Government of Manitoba to devote additional resources to ensure that all gender-based violence and anti-human trafficking programs are available to survivors, regardless of their age.

3. Investing in capacity-building grants and program funding to support the growth and sustainability of the anti-human trafficking sector.

Despite annual funding toward anti-human trafficking initiatives, local organizations told us that there was a lack of clarity, transparency and communication about funding opportunities. Additionally, we heard that funding was allocated to only a fraction of the agencies operating anti-trafficking programs and services. In order to ensure a robust and effective service system that supports survivors of human trafficking, we recommend:

- Investments in capacity-building grants to support the growth and sustainability of the anti-trafficking sector;

- Allocating funding for programs that support the recovery of trafficking survivors across all social services (e.g. harm reduction programs for people using substances, access to health and mental health care, and housing); and
- Ensure ongoing and sustained funding for the Red Dress Alert as it becomes a fully implemented program.

4. Focusing more resources and attention towards anti-labour trafficking initiatives

While sex trafficking remains the most common form of human trafficking reported to the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline, the number of identified labour trafficking cases has increased by 317% over the past two years (CCTEHT, 2025, p. 10). A significant portion of these cases involves international students, migrant workers, and people without status. These groups are targeted by traffickers due to immigration-specific insecurities, which can both increase their risk of exploitation and limit their ability to access services.

Although the federal government oversees immigration programs, the provinces play a critical role in reducing the risk of labour trafficking and improving outcomes for temporary residents. We recommend:

- Expanding Tracia's Trust to explicitly include labour trafficking-specific strategies, programming and policies;
- Ensuring that all social supports are available and barrier-free for migrant workers and international students;
- Increasing training among law enforcement and prosecutors as well as their capacity to investigate labour trafficking cases in ways that support survivors; and
- Convening consultations with service providers, survivors, law enforcement, and migrant rights groups to identify how the province can prevent labour trafficking and support survivors in a trauma-informed way.

5. Embedding lived experience into the centre of the province's strategy to end chronic homelessness

Growing evidence demonstrates a direct link between housing precarity and human trafficking (Public Safety Canada, 2018). A lack of access to safe housing creates significant emotional, financial, and physical vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit.

Once in a trafficking situation, a survivors' inability to access secure housing is the most significant barrier to leaving; far too many are forced to remain with their traffickers or move into other exploitative situations.

In 2025, the Government of Manitoba released *Your Way Home*, a plan to end chronic homelessness. To address the strong links between homelessness and human trafficking, we recommend augmenting the current plan by:

- Increasing funding for housing specific to the needs of human trafficking survivors;
- Increasing funding for emergency, transitional, and supportive housing more generally; and
- Improving the capacity of the housing and homelessness sector to identify trafficking through training and education.

The 2026 Budget presents an important moment for all Manitobans. By prioritizing these recommendations, the government can move beyond merely reacting to the crisis unfolding in your borders. Proactive and innovative measures are needed to prevent exploitation and support survivors on their path to recovery.

Manitoba has a rich legacy of combatting human trafficking. It's time to once again step up as a leader in this critical fight.

Sincerely,



Julia Drydyk
Executive Director
The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

References

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About The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

Founded in 2016, [The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking](https://www.ccteht.ca) (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](https://18339001010.ca) (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.