



Canadian Centre to  
End Human Trafficking

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January 13, 2026

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, M.P.P.  
Minister of Finance  
Government of Ontario  
111 Wellesley St. W.  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1A2

## Re: 2026 Pre-Budget Consultation Submission

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy,

Human trafficking is often misunderstood in Canada. Contrary to media depictions, it is frequently subtle and perpetrated by people known to the victim/survivor. While anyone can be targeted, individuals experiencing poverty, housing instability, homelessness, precarious immigration status, and people with limited social supports are at a higher risk of both sex and labour trafficking.

Many Ontarians remain unaware that trafficking occurs within their own communities; however, data from Statistics Canada (Sutton–Preddie, 2025) and the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (CCTEHT, 2025, p. 16) reveal that this issue occurs in every corner of the country, including Ontario’s small and rural municipalities.

Victims/survivors transitioning out of their trafficking situation often depend on a range of public services, meaning that no one ministry or government can address this issue alone. Data from 2019 to 2024 shows that housing and shelter were the most requested referrals for sex trafficking survivors, while legal services were the primary need for labour trafficking survivors (CCTEHT, 2025, pp. 13–14).

Ontario has been a leader in prioritizing and investing in anti-trafficking initiatives. The Centre applauds the province’s renewed commitment through the updated 2025–2030 strategy and the \$345 million investment to support its implementation.

The 2026 budget provides an important opportunity for policymakers to build on these successes and address remaining gaps. We are calling on the Government of Ontario to ensure its anti-trafficking investments include substantial resources to:

1. Address labour trafficking; and
2. Enhance the housing and shelter system for victims/survivors.

### **1. Allocate resources to 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 particularly vulnerable 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:

- Increasing funding for the Ministry of Labour's Divisional Intelligence Unit to enhance its capacity to conduct proactive inspections and release public reports on the status and outcomes of labour trafficking investigations;
- 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;
- 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.

### **2. Enhance the housing and shelter system for victims/survivors**

Growing evidence demonstrates a direct link between housing precarity and human trafficking (Public Safety, 2018). A lack of access to safe housing creates significant emotional, financial, and physical vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit. Once in a trafficking situation, a victim/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 2023, the Centre submitted an [Ontario-specific housing policy brief](#) based on consultations with frontline providers and victims/survivors which is still relevant today. Key recommendations include:

- Increasing funding for housing specific to the needs of human trafficking survivors;
- Increasing funding for emergency, transitional, and supportive housing more generally;
- Improving the capacity of shelter and housing providers to identify trafficking through training and education; and
- Rapidly increasing the province's non-market housing stock.

Prioritizing these recommendations in the 2026 budget is critical to preventing trafficking and supporting survivors on their path to recovery.

Thank you for your consideration. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can further support the province's anti-trafficking efforts.

Sincerely,



Julia Drydyk  
Executive Director  
The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

## References

Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking. (2025). *Human trafficking trends in Canada, 2019–2024*.

<https://www.canadiancentretoendhumantrafficking.ca/human-trafficking-trends-in-canada-2019-2024/>

Public Safety Canada. (2018). 2018 Human Trafficking Consultations Report. Government of Canada. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2018-hmn-trffckng-cnslttns-rprt/index-en.aspx>

Sutton-Preddie, D. (2025). *Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2024*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2025001/article/00008-eng.htm>

## About The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

Founded in 2016, [The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking](https://www.canadiancentretoendhumantrafficking.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://www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.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.