



Canadian Centre to
End Human Trafficking

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December 12, 2025

The Honourable John A. Lohr, M.L.A.
Minister of Finance and Treasury Board
Government of Nova Scotia
1726 Hollis Street
Halifax, NS
B3J 2Y3

Re: 2026 Pre-Budget Consultation Submission

Dear Minister Lohr,

Human trafficking is not well understood in Canada. Contrary to what is depicted in the media, human trafficking is often far more subtle and is usually perpetrated by someone the victim/survivor already knows. While anyone can be a target of human trafficking, individuals experiencing poverty, housing instability, homelessness, precarious immigration status, and people with limited social supports are at a higher risk of both sex trafficking and labour trafficking.

Many Nova Scotians are unaware that human trafficking is happening in their own communities; however, data from Statistics Canada and the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline show that Nova Scotia is over-represented in human trafficking incidents relative to its population size.¹ The reality is that human trafficking occurs in every community across Canada, including small and rural municipalities in Nova Scotia.²

Survivors who leave their trafficking situation often depend on a range of public services, such as housing, healthcare, education, mental health and addiction support, legal aid, and employment services. The most requested referrals on the

¹ Sutton-Preddie, D. (2025, December 8). [Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2024](#). Statistics Canada Juristat Bulletin.

² The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking. (2025). [Human Trafficking Trends in Canada 2019-2024](#), p. 16.

hotline between 2019 and 2024 were housing and shelter for survivors of sex trafficking, and legal services for labour trafficking survivors.³

Nova Scotia has made progress on addressing human trafficking. This includes establishing dedicated units and roles within the provincial police, Prosecutions Office, and Victim Services to identify, investigate and prosecute trafficking cases, and support survivors. Additionally, the government's support of the Trafficking and Exploitation Service System (TESS) crucially acknowledges the need for a multi-sector, inter-agency approach.

Nevertheless, more work is needed if we are to end human trafficking in our time. We are calling on the Government of Nova Scotia to invest in three specific initiatives to address human trafficking:

1. Develop a public-facing, whole-of-government anti-human trafficking strategy focused on both prevention and appropriate responses to trafficking;
2. Allocate resources to anti-labour trafficking initiatives; and
3. Enhance the housing and shelter system for victims/survivors.

1. Develop a public-facing, province-wide anti-human trafficking strategy

Human trafficking spans policy areas and cannot be tackled by a single ministry or government alone. A comprehensive, whole-of-government approach is desperately needed. Such an approach would prevent trafficking by addressing root causes, apply a trauma-informed lens, and be informed by individuals with lived experience. Central to this approach is the creation of provincial coordinating bodies – a Nova Scotia Office to Combat Human Trafficking and a Survivors' Advisory Committee – to oversee and lead strategy implementation.

The positive news is that you do not need to create this approach from scratch: Ontario, Alberta, and Manitoba have developed their own dedicated strategies that can be replicated and adapted to meet the needs of Nova Scotia. Through our work, one thing has been very clear: the jurisdictions that have dedicated strategies are better positioned to prevent it from occurring, identify cases, and support survivors. It is time that Nova Scotia develops its own strategy.

³ Ibid, p. 13-14.

2. Allocate resources to anti-labour trafficking initiatives

Sex trafficking remains the most common form of human trafficking in data collected from the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline; however, the number of identified labour trafficking cases has increased by 317% over the past two years.⁴ A significant number of these cases concern international students, migrant workers, and people without status. These groups are particularly vulnerable because their precarious immigration status and insecurity can increase their risk of exploitation. This precarious status also limits these groups from accessing programs and services that could protect them from exploitation and support them post-trafficking.

When members of our team met with law enforcement and service provider stakeholders in Halifax in 2024, we were disappointed to hear that they did not feel they had the mandate, resources or expertise to properly address labour trafficking.

Although the federal government operates and oversees immigration programs, the provinces have a significant role to play in reducing the risk of labour trafficking and improving outcomes for temporary residents. This includes:

- Ensuring that all social supports are available and barrier-free for migrant workers and international students;
- Increasing training among law enforcement and prosecutors and 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.

3. Enhance the housing and shelter system for victims/survivors

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

⁴ Ibid, p. 10.

significant barrier to leaving; far too many are forced to remain with their traffickers or seek other unsafe and exploitative situations.

In 2024, the Centre submitted a Nova Scotia-specific housing policy brief that considers the needs of human trafficking survivors. Based on consultations with frontline service providers, survivors, and municipalities, the brief highlights recommendations that are critical to preventing trafficking and supporting survivors. They 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.

The attached housing brief was endorsed by organizations that directly serve Nova Scotians. Our co-signatories were: Bryony House, ElevateHER Mental Health Support Services Canada, Elizabeth Fry Society Mainland Nova Scotia, Peer Outreach Support Services & Education, Cape Breton Transition House Association, Trauma Recovery for Exploited Youth, and Truro Housing Outreach Society.

We believe that prioritizing these recommendations in the 2026 budget is critical to preventing human trafficking and supporting survivors on their path to recovery. Thank you for your consideration of this submission. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can support you in furthering anti-trafficking work in the province.

Sincerely,



Julia Drydyk
Executive Director
The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

About The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

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