



HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN ONTARIO

THINGS TO PONDER:

- What can individuals do to prevent human trafficking?
- How can policies tackle criminal elements of human trafficking while providing victim support? What is the right balance?
- How can the federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government collaborate to end human trafficking in Canada?

BACKGROUND

To most Canadians, human trafficking evokes images of women smuggled from far-off lands or over the border. In reality, human trafficking is an issue that takes place within Canada's borders (Globe and Mail 2016).

Canada's legal definition of human trafficking is someone who recruits, transports, transfers, receives, holds, conceals or harbours a person, or exercises control, direction or influence over the movements of a person for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation. In Canada, the majority of victims are females between the ages of 18 and 24 who have a history of sexual abuse. Aboriginal women account for approximately half of all human trafficking victims in Canada (Statistics Canada 2014).

According to Statistics Canada, in 2014 police services reported 206 violations of human trafficking in Canada. Over 60 per cent of cases happen in Ontario, through the Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal corridor, which is Canada's largest sex trafficking route. Ottawa for instance, is considered a pit stop between Toronto and Montreal. As a result, the city has one of Canada's worst rates of human trafficking. The Ottawa Police Service estimates that the human trafficking industry in Ottawa is worth approximately \$26 million (Ottawa Police Service).

In 2012, the Government of Canada announced funding for a four-year, \$25 million human trafficking national action plan aimed at mostly supporting international human trafficking initiatives and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)'s operations focused on combating human trafficking. The Federal government has also recently introduced new legislation that if passed, would give prosecutors more scope to convict traffickers.

At the provincial level, in June 2016 the Ontario government announced a \$72 million strategy to end human trafficking by creating a provincial anti-trafficking co-ordination office that will foster information sharing between police, social services, child welfare and other sectors. Besides providing access to funds, the Ontario government has also introduced the *Anti-Human Trafficking Act*, which will



establish a process where survivors and those at risk of being trafficked can apply for human trafficking-specific restraining orders to protect themselves from traffickers and allow survivors to sue their traffickers.

Despite government responses, finding solutions to human trafficking is challenging. One reason is due to funding. Government funding can be short-term, making the right balance between law enforcement and preventative measures such as education and support services can be hard to find. In addition, Canada's investment in combating human trafficking is comparatively less when compared to other states. For example, Sweden spends an average of \$1.27 per person a year on ending human trafficking while Canada commits approximately 19 cents (Globe and Mail, 2016).

Human trafficking reporting in Canada is also fragmented. Though crime reporting is universal across Canadian policing, human trafficking violations can be filed under different categories and can often be grouped as part of larger criminal activities such as drug trafficking or prostitution. As a result, this can produce challenges in reporting. Coupled with the lack of a broad national coordinating body on the issue, and a centralized data-collection mechanism, a true picture of human trafficking and what solutions may exist in Canada can be elusive to law enforcement agencies.

The ugly truth is that human trafficking happens in Canada. It is in an upward trend and has strong roots in our most populous province (Globe and Mail, 2016). The question is: How do we get rid of this ugly truth?

SUGGESTED READING

Want to know more about human traffic in Ontario and Canada? Check these out:

- Human Trafficking in Canada
http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/grc-rcmp/PS64-78-2010-eng.pdf
- The Incidence of Human Trafficking in Ontario
<http://www.allianceagainstmodernslavery.org/sites/default/files/AAMS-ResearchData.pdf>
- The Trafficked - Globe and Mail Special
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/the-trafficked-sexual-exploitation-is-costing-canadian-women-their-lives/article28700849/>
- Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking
<https://news.ontario.ca/mcss/en/2017/02/ontarios-strategy-to-end-human-trafficking-progress-report.html>
- Human Trafficking in Ontario
<http://www.allianceagainstmodernslavery.org/sites/default/files/AAMS+-+Research+Report+-+2014.compressed.pdf>



REFERENCES

- Statistics Canada
<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14641-eng.htm>
- Ottawa Police Service
<https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/annual-report/Human-Trafficking.asp>
- The Trafficked - Globe and Mail Special
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/the-trafficked-sexual-exploitation-is-costing-canadian-women-their-lives/article28700849/>