

HOW TO HELP STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Tips for Short-Term Rental Owners

Human trafficking is a pervasive problem that often goes unnoticed. There is a growing trend that traffickers will use short-term rentals instead of hotels and motels due to the greater possibility of anonymity. Short-term rental owners can play a crucial role in combating this crime by learning about human trafficking, how to recognize trafficking signs and how to respond appropriately. This article outlines several ways that short-term rental owners can help prevent human trafficking and what to do if they suspect potential trafficking in their property.

PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Nova Scotia's Provincial Human Trafficking Unit (RCMP) and the Department of Growth and Development, in partnership with The Joy Smith Foundation, is committed to raising awareness about human trafficking. As a short-term rental owner, you have a role to play in reporting suspected cases of human trafficking or other suspicious activity in your rental properties.

DETER HUMAN TRAFFICKERS FROM CHOOSING YOUR RENTAL

There are several steps that you can take to deter human traffickers from choosing your rental property in the first place.

- ▶ Screen your bookings carefully including guest reviews from other short-term rentals where they have stayed in the past.
- ▶ Don't accept last-minute bookings.
- ▶ Where possible welcome guests/sign-out guests in person minimizing use of lockbox self-check-in/check-out
- ▶ Be cautious before accepting a booking from renters that are from the same area as your rental.
- ▶ Install cameras on the outside of your property to record those coming and going.
- ▶ Use devices that monitor sound levels inside and outside of your property.
- ▶ Do not allow guests to have unregistered guests on your property.
- ▶ Gather information about your renters including the names of all guests, photo identification and license plate numbers.
- ▶ State clearly in your listing that you are committed to preventing human trafficking and other illegal activities in your neighbourhood. State that you will report any suspicious activity and may even allow access to local authorities without notification.
- ▶ Be a present and engaged landlord. Regular check-ins, active management, and upkeep deter criminal activity and help keep your property safe.

Nova Scotia has a duty to report when it involves a minor or vulnerable individual. If you suspect abuse, please refer to the contact information provided here: novascotia.ca/report-child-abuse-or-neglect

If there are concerns about possible human trafficking—whether involving a child or an adult—contact police. Do not intervene directly.

WHERE TO REPORT

- Immediate Danger, call 911
- Nova Scotia's Human Trafficking Unit 902-449-2425
- Crime Stoppers 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) crimestoppers.ns.ca/contact-us/

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SIGNS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN YOUR RENTAL

Traffickers want to fly under the radar, so they often use short-term rentals like yours to run their illegal activities. While it can be difficult to spot a human trafficker, there are several signs that you can look out for. These indications may seem harmless on their own, but in combination, they may be a sign of human trafficking:

- ▶ Frequent use of short-term rentals.
- ▶ Last minute bookings – this is a red flag! Be cautious!
- ▶ Several bookings that are close to the same time in the same location.
- ▶ Multiple different people entering and leaving the property.
- ▶ Individuals that appear to be under the control of another person.
- ▶ Individuals who dress inappropriately (especially for the weather).
- ▶ Signs of altering the property for excessive privacy – keeping all of the curtains closed/ covering windows, declining housekeeping services from coming in
- ▶ Excessive requests for towels and sheets
- ▶ Setting up of video recording equipment/ photo shoot set ups
- ▶ A group of people are picked up from your property, taken somewhere else, then brought back at around the same time every day.

- ▶ Vehicle dropping someone off to the property but waiting for them in the car
- ▶ People arriving and departing from your property with minimal luggage not appropriate for the length of the stay.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A POTENTIAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING SITUATION IN YOUR PROPERTY

If you encounter a situation in your rental that could potentially be human trafficking, it is your responsibility to report it. Never put yourself in harm's way by approaching a guest if you are concerned. If you think something is suspicious, don't say or do anything that may put you or your family in danger. Simply call the police immediately and let them handle it.

As a short-term rental owner, you have a responsibility to help prevent human trafficking in your community. By partnering with the community and law enforcement, deterring human traffickers from choosing your rental, recognizing red flags, and responding appropriately, you can make a significant difference in the fight against human trafficking. Remember, your actions could save lives.

It is also a good idea to ask your neighbors to be your eyes and ears and to report anything suspicious to the police.

If you would like to learn more about human trafficking and how you can help to prevent this from happening in your community, visit joysmithfoundation.com for easily accessible online courses.



traffickingsigns.ca ▪ joysmithfoundation.com
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FACTS ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CANADA

The most important first step you can take toward helping combat this issue is to **KNOW THE FACTS!**

Often described as modern-day slavery, human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, or harbouring of persons for the purpose of exploitation, typically in the sex trade or through forced labour.

It's a growing Canadian problem that goes largely unnoticed because victims are first lured by false trust and then have their ability to make decisions taken from them with threats, coercion and manipulation.

Traffickers actively recruit in Canadian urban and rural areas. Knowledge is our greatest protection. The more we know and understand about human trafficking, the more we can do to prevent it.

The Joy Smith Foundation and our National Human Trafficking Education Centre work to prevent human trafficking and build awareness by providing easily accessible education.

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

According to the United Nations, human trafficking is “a crime that trades in people and exploits them for profit. People of all genders, ages and backgrounds can become victims of this crime, which occurs in every region of the world. Traffickers use violence, fraudulent employment agencies, and fake promises of education and job opportunities to trick, coerce and deceive their victims.

Organized networks or individuals behind this crime take advantage of people who are vulnerable, desperate or simply seeking a better life.”

In Canada, youth and adults are manipulated by acquaintances, ‘friends’ or sometimes a family member and forced into the sex trade or labour market, which only benefits the perpetrator.

13 is the average age of entry into sex trafficking

85% of police reported human trafficking cases in Canada occur in urban areas

IMPACT IN NOVA SCOTIA

According to Statistics Canada (2024 Census)...

Nova Scotia has **4X** the national average for police reported instances of human trafficking

Halifax specifically holds an average of **6.4** instances per **100,000** population

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WHO IS BEING TRAFFICKED?

Human Trafficking disproportionately impacts children and youth, particularly those aged 12 to 17 (Statistics Canada 2021), as well as Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities (*Hearing Them: Voices and Lived Experiences from the Sex Industry in Nova Scotia* collected by the YWCA, POSSE, Stepping Stone, and the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association).

Children and youth are especially vulnerable when they are not educated about this crime or the tactics used by traffickers, and are often deliberately targeted, groomed and manipulated by the people they trust.

Our goal is to educate Nova Scotians to recognize the signs and prevent this from happening.

WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

Individuals are lured because they are unaware of this possibility or the malicious intent and tactics used by predators. It's an act of betrayal that changes the lives of individuals and their families forever. Education and awareness can help.

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Trafficked persons do not choose this life. They are lured into these circumstances with lies and manipulation. Perpetrators work to gain their victims' trust with promises and gifts, with the goal to have them under their complete control.

WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

This crime can happen to anyone, anywhere, and at any time. It is happening right now in your community. It is happening right now in EVERY community across Canada. It is far more prevalent than people realize.

When you see the signs and who is vulnerable, you are empowered to take the steps and strategies to prevent this crime from occurring. Human trafficking on your property can pose serious safety, financial, legal, and reputable risks for your short-term rental. Property owners and managers must balance guest privacy with awareness of warning signs and understand appropriate, lawful ways to respond if concerns arise.

We want to raise awareness to STOP IT!

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ▶ Educate yourself about the issue.
- ▶ Learn who's at risk and the signs of human trafficking.
- ▶ Know what actions to take, if you suspect something.
- ▶ Have conversations with your friends, neighbours and family to raise awareness and contribute to the disruption of this crime.



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