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HALIFAX 

# YWCA Halifax to offer 'safe spaces' to human trafficking victims and survivors

By **Taryn Grant** Star Halifax  
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HALIFAX—Home can be a place of comfort and refuge, but it can be used as a tool for exploitation.

Perpetrators of human trafficking often control their victims by



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survivors a safe place to live is an essential part of supporting their exit from the exploitive cycle, and it's why the YWCA Halifax's latest program will be a milestone in the fight against human trafficking in Nova Scotia.

Gagnon manages anti-trafficking initiatives at the YWCA Halifax and says human trafficking "is not a new issue to Nova Scotia," but the attention afforded to it has been gradually changing, both locally and across Canada.

In 2005, a trio of amendments to the Criminal Code prohibited human trafficking, specifically, for the first time. Further legislative changes have continued to trickle in since then, and Gagnon says that as laws have emerged to address human trafficking, public awareness has grown.

By shedding more light on the issue, front line workers — like social workers, police, school guidance counsellors — are better able to identify victims. A few years ago, YWCA staff started identifying more and more human trafficking victims, but Gagnon said there was no real system in place to fully respond.

Particularly when it came to safe housing.

"We kind of knew it right from the very beginning, there has been a lack of housing that is specific to this kind of victimization."

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