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HUMAN TRAFFICKING CHARGES LAID AGAINST AIRDRIE MAN

Yesterday, RCMP charged a 25-year old Airdrie man with human trafficking and prostitution offences against an unidentified youth who was reported missing.

The charges follow the release this week of the US State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report. This comprehensive resource describes the governmental response to human trafficking in nearly every country in the world and ranks each country on a tiered scale.

Canada maintained a Tier One ranking, indicating that the Canadian government complies with the minimum standards set by the US Department of State. However, the report emphasized that Canada has much to improve on.

The report noted that Canada is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to both sexual exploitation and forced labour. This is the first year that Canada was acknowledged to be a source and transit country for victims of forced labour, with the report noting that many victims of this heinous abuse enter Canada legally and are then subsequently trafficked.

According to the report, police charged 121 individuals in 77 trafficking cases involving 261 victims across Canada in 2014.

Foreign trafficking victims in Canada are eligible to apply for a temporary resident permit or TRP, which gives them temporary legal status in Canada. Troublingly, the report noted that only five TRPs were issued in 2014, down significantly from 14 the previous year, 26 in 2012, and 53 in 2011.

"TRPs are a critical tool in assisting victims of human trafficking," says Andrea Burkhart, Executive Director of ACT Alberta. "It allows victims of human trafficking to access counselling, health care and temporary status in Canada. It helps keep people safe, at least on a short term basis. The number of TRPs being issued drops every year by more than half, which is very concerning to us"

The report also noted that the demand for services, such as housing, addiction treatment, psycho-social care, and job skills, currently exceeds available resources. "We've come a long way in Canada in recognizing and responding to this issue. But there remains much to be done," says Burkhart.

Human trafficking is the act of forcing, coercing, or deceiving an individual into selling sex or labour for the personal gain of another.

ACT Alberta works collaboratively with government agencies, law enforcement, and frontline service providing agencies to address the needs of victims of trafficking,

provide public education and training, conduct research, and coordinate services in the community.

For the complete US State Department Report, please visit <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/245365.pdf>

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To learn more about ACT Alberta, please visit our website: www.actalberta.org