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Council proclaims National Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness Day

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of Shelburne has officially proclaimed Feb. 22 as National Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Shelburne.

The proclamation, read at council's Feb. 9 meeting by Mayor Wade Mills, highlighted the awareness day.

?National Human Trafficking Awareness Day was established on February 22, 2007, in the House of Commons to encourage Canadians to raise awareness of the magnitude of modern day slavery in Canada and abroad and to take steps to combat human trafficking,? Mills read. ?I, Mayor Wade Mills, on behalf of Council, do hereby proclaim February 22, 2026, as ?National Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness Day' in the Town of Shelburne.?

National Human Trafficking Awareness Day continues to serve as a focal point each year for education, prevention and advocacy, with organizations across Canada offering training, resources and campaigns to help communities recognize the signs of trafficking and support survivors.

Mills also drew on law enforcement and victim services figures to underscore the local impact of the issue.

?Between 2009 and 2018 the police reported 1,708 incidents of human trafficking in Canada,? he said. ?Between 2018 and 2019 Dufferin Child Victim Services were made aware of 22 victims of human trafficking, with seven being youth under the age of 18.?

Public Safety Canada defines Human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation or control of people through coercion, deception or force for the purpose of exploitation ? typically sexual exploitation or forced labour. It is considered a form of modern-day slavery.

While precise numbers are difficult to determine, Statistics Canada data shows that the majority of police-reported human trafficking victims are women and girls, and a significant portion are young people under 25. This highlights the vulnerability of youth and the importance of community vigilance and support services.

Council also recognized the work of CRY NoT, a volunteer-driven partnership that combats human trafficking locally.

?CRY NoT, which stands for Compass Rotary Youth, No Trafficking, is a volunteer-driven group, composed of the Rotary Club of Orangeville and Compass Community Church to raise awareness to the concern of human trafficking in the Dufferin?Caledon community,? Mills said. ?The mission of CRY NoT is to reduce and eliminate human trafficking by raising awareness, fostering collaboration among groups like groups and organizations, equipping adults with connections and resources available to defeat the threat of human trafficking and to create and maintain digital information.?

Mills concluded by urging residents to educate themselves, support local front-line organizations and help create safer conditions for vulnerable youth and adults throughout Dufferin and Caledon.

For those wanting to learn more, online resources are available from organizations like CRY NoT or the Caledon Dufferin Victim Services on their respective websites, crynot.ca and cdvs.ca/trafficking.