

# Police Free Modern Day Slaves In Barrie Area

*Dozens Of Mexicans Lured By Traffickers To Canada, Forced To Work On Vacation Properties*

BARRIE: Dozens of Mexican modern day slaves" who were allegedly forced to work as cleaners at vacation properties in Ontario for as little as \$50 per month have been freed and offered legitimate employment, police announced Monday.

The provincial police and the Barrie, Ont., force said they launched an investigation into the alleged scam last year after receiving multiple tips from the public. They found that the alleged victims were lured to Canada believing they would be offered jobs and educational opportunities.

Forty-three people were brought into Canada under misleading circumstances, and were promised a safer life and more opportunities," said Barrie police

Chief Kimberley Greenwood. ... these individuals are now free from the control of the people who wished to exploit them for their personal gain."

The operation targeting the alleged human trafficking ring took place on Feb. 5 and also involved the Canada Border Services Agency, police said.

The Mexican workers have since been offered accommodations and legitimate employment at a local resort, said Greenwood, adding that those individuals are communicating with Immigration and Refugees Canada about their status in the country.

We have to acknowledge that this is the first time that we have seen a labour human trafficking operation of this nature and size in our area," she said.



The workers, whose hometowns were not released, arrived in Canada by plane, a police spokesman said.

The 43 victims were transported to Canada, coached on what to say as they entered the country but then made to live in squalid conditions at locations in Barrie

and a hotel. They were made to pay their alleged traffickers large sums of money for transportation and housing, and were only allowed to keep less than \$50 a month in some cases.

As many as 250 officers and support staff searched 12 properties last week and rescued the workers from their situation, Barnum said.

One of the victims said to our officer, 'Last night, I went to bed a slave. This morning, I woke up a free man,'" he said.

Police are keeping close track of two people who were allegedly running the Barrie-based cleaning company that employed the foreign workers as the investigation continues, Barnum said, adding that criminal charges would be laid later. Pic: OPP

## RCMP Dismantles Huge Drug Money Laundering Network

MONTREAL: A sophisticated money laundering ring with international tentacles was behind hundreds of millions of dollars in transactions until it was dismantled this week, federal authorities said Tuesday.

The RCMP told a news conference its probe \_ dubbed Collector" \_ uncovered a network with cells in Montreal and Toronto that collected and laundered money primarily from Montreal groups.

"We believe with the amounts we saw being transited through the network we just dismantled, this network was occupying a primary place in the money laundering world in Montreal," Sgt. Francois-Olivier Myette said.

Police did not look further into organized criminal groups that allegedly used the group's services \_ there were at least six \_ but investigators have no doubt they played a big role in cleaning dirty money. These cells might have different links to different organized crime groups, but it wasn't the main focus (of our investigation)," Myette said. We were really focusing on the money laundering aspect of it, although it was necessary to find drugs to demonstrate the money was derived from sales of narcotics and proceeds of crime."

Supt. Martine Fontaine said the network used connections in Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, the United States and China to launder money before returning it to drug-exporting countries,



RCMP Sgt. Francois-Olivier Myette, right, RCMP Superintendent Martine Fontaine and Stephane Bonin, of Canada Revenue Agency, left, explain the operation. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Ryan Remiorz

such as Colombia and Mexico.

"It is by depriving criminal groups of their money laundering networks that we will shake the very structure of organized crime," she said.

On Monday more than 300 officers from the RCMP and other forces, aided by the Canada Revenue Agency, took part in raids in Ontario and Quebec. They seized drugs, cash and bank accounts and restrained real estate with a total estimated value of \$32.8 million. Myette explained the two-year investigation was triggered in 2016 by a tip from the United States Drug Enforcement Administration. He said investigators observed hundreds of clandestine exchanges of bags filled with between \$250,000 to \$500,000. The money was often stuffed in bags or suitcases and transactions took place in parking lots and other locations.

Documents and other evidence suggests hundreds of millions of dollars were allegedly laundered through the group without ever leaving the country. The group used what is known as an informal value transfer system. So taking money in one jurisdiction and then retrieving money in another jurisdiction without actual transfers," Myette explained. The network offered up a money transfer service.

Seventeen people face charges including conspiracy, possession of drugs for the purpose of trafficking, gangsterism and laundering proceeds of crime.

The network's alleged leaders, Nader Gramian-Nik, 56, of Vaughan, Ont., and Mohamad Jaber, 51, of Laval, Que., were among those arrested. Three suspects were still being sought late Tuesday, but none are believed to be in Canada.

## Tories Flay 'Crazy Marxist' Student Unions

TORONTO: Premier Doug Ford accused student unions of getting up to "crazy Marxist nonsense" as he appealed for donations to his Progressive Conservative party in a fundraising email sent Monday.

Ford's claim was made as he highlighted his government's move to make some fees paid by Ontario college and university students optional instead of mandatory.

Students were forced into unions and forced to pay for those unions," Ford said in the email sent by the Progressive Conservatives. I think we all know what kind of crazy Marxist nonsense student unions get up to." The message sparked condemnation from students groups and opposition politicians who said the premier's language confirms what they've suspected \_ that the fee changes announced last month are politically motivated.

The fundraising email \_ which bore the subject line How broken was education?" \_ also mentions the government's decision to scrap free tuition for low-income students and impose a 10 per cent across-the-board tuition fee cut. It's little things ... but they add up," Ford said in the email Monday, before asking for a donation to the party.

The Progressive Conservative party and Ford's office did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the message.

The Canadian Federation of Students said the message suggests the government's changes to certain student fees were made for political purposes. It's really just taking away resources from student groups," said Nour Alideeb, chairwoman for the group's Ontario branch.

## Quebec Immigration

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Legault said he is confident Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will come around and grant Quebec more power over immigration.

Meanwhile, Quebec's official Opposition is calling Legault's government to back down from its plan.

Liberal lawmaker Dominique Anglade says the Coalition Avenir Quebec government's move would affect some 50,000 people, many of whom are already working and living in Quebec.

The government said the new system would better match applicants to the needs of the labour market, and emphasize the need for immigrants to speak French and respect Quebec's values.

But Anglade said there's no need for the government to cancel existing applications as it puts a new system in place.

She says the government should take the \$19 million it has set aside to reimburse fees for cancelled applications and instead apply it towards processing the files.

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