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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **HUNDREDS EXPECTED AT ANNUAL WALK AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

**Toronto, ON (Thursday, August 15, 2013)** – While back to school and TIFF preparations govern heavy on the minds of many across Ontario this month, for a motivated group of volunteers, September is a month to raise awareness about the thousands of victims of human trafficking in Canada.

On September 14, hundreds of people will participate in the annual four-kilometre walk hosted by one of Canada's leading anti-slavery advocacy groups, [free-them]. In its fourth year, the [free-them] Freedom Walk has grown from an initiative of 15 people to over 500 walkers including children, seniors and even babies alongside their parents.

"It's important for us to have people of all ages involved in the fight against human trafficking", comments Shae Invidiata, founder, [free-them]. "The average age of entry in Canada is just thirteen years old, which means that to get an average that low, you need to have many kids under the age of thirteen who are being forced into a life of exploitation- children aged nine, ten and eleven years old. Children need to know human trafficking exists and parents need a safe and positive platform to educate them. The [free-them] Freedom Walk provides this opportunity for participants."

As the presenting sponsor for the fourth annual Freedom Walk, The Fairmont Royal York plays a key role by providing a home base for the walks' participants, (often called Freedom Fighters). Participants will start the motivating morning on the convention floor of the Fairmont Royal York with an honorary ceremony, performances and keynote addresses from some of Canada's leading voices and change makers in the fight against human trafficking. The walk will end on the steps of City Hall.

"The team at the Fairmont is committed to giving back to the community and are thrilled to support the [free-them] Freedom Walk for a second year," Says Kerry Ann Kotani, Regional Director of Sales and Marketing, Fairmont Royal York.

The team at [free-them] is knee deep in preparation to make the 2013 walk even larger than years prior. Among those scheduled to participate are: MP Joy Smith: Canada's leading politician in the area of human trafficking, Constable Lepa Jankovic: one of the two RCMP officers who brought down Canada's largest human trafficking ring to go before Canadian courts and Timea E. Nagy: an author, speaker, and survivor of human trafficking right here in Canada. Returning in a larger capacity for the 2013 [free-them] Freedom Walk is OMNI Television's, Veronica Chail who will officially host this year's walk and provide support through the walk's media sponsors OMNI Television and City TV.

"Human trafficking is the worst kind of depravity imaginable as it impacts the most vulnerable in our society," said Veronica Chail, host of OMNI Television's *Bollywood Boulevard*. "[free-them] has done amazing work to inspire change, and I am proud to support the organization's annual Freedom Walk, along with OMNI Television and City."

**(More)**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Freedom Walk presented by the Fairmont Royal York and hosted by OMNI Television's Veronica Chail takes place on Saturday, September 14, 2013 at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel located at 100 Front Street West. Registration is \$12 per person (children under 18 are free) and families are welcome. Onsite activities include a fair-trade, slave-free vendor area to support initiatives that donate proceeds to victims, a kids zone with activities for youth, a media lounge for private interviews and a continental breakfast.

Last year's walk raised \$30,000 dollars for victims of human trafficking in Canada and was featured on major news programs across the country.

For more information or to register to walk, please log on to [www.freethemwalk.ca](http://www.freethemwalk.ca).

*[free-them] is a volunteer-based initiative dedicated to raising awareness and funds to abolish human trafficking in Canada and abroad. Founded in January 2010, [free-them] is committed to partnering with businesses, government and law enforcement to fight human trafficking (slavery today) through awareness, education, legislation and fundraising for front line organizations. For more information about [free-them], please log on to [www.freethem.ca](http://www.freethem.ca) or follow them on twitter @free\_them.*

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