



**Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T)  
Elder Abuse Working Forum**

**November 8, 2007**

**Vancouver, British Columbia**

**Summary of Proceedings**



The following summary of proceedings for the November 8, 2007 Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Elder Abuse Working Forum was prepared by the F/P/T Safety and Security for Seniors Working Group (the Working Group).

The views expressed in this summary report do not necessarily reflect the position of the Working Group, a particular jurisdiction, organization or participant of the forum. This report should in no way be construed as official or unofficial policy.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the discussions that took place at the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Elder Abuse Working Forum and to present the key themes that emerged from those proceedings.

The F/P/T Elder Abuse Working Forum (the Forum) was an invitational event held on November 8, 2007 in Vancouver, British Columbia at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel. The Forum was organized by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Safety and Security for Seniors Working Group (the Working Group), led by Ontario, on behalf of F/P/T Ministers Responsible for Seniors. The Forum was held in conjunction with the Centre for Elder Law Studies' 2007 Canadian Conference on Elder Law.

The Forum brought together, for the first time, diverse people from across the country who have experience in, and knowledge of, a variety of approaches to elder abuse prevention and response. Approximately 170 participants nominated by F/P/T Officials or their peers were invited to attend the Forum.

Delegates were pre-registered to work in one of the following five breakout sessions, depending on their key area of interest or expertise:

1. Criminal Law
2. Civil Responses
3. Financial Abuse
4. Community Responses
5. Advocacy

Through a blend of presentations, facilitated dialogue and open discussion, the Forum sought to draw from and build upon the practical knowledge and experience of the participants. Participants were asked to focus their discussions on seniors living in the community and abuse in relationships of trust.

Forum objectives were to:

- Learn what seniors want and need to be secure by examining elder abuse from a senior's perspective;
- Share promising practices across sectors through information and resource exchange;
- Determine what internal and external supports and partnerships are needed for programs to be more effective by reviewing and analysing examples of program models from across the country;
- Build and strengthen relationships among people working to prevent and respond to elder abuse;



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- Identify ways to measure the effectiveness of programs designed to address elder abuse;
- Develop guiding principles or recommendations to ensure elder abuse initiatives are designed and implemented systemically; and
- Recommend collaborative action, next steps and the partnerships needed that should be considered by communities and governments.

Feedback from Forum participants indicates that this unique opportunity to dialogue with colleagues from across sectors and jurisdictions on responses to elder abuse was viewed as extremely valuable. Some participants noted that this networking opportunity has already resulted in collaboration on elder abuse activities. The Forum's *Toolbox Room*, which housed elder abuse resources and tools from across the country, was also found to be very useful and informative. Many participants stated that they will share these resources within their local communities and incorporate them into their work on elder abuse.

The Working Group, on behalf of Ministers, will use this summary of proceedings to guide its future work on the prevention and response to elder abuse. It is hoped that this document will also serve as a resource to Forum delegates by suggesting key areas to enhance elder abuse prevention and response.



## BACKGROUND

*“...every person in our society, regardless of age, is entitled to three things: [to] live with dignity; to live with security; and to live as an autonomous human being”*  
(Right Honourable Chief Justice of Canada Beverley McLachlin, P.C, Keynote Address, 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Canadian Conference on Elder Law, November 10, 2007)

Elder abuse is a complex issue, and there is no simple explanation for why it occurs. The World Health Organization defines elder abuse as, “a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.” Elder abuse can take many forms: physical, emotional, verbal, financial, sexual, spiritual, or neglect. Financial abuse is the most commonly reported type of elder abuse. Sometimes elder abuse takes the form of a criminal act; however, there are many instances when it does not, which often makes intervention challenging. Some abuse may reflect ageism (or ageist attitudes) or be part of an intergenerational cycle of family violence. The issues influencing elder abuse and appropriate interventions can also vary across different cultural contexts.

Canadian research suggests that between four and ten per cent of seniors will experience some form of abuse during their lifetime. However, these rates may represent the “tip of the iceberg” in terms of actual occurrences. Older adults are often reluctant to report abuse. Research suggests that only one in five incidents of elder abuse ever comes to the attention of those that can help.

F/P/T Ministers Responsible for Seniors recognized abuse of older adults as a priority area and directed that the Working Group host a national forum on elder abuse in conjunction with the 2007 Canadian Conference on Elder Law (CCEL).

The aim of the CCEL is to educate professional groups, lawyers, community members, advocates, health specialists, researchers and interested individuals on important legal issues relating to older adults. In her keynote address at the 2007 CCEL, the Right Honourable Chief Justice of Canada, Beverley McLachlin, P.C., spoke of the need to address elder abuse and the important role the law has to play in securing the rights of seniors. These two complementary events, the CCEL and the F/P/T Elder Abuse Working Forum, shared a focus on the issue of elder abuse.



## Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Elder Abuse Working Forum

Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel

Thursday, November 8, 2007

1088 Burrard Street, Vancouver British Columbia (B.C), V6Z 2R9

(604) 331-1000

### Agenda

#### Thursday, November 8, 2007

|                |   |                                      |
|----------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 7:00 to 8:30   | <b>Registration</b>   | Pavilion Ballroom Foyer              |
| 7:15 to 8:30   | <b>Continental Breakfast</b>  | Pavilion Ballroom Foyer              |
| 7:30 to 5:00   | <b>Exhibits:</b><br>"Tool Box Stations"<br>"Tool Box Video Room"  | Pavilion Ballroom<br>Blue Whale Room |
| 8:30 to 8:50   | <b>Welcome and Opening Remarks</b><br>Message from Barbara Walman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Seniors', Women's and Community Services Department, Ministry of Community Services<br><br>Elizabeth Esteves, Chair of the F/P/T Safety and Security Work Group<br><br>Susan Scotti, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Income Security and Social Development Branch, Human Resources and Social Development Canada | Pavilion Ballroom                    |
| 8:50 to 9:00   | <b>About the Working Forum</b><br>Pearl McKenzie, Forum Facilitator   | Pavilion Ballroom                    |
| 9:00 to 10:30  | <b>Opening Plenary Panel</b><br>How Our Thinking About Elder Abuse is Shaping Our Responses<br><br>Facilitator: Pearl McKenzie<br>Panelists: Judith Wahl, Mark Huyser-Wierenga, Michelle Ranville, and Shashi Assanand  | Pavilion Ballroom                    |
| 10:30 to 10:45 | <b>Networking and Refreshments</b><br>Opportunity to visit the "Tool Box Stations" and "Tool Box Video Room"  | Pavilion Ballroom Foyer              |



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|                |  |   |
|----------------|--|---|
| 10:45 to 12:15 | <b>Concurrent Breakout Sessions:</b><br>1. Criminal Law<br>2. Civil Responses<br>3. Financial Abuse<br>4. Community Responses<br>5. Advocacy | Parksville Room<br>Port Hardy Room<br>Orca Room<br>Finback Room<br>Galiano Room |
| 12:15 to 1:15  | <b>Networking and Lunch</b>  | Pavilion Ballroom Foyer   |
| 1:15 to 2:45   | <b>Concurrent Breakout Sessions:</b><br>1. Criminal Law<br>2. Civil Responses<br>3. Financial Abuse<br>4. Community Responses<br>5. Advocacy | Parksville Room<br>Port Hardy Room<br>Orca Room<br>Finback Room<br>Galiano Room |
| 2:45 to 3:15   | <b>Networking and Refreshments</b><br>Opportunity to visit the “Tool Box Stations”<br>and “Tool Box Video Room”                              | Pavilion Ballroom Foyer   |
| 3:15 to 5:00   | <b>Plenary: Pulling it all Together</b><br>Report Back from Concurrent Breakout<br>Session Facilitators                                      | Pavilion Ballroom   |
| 5:00 to 5:15   | <b>Closing Remarks</b><br>Laura Watts  | Pavilion Ballroom   |

**Concurrent Breakout Sessions**

| Topic                      | Room            | Facilitator                 | Presenters  |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Criminal Law</b>        | Parksville Room | Const. Patricia Fleischmann | Det. Christina Wolf<br>Graham Webb  |
| <b>Civil Responses</b>     | Port Hardy Room | Joan Harbison               | Lisa Manuel<br>Deborah Dithurbide<br>Ron Kruzeniski, Q.C.<br>Amanda Brown |
| <b>Financial Abuse</b>     | Orca Room       | Charmaine Spencer           | Ned Chase<br>Sgt. Brian Trainor   |
| <b>Community Responses</b> | Finback Room    | Elizabeth Siegel            | Alison Leaney<br>Hélène Wavroch<br>Teri Kay                               |
| <b>Advocacy</b>            | Galiano Room    | Jane E. Meadus              | Nasser Amiri<br>Elliot PausJenssen  |





## SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

The Forum began with a welcome message from Barbara Walman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Womens', Seniors' and Community Services, Ministry of Community Services, British Columbia, opening remarks from Elizabeth Esteves, Chair of the Working Group, and welcoming remarks from Susan Scotti, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Income Security and Social Development Branch, Human Resources Social Development Canada.

Pearl McKenzie, the Forum facilitator, provided an overview of the day following the opening greetings. She highlighted the purpose of the Forum, which was to link seniors, experts and champions across professions and sectors so as to better position them to address abuse of older adults and advance collaborative actions in the prevention of and responses to abuse of older adults. She reminded delegates to move beyond issues and problems during the concurrent sessions and focus on trying to find solutions. She advised participants to work alongside the older adults participating in each concurrent session to examine elder abuse from their perspective, in order to better understand what seniors need to be secure.

### Opening Plenary Panel

A panel presentation was held during the opening plenary which was designed to provide Forum participants with a critical look at how people perceive elder abuse. It consisted of a series of presentations from four panel members who each provided a critical analysis of how people understand elder abuse and how their perceptions shape legislation, policy, resources, programs, and services across the country.

Panel members included:

Judith Wahl, Executive Director, Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, Ontario

Mark Huyser-Wierenga, Crown Prosecutor, Alberta

Michelle Ranville, Chief Executive Officer, Age & Opportunity Inc., Manitoba

Shashi Assanand, Executive Director, Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society, British Columbia

Panellists highlighted the following key points:

- The most important lessons about elder abuse are often learned through seniors themselves, thus it is imperative that the perspective of seniors be the guiding force behind our responses and programs. Let clients dictate practice;
- It is important to contextualize when sharing information and ideas across jurisdictions. Adapt not adopt;



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- Services and programs need to be accessible in order to truly benefit those in need (e.g., Are outreach methods, eligibility criteria, policies and protocols inaccessible to seniors?);
- We need to examine traditional responses to elder abuse and ask ourselves if they really work in practice. We need to challenge ourselves to develop more effective ways to address this issue;
- Systemic barriers and gaps need to be addressed so that when a senior breaks away from an abusive situation, the programs and services they need are there for them (e.g., safe places);
- Progress has been made on the issues of child protection and domestic violence and how they are addressed by the criminal justice system. Elder abuse is the next frontier. We must empower seniors and help them to navigate the justice system in order to ensure that their voices are heard in court;
- Although seniors cannot be stereotyped as vulnerable, the criminal justice system must be more attentive to power imbalances and the possibility that the system may be continuing the victimization of seniors;
- It is important to focus on and address the unique experiences of immigrants, visible minorities, and refugees, and the issues they face when dealing with elder abuse:
  - There is often a perception that seniors within these communities are well-looked after by their children; however, factors such as racism, lack of services, systemic barriers, culture shock, isolation, and immigration policies, particularly those relating to sources of financial support, can place seniors from these communities in quite vulnerable situations;
  - There is a need for services to address the diverse needs of seniors from these communities (e.g. services that are in the native language of the seniors and those which use innovative outreach methods.)

## Concurrent Breakout Sessions and Recommendations

Presenters and a Facilitator were assigned to each concurrent session. The role of the Presenters was to provide a brief “snapshot” of the area being discussed by imparting their experience and expertise in the topic area (i.e. criminal law, civil responses, financial abuse, community responses, and advocacy). Their presentations served as catalysts for discussion. They briefly highlighted key issues and/or challenges and strengths of models or programs they had experience in, encouraging group participants to focus on what is needed to make programs and approaches more effective. The role of the Facilitators was to guide concurrent breakout session discussions, and to present the concurrent breakout session’s recommended collaborative actions at the final plenary.

The following section summarizes the presentations and highlights critical points that came up during the discussions that were held in each of the five breakout sessions. It also provides final plenary recommendations.



## Criminal Law

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**Facilitator: Constable Patricia Fleischmann**

**Presenters: Detective Christina Wolf and Graham Webb**

Detective Christina Wolf discussed the work of the Elder Abuse Section (EAS) of the Ottawa Police Service, which was launched in January 2005. She explained the history of the EAS, its complement, mandate and investigative statistics.

Det. Wolf noted that when it comes to investigating elder abuse in Ontario “we are embarking on uncharted territory.” She highlighted some key issues that currently present challenges to the investigation of cases of elder abuse in the province. One such challenge is posed by the fact that Ontario’s seniors reside in a variety of settings, including their own homes, supportive housing, long-term care homes, and retirement homes (the latter not regulated.) Det. Wolf also discussed the fact that personal support workers have no governing body. Navigating issues of privacy can also be challenging when investigating cases of elder abuse.

Det. Wolf also presented an overview of court process issues. Among the issues she discussed were time delays, the prevalence of elderly victims/witnesses being unavailable for court; and the fact that the judicial system may not be seeing elder abuse as a serious crime.

Graham Webb described his work as a Staff Litigation Lawyer with the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE), a community legal aid clinic in Toronto, Ontario. He highlighted the importance of legislation, policy and procedural reform. Mr. Webb also spoke about the need to increase public awareness and enhance criminal justice training on the issue of elder abuse. Finally, Mr. Webb described some future directions, including the training of judges, crowns and police as well as collaboration among police and other law enforcement agencies.

### Discussion- Critical Points

- **Those who work directly with seniors should have a strong understanding of privacy legislation as well as consent and capacity issues**

Delegates highlighted the need for individuals to be aware of the scope and limitations of their jurisdiction’s legislation.

The point was raised that people often feel that they cannot report elder abuse due to privacy legislation. Concerns about liability can result in a reluctance to report. However, they can report their concern if they get an individual’s consent, which underscores the importance of talking to the older person.

Mandatory reporting of elder abuse was also discussed. A concern was expressed that if physicians must report elder abuse, older adults may not visit their doctors. It was suggested that if mandatory reporting exists, it should apply to all ages.



- **Increased training and dedicated staff and services would improve the criminal justice system response to elder abuse**

Session participants emphasized the importance of training for courts, crowns, law enforcement, judges and service providers.

The discussion also touched upon the need to identify judges who can promote awareness of the issue with their peers.

Participants suggested that age-appropriate services and supports be developed within the criminal justice system. Assigned crowns and courtrooms would be helpful (as would be training to accompany the assignments).

In some cases of elder abuse, restorative justice approaches should be fully considered and used where appropriate as they may provide better outcomes than responses within the formal justice system.

- **There is a need to establish collaborative responses to elder abuse**

Participants identified inter-agency consultations regarding high-risk files as a useful practice in addressing elder abuse, and stressed that there should be increased communication among various organizations that form coordinated approaches to elder abuse.

The group also pointed to the need for improved inter-provincial/territorial collaboration and networks.

- **Responses and services should respect and be tailored to the needs and wants of older adults**

Even though elder abuse is often paralleled to child abuse, a distinction between these two types of abuse must be made. Those experiencing elder abuse must be recognized as adults and as decision-making authorities of their own. It is especially important for those working in this field to talk with seniors to determine their wants and needs.

- **National associations should give priority to elder abuse**

Delegates suggested that there is a need for the Solicitors General to grant a specific organization or body the mandate to respond to elder abuse.

Concern was expressed that the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police does not have an elder abuse sub-committee.

It was recommended that the Canadian Judicial Council be approached to suggest that elder abuse be recognized as a training priority.

- **There is a need to have a better understanding of, and sensitivity to, diverse cultures when addressing elder abuse**

Participants agreed on the importance of culturally-sensitive and especially “culturally competent” elder abuse approaches.

When language barriers exist, it is essential that services and supports that allow for communication are readily available.



- **There is a need for a national social marketing campaign focused on protecting the rights of seniors**  
Participants pointed to the need for a national “branding” initiative to market awareness of abuse of older adults. Importantly, older adults should be consulted when developing this kind of initiative.

- **Ongoing funding for programs and services that address elder abuse is essential**  
When raising awareness of elder abuse, there is a need to ensure that appropriate services are available. Participants agreed that core funding is needed for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) addressing elder abuse.

- **There is a need for better information-sharing through a national clearinghouse**  
Participants discussed programs and services that could be helpful in addressing elder abuse, such as a national clearinghouse and toll-free numbers. It was also suggested that we work with what we have, for example, the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence.

***Plenary Recommendations  
Criminal Law Breakout Session<sup>1</sup>***

- **To undertake a review of federal and provincial privacy legislation, and the interpretation of it, with a view to ensuring that it is not an impediment to assisting older adults affected by abuse, including:**
  - a specific focus on how it impacts police investigation and subsequent prosecutions; and
  - an intensive examination of the use of discretion in reporting abuse affecting the safety of older adults.
- **Develop a national (social marketing) campaign focused on crimes against older adults committed by persons in relationships of trust.**
  - consult with older adults regarding appropriate messaging and campaign strategy.
  - include some focused training for judges, lawyers, police, victim services (i.e. promoting multidisciplinary training efforts).
- **Promote collaborative action models, including sharing promising approaches and the essential elements of an elder abuse response (e.g. police officer/social worker teams) with other F/P/T mechanisms/groups with consideration of ongoing financial support (i.e. health, seniors, status of women, Attorneys General, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Canadian Bar Association, Canadian Judicial Council).**

<sup>1</sup> The plenary recommendations from each breakout session consist of the text from the summary slides developed by each breakout session and presented to the closing plenary.



## Civil Responses

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**Facilitator:** Joan Harbison

**Presenters:** Amanda Brown, Lisa Manuel, Deborah Dithurbide, and Ron Kruzeniski, Q.C.

Amanda Brown's presentation included a discussion of Vancouver Coastal Health's Re:Act Program. Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) is one of British Columbia's six health authorities which are legally-designated agencies for intervention for the purposes of adult protection. Re:Act provides education and a response program for VCH front-line care providers, ensuring that they are aware of, and understand, their obligations and resources in relation to identifying, assessing and reporting situations involving abuse, neglect and self-neglect of vulnerable adults. This program was developed as a response to Part 3 of the Adult Guardianship Act, which gives enhanced intervention and investigative powers in situations where vulnerable adults are living at risk.

Ms. Brown explained some of the challenges faced by VCH workers in regard to the Act, including limited resources and the dual role of healthcare workers (essentially adult protection workers that sometimes intervene against the will of the client, and professionals aiming to develop a therapeutic alliance with the client based on trust and empowerment). While the work of Re:Act is in large part based on the possibility of court remedies to situations of abuse and neglect, it does not have a legal team nor are the front-line workers trained in court procedures.

Lisa Manuel explained the range of services including counselling services, available at the Family Service Association (FSA) of Toronto for older adults experiencing abuse. She explained that the senior and caregiver supports unit was founded in 1981 and that the Association began tracking abuse-related interventions in 1986. Over 50 per cent (about 250-300 people) of clients of the FSA were in abusive situations at the time the counselling services were being delivered.

Ms. Manuel described the profile of clients typically served and the types of abuse commonly experienced. Clients are predominately women, over the age of 75, with capacity intact, of diverse populations, and with an adult child perpetrating abuse. Most clients who are victims of abuse do not want to sever their relationship with the adult child-perpetrator; they just want the abuse attenuated. Much of the abuse against older adults that the FSA deals with involves undue influence and "hostage-taking" situations. Many FSA clients come from small communities to Toronto for this service because they do not want to deal with the issue in their communities.

"When our clients fall into other systems," said Ms. Manuel, "we often witness a medicalization of abuse, where service providers want to protect themselves from charges of inaction and failure to protect, and so jump too quickly to a declaration of incapacity and move the victim to a long-term care home. As advocates for the victim at FSA, we try to fend off an inappropriate declaration of incapacity." This is a tenuous



balance, according to Ms. Manual, especially where there may be a risk of homicide. She urges service providers to imagine that an 85-year old woman as a 35-year old woman, and ask themselves whether they have ageist assumptions that cause them to unduly treat the older woman differently.

Ms. Manual summarized some of the challenges that she faces in her work, including:

- Trying to work within an empowerment framework in a medicalized response system;
- Negotiating across fragmented systems; and
- The need to push beyond age-based definitions of abuse.

Deborah Dithurbide described the guiding principles and types of interventions conducted by the Adult Protection Services at the Nova Scotia Department of Health. She explained that the Adult Protection Act is provincial legislation that was proclaimed in January 1986. It was developed in response to the growing public awareness of abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults in Nova Scotia and is currently under review. Ms. Dithurbide explained that adult protection workers are brokers of service but do not deliver services themselves other than intervening to make adult protection assessments and referrals. In many of the situations dealt with by Adult Protection Services, a large family is relying on an elder person for their income.

Ms. Dithurbide also explained some of the key challenges of her work, including the dismantling of family supports due to out-migration, lack of resources and the absence of an Office of the Public Guardian.

Ms. Dithurbide highlighted the interplay of issues in the healthcare and the adult protection systems. She also spoke of the need for a continuum of health and social care and housing options. Ms. Dithurbide also explained that there is a fear among the interdisciplinary team of adult protection workers of losing specialized discipline-specific knowledge when adopting a generalist model.

Ms. Dithurbide expressed the belief that ageism is alive and well in our society. For instance, she explained that people have a tendency to respond to situations of elder abuse by treating the older person like a child. She highlighted the need for education of both the general public and those in the private sector who work with seniors in order to change ageist attitudes and behaviour.

Ronald J. Kruzeniski, Q.C., discussed the office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (PGT) of Saskatchewan and relevant legislation. He explained that the people served by the legislation and programs available include the following “vulnerable people”:

- those affected by mental or physical challenges;
- persons who are not capable of managing their own affairs because of mental or physical challenges; and
- vulnerable people where serious allegations of financial abuse are made.



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Mr. Kruzeniski spoke specifically about financial abuse, making references to relevant legislation, such as *The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Act*, the *Public Guardian and Trustee Act*, and *The Powers of Attorney Act*, among others, in Saskatchewan. Mr. Kruzeniski explained that the following principles form the basis of the legislation: the interventions should be as least intrusive as possible; the assignment of a guardian should be the intervention of last resort; and the interventions, including those of the guardian, must be in the best interest of the client.

He explained that when a vulnerable person is incapable of managing and there are serious allegations of financial abuse, the PGT can request documents, conduct investigations, obtain a warrant, and freeze financial institution accounts.

Mr. Kruzeniski also described some of the challenges associated with his work. These challenges include inadequate resources, and the need to monitor the actions of Powers of Attorney and guardians. This is not a simple job and it takes time. Sometimes, when the PGT takes steps to address abuse, the adult-child perpetrator will state, “If I’m not managing things correctly, then you do it.” The default manager becomes the healthcare system, the social care system, or the PGT. Another challenge is the need to increase awareness among attorneys and guardians of their obligations and duties.

Mr. Kruzeniski explained that education of professionals is also part of the solution. The Office of the PGT gives educational presentations to approximately 300 social workers every year. Due to high turnover among social workers, the job is never done and requires significant resources.

### Discussion- Critical Points

- **There is a need to be cognizant of the meaning of terms in various contexts, when addressing elder abuse**

Participants discussed the definition of adult protection. Some explained that the expression “adult support” is a more appropriate term because it is more inclusive and emphasizes empowering the at-risk adult as much as possible.

The use of the term “elder abuse” was also discussed. In Nova Scotia, the term “senior abuse” is used. In the North, the expression “elder abuse” was found to be problematic because elder refers to an Aboriginal person; thus, older adults who are non-Aboriginal may not relate to this term.

- **Health and legal professionals need to be educated about providing appropriate and informed direction and options to their clients**

Participants discussed the need for health professionals, including physicians, to be educated about elder abuse, so that their clients feel more comfortable confiding in them and trust that they will be supported if disclosing an abuse situation.





- **Canadians need to “normalize age”**  
Session participants discussed the importance of investing in broad public education about elder abuse and the need to “normalize age” in Canada.
- **Education and training should be provided to those professionals who are in a position to identify and intervene in cases of elder abuse**  
Participants felt it was important to encourage elder abuse training and ongoing practical knowledge transfer for those working with seniors (e.g. mentorships and preceptorships.)
- **Options and services available to seniors who are at-risk or experiencing abuse should be increased (e.g. in rural areas and diverse communities).**  
Participants raised the point that there are often limited resources and options available for older adults in at-risk situations. Older adults are often given the choice of either institutionalization or continuing to live at home and at-risk of abuse. Those continuing to live at home may face further challenges to get the care that they need. Home support in some jurisdictions has decreased from a maximum of 40 hours to 14 hours per week for the same given situation.  
One participant raised issues around access to services and resources in rural areas. In areas where there are fewer addiction treatment services and housing options, Adult Protection Services are called upon to intervene more frequently. Undue influence is a big challenge in areas where there is little or no access to lawyers. There tend to be fewer lawyers in rural areas, and some do not want to focus on adult guardianship issues.  
Participants discussed the importance of older adults having control over their choices. Increased peer supports are needed, but should not replace other needed supports. Rather, they can be “layered to the formal system.” Some vulnerability comes from isolation, so support from seniors’ organizations is important in addressing this issue.  
Participants agreed that services must be available in a senior’s preferred language.
- **The stigma associated with elder abuse is a barrier to reporting which must be removed**  
Participants discussed the need to encourage reporting of elder abuse. “We need to also remember those that are capable, but at risk,” said one participant. The group agreed upon the importance of changing our culture so that abuse of older adults is no longer shrouded in shame. One woman recalled the “days when a woman would not disclose conjugal violence because of the shame attached to having chosen to ‘marry such a rotten man’. We don’t have a climate where elders feel safe...We need a paradigm shift where elders come forth to report.”
- **Low employee retention of healthcare and community workers could be mitigated through appropriate training and compensation**



Session participants discussed the fact that workers in the field of elder abuse have high rates of “burn-out” and can be confronted with harassment, intimidation and possibly violence. Some workers are frustrated by being healthcare workers, but required to act like law enforcement officers or adult protections workers. Furthermore, community-based organizations often have limited resources with which to train and compensate staff appropriately.

- **Collaboration across services and sectors is important, while maintaining focus on the particular needs of older adults**

Delegates agreed that fostering collaboration among services would be useful to reduce working in “silos” and possible service duplication. “There shouldn’t be three different crisis lines, one for mental health, one for women’s rights, one for older adults,” said one participant, “I shouldn’t have to ask myself my age before I make a phone call.”

Discussion then turned to the definition of family violence. For instance, elder abuse can be family violence, but often it is not considered this way. The point was raised that we have developed a life-course perspective on family violence but have left out the last piece - violence against older adults. Some felt that some of the particularities of abuse against older adults would be lost if subsumed by family violence interventions and paradigms. One participant suggested collaboration across sectors without subsuming violence against older adults in the family violence framework.

- **Since competency is a threshold, it is essential to be aware of the continuum of capacity**

Participants highlighted the difficulties posed when people are not declared incompetent, yet are “on the verge” of losing capacity. In these cases, it is difficult to decide if resistance to intervention should be overridden in the name of protection. The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE) in Toronto supports the client wishing to challenge the assessment of incapacity. While the client’s incapacity may ultimately be confirmed, in the process ACE goes a long way in drawing attention to the client’s rights and his or her alternatives. Unfortunately, not all jurisdictions have mechanisms through which clients can access such legal advocates.

So much rides on the capacity or competency issue. Participants asked, “Who is doing assessments of competency? Who should be doing assessments?”

Apparently, some physicians have begun to refuse to undertake a medical determination of capacity, because of the potential challenges associated with the outcome of this assessment.

Another participant reinforced the need for correct assessments and related legal protections for the client. “We need minimal due process protections, regardless of the legislative framework, per se.” she said.

“While laws are tools, they do not in themselves solve problems,” pointed out one participant. “We can go the guardianship route but we have to provide other supports. We will never fully address undue influence so we have to find ways to



convince people that they don't have to do this or that. That's part of the paradigm shift required."

Another participant gave the example of an older woman with Parkinson's disease whose niece decided she needed to be moved to a nursing home. The older woman appealed the declaration of incompetency and returned to her apartment. "While the 'wisdom' was with the niece, the right to live at risk is the right we want to uphold," she said.

- **Research and evaluation on elder abuse should be enhanced to more effectively address elder abuse issues**

Participants discussed the importance of research and policy analysis, specifically:

- supporting/encouraging/funding research that increases understanding of the incidence, impacts and solutions for elder abuse in a context that respects cultural differences;
- measuring the incidence and prevalence of violence against older adults, and using existing data to conduct secondary analysis and research. Participants pointed out that much of the existing data collected to measure violence against women does not include women age 65 or older. The General Social Survey on Victimization, the Survey of Labour, and the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging should all include measures of the various forms and dimensions of abuse and neglect of older adults;
- reviewing Federal immigration sponsorship policy to assess impacts on older people, in terms of creating situations of extreme dependence and thus potential for mistreatment of seniors. This could be done in concert with provincial/territorial and community agencies;
- encouraging/supporting/funding the evaluation of civil responses taken in the last decade by federal/provincial/territorial jurisdictions, to determine their effectiveness in addressing mistreatment and neglect; and
- developing a broader policy initiative to evaluate the effectiveness of adult protection legislation and policies and share this evaluation across jurisdictions.

- **Zero tolerance**

Participants suggested developing a broad policy of "zero tolerance" for elder abuse in Canada. The need to be strategic in efforts to obtain resources for this cause was strongly emphasized. Delegates suggested increasing resources (e.g. enhanced funding for federal/provincial/territorial collaboration to address elder abuse.)



**Plenary Recommendations  
Civil Responses Breakout Session<sup>2</sup>**

**National/provincial/territorial collaborative and integrated approaches for:**

- research; and
- Knowledge transfer, education and training

**Research - Support/encourage/fund research that increases understanding of elder abuse:**

- its incidence and prevalence;
- impacts; and
- ways of addressing it that respect cultural difference.

Use existing data to conduct secondary analysis and research. For example, add questions to General Social Survey, Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging.

**Research (policy review/evaluation)**

- review immigration sponsorship policy to assess impacts on older people and potential for mistreatment of seniors, in concert with provincial/territorial and community agencies; and
- encourage/support/fund evaluation of civil responses taken in the last decade by federal/provincial/territorial jurisdictions to determine their effectiveness in addressing mistreatment and neglect.

**Knowledge transfer, education and training:**

- support, encourage and fund initiatives to educate and train the many providers who interact with older adults about aging, and elder abuse. (ex: normalize age to prevent mistreatment and neglect; develop language skills and cultural knowledge);
- education initiatives have to be sustained to support ongoing capacity; and
- Who? Identify issues and front-line interveners.

**Additional recommendations put forth by this group:**

- enhanced funding at F/P/T for responses to mistreatment and neglect; and
- zero tolerance for elder abuse. Collaborative F/P/T actions to support each province in developing a strategy to address elder abuse.

**Financial Abuse**

**Facilitator: Charmaine Spencer**

**Presenters: Sgt. Brian Trainor and Ned Chase**

Retired Sergeant, Brian Trainor, discussed the issues and challenges facing the criminal justice sector in addressing financial abuse of seniors. Sgt. Trainor explained that due to challenging work demands, police officers and prosecutors are not always

<sup>2</sup> The plenary recommendations from each breakout session consist of the text from the summary slides developed by each breakout session and presented to the closing plenary.



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able to attend to complaints of financial abuse of seniors in a timely manner. Often, only those complaints where the “probability of conviction” is deemed high are put before the courts. Some seniors may also be viewed as poor witnesses to subpoena to court as a result of stereotypical notions of seniors on the part of the prosecution/police team. One such notion is that most seniors suffer from memory problems and/or nervousness and are easily confused.

Sgt. Trainor recommended implementing proper training in the laws, procedures, and responses regarding elder abuse to a broad range of stakeholders (e.g. police, medical, financial and legal communities, and seniors with an interest in this issue). He also suggested that the development of a vehicle that allows for the sharing of interagency information concerning vulnerable seniors would help communities as a whole become proactive in addressing financial abuse.

Ned Chase spoke about a range of issues regarding financial abuse of seniors, with a particular focus on the misuse of Powers of Attorney (POAs). Mr. Chase explained that one way to address misuse of a POA would be to create a registry of people who have executed a POA and have subsequently become incapable of managing their own affairs. Access to such a registry could be given to banks, financial institutions, police investigators and practitioners so that financial institutions become aware that the person they are dealing with is the attorney for an incapacitated individual. The registry would also assist in the investigation of abuse of the POA. Responsibility for the registry could rest with either with the Probate Courts (Province) or the Public Trustees’ office and could come with the caveat that, if the donee fails to register once the donor becomes incapacitated, it may expose the donee to a greater degree of liability.

The likelihood of reporting suspected elder abuse by family members and neighbours could be improved and criminal trials could be avoided through the creation of provincial advocacy centres for the elderly. The advocacy centres would be staffed with both legal and non-legal personnel who can respond to issues raised by the older adults. These centres would also engage responses outside the criminal justice system, such as mediation, in an effort to avoid a criminal trial, where such avoidance may be warranted.

Various jurisdictions have a fractured approach to many of the remedies available, highlighting the need for greater consistency across Canada. A re-examination of issues relating to privacy and confidential communications among various sectors of service providers is needed to expose financial abusers who may otherwise find themselves protected by privacy provisions and confidential communications. Also, setting standards and developing a registration mechanism for all caregivers could be considered.

It is important to take steps to avoid “isolating the older adult”, such as establishing networks, driver programs, and meals on wheels programs. Where possible, these programs and services should have seniors as volunteers.



## Discussion- Critical Points

- **Mediation and restorative justice approaches should be considered when responding to financial abuse**

Session participants discussed issues regarding the use of the formal court system in addressing financial abuse. Comments were made that this system can be slow, costly and perceived as embarrassing, which often deters older adults from using it. As an alternative, participants discussed using the court system for more “extreme cases” of elder abuse, and opting for mediation and restorative justice for others. Using these kinds of programs can also sometimes have the positive benefit of restoring relationships between the older adult and the abuser, instead of separating them.

- **There is a need to involve financial institutions in developing responses to financial abuse**

Participants discussed the need for financial institutions to assume more leadership in preventing and responding to financial abuse. Becoming more involved in elder abuse initiatives could be a part of their public relations programs. For instance, one possible initiative discussed was for banks to investigate anomalies in an individual’s banking and spending records, as is often done with potential credit card fraud.

- **There is a need to increase education about financial abuse issues, both for the general public and in particular sectors (e.g. financial services sector)**

Session delegates stressed the need to increase knowledge regarding financial issues in a broad sense. For instance, they explored the need for an educational campaign regarding financial abuse that would be directed at all segments of society. Also, they argued that financial abuse education should be taken in the context of familial relationships, which are often quite complex.

Participants also discussed the need to increase financial literacy and knowledge about elder abuse with professionals, bank staff and seniors. For instance, Powers of Attorney and joint bank accounts can be initiated without clear definitions and knowledge about how these should function. There is a need to explain and clearly define how such mechanisms will be used for each individual case. Delegates also spoke about the need to regulate financial advisors.

- **Responding to financial abuse is often complex because it tends to occur within trusting relationships (e.g. families)**

Responses to financial abuse should not only address the results of this type of abuse, but its underlying root causes. Session participants described what they viewed to be some of the root causes of the financial abuse of seniors, such as:

- ageist attitudes;
- pressure (i.e. need/greed);
- a sense of false entitlement ;



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- gambling, drugs, alcoholism, debt;
  - family violence;
  - coercive conditions of service provision (e.g. residences' requiring that a senior have a POA as a condition of residency); and
  - senior's need/greed (i.e. mail scams).
- **Responses to financial abuse should focus on empowerment and be developed “side by side” with seniors**

Participants discussed the need for responses to financial abuse to focus on empowerment of seniors. For example, by increasing knowledge about some of the key ways in which financial abuse surfaces (i.e. often in subtle forms, involving small amounts of money), seniors will be better equipped to protect themselves. Session discussion identified the need to adopt a “senior’s perspective” with regards to financial abuse. For instance, participants discussed the importance of consulting with seniors regarding what they want and need. Also, responses should reflect the fact that each experience of financial abuse is unique.

### ***Plenary Recommendations Financial Abuse Breakout Session<sup>3</sup>***

#### **Initiative with financial institutions:**

- tap into financial institutions' social conscience through the federal government;
- banks need to show more leadership with this issue;
- training of staff;
- create a system that would detect situations of abuse;
- develop other mechanisms/products that balance protection with autonomy;
- clarification and understanding of privacy legislation;
- intersection of provincial and federal legislation governing banks;
- play a role in consumer education; and
- build the understanding among bank administration and staff about the capacity of incapacitated individuals (service roles for incapacitated individuals).

#### **Identify and educate key contacts/stakeholders/service providers:**

- clarify roles and responsibilities (including professional obligations);
- clarify and communicate/educate regarding privacy issues;
- educate professionals; for example, lawyers and others with regards to POA;
- build capacity through the existing educational system (i.e. law school, community college) to understand aging issues and family violence;
- develop professional standards for dealing with individuals with cognitive impairments; and

<sup>3</sup> The plenary recommendations from each breakout session consist of the text from the summary slides developed by each breakout session and presented to the closing plenary.



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- develop expertise within professions and within the justice system on identifying and responding to situations of elder abuse.

### **National campaign on how to protect and guard your rights (prevention):**

- utilize existing delivery systems to educate (i.e. seniors' organizations) and support and fund centres to respond;
- simple messages (it's wrong) that build an understanding (social norms) within the community;
- build on existing watchdog mechanisms in the community; and
- specialize messages and delivery mechanisms for high risk populations (i.e. immigrant, Aboriginal, those with physical and cognitive impairments, those with physical illness who are hospitalized, etc.).

### **Community Responses**

**Facilitator:** *Elizabeth Siegel*

**Presenters:** *Alison Leaney, Teri Kay, and H el ene Wavroch*

Alison Leaney spoke about the British Columbia Association of Community Response Networks (BCACRNs) in her capacity as Executive Director. She described the broad range of groups and individuals involved with BCACRNs including those personally affected by abuse and concerned citizens, seniors' counsellors, First Nations organizations, police as well as health and social service workers. Ms. Leaney also described future work of the BCACRNs, which includes a community capacity building initiative to address and prevent adult abuse and neglect. Her presentation also had a particular focus on explaining the key components and principles of B.C.'s Coordinated Community Response Model.

Teri Kay outlined the work of the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (ONPEA) in her capacity as Executive Director. Ms. Kay also described Ontario's Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse. She highlighted the importance of collaboration, which she described as a formal agreement involving shared goals, structures and activities. She also described some drivers and challenges related to collaborative initiatives. With successful collaboration, elder abuse initiatives can produce:

- a reduction in duplication of service;
- the identification of gaps;
- shared principles and value statements;
- common tools for identifying elder abuse;
- shared strategies for responding to abuse;
- shared communication and cooperation processes among agencies and organizations (privacy and confidentiality issues addressed); and
- shared contact list of critical referral sources (outcome of referral can be tracked).





Hélène Wavroch described the work of the Réseau québécois pour contrer les abus envers les aînés/RQCAA (the Réseau), in her capacity as Executive Director. The Réseau's mission is to bring together individuals and groups of individuals who are concerned with the issues of prevention, detection or intervention regarding elder abuse. She spoke of the main objectives and challenges facing the Réseau and its work, and also how they face these challenges. For example, she explained that one of their main challenges is the denial by the general population of the prevalent existence of elder abuse. This challenge is addressed by activities such as public awareness campaigns, the development and distribution of promotional materials, invitations to community groups to hold local elder abuse events, and bi-monthly press releases. Ms. Wavroch also described some of the work that the Réseau is currently undertaking, including the development of various committees on specific elder abuse-related issues and multi-sectoral elder abuse prevention tables.

### Discussion- Critical Points

- **Collaboration and coordination are essential to effective responses to elder abuse**

Session participants highlighted the importance of collaboration, partnerships and coordinated action. For instance, involving the faith communities in elder abuse-related work was seen as particularly important. Community-based organizations should also collaborate with different levels of government. In addition, improved communication between researchers and communities might result in the application of useful research within communities seeking information on elder abuse responses. Participants also discussed the need for more coordinated action to appropriately respond to cases of elder abuse.

- **It is important to recognize the strong commitment by volunteers on this issue. At the same time, sufficient funding is critical to developing sustainable community responses to elder abuse**

Initially, discussion focused on how organizations receive funding for awareness-raising and collaborative responses to elder abuse. Delegates discussed how much of the work done by organizations and individual volunteers and workers is “in kind” since on-going funding is difficult to obtain. The sustaining force is people’s commitment to the issue, but the continuous search for funding may lead to worker burnout. Consequently, sustainable funding from various sources is needed for community responses at all levels.

- **Addressing ageism is integral to preventing elder abuse**

Participants felt that there is an undercurrent of ageism in society. Therefore, elder abuse education is needed, and should be targeted at a broad audience (e.g. including the range of people who work with older adults, students, and the general



public). For example, a tool-kit from Saskatchewan for designing activities for Seniors' Week was described as a useful resource for addressing ageism and promoting the prevention of elder abuse.

There was discussion about the possibility that the Canadian government propose that the United Nations declare June 15<sup>th</sup> as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) and that Canada host WEAAD 2008 in Ottawa.

- **It is important to encourage existing outreach methods and develop new, innovative ways to reach seniors about elder abuse issues**

The development of media campaigns on elder abuse was discussed as a key area of work. Television and radio campaigns are particularly needed and may enhance the fundraising efforts of organizations that address elder abuse. Key messages of such campaigns would focus on the need to address elder abuse as a societal problem and that it is everyone's business.

In Québec, promotion of elder abuse initiatives during two well-subscribed seniors' television programs was described as very effective in this effort. Public service announcements on elder abuse, such as those developed in Ontario, were also seen as very useful. Session participants explained the value of theatrical events and informal gatherings in reaching seniors. There is a growing use of drama, and there has been positive feedback to drama troupes comprised of seniors. "Kitchen groups", where workers go to people's houses to have lunch or supper discussions, have also proven useful to reach seniors. One participant noted that it would also be helpful to place an informative insert into bills that seniors regularly receive (e.g. hydro bills).

- **Increased research on elder abuse will help to improve knowledge and understanding of the issue**

Participants noted that more research (e.g. on specific types and the incidence of abuse, by gender and age) is needed as elder abuse is not widely understood.

- **It is important to standardize tools and resources and we must also address diverse needs**

Crisis lines, standardized tools and interpretation services were some of the tools and services found to be useful in addressing elder abuse. Participants discussed the availability of a crisis/abuse or victim support line in their jurisdiction. One participant noted that she is currently working on developing such a service for cases of elder abuse in her jurisdiction. Similar training, education, and evaluation methods were found to be useful to support the use of commonly understood concepts and terms. Interpretation services were also identified as useful yet difficult to attain. We must increase the availability of interpretation services, so that all seniors can access the services and programs that they need.

- **Leadership at the national and provincial/territorial level will require sustained funding**



Participants identified the need for a “national leader” on elder abuse. The Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (CNPEA) was discussed as a potential leader on this issue, but it would need long-term funding to take on this role.

Participants also discussed the need to increase support to seniors’ secretariats, given the leadership that they provide.

**Plenary Recommendations  
Community Responses Breakout Session<sup>4</sup>**

**National:**

- recognize a national leader in knowledge transfer (CNPEA), as a national centre of excellence, a model of interdisciplinary collaboration connecting government, the community, and centres of excellence in each jurisdiction;
- awareness;
- promote the recognition of WEAAD on the UN calendar;
- coordinate a WEAAD international event to be held in Ottawa (June 2008); and
- develop an interdepartmental action plan at the federal level in connection with the Canadian implementation of the WHO report on violence.

**Provincial:**

- develop a funding formula for sustainability of coordinating community response networks. This would acknowledge the huge volunteer effort that has sustained the movement so far;
- establish/endorse provincial centres of excellence;
- provide more financial support for the Seniors Secretariats (or develop them in provinces that don’t have them); and
- provincially develop an interdepartmental action plan so that each department can examine their role in intervention and prevention (e.g. Ministries of Education can examine how to include positive perceptions of aging in the curriculum).

**Community:**

- encourage an active role in prevention (e.g. education for Seniors Week in schools).

**Advocacy**

**Facilitator: Jane E. Meadus**

**Presenters: Elliot PausJenssen and Nasser Amiri**

Elliot PausJenssen spoke about the Saskatoon Council on Aging Inc., in her capacity as a Volunteer Coordinator. The Council is a community-based organization dedicated to

<sup>4</sup> The plenary recommendations from each breakout session consist of the text from the summary slides developed by each breakout session and presented to the closing plenary.



promoting the dignity, health and independence of older adults. She described some of the key initiatives of the Council, including a resource centre, the Abuse of Elderly Project, the Isolation of Older Adults Project and the Older Adult Abuse Task Force as well as its political actions. She also explained the strengths, challenges and successes of the organization and its work.

Nasser Amiri presented on the British Columbia Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors (BC CEAS) in his capacity as a Legal Information Counsellor. As part of his work, he provides legal information over the phone, as well as within two legal clinics for seniors with low-incomes. He explained that financial abuse is the most common concern raised by clients; however, housing, pension issues, and other types of abuse are also common issues raised. Also, Mr. Amiri explained that the Law Foundation of BC has recently agreed to fund a full-time lawyer for seniors, which is modelled after the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly in Toronto.

### **Discussion- Critical Points**

During the initial stages of the discussion, session participants discussed what the term “advocacy” means. Participants described a range of definitions including influencing system and legislative change, helping people to have their own voice and to navigate systems, as well as raising awareness. Session participants explained some of the ways to advocate for addressing elder abuse and related issues. For instance, they discussed merging organizations together to increase funding opportunities and the importance of intergenerational activities to foster respect for older adults, among youth.

- **Advocacy methods should focus on the use of multi-disciplinary teams that work “side by side” with seniors to raise awareness**

In regard to advocacy methods, participants spoke about the need to raise awareness of elder abuse.

They discussed the importance of multi-disciplinary teams that work “side by side” with seniors. Participants expressed that seniors should be part of the process, but that it can often be hard to get seniors to become involved in initiatives.

Some key means to reach seniors include working with seniors’ organizations, informal sharing of information and working with the media. Some suggestions made to reach the “hard to reach” seniors were conducting more outreach (e.g. outreach workers going to seniors’ homes) and training for those who work regularly with seniors (e.g. hospital emergency staff and service providers).

Participants also discussed the importance of recognizing the gender bias with respect to elder abuse, when developing educational and awareness campaigns.

These campaigns should reflect that women tend to live longer, are typically poorer and suffer from elder abuse more often than men.

- **There is a need to strengthen advocacy efforts at both the grassroots and national levels**



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Participants discussed whether responses to elder abuse need to be different than responses to other kinds of abuse. Participants stated that elder abuse responses should not be less funded than other responses and that they need to address ageist attitudes. They explained that there is a need for a strategy on the aging population, which would include addressing elder abuse and related issues. A national action plan on elder abuse could be developed with leadership from the federal government. There is also a need to increase grassroots advocacy and advocate for services and practical support for seniors.

- **There is a need for intergenerational advocacy initiatives and those specifically focusing on the baby boom generation**

While intergenerational initiatives were seen as valuable, participants explained that elder abuse campaigns targeting baby boomers would also be helpful. By doing so, it is hoped that baby boomers would become more proactive in addressing this issue.

- **We need to promote recognition of the importance of elder abuse as a societal issue both across Canada and internationally**

Participants discussed the possibility of hosting an international World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) event in Ottawa in June 2008.

It was also mentioned that Canada should promote WEAAD to be placed on the United Nations (UN) calendar of events.

Delegates agreed on the importance of having commitment to address elder abuse from Ministers and governments across Canada.

- **Seniors' access to services should be enhanced**

Specifically, improving seniors' access to legal representation was discussed, as access to these services varies within and across jurisdictions.

Interpretation services should be available so that seniors can access services in the language in which they are most comfortable; services should also be accessible to those who are hearing impaired.

Access to elder abuse advocates, in addition to police, was also seen as important, as some people may not feel comfortable seeking police services to address abuse concerns.

### ***Plenary Recommendations Advocacy Breakout Session<sup>5</sup>***

#### **Services:**

- services are the key to any advocacy program; and
- services must be accessible to all in that they must be affordable, available in the language in which the senior communicates, and available in all jurisdictions.

<sup>5</sup> The plenary recommendations from each breakout session consist of the text from the summary slides developed by each breakout session and presented to the closing plenary.



**Education and awareness:**

- national elder abuse curriculum for professionals and front-line workers;
- intergenerational education; and
- national series of public service announcements to reach seniors and general public.

**Individual and systemic advocacy program:**

- provincial and territorial seniors' advocates; and
- access to legal representation/advocacy where rights are at risk or have been taken away.

**Additional recommendations put forth by this group:**

- sustainable National Elder Abuse Action Plan;
- host 2008 World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Event that includes announcing the Action Plan; and
- put WEADD on UN Calendar of Events.

**Plenary: Pulling it all Together**

Facilitators from each of the breakout sessions brought forth their final recommendations to the plenary. This part of the day was facilitated by Pearl McKenzie, who encouraged further dialogue from Forum delegates.

Following the breakout session presentations, Ms. McKenzie provided an opportunity for delegates to express additional recommendations.

One of the key concerns raised was for medical sector involvement (i.e. family physicians) in addressing elder abuse. Session participants explained that doctors are often not educated about detecting elder abuse. Moreover, they are often fearful of detecting elder abuse because they do not know how to respond and because of the related demands on their time. One participant suggested that we need “doctors talking to doctors,” having elder abuse as part of their curriculum and continuing education, and addressed in medical journals. Further comments were made regarding the need for doctors to know about the support systems and services available to them when they detect elder abuse.

Furthering this response, one participant explained that she has presented at medical schools and works with physicians on elder abuse related issues. She recommended a quick assessment tool for physicians and other healthcare professionals. An example of such a tool can be accessed at The Vancouver Coastal Health’s Website: [www.vchreact.ca](http://www.vchreact.ca).

Another recommendation made during the Plenary was for increased awareness, both for professionals and broader society, on the issue of elder abuse. One of the ideas put



forth was to use the media to create an awareness campaign. Alongside this recommendation, communities and/or governments need to develop and conduct generic training and continuing education for all healthcare providers on elder abuse issues.

The National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE) was mentioned for its advocacy and professional development initiatives. One of the theme areas of this organization is elder abuse. Its activities include an initiative whereby physicians conduct knowledge transfer projects. NICE has developed core concepts and curricula for doctors, nurses and social workers (more professions will be added in the future).

## Closing Remarks

Final remarks were made by Laura Watts, who outlined three key messages:

1. **Now is the Time:** The movement for elder rights shares commonalities with previous rights movements. The elder rights movement is the movement of the 2000s.
2. **Here is the Place:** Canada plays a leading role in elder abuse issues. Working nationally and internationally provides greater support and linkages, but we need to recognize that we are doing good work and are on the cutting edge.
3. **We are the Ones:** We are now focusing on the larger elder abuse-related issues and how can we connect. There is momentum building on these issues and there are key decision-makers on this issue working in Canada.

Ms. Watts highlighted the need for interdisciplinary work on elder abuse. As the spectrum of key players come together on this issue, we need to be cognizant of the terms we are using and what they mean across different professions. Therefore, there may be a need to develop new terms and a new lexicon.

Addressing ageism is an important component of effectively addressing elder abuse, and Ms. Watts highlighted a need to “normalize age.” We need to stop thinking of age as “other” or different. She called for a declaration of zero tolerance of elder abuse in Canada.

Lastly, Ms. Watts thanked all participants and the Working Group for their involvement in the Forum, which she described as one of the most important things done to date on this issue in Canada.

Pearl McKenzie provided final remarks, thanking all delegates for their participation and expressing her hope that this is just the beginning of the work that we do together.



## THEMES

The recommendations that emerged from the five breakout sessions and plenary discussions of the Forum revealed four overarching theme areas. Although each session had a unique focus, these common themes ran through the day's proceedings, and are germane to all of the topic areas.

- 1. Raising Awareness**
- 2. Education, Training and Research**
- 3. Developing and Sharing Promising Approaches**
- 4. Support, Services and Advocacy**

### 1. Raising Awareness

Forum participants emphasized the importance of raising awareness about elder abuse and building on the momentum already developed across jurisdictions and sectors of society and at the international level. To that end, it is imperative that the Working Group continue to support World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEADD) on June 15<sup>th</sup>.

The general public should be made aware that abuse or neglect can happen to any older adult. In fact, contrary to commonly held beliefs, most older adults who experience abuse or neglect are mentally competent, are not dependent on other people, and do not require constant care. It can occur in any relationship, including one where there is an expectation of trust or where a person is in a position of power or authority. Elder abuse can often result from ageist thinking. Many forms of abuse and neglect of older adults fall into the category of family violence.

Forum participants pointed to the need to address underlying attitudes/causes of elder abuse (e.g. ageism, continuation of domestic violence) when developing awareness-raising initiatives. For instance, our society is culturally biased in favour of youth, which can negatively influence the way older people view themselves, and how they are viewed by society. As the Forum facilitator has expressed, even solicitous feelings and impulses can have an adverse outcome if they infantilize adults and perpetuate an image of some people not being entitled to the rights and privileges of other adults.

“Even though elder abuse is often paralleled to child abuse, a distinction between these two types of abuse must be made. Those experiencing elder abuse must be recognized as decision-making authorities of their own. It is especially important for those working in this field to talk with seniors to determine their wants and needs.

Like sexism, racism or other “isms”, discrimination against someone because of age is not only unjust but it can also make that individual more vulnerable to abuse or neglect. This effect is compounded and exacerbated by the involvement of other potential





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discriminatory factors such as gender, disability or race.” (Pearl McKenzie, Attitudes, Beliefs and Misconceptions about Age and Disability, 2001)

While ageism is a key factor influencing elder abuse, the role of domestic/family violence also needs to be recognized. Research indicates that a significant percentage of elder abuse is a continuation of domestic violence. However, senior women in particular, who are experiencing abuse, may face tremendous difficulties when trying to find support and services. Many of the resources available to younger women or men who are victims of domestic/family violence are not offered to older women or men.

Some Forum participants expressed that very strong messaging is needed in elder abuse awareness initiatives, such as “zero tolerance for elder abuse.” On several occasions throughout the Forum, suggestions about pooling our resources and maximizing the reach and impact of awareness raising initiatives were brought forward. A public awareness campaign that could be rolled out on a federal, provincial and territorial level would save the time and resources that are expended by parties working in “silos,” independent of one another. If we speak with one strong voice, delivering the message that elder abuse is a societal issue and that the abuse of older persons will not be tolerated anywhere in this country, we have the best chance of reaching the general public and changing perceptions and attitudes on a grand scale.

## 2. Education, Training, and Research

Forum participants identified the need for elder abuse education and training across disciplines (e.g. for those working in health, social services, justice and financial systems) so that front-line staff interacting with seniors are properly informed about and sensitive to the needs of abused older adults. Front-line staff, including medical professionals, are often the first people to come into contact with abused older adults and should be well equipped with the knowledge and skills of how best to respond to their needs. It is important that service providers and professionals are educated about older adults and recognize that ageist thinking against older people is morally and sometimes legally wrong. In addition to continuing to support elder abuse training and education for professionals and staff serving seniors, the opportunity to build and reinforce partnerships across disciplines and jurisdictions can be pursued through multi and inter-disciplinary training for front-line service providers.

One of the key points of discussion at the Forum was the need to effectively address ageism. Though many cultures have historically respected and valued older people, ageist thinking still exists in our society, and throughout the world. This form of discrimination must be corrected through proper training and education. Such initiatives would increase understanding of aging and address negative attitudes towards it.

Forum participants also discussed the importance of intergenerational initiatives and the need for education for elementary and secondary school students. The Working Group recognizes the opportunity to positively impact the perceptions and attitudes of younger generations, by encouraging intergenerational programs to foster respect across



generations and supporting and promoting elder education in primary, secondary and post-secondary schools.

Participants called for research to examine several key issues related to elder abuse. The Working Group is well-positioned to conduct research to build understanding of the issues surrounding elder abuse and further knowledge of its prevalence. A review of privacy legislation at federal, provincial and territorial government levels and how the understanding and implementation of that legislation impacts elder abuse interventions is another opportunity for action that could be pursued by the Working Group. Finally, seniors from newcomer populations would benefit greatly from a review of immigration sponsorship and settlement services policy and an assessment of its impact on older adults.

### **3. Developing and Sharing Promising Approaches**

Forum participants shared their experiences about good practices and the gaps that need to be addressed in approaches to addressing and preventing elder abuse.

There are existing models of effective collaboration and cross-sectoral partnerships (e.g. police and the law or police and community) that are working to address elder abuse cases. These models, which have been found to be effective, should be supported and promoted across jurisdictions. Broadening collaboration through further development of such models should also be encouraged. This approach will provide an opportunity for a multitude of key players in elder abuse to come together to address this issue. To that end, the Working Group will continue to hold events (e.g. workshops, conferences and forums) on key elder abuse and related issues that foster information sharing and the development of collaborative approaches to prevent and address elder abuse.

Forum participants highlighted the need to encourage knowledge exchange. While the development of promising approaches to addressing and preventing elder abuse is crucial, this information has to be effectively shared to help create change for individuals and communities. Opportunities should be provided for people from across sectors and jurisdictions to network and share information. The Working Group considers promoting the development of a clearinghouse of information and resource materials on elder abuse one such opportunity. Supporting the establishment of elder abuse research centres (e.g. centres of excellence) is another opportunity for action that would foster knowledge exchange and the sharing of best practices.

Coordinated approaches to addressing elder abuse were discussed as a useful practice. Forum participants emphasized the need to support and promote local networks that cross disciplines so that those who work with seniors can learn from each others' experiences, insights and good practices in responding to elder abuse.

### **4. Support, Services, and Advocacy**



## **Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors**

Forum participants expressed concern about adequate support and services for seniors experiencing abuse and neglect. They also highlighted the need for greater advocacy in this area. Although older adults in Canada enjoy many age related benefits, they may have difficulty in accessing basic care and services. Seniors who are abused and neglected face additional barriers; they may be isolated and hidden from view, be unable to ask for help or not know where to turn for assistance.

Negative images of older people - that they are vulnerable, dependent, unable to make decisions and make no contribution to their community – can contribute to the denial of their human worth and dignity which may lead to a lack of appropriate services to prevent or address abuse and neglect.

Society should assist persons of all ages who are unable to protect themselves from abuse. Forum participants stressed that seniors, just like any other adult, must have access to the supports and services they need to live with security, dignity and autonomy. Services and systems, such as the criminal justice system, domestic violence initiatives and legal aid, should extend to meet the needs of older adults. These services must also be affordable, accessible and available in the language in which the senior communicates, and they should include communication aids for persons with disabilities, so that seniors can find help and information when they need it. The Working Group is prepared to explore and promote the benefits of services and/ or programs that assist with seniors' legal rights. Another way the Working Group could support the improvement of services and responses to elder abuse would be to share effective methods of evaluating policies, programs, and services for seniors who are abused and neglected and share research findings.

Forum participants expressed the importance of horizontal, inter-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships to address elder abuse prevention and response. They also indicated that Seniors' Offices/Secretariats with adequate supports are well-positioned to provide leadership on elder abuse-related initiatives. The Working Group also has a role to play in supporting the community-based response to elder abuse and promoting collaborative working relationships and information sharing across sectors.



## Appendix A: Participants List

**Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Elder Abuse Working Forum  
Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre  
Thursday, November 8, 2007  
Vancouver, British Columbia**

### Delegates List

| <b>NAME</b>         | <b>ORGANIZATION</b>   |
|---------------------|---|
| Amarulik, Julia     | Nunavut Elder   |
| Amiri, Nasser       | British Columbia Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors                      |
| Ash, Katherine      | Saskatoon Council on Aging (SK)   |
| Assanand, Shashi    | Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society (BC) |
| Azyan, Kimberly     | Public Guardian & Trustee of British Columbia                                 |
| Baker, Barb         | Nova Scotia Department of Seniors   |
| Bazin, Jean-Louis   | Secrétariat aux aînés, Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés (QC)              |
| Bornstein, Joseph   | The Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse                         |
| Bonnell, Leo C.     | Health & Community Services,<br>Government of Newfoundland & Labrador         |
| Braun, Joan         | British Columbia Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors                      |
| Brown, Amanda       | Vancouver Coastal Health (BC)   |
| Calnek, Angel       | Manitoba Society of Seniors   |
| Carr, Marcia        | Fraser Health (BC)  |
| Chalke, Jay         | Public Guardian & Trustee of British Columbia                                 |
| Chase, Edward (Ned) | Canadian Bar Association (NS)   |
| Chetner, Saara L.   | Public Guardian & Trustee (ON)  |
| Ching, Carol        | Alberta Seniors & Community Supports  |
| Cooke, Robert       | Royal Canadian Mounted Police (MB)  |
| Cooper, Kelly       | Government of Yukon, Health & Social Services/Adult Protection                |
| Crichton, Susan     | Manitoba Seniors & Healthy Aging Secretariat                                  |
| Davis, Hélène       | Aging & Seniors Division,<br>Government of Newfoundland & Labrador            |
| Desveaux, Jeanne    | Canadian Bar Association - Elder Law Section                                  |

## Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors



|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Devore, Jeanette      | Community Response to Abuse & Neglect of Elders (AB)  |
| Dithurbide, Deborah   | Family Service Association (NS)   |
| Dixon, Heather        | Elder Law Section, Manitoba Bar   |
| Doerksen, Kathy       | British Columbia Association of Community Response Networks   |
| Doran-MacLeod, Jackie | Department of Health, Government of Prince Edward Island  |
| Driscoll, Christine   | Public Prosecution Service (NS)   |
| Dupont, Shelly        | National Community Policing Services Branch,<br>Royal Canadian Mounted Police   |
| Esteves, Elizabeth    | Ontario Seniors' Secretariat  |
| Fleischmann, Patricia | Toronto Police Service, Community Mobilization Unit (ON)  |
| Goddard, Jan          | Jan Goddard & Associates (ON)   |
| Goulding, Pamela      | Department of Justice, Government of Newfoundland & Labrador  |
| Gutman, Gloria        | INPEA, British Columbia Network for Aging Research  |
| Harbison, Joan        | Dalhousie University, School of Social Work (NS)  |
| Hawley-George, Kim    | Department of Justice, Government of Newfoundland & Labrador  |
| Hill, Brenda          | Kerby Rotary House (AB)   |
| Hirtle, Dean          | Nova Scotia Department of Health<br>Adults with Disabilities & Senior Services, Department of Family &<br>Community Services, Province of New Brunswick |
| Howie, Jamie          | Alberta Justice and Attorney General  |
| Huysen-Wierenga, Mark | Department of Culture, Language & Youth (NU)  |
| Iyerak, Thoretta      | The Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse   |
| Kay, Teri             | British Columbia Association of Community Response Networks   |
| Kennedy, Yvonne       | Canadian Pensioners Concerned (ON)  |
| Kilbourn, Barbara     | Public Trustee of Manitoba  |
| Knowlton, Joanna      | Public Guardian & Trustee (SK)  |
| Kruzeniski, Ronald    | British Columbia Association of Community Response Networks   |
| Leaney, Alison        | Ontario Seniors' Secretariat  |
| Levitt, Latha         | The Council on Aging of Ottawa (ON)   |
| Loney, Al             | National Seniors Council  |
| Loveless, Marilyn     | Hamilton Police Service (ON)  |
| Lum, Ed               | Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism  |
| MacLeod, Beverly      | Canadian Academy of Senior Advisors (BC)  |
| MacMillan, Linda      | Association Québécoise de défense des droits<br>des personnes retraitées et préretraitées (QC)  |
| Major, Claude         | Family Service Association of Toronto (ON)  |
| Manuel, Lisa          | Public Trustee of Alberta   |
| Mar, Lincoln          | Seniors Safe House, Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton<br>(AB)   |
| Marcus, Debby         | University of Toronto,  |
| McDonald, Lynn        |   |

## Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors



|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| McGillivray, Thelma    | National Institute for the Care of the Elderly (ON)             |
| McKenzie, Pearl        | Older Women's Network (ON)                                      |
| McLachlan, Susanne     | Consultant, British Columbia                                    |
| McMillan, Elsie        | Ministry of Community Services, Government of British Columbia  |
| Mead, Eileen           | Eastern Health (NL)   |
| Meade, Ethel           | Law Society of Manitoba   |
| Meadus, Jane           | Ontario Society (Coalition) of Senior Citizens' Organizations   |
| Micucci, Lisa          | Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ON)                            |
| Morrison, Helen        | Department of Justice Canada, Family, Children & Youth Section  |
| Nahmiash, Daphne       | Cape Breton Regional Police Service (NS)                        |
| Nicholson, Paul        | Notre Dame de Grâce Community Committee on Elder Abuse (QC)     |
| Norton, Keith          | and National Seniors Council                                    |
| Outridge, Kim          | Royal Canadian Mounted Police (NL)                              |
| Paramonczyk, Christine | Canada's Association for the Fifty-Plus (ON)                    |
| PausJensen, Elliot     | Yukon Territorial Government,                                   |
| Pearson, Sheryl        | Continuing Care Branch, Macaulay Lodge                          |
| Podnieks, Elizabeth    | Ontario Seniors' Secretariat                                    |
| Praught, Heather       | Saskatoon Council on Aging (SK)                                 |
| Ranville, Michelle     | Pearson Consulting (AB)   |
| Rietschlin, John       | International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse         |
| Robinson, Keith        | Nova Scotia Department of Seniors                               |
| Roger, Kerstin         | Age & Opportunity Inc. (MB)                                     |
| Rogers-Lidstone, Kay   | Human Resources & Social Development Canada                     |
| Rolls, Andrea          | Upper Fraser Valley Regional Detachment (BC)                    |
| Ryan, Marc             | University of Manitoba  |
| Savidant, Richard      | Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman                             |
| Schmidt, Treena        | Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General (BC)              |
| Scotti, Susan          | Fédération des Aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario |
| Siegel, Elizabeth      | Prince Edward Island Seniors' Secretariat                       |
| Smith, Bill            | Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network, City of Edmonton (AB)    |
| Smith, Marie           | Human Resources & Social Development Canada                     |
| Smith, Michelle        | Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland & Labrador              |
| Soden, Ann             | Royal Canadian Mounted Police (NL)                              |
| Spencer, Charmaine     | United Senior Citizens of Ontario                               |
| Stanley, Anita         | Women's Policy Office, Government of Newfoundland & Labrador    |
|                        | National Institute of Law, Policy & Aging                       |
|                        | Gerontology Research Centre, Simon Fraser University (BC)       |
|                        | Victim Services, Department of Justice,                         |

**Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors**



|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Stevens, Laura         | Government of Newfoundland & Labrador<br>New Horizons for Seniors Programs, Human Resources<br>& Social Development Canada |
| Stewart, Donna         | British Columbia Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors   |
| Stone, Karen           | Department of Health & Community Services,<br>Government of Newfoundland & Labrador  |
| Strathy, Kerrie        | University of Regina, Senior Education Centre (SK)   |
| Syverson, Lauren       | Ministry of Community Services, Government of British Columbia   |
| Therriault, Estelle    | Office of the Public Trustee of Nova Scotia<br>Edmonton Elder Abuse Intervention Team, Catholic Social<br>Services (AB)    |
| Therrien, Lori         | Secrétariat aux aînés, Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés (QC)   |
| Thibault, Stéphanie    | Nova Scotia Department of Health   |
| Thorne, Jennifer       | First Sask Credit Union  |
| Trainor, Brian         | Government of Yukon, Health & Social Services/Adult Protection   |
| Veale, Catherine (Kip) | Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network, City of Lethbridge (AB)   |
| Vickers, Dawn          | Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ON)   |
| Wahl, Judith           | University of Calgary (AB)   |
| Walsh, Christine       | Canadian Centre for Elder Law Studies  |
| Watts, Laura           | Réseau québécois pour contrer les abus envers les aînés (QC)   |
| Wavroch, Hélène        | Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ON)   |
| Webb, Graham           | Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network, City of Calgary (AB)  |
| Wiles, Robert          | New Westminster Police Service (BC)  |
| Wilson, Terry          | Ottawa Police Service (ON)   |
| Wolf, Christina        | Office of the Public Guardian (AB)   |
| Wood, Jody             |  |



## **Appendix B: Biographies**

**Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Elder Abuse Working Forum  
Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel  
Thursday, November 8, 2007**

### **BIOGRAPHIES**

#### **Forum Facilitator**

**Pearl McKenzie  
Consultant, BC**

Pearl McKenzie works as a consultant to raise awareness about seniors' rights and legal issues affecting older people. She has served on federal and provincial task groups to make recommendations about changes to laws, policies and services for adults who need information and support to express their wishes. Over the years, Pearl has worked to build community networks and created training resources, publications and videos on legal and elder abuse subjects. She is the author of the "Guide to Legal Issues in Elder Abuse Intervention" first written in 1992 and updated in 2002. Pearl was a founding member of BC Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors (BC CEAS) and a member of the Joint Government/Community Working Committee that met for three years to develop recommendations for the Adult Guardianship Legislation in British Columbia. Since that time she has provided training and helped develop policy frameworks to support the implementation of this legislation.

#### **Panel Members**

**Judith Wahl  
Barrister & Solicitor; Executive Director of Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, ON**

Judith Wahl, B.A. LL.B. is a lawyer and Executive Director of the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE), a legal clinic for seniors, in Toronto, since 1984. In her work at ACE, she has had extensive experience in elder abuse issues in a variety of ways. ACE provides legal representation for seniors that are victims of abuse. ACE produces public legal education material to raise awareness about elder abuse and abuse response. ACE has worked with police services in Ontario to develop education programmes and training for police on abuse investigation and response of the criminal justice system to crimes against seniors and training for Crown attorneys on issues related to the prosecution of crimes that are elder abuse. ACE has assisted communities across





Ontario, both urban and rural, in the development of elder abuse community response networks. Judith is a frequent speaker at conferences locally, provincially and nationally on elder abuse issues.

**Michelle Ranville**  
***Chief Executive Officer, Age & Opportunity Inc. MB***

Michelle Ranville is currently the Acting CEO of Age & Opportunity, a non-profit social service agency serving Winnipeg's older adults since 1957. She has supervised the agency's Elder Abuse Services, Older Victim Services, SafetyAid Crime Prevention for Older Manitobans program, Friendly Visiting and Counselling programs since 2002. In 2006 she established the Agency's Safe Suite program. She is the co-chair of the Winnipeg Elder Abuse Strategy and the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Committee. She continues to work with Elder Abuse clients, and has worked with the majority of the Safe Suite program clients. Michelle has presented on Age & Opportunity's Elder Abuse Services, Paws with a Cause Therapy Dog Program and This Full House Senior Hoarding Program at national conferences. She is currently working towards a Master of Social Work Degree in Policy and Administration and volunteers on two boards in the Aboriginal community.

**Mark Huyser-Wierenga**  
***Crown Prosecutor, Justice & Attorney General, AB***

Mark Huyser-Wierenga is a senior Crown prosecutor in the employ of Alberta Justice. For most of the past decade he has been a part of the Family Protection Unit within the Edmonton Crown Prosecutors' Office. His caseload as a member of this specialized unit has primarily consisted of files involving children who have been sexually abused and files involving adult victims of domestic violence; less frequently he has conducted elder abuse prosecutions. It is his view that while the criminal justice system in the past two decades has made significant efforts to ensure the voices of children and women affected by domestic violence are heard in Canadian courtrooms, a third category of vulnerable victims, elderly persons, remains underserved.

**Shashi Assanand**  
***Executive Director, Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society, BC***

Shashi Assanand is a Registered Social Worker and has worked with immigrant communities for the past 30 years. She has extensive counselling and advocacy experience in working with immigrants and refugees (families, youth and women). She is a trained and experienced mediator in family and community disputes. She is very actively involved in the areas of multiculturalism and women's issues locally, provincially and nationally. She has served as an appointed member, board member, co-chair or president of numerous boards and committees over the years. Her goal is to ensure that the voices of immigrant and refugee communities are well represented. She is the



Founder and Executive Director of the Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society, an organization funded to help immigrant, refugee and visible minority women and their families that face domestic violence. The Organization provides services in 24 languages.

## **Facilitators**

### **Constable Patricia Fleischmann**

***Constable, Toronto Police Service-Community Mobilization Unit, ON***

Constable Fleischmann is in her 22<sup>nd</sup> year with Toronto Police, assigned to Community Mobilization with administrative responsibilities for older/vulnerable adult abuse and neglect, and mental health. Patricia is a graduate of Durham College, McMaster University and Ryerson University, where she wrote on the “Needs of the Disabled Community” and “Barriers/Challenges of Older Abused Adults” in accessing the Canadian criminal justice system. She is currently studying Gerontology. Patricia has worked all areas of law enforcement including uniform, investigative and plainclothes duties. Patricia is an active member of the International Association of Women Police and sits on the Board of Trustees with Ontario Women in Law Enforcement. She is a founding member of Law Enforcement Agencies Protecting Seniors, a group committed to sharing information and ideas leading to the positive treatment of older adults, as well as developing a collaborative, coordinated and effective response to the abuse of older persons throughout Ontario.

### **Elizabeth Siegel**

***Project Coordinator, Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland & Labrador, NL***

Elizabeth Siegel is an editor, writer, project coordinator, and proud mother of a five-year-old son. She grew up in St. John’s and then moved to Ottawa to get her Journalism degree from Carleton University. After graduating, Elizabeth worked in the educational publishing industry in Toronto. In 2002, she moved back to Newfoundland and became involved with the Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador (SRC). Her first project with the Centre was developing and writing ***Looking Beyond the Hurt: A Service Provider’s Guide to Elder Abuse***. This got her interested in elder abuse issues. She next worked on an SRC project to develop a community-driven strategic plan to address elder abuse issues in Newfoundland. Currently, she is working with the SRC and the Elder Abuse Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador to develop a community response model for Newfoundland to present to the government in 2008.

### **Jane Meadus**

***Barrister & Solicitor, Institutional Advocate of the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, ON***



Jane Meadus is a lawyer and Institutional Advocate with the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly. She represents clients in long-term care homes, hospitals, psychiatric facilities and care homes (retirement homes) with respect to related legal issues. Ms. Meadus has a B.A. Anthropology from McMaster University, an LL. B from the University of Ottawa and was called to the bar in Ontario in 1993. Ms. Meadus practiced in the private bar until joining the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly in 1995. She is the author of Chapter 9: Medical Issues, Housing Costs and Special Care Arrangements: Practical Considerations in the loose-leaf service *Financial & Estate Planning for the Mature Client*. She is a contributing author to *Long-Term Care Facilities in Ontario: The Advocate's Manual* published by the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly. Ms. Meadus is a regular speaker at educational seminars and before various groups. Jane is a Distinguished Fellow of the Canadian Centre for Elder Law Studies.

**Joan Harbison**

***Associate Professor, Dalhousie University-School of Social Work, NS***

Joan Harbison, Ph.D., RSW, is an Associate Professor at Dalhousie University's School of Social Work in Canada. Dr. Harbison teaches courses on aging, and on health and social service delivery. Her scholarly work focuses on issues surrounding diverse forms of assistance to older people said to be in situations of mistreatment and neglect. She leads a team of researchers from the disciplines of social work, law and sociology. The results of their work have been published in a number of journals and texts. The team is currently engaged in a study examining the relationship between legislation, service delivery and locally occurring practices in responses to mistreated and neglected older people living in the rural Maritime Provinces. Joan is a founding member of the Network Initiative for the Care of the Elderly, a nationally funded project aimed at allowing members of many disciplines to share and synthesize their work, and a member of the Steering Committee of The Way Forward: Promoting Promise Approaches to the Prevention of Elder Abuse in Institutional Settings. Joan sits on the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors Elder Abuse Strategy Planning Committee.

**Charmaine Spencer**

***Adjunct Professor, Simon Fraser University-Gerontology Research Centre, BC***

Charmaine Spencer is a noted gerontologist whose work focuses on a range of "risk" and abuse-related issues. Ms. Spencer has been a member of Simon Fraser University's Gerontology Research Centre's staff in Vancouver, B.C. since 1991. With a background in gerontology, psychology, and law, Ms. Spencer has prepared several discussion papers for federal and provincial governments on aging issues. She works closely with community agencies and other organizations serving seniors throughout Canada on a range of aging issues from a multidisciplinary perspective. At the Gerontology Research Centre, Ms. Spencer's research has focused on the Abuse and neglect of older adults in community and institutional settings; seniors with substance use or mental health problems, and other "at risk" senior populations; and Legal and



ethical issues in aging. A member of the Law Society of British Columbia, her legal interests have focused on disability, non-discrimination, long-term care and housing law.

### **Presenters**

#### **Detective Christina Wolf**

***Detective, Ottawa Police Service-Elder Abuse Section, ON***

Christina Wolf is a sworn officer with the Ottawa Police Service for the past 16 years. She currently holds the title of Detective Constable and had been working in the District Investigations and Criminal Investigations Divisions for 7 years before being selected to head the new OPS Elder Abuse Section launched in January 2005. She is a member of the Clinical Consultation Team, a multi-disciplinary sub-committee of the Council on Aging Elder Abuse Steering Committee. She is also a member of LEAPS (Law Enforcement Agencies Protecting Seniors), a provincial committee developed for the purpose of sharing information and investigative strategies between police agencies.

#### **Graham Webb**

***Staff Litigation Lawyer, Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, ON***

Graham Webb is a Staff Litigation Lawyer employed by the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly since May 1995. He is a graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School with an LL.B. (1983) and an LL.M. (Tax) (2001). He was called to the Bar of Ontario in 1985, and was engaged in private practice from 1985-1995. He has appeared in civil, criminal and administrative proceedings before all levels of courts including the Supreme Court of Canada, the Ontario Court of Appeal, the Superior Court of Justice, the Ontario Court, and a wide range of administrative tribunals. He is a co-author of *Long-Term Care Facilities in Ontario: The Advocate's Manual*, a co-editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Law and Social Policy*, and a published author of journal and newsletter articles. He is a part-time evening instructor in gerontology at Ryerson University. He is a frequent public speaker on elder law issues, and has presented on elder abuse at the Ontario Crown Attorneys' Association Fall Training Conference, the Ontario Police College, and the C.O. Bick Police College.

#### **Deborah Dithurbide**

***Supervisor of Adult Protection Services, Nova Scotia Dept of Health, NS***

Deborah Dithurbide has had a long career in the public sector in Nova Scotia, always choosing paths that would keep her close to the service and support of individuals coping with life's challenges and difficulties. For many years, Deborah was a frontline worker in the youth justice system. Adult Protection work became her second career passion. She worked for seven years as an Adult Protection Social Worker before becoming supervisor of the Adult Protection Program in the Eastern Region of the province. Deborah is accountable for the effective management, direction and supervision of the Adult Protection Program and for ensuring the delivery of quality,



timely and cost effective services. Her frontline expertise stands her in good stead for her current work. Deborah has a Bachelor of Social Work Degree from Dalhousie University and is currently pursuing a Master Degree in social work. She also has a certificate in criminology. Deborah was born and raised in rural Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and she is proud of her Acadian heritage. She lives in Sydney with her partner, Carl, who shares her passion for western riding. She spends time with her Quarter horse, Shelby, who provides hours of stress free pleasure.

**Ron Kruzeniski, Q.C.**  
***Public Guardian & Trustee, Saskatchewan Justice, SK***

- Admitted to the Bar, 1973
- In private practice for 16 years
- Chairman of the Human Rights Commission 1983 - 1989
- 1989 Assistant Deputy Minister of Labour
- Appointed Public Guardian and Trustee in 1995 to present
- Bencher, Law Society of Saskatchewan 2004 and Chairman of the Centennial Committee
- Vice Chair, Campion College Board of Regents
- Past Chairman, Regina Separate School Board
- Past Vice Chair, Regina Public Library Board
- Past Vice Chair, National Council, Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Life member of Saskatchewan School Trustees Association
- Recipient of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal for 1998
- Recipient of the “Commemorative Medal for the Queen’s Golden Jubilee” for 2002
- Recipient of the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal for 2005

**Lisa Manuel**  
***Manager of Seniors and Caregivers Support Services, Family Service Association, ON***

Lisa Manuel has a Master’s Degree and Doctorate from the University of Toronto in sociology with a special focus on gerontology. She has worked in the senior’s field since 1984 in both the social service and hospital sector. She is currently Manager of the Seniors and Caregivers Support Services Unit and the Violence Against Women Program at Family Service Association of Toronto. Prior to this she was Director of Social Services in a community-based agency for seniors. Lisa is the team leader of FSA’s Elder Abuse Consultation Team. She has consulted on a number of initiatives in the field and is often called upon to speak about elder abuse. She presents at local, national and international conferences on this topic and is keenly interested in the similarities and differences between domestic violence and abuse of older persons. Her most recent publication is a Best Practice Manual on responding to abuse of older persons.



**Ned Chase**  
***Lawyer, Canadian Bar Association – Elder Law, NS***

Ned is Counsel to the Kentville, Nova Scotia firm of TMC Law, practising in the areas of Estate Planning, Wills, Trusts and Probate. A practice originating in the Annapolis Valley found him representing various segments of both the Agricultural and Corporate Communities in the more complex issues relating to succession and estate planning. He has written papers and given presentations on his area of practice to various professional groups, his local Bar Society, the Nova Scotia Bar Society and to different provincial Sections of the C.B.A. - Nova Scotia. Ned graduated from Acadia University and Dalhousie Law, has served on the Board of Governors at Acadia University and is a Past President of the Associated Alumni of Acadia University. Ned's community involvement includes the Chairmanship of the Kings County Children's Foundation. Ned is an active member of the Kings County Barristers' Society and has served on a variety of committees of the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society. Ned is a registered member of the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners. He is Past Chair of the CBA, Nova Scotia Elder Law Section, and an Executive officer of the CBA National Elder Law Section.

**Sgt. Brian Trainor**  
***Community Resource Consultant, FirstSask Credit Union, SK***

Sgt. Trainor, a 27 year police veteran, recently retired to pursue his passion of preventing seniors from financial abuse. As FirstSask Credit Union's Community Resource Consultant, he provides public lectures on fraud prevention. As a fraud detective, he investigated the financial exploitation of seniors, and is recognized as one of few police officers to investigate Power of Attorney abuse. Sgt. Trainor has written a book titled **STOP FRAUD** available in stores now. His lectures, locally and nationally are based on his book. He has extensive experience in Power of Attorney Fraud, Telemarketing Scams, Identity Theft, Internet Frauds, Privacy Issues, Search Warrants and Production Orders. Sgt. Trainor is a regular guest on Saskatchewan CBC Radio, and Saskatchewan News Talk Radio. He is regarded as the local fraud expert on CTV, and Global news in Saskatoon.

**Teri Kay**  
***Executive Director, Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, ON***

Teri Kay is the Executive Director of the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. After 25 years as Director of Family and Community Services in Toronto, she had planned to retire when an old friend asked her to consider this appointment. In the capacity of Executive Director, Teri is responsible for steering this organization's training, coordination of community services, and public education programs. Though holding a record of accomplishments, ONPEA was having organizational and sustainability issues that Teri Kay was able to turn around. ONPEA is emerging as a vital factor in promoting safe and dignified lives for Ontario seniors. Teri, graduating



from the University of Calgary, is registered social worker and has had a long career as Senior Director at Jewish Family and Child Service in Toronto. She was instrumental in creating new and innovative programming for abused women, for parents and children experiencing divorce, school based programs, family life education workshops and initiatives aimed at reducing poverty. In addition she was on the Board of Family Services Ontario, is an accreditor with Family Services Canada, and serves on many community committees. Teri enjoys her life at home with her husband of 44 years. She has 2 grown daughters and one grand puppy.

**Alison Leaney**

***Executive Director, BC Association of Community Response Networks & Adult Guardianship Community Development Coordinator, Public Guardian and Trustee of BC***

Alison is currently the half-time Executive Director of the BC Association of Community Response Networks and the half-time Adult Guardianship Community Development Coordinator at the Public Guardian and Trustee of BC. Her role at the BC Association of CRNs is to continue to coordinate the sustaining of BC's 50 Community Response Networks while her role at the PGT is to continue to support the implementation of the Adult Guardianship Legislation which she has been involved with for more than 12 years. CRNs are local networks creating local responses to adult abuse and neglect developed in relation to Part 3 of the Adult Guardianship Act. Her background includes supporting women leaving abusive situations, supporting women involved with the Criminal Justice System, medical social worker and providing pastoral care and supporting capacity-building in a faith community. Until just recently, Alison was the Chair of the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (CNPEA).

**Nasser Amiri**

***Legal Information Counselor, BC Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors, BC***

Nasser Amiri, Ph.D. was born in Afghanistan and immigrated to Canada in late 1985 with his wife and two children. He started his first job at MOSAIC where he worked for 14 years as a settlement counsellor, community development worker and paralegal. He then moved to the Legal Services Society of BC and worked as a paralegal at the North Shore Community Law Office. In the past six years he has been working as a Legal Information Counsellor and Advocate at BC Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors (BC. CEAS). He also teaches the Court Interpreting Program at Vancouver Community College on a part time basis. He served on the board of directors of Vancouver Refugee Council, Inland Refugee Society, North Shore Multicultural Society and Rudaki Cultural Foundation. At the present he volunteers in running a local TV program for the Afghan Community in Vancouver. Nasser is a published Persian poet and author.



**Elliot PausJenssen**

***Volunteer Coordinator, Saskatoon Council on Aging, SK***

Elliot PausJenssen is a senior and has been volunteer coordinator with the Task Force on Older Adult Abuse of the Saskatoon Council on Aging since its inception in 2005 and with its working groups: Older Adults in Care, Legal and Financial, and World Older Adult Abuse Awareness Day. She is on the Boards of the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and of the Saskatoon Housing Authority. Before retirement in 2004, Elliot was social worker on the geriatric assessment unit, Saskatoon Health Region, and over many years worked with seniors who had experienced abuse, their families and involved agencies. She also participated in the development of a community protocol for response to abuse by community agencies and teaching tools on abuse for use in the community and in care facilities

**Amanda Brown**

***Director, Vancouver Coastal Health Centre, BC***

Amanda is the Director of the Re:Act Response Resource, a service of Vancouver Coastal Health designed to support staff who routinely come into contact with those adults who are considered more vulnerable and are experiencing abuse, neglect or self-neglect. She is the regional lead for VCH on issues related to the Adult Guardianship Act and her work includes providing education and clinical consultation to staff as well as identifying and addressing the systemic challenges for health providers as they execute their duties under Part 3 of the AGA. Amanda has a particular interest in integrating less formal community supports into responses so that all resources are used most effectively and adults benefit from a collaborative approach to care. She became a Director of the BC Association of Community Response Networks in 2005.

**Hélène Wavroch**

***Directrice Générale, Réseau québécois pour contrer les abus envers les aînés,  
QC***

- Currently Executive Director of the *Quebec Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse*
- Former State Administrator and President of the *Conseil des aînés*, an advisory board to provincial government on senior issues
- Named by the National Assembly of Quebec, served a 13-year mandate as Vice-President of Quebec's *Pay research and information Bureau*
- Headed a 40 000 member Coalition of Health Professionals and was President of the *Federation of United Nurses Inc.*
- 2006 recipient of the Rosa Park's Human Rights Award awarded by the Canadian Human Rights Commission





**Canadian Centre on Elder Law**

**Laura Watts**  
***National Director, CCELS, BC***

Laura Watts is the National Director of the Canadian Centre for Elder Law Studies (CCELS), the national organization which focuses on issues of law and aging in Canada. She is also a Staff Lawyer at the British Columbia Law Institute and a legislative drafter. Completing her law degree at the University of Victoria Law School in 1998, Laura was called to the Bar in British Columbia in 1999. Laura is the Secretary of the National CBA Elder Law Section and a frequent contributor to CLE programmes on elder law issues. Laura serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the Canadian Journal on Elder Law and the facilitator of the World Study Group on Elder Law. She stands as the national Theme Leader on End of Life Issues for the National Initiative for Care of the Elderly (NICE network). Annually, she organizes the Canadian Conference on Elder Law, which is an international conference advancing issues of elder law to both legal and interdisciplinary audiences.