



## **CARP Recommendations**

CARP is calling for a comprehensive approach to punish the most egregious manifestations of elder abuse but also to prevent the abuse from occurring in the first place. In order to prevent, detect, investigate, prosecute, and end elder abuse, CARP recommends the following actions:

**1. Elder Abuse Hot Line** – single point of first contact: 911 or a 1-800 line – widely known across the country, with the capacity to re-direct to local service agencies, and sensitive to diverse cultural and linguistic needs. 911 already has this capability but needs to be assigned this mandate and local service agencies must exist and be properly resourced.

**2. Duty to Report** reflects social responsibility. Elder abuse is a public crime, not just a personal matter, as with spouse abuse reporting protocols. There must be clear guidelines for action and intervention, protection and the professional investigative capacity to respond to such reporting.

**3. Added Caregiver Support** – Greater support for the estimated 2.7 million Canadians now caring for loved ones at home by providing targeted financial support, especially to those providing heavy care, workplace protection, respite and work-leave and integrating support for informal caregivers with the formal health system, through training and clinical support.

**4. Specialized Investigative Support** for existing criminal offenses.

**5. Expedite passage of provision for Exacerbated Sentencing** for hate crimes and breach of trust already in the Criminal Code, promised during the recent federal election.

**6. New Criminal Offence of Elder Abuse** if warranted following a review.

**7. Victim Support Services and elder shelter.** Ensure uniform and adequate access to specialized support across the country.

## **1. PREVALENCE OF ELDER ABUSE**

- **Reported Prevalence:** 10% of older Canadians experience some form of abuse, according to CARP member polling, consistent with academic and Statistics Canada research.
- **Greater Incidence in Vulnerable populations:** 25% of vulnerable seniors (higher levels of disability, living in institutions).
- **Under-reporting** At least 30 % of CARP members know of someone who is being or has been abused.
- **Nearly Half a Million affected:** Ten % of 4.6 million Canadians over 65 means there are potentially 460,000 people confronting elder abuse in Canada.
- **Problem Doubles if No Action:** In 10 years, the 65-plus population will grow to 7.9 million and if nothing is done to reduce the incidence of abuse, approximately 790,000 are potential victims of elder abuse.

### *Violent Crimes Against Seniors on the Rise*

- **Up 14%:** Data from a sub-set of police services in Canada show that the rate of family violence against seniors has increased by 14% since 2004.
- 7,900 seniors were victims of violent crime alone between 2009 and 2011 (not including financial, emotional, psychological abuse and neglect).
- **Perpetrators are Mostly Family, Friends:** Of the 7,900 reported acts of violence, the perpetrators were likely to be family, friends, or a stranger, a trend the CARP Poll™ confirms to be true for most cases of elder abuse.

## *Financial abuse*

- Financial abuse is the most prevalent type of elder abuse, as reported by CARP members in CARP polls.
- Approximately 10% of CARP members have been victims of financial abuse, but more than 40% know someone who has been victimized.
- **Mostly demands for money from family:** In most cases, the abuse was a demand or pressure for an early bequest (17%) and inappropriate financial advice to older investors from professional advisors (16.8%), followed closely by telephone solicitations for money (13.3%) and non-repayment of money by family and friends (10.1%).

## **2. BARRIERS TO REPORTING ELDER ABUSE**

**Under-reporting:** 7 in 10 crimes against older Canadians are never reported to police. Studies of elder abuse in the US suggest that as many as 90 % of all cases of elder abuse go unreported. As a result, elder abuse is often not investigated nor prosecuted.

### *Reasons for under reporting*

- Difficult to communicate abuse or neglect.
- Limited ability to understand or report the nature of the crime - victims may be mentally or cognitively impaired, may have physical disabilities, or literacy and language problems.
- Dependence on the abuser as a caregiver, friend, or family member. Most victims and abusers are closely related, which complicates the social aspects of the crime, just as it has historically with child and spousal abuse.
- Fear of retaliation from the abuser.
- Isolation and lack of social contact.
- Ingrained resistance to interfering in other people's families. Family, friends, and authorities may often err on the side of privacy rather than report or investigate suspected cases of elder abuse.

- **Systemic Neglect breeds Inaction:** Canada's rapidly aging population, poorly coordinated home care services, historically low support for caregivers, and inadequate long-term and continuing care options add stresses that precipitate abuse and sense of helplessness that hinders reporting.
- Ageism is also a factor. Commonly used terms such as 'bed blockers' used to refer to older hospital patients creates a culture of neglect and frustration.

## **3. ENDING ELDER ABUSE**

### *CARP Member Polls*

- CARP members favour investigation and prosecution as means to ending elder abuse. Almost 25 % of members polled think that specialized investigation and prosecution teams working with police is the best solution.
- Another 25 % of CARP members want to see Elder Protection Agencies in every province, as there currently is in each US State.
- The vast majority of CARP members (95%) believe that exacerbated sentencing is crucial to combating elder abuse. 42% % of members think that increasing sentencing measures will raise awareness of elder abuse, while 20% think that it will reduce incidence of abuse.

### *Punishing Financial Abuse*

- CARP members favour asset stripping and wage garnishing to repay investors (34%)
- Stiffer sentences than are currently imposed (17%) and mandatory jail time (16%)
- High profile prosecution of offenders (14.2%)

### *Self-Protective Measures*

- Never divulge personal information to strangers or over the phone (32.6%)
- Know more about investment risk tolerance and investment practices (19.5%)
- Seek third party advice when dealing with financial matters with family (13%), and
- Perform due diligence before hiring caregivers and advisors (12.3%)