



ALBERTA

JUSTICE AND SOLICITOR GENERAL

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Calgary-Acadia*

AR 3706

August 21, 2013

Susan Eng
VP Advocacy
CARP
30 Jefferson Avenue
Toronto, ON M6K 1Y4

Dear Ms. Eng:

Thank you for your letter dated July 4, 2013 regarding elder abuse. I have consulted with my colleagues, Honourable Fred Horne, Minister of Health and Honourable George VanderBurg, Associate Minister of Seniors, and appreciate the opportunity to provide the following information.

The Government of Alberta recognizes that elder abuse is a complex and important issue. Premier Redford has mandated that Associate Minister VanderBurg continue with the implementation of the *Addressing Elder Abuse in Alberta: A Strategy for Collective Action*, released in 2010. The Strategy outlines the collective action that governments and communities need to take to help prevent and reduce elder abuse, and to improve supports for Alberta seniors affected by abuse. The strategy builds on the Government of Alberta's existing and on-going efforts in preventing family violence and bullying, and on the policy directions set out in the *Aging Population Policy Framework*. Actions to prevent elder abuse in the Strategy are centred on four goals: improved awareness, skilled service providers, coordinated community response, and protective law and policies.

There are a number of existing mechanisms in place that facilitate and support seniors' safety and well-being, including those found in the *Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act*, *Personal Directives Act*, *Protection for Persons in Care Act*, *Protection Against Family Violence Act*, *Powers of Attorney Act*, and the *Criminal Code of Canada*. The *Protection for Persons in Care Act* requires mandatory reporting of abuse for those individuals receiving care or support services from publicly-funded service providers such as hospitals, seniors' lodges, nursing homes, and other supportive living settings.

In 2013, the *Criminal Code of Canada* was amended with the addition of Bill C-36, *Protecting Canada's Senior's Act*, which highlights vulnerabilities such as age, health and financial circumstances as potential aggravating circumstances on sentence. Alberta Justice and Solicitor General actively participated in provincial consultation on these amendments.

Professional training and education on topics such as elder abuse is an important component to effectively assist vulnerable Albertans. You may be interested to learn that recent activities include the development and implementation of a training framework. *Taking Action Against Elder Abuse*, provides training opportunities for a variety of service providers to enhance their understanding with recognizing, referring, responding and reconnecting with victims.

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Training and education for Police and Crown Prosecutors is delivered on an on-going basis. The topic of elder abuse has been included within the domestic violence curriculum. This training is designed to address the goals of improved awareness and many of the associated actions identified in the *Elder Abuse Strategy* including, investigating and identification of elder abuse, collaboration, response to non-criminal elder abuse, sharing of best practice and dissemination of resource materials. The Victim Services Unit of Alberta Justice and Solicitor General also offer an elder abuse component in their on-line certification training for front-line victim service workers in Alberta.

In addition, there are eight specialized family violence courts within Alberta. The purpose of these courts is to provide a specialized, coordinated response to family violence which is integrated with a variety of community services. These courts allow government, police services, and community agencies to work together to address these types of behaviours. In responding to family violence, these organizations share information, provide counselling to both victims and the accused, assist with safety planning, and ensure offenders abide by court orders. Through this collaborative effect, these specialized courts, with specialized Crown prosecutors, have shown how a coordinated community response can provide an effective means for dealing with all forms of family violence, including elder abuse.

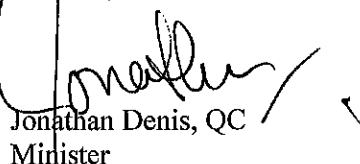
The Government of Alberta addresses family violence directed towards elders in a collaborative manner. Ministries including Alberta Health and Justice and Solicitor General have created strong working partnerships with community organizations like the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network (AEAAN); a provincial committee comprised of government and non-government organizations working to increase awareness and support through a community coordinated response. The Integrated Threat and Risk Assessment Centre (I-TRAC) is available to assess threats of harm made in relationship violence situations and develop intervention strategies through multidisciplinary team of professionals.

In regards to support for older adults experiencing abuse, the Family Violence Information Line at 310-1818 provides Albertans with information, advice and referrals. This 24 hour number is toll-free anywhere in Alberta and is available seven days a week. Trained workers are available to provide callers information on family violence and service is provided in over 170 languages. For seniors requiring temporary housing, there are two seniors' shelters that provide assistance to older adults who are escaping abusive situations: the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton (SAGE) seniors' Safe House and the Kerby Rotary Shelter in Calgary. Alberta Health provides funding for the operation of these shelters.

For additional information on elder abuse and to access the Alberta *Elder Abuse Strategy*, you may wish to visit <http://www.health.alberta.ca/seniors/elder-abuse.html>

Thank you for your commitment on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Denis, QC
Minister

cc: Honourable Fred Horne, Minister of Health
cc: Honourable George VanderBurg, Associate Minister of Seniors