

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Data show incidents of elder abuse are increasing in B.C.

VICTORIA – June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and an opportunity to raise awareness of increasing reports of abuse and neglect of older adults in B.C.

Elder abuse can take many forms, including financial, physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or other and can include mistreatment, neglect and self-neglect. It may be perpetrated by family members, friends, neighbours, caregivers or commercial vendors.

“Data show that reports of most types of elder abuse made to designated agencies, police and seniors’ organizations have been steadily increasing for several years as the population of older adults grows. I regularly hear heartbreaking stories from seniors and loved ones about older people being abused,” said Dan Levitt, BC Seniors Advocate. “Many people are reluctant or embarrassed to report elder abuse, so we know there are more incidents taking place than are shown in the data.”

Financial abuse is one of the most commonly reported forms of elder abuse, and it is often committed by a stranger engaged in frauds and scams using increasingly sophisticated technology. It’s important to stay informed of emerging scams to help protect vulnerable people in our province.

“During a vulnerable time in my life, I was lonely and looking for connection when I met someone online who gradually gained my trust over more than a year. I truly believed he cared about me and we had a future together. By the time I realized I was being manipulated, I had lost over \$60,000 and I had a heart attack,” said Sharon Blakeborough, an Elder who fell victim to an online romance scam. “I’m speaking out because too many people suffer in silence out of shame or embarrassment. These scams affect every part of a person’s life. I want others, particularly senior women, to recognize the warning signs and know they are not alone.”

Anyone experiencing or concerned about abuse, neglect, self-neglect or exploitation of a senior is encouraged to contact the Seniors Abuse and Information Line, their health authority, RCMP, police, the Office of the Seniors Advocate, or local Community Response Network.

“Last year, the Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL) received 2,725 calls regarding situations of abuse, but these numbers only show the tip of the iceberg,” said Marie-Noël Campbell, Executive Director, Seniors First BC. “Elder abuse affects people of all social and cultural backgrounds, within the family unit, or with strangers – often impersonating trusted institutions or loved ones. Financial abuse and emotional abuse continue to be the most prevalent forms of elder abuse, and we urge older adults concerned about their wellbeing to

talk about their situations with someone they trust, or to contact SAIL, and work on a plan to protect themselves.”

The United Nations designated June 15 each year as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in 2011. Since its inception, communities around the world have used this day as an opportunity to raise awareness of elder abuse and neglect of older persons by sharing information about their rights and promoting resources and services to support seniors’ safety and well-being. This year’s theme is ‘Be Bold: Age with Attitude’ which encourages people of all ages to prevent elder abuse by standing up for the rights of older people.

“Preventing elder abuse takes a community working together. When community agencies, service providers, families and neighbours join forces, we create stronger networks of support that help older adults stay connected, safe, and respected,” said Heather Treleaven, Executive Director, BC Association of Community Response Networks. “Together, we can help ensure every older adult can age with dignity.”

Quick Facts:

The Office of the Seniors Advocate’s Monitoring Seniors’ Services 2025 report found that over the past six years:

- Total calls to the Seniors Abuse and Information Line (7,700) increased 39%
 - Calls reporting abuse specifically increased 71%
- Cases of abuse, neglect and self-neglect of seniors (2,267) reported to Designated Agencies increased 16%
- Violent offences against seniors reported to the RCMP increased 29%
- Cases of financial abuse against seniors reported to the Vancouver Police Department increased 65%

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