

# **Community Mobilization Empowering Seniors Against Victimization**

Final Report: Community Mobilization Empowering Seniors  
Against Victimization

Submitted to:  
National Crime Prevention Centre of Canada  
Public Safety Canada

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## **1. Introduction**

The United Senior Citizens of Ontario (USCO) is a non-profit organization promoting the best interests of senior citizens by providing information, education and advocacy on behalf of older adults in Ontario. The mission of the USCO is to represent the needs of seniors through unity, education, advocacy, and cooperation with member clubs and other groups to enhance the quality of life, community participation, and independence of seniors.

Community Mobilization by Empowering Seniors Against Victimization (Project SAV) is a collaborative research partnership between the USCO and the Ontario Provincial Police, Crime Prevention Section, Seniors Assistance Team. The project speaks to concerns that exist about the seriousness of underreporting as it relates to elder abuse, by addressing the need for an integrated, multi-sectoral, and co-ordinated approach to combat the barriers to disclosure confronting older adults. Components of the 78-week project consisted of research focus groups, working group sessions, a literature review, development of a brochure, and assembly of an advisory committee to oversee project activities (see Appendix A).

### **1.1 Background**

In 2004, the OPP Seniors Assistance Team conducted four focus groups with seniors in communities across Ontario to determine if there was reluctance by seniors to report abuse. The focus group results implied a need for a closer study of underlying social development and behaviour patterns of Ontario seniors in relation to their perceptions of police and reporting of elder abuse.

In 2006, support for the project was received under the National Crime Prevention Strategy of the Government of Canada. The initiative, based on a crime management model, utilizes a community partnership and social development approach to prevention, where police work closely with seniors and seniors' service providers from the community to reduce crime. The purpose of the Community Mobilization Empowering Seniors Against Victimization project was to gather further information on the barriers seniors<sup>1</sup> face in reporting elder abuse, and to gain deeper understanding of senior' perceptions of police. By asking how service providers, including the police, and seniors from the community can unite to create and maintain an environment conducive to reporting, the project was able to better understand and enhance the relationship between these groups.

With support from various partner organizations and government agencies, the project conducted 7 regional focus groups with seniors, 5 provincial-wide working group sessions, and developed a brochure subsequent to the results<sup>2</sup>. A contact list of

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<sup>1</sup> In this report, the terms 'seniors', 'elderly persons' and 'older adults' are used interchangeably and refer to persons aged 60 years and older.

<sup>2</sup> The brochure is available in both official languages, English and French, with electronic versions available in early spring 2008 on the United Senior Citizens of Ontario website, [www.uscont.ca](http://www.uscont.ca).

individuals who participated in the 2007 “Community Mobilization Empowering Seniors Against Victimization” working groups is provided in Appendix B.

## **1.2 Focus Groups**

Small group discussions are an effective way to gain insight on seniors’ perceptions on the ability of communities to respond to their needs. The first phase of research involved the conduct of focus groups with Ontario seniors aged 60 years and older between January and May 2007. Seven sessions were held across various regions throughout the province in order to obtain data that was representative of Ontario’s diversity. These cities included:

- London (Southwestern Ontario)
- Trenton (Eastern Ontario)
- Oshawa (Central East Ontario)
- Toronto (Central Ontario)
- North Bay (North Eastern Ontario)
- Toronto – Multi -Ethnic (Central Ontario)
- Manitoulin Island (Northern Ontario, First Nations)

Advertisement with posters, letters, and e-mails circulated through selected USCO member organizations, clubs, and partner agencies to build awareness and to promote interest in the focus group sessions. Communication and connections within existing seniors networks increased participant turnout in each of the regions.

In addition to collecting demographic information, the focus groups provided an opportunity to speak with seniors about their reluctance to report abuse, knowledge of resources, relationships with police, and perspectives on empowerment. One limitation to the larger groups was that they experienced less time for individual response. Also in some cases, a few of the individuals partially withdrew from discussion, perhaps feeling intimidated by the size of the group or shut-out by louder voices. Smaller groups of six to eight increased opportunities for each individual to be speak, and allowed probing of deeper issues.

## **1.3 Working Groups**

Five working group sessions took place between June 4, 2007 and October 2, 2007. Sessions were held at hotel and conference centres in Thunder Bay, Belleville, Markham, and London, and one community centre in Sudbury, Ontario. The focus of the day-long meeting was to gather information on how seniors, seniors’ service providers, and police can work together to empower older adults to overcome the barriers and obstacles they face in reporting crimes, specifically abuse. These sessions were to provide a forum about innovative and effective strategies for police and service providers to respond to the abuse and/or neglect of older adults in Ontario. Currently, only a few initiatives across Ontario involve input, cooperation, and participation from members inclusive of all three sectors.

An evaluation with participants was conducted at the completion of each session. Feedback from the evaluations encouraged a revision to the facilitation method and modifications were made to the process. One area questioned in the evaluation was the impact of length of the working group on participants, particularly seniors. Comments included recommendations to shorten what was perceived as an intensive day for seniors and other participants who attended from out of town. The method was designed to engage participants in a step-by-step discussion and planning process, however, in response to feedback, the length of each activity was shorted while maintaining sufficient time for the process to be productive.

## 2. Summary of Activities

### Workplan Activities and Deliverables

- Regular consultation with Rick Tout, Ontario Provincial Police, Seniors Assistance Team Coordinator and Marie Smith, President of the United Senior Citizens of Ontario;
- Electronic and in-person meetings with government/seniors' organizations representatives and seniors' service providers (project partners) to help identify objectives and appropriate participants/contacts for the focus and working groups;
- Development of recruitment materials for focus and working groups;
- Communication with identified participants, liaisons, and small group facilitators regarding recruitment for focus and working groups;
- Seven focus group sessions in 6 regions of the province;
- Participant questionnaire for focus groups;
- Analysis of focus group session results;
- Preparation and co-facilitation with five provincial working groups;
- Data analysis and process notes from working groups sessions;
- Compilation of written and electronic correspondence; Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, participant lists consisting of contact information, NCPC financial reports and Agreement Amendments;
- Preparation of financial reports, in-kind contributions, budget management, and CPAF interim reports;
- Summary of working group evaluations;
- Development of an educational brochure on elder abuse; Submit brochure for French and Ojibwa translation;
- Organization of a volunteer recognition event, including gift purchases;
- Literature review; and
- Preparation of communication strategy, final reports, and recommendations.

### 3. Level of Participation

#### 3.1 Focus Groups

**Table 1**

ONTARIO REGION / COMMUNITY	CITY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS <sup>3</sup>	DATE 2007	SURVEY COMPLETION
Southwest	London	9	5	January 23	<b>100%</b>
Central	Toronto	10	3	February 20	<b>100%</b>
Central East	Oshawa	8	3	February 23	<b>100%</b>
Northeast	North Bay	6	3	March 2	<b>100%</b>
East	Trenton	10	5	March 22	<b>100%</b>
First Nations Manitoulin Island	M'Chigeeng First Nations	6	4	March 30	<b>100%</b>
Central – Multi-Ethnic	Toronto	20	6	May 9	<b>100%</b>
TOTAL		69	26	Response Rate 100%	

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<sup>3</sup> Volunteers for the focus groups included regional consultants with the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (ONPEA), Rick Tout (OPP SAT), and occasionally a representative from Phone Busters, the USCO or affiliated clubs/associations, and translators.

### 3.2 Demographic Information

Results from the questionnaire indicate 61% of focus group participants were female and 39% of participants were male. Slightly more than half (51%) of respondents were born in Canada, and 38% identified themselves as members of visible minority groups.<sup>4</sup> A majority (75%) of the research participants were younger seniors, those between 60 and 74 years of age. Of them, 17% reported being between the ages of 60 and 64, 33% were between 65 and 69, and 25% indicated being between 70 and 74 years of age. Elderly persons aged 75 to 79 represented 10% of the sample, while 13% were 80 years and older.<sup>5</sup> When asked about their current relationships and living arrangements, over half (58%) of the respondents reported being married and currently living with their spouse (52%). Only 29% of participants reported living alone, while slightly less than that (28%) were widowed or divorced (10%) and living with family (19%). Nearly half (43%) of seniors indicated knowing a victim of elder abuse. Of them, 53% did not seek assistance for their situation.

### 3.3 Working Groups

**Table 2**

Date: June – October 2007

REGION & CITY	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF FACILITATORS	NUMBER OF SENIORS	NUMBER OF SERVICE PROVIDERS	NUMBER OF POLICE	NUMBER OF YOUTH	EVALUATION RESPONSE RATE %
Northwest Thunder Bay	43	5	12	14	8	4	<b>71%</b>
East Belleville	35	5	13	7	10	0	<b>93%</b>
Central Markham	32	5	8	12	7	0	<b>89%</b>
Northeast Sudbury	26	5	8	3	10	0	<b>81%</b>
Southwest London	31	5	8	9	9	0	<b>100%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	167	25	49	45	44	4	86%
% of participation (calculations do not include facilitators)			34.5	31.5	31	3	

<sup>4</sup> Members of visible minority groups are persons of colour or race that are identified minorities in Canada.

<sup>5</sup> One participant did not indicate an age.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Focus Group Sampling, Design, and Data Collection**

The purpose of these sessions was to give seniors in the community an opportunity to speak about their experiences with abuse, police, and seniors' services and for us to learn more about patterns of behaviour involved in the disclosure of elder abuse. The research questions encouraged participants to:

- increase their awareness
- explore the issue of abuse/neglect of older adults and policing
- relate to their own experience
- question assumptions, patterns of behaviour, and procedural processes
- consider community relationships and avenues for assistance
- make recommendations on how to empower older adults against victimization

Volunteers were asked to complete a questionnaire before participating in the session, which began with a taped viewing of three public service announcements on elder abuse.<sup>6</sup> The design involved a one and half hour tape recorded focus group conducted at a neutral location known to participants. This was usually a meeting or common room belonging to the organization or club from which most of the participants were members.

Elder abuse is a topic area in which it is difficult to randomize a sample. It is important to acknowledge that there were limitations to the research design and data. The data that appear in the report are based on answers provided from a sample of self-selected Ontario seniors, and therefore subject to a sampling error. A correction for this error would be to include isolated or abused elderly persons in the sample, however, it is extremely difficult to locate these people, or persons may be hesitant to come forward and admit to being abused due to factors such as fear of reprisal from the abuser.<sup>7</sup> This problem is hard to overcome; consequently, the research acknowledges that a self-selection bias was created by the situation.

### **4.2 Working Group Format and Data Collection**

The working group activities provided an opportunity to dialogue, exchange ideas, and build effective team partnerships. One of the important components of the working groups was that it would be a multi-sectoral consensus-building model delivered at a regional level. The facilitation method involved a step-by-step process to help lead and clarify discussions in order to achieve consensus within a group. The process encouraged equal participation, diversity of perspective, the formation of new ideas, and provided a clear channel of communication.

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<sup>6</sup> Audio-visual material was provided by the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse.

<sup>7</sup> In addition, some abused persons may not be in a position to seek out assistance due to their situation, for example, the victim may have a disability that prevents her or him from reporting.

The primary targets for the working group sessions were seniors and seniors' service providers, which include the police, though youth, and representatives from government agencies and seniors' organizations attended as well. It was anticipated that this model would provide a forum for inter-departmental and community networking. In smaller collective groups of five to ten, seniors, seniors' service providers, and police worked together to complete activities throughout the day. Each task focused on different aspects of elder abuse as an issue, the current environment, obstacles to reporting, and strategies which empower seniors to disclose abuse.

## 5. Focus Group Results

### 5.1 Key Issues Raised by Seniors

Table 3 below outlines key issues and concerns facing seniors when reporting an abuse as identified by seniors who participated in the focus group sessions.

Table 3

<b>Issues/Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes and Concerns</b>
Ageism	How to reverse, change, and challenge negative attitudes, policies, and practices rooted in ageism.
Crime Prevention	<u>Communication</u> Get seniors talking, share information, social activity/involvement; <u>Financial abuse – Fraud prevention</u> Keep seniors informed through more community seminars, workshops, and brochures by police or Fraud/Phone Busters; <u>Prevention &amp; Reporting</u> Need to address fears of older adults Need to create a system or tool that is conducive to reporting and offers a non-threatening environment in which to report; How to increase police presence in the community Need a dedicated police officer to address seniors' issues in every community
Cultural Diversity	Access to available resources, information, services, and supports are limited by language barriers and cultural differences; Resources and services need to be specific to community and demographics within each community; Services/supports need to accept and understand cultural differences;
Education and Information	Communication of knowledge and awareness around elder abuse; How to get help and what to expect – want printed resources Peer groups to share information and build and maintain relationships; Barriers to accessing information include culture, language, transportation, comfort level with computers and using the internet; Need forums and gatherings involving seniors in the community; Educate family and caregivers to increase compassion, understanding, and acceptable behaviours (intergenerational education to combat ageism and

	abuse); Raise awareness through media campaigns (radio, newspaper, television)
Long-Term Care Facilities and Health Care	Lack of trained and qualified professionals and caregivers; Importance of trained and experienced staff; Creation of a registry for caregivers; Mandatory annual evaluation and certification staff needs to be implemented; Doctors to make house calls, be more involved, mandatory reporting; Importance of continuity of care in the community;
Justice and the Legal System	Insufficient non-legal alternatives for family members; Swift and guaranteed consequences for abusers; Important for seniors to be kept informed during the process and be involved throughout the investigation; Need senior friendly courts, policies, and legislation; Demystify the police and court system;
Outreach	<u>Social Connections to the Community</u> Importance of family and social connections to prevent isolation and victimization – networks can increase awareness and access to services in remote and urban areas; Hire more outreach workers and social workers as field representatives; Extend transportation into rural, outlying and remote areas;
Psychology and Emotion	Seniors – how do we address fears? How can we address helplessness or unwillingness to change?
Services and Seniors' Service Providers	Barriers to accessing services include transportation, culture, language, income, awareness and knowledge of community resources; Employee training on seniors' issues (compassion) Current supports and services do not encourage independent living; Increase supports for low-income and isolated seniors; How to increase outreach and make services accessible; Creation of a 24-hour phone line with trained staff for referrals and guidance in multiple languages for the region/province;

## 5.2 Results and Interpretation

### General knowledge and awareness of community supports for seniors

Seniors did not have difficulty identifying various options available to themselves and their peers if they required assistance or support. Responses were similar across the regions with groups quickly identifying police, family, and community services such as Community Care Access Centres (CCAC), Victorian Order of Nurses (VON), doctors, social workers, and help-lines as options for support.

Seniors more comfortably confide in neighbours, friends, family, and church or social groups, preferring to turn to existing trustful associations for advice and support. While individuals within each group immediately identified the police as a source of aid, they also reported hesitation when considering calling the police as a first response to any abusive situation. In fact, participants revealed that in situations where the abuser is a

family member or loved-one, they would be reluctant to call the police. Conversely, situations involving financial and severe physical abuse would more likely involve a call to the police, while abuses of a psychological, emotional, or systemic nature will less likely want to be dealt with legally.

Assistance from community organizations included speaking with seniors' organizations for referral information, community care nurses, peer mentors, support groups, hospitals and medical centre staff or a family physician, as well as contacting their local MPP, lawyer or legal aid office, or browsing on-line as way of self-help.

### Barriers to disclosure

Fear is the main reason for the reluctance of victims to call police or reach out for help. Greatest are fears of retaliation, followed by loss of residency, increased vulnerability, and isolation especially when there is daily contact with the abuser. Ultimately, there exists a fear that the situation will get worse after reporting abuse. For new residents or those sponsored in Canada by family and friends, the threat of immigration consequences is terrifying and may keep seniors living in abusive situations silent. In addition, language and cultural barriers often exist when reporting abuse or attempting to access information to prevent victimization. Ethno-cultural seniors stated an inability to express themselves or their situation to police, and were often unable to comprehend the reporting process involved. As a result, turning to police for help had the opposite effect of complicating what was perceived as an already frustrating situation.

Fear and shame are dominant barriers to disclosure in the visited First Nations community. The elders stressed fear of ostracization and being labelled a "cop-caller", as well as feeling ashamed. Not only were elders afraid of not being believed, but felt ashamed and embarrassed of possibly having the entire community aware of their personal problems, a known disadvantage of smaller communities. Furthermore, the discussion revealed a common notion held by seniors that their problems were not important enough to call the police. This combined with a concern that family and friends would not believe them, can decrease the rate of disclosure by obscuring the outcome or reporting.

Circumstances involving the abuser as being someone in a position of trust also have a negative impact on report rates. A relationship with the abuser can discourage an elderly person to report abuse because many seniors perceive legal intervention as too severe. Some individuals indicated a preference for less formal or community-based response similar to a restorative justice approach to elder abuse. Restorative justice appealed to group participants because of the belief it could provide an opportunity for victims to speak with their abusers, for the abusers to receive education about appropriate and acceptable behaviours, and present a way to repair the harm without family or loved-ones facing serious legal repercussions.

Other barriers identified by focus group participants include a victims' resistance to change, a decision to stay in the situation, and ignorance or denial of their abusive situation. In addition, negative opinions, experiences with police, and a notion that

agencies or organizations lack the authority, power, or trained staff to resolve an abusive situation, render older adults feeling helpless.

### Perspectives on policing

Seniors want improvements in three main areas; officer relationships with seniors, delivery of public and individual education resources, and police and judicial responses to the abuse of older adults. The discussions exposed an attitude of mistrust between seniors and police, advising that compatibility between the two groups would increase if police officers made more visits within the community in an effort to get to know the seniors. Seniors, in the North and East communities particularly, suggest that familiarity with an officer would increase reports by improving contact and communication. From this perspective, seniors wanted a dedicated seniors' officer or liaison within each community at forums and workshops to discuss seniors' issues including abuse. Formal training in seniors' issues would be required of this officer and optimally partners from within social services would support them. Participants also agreed to the need for additional training for all police and cadets. Participants hope that a deeper understanding of seniors' will translate into improved handling of older adults, and eventually encourage seniors to speak up.

Other suggestions to increase police involvement include weekly visits, attendance at social gatherings and visits to seniors groups, homes and retirement communities. In addition, having plain-clothes officers could increase comfort levels and relieve the uneasiness felt by most seniors who feel that uniforms are not personable and draw negative unwanted attention to their situation. Furthermore, participants add that having a plain-clothes officer to conduct an investigation would maintain a level of discreetness and reduce the level of shame or embarrassment for those involved.

Quite the opposite, participants representing a First Nations Community preferred officers on the reserve to be in uniform. Elders requested for police officers should be more obvious and visible within their communities. Elders insist that increasing police presence and visibility will help deter criminal behaviour amongst youth and make uncomplicated reporting by making identification of an officer easier. Prevention and policing strategies which utilize current technologies, such as photo-radar, were popular within this community.

Participants who would not consider receiving help from police admitted to having both a negative experience with the service and an overall dissatisfaction with the police response. Police services need to be more thorough with their investigations, following-up every case, and should keep seniors informed throughout the process. Secondly, some incidents warrant less serious or more sensitive interventions than others. Police should focus on developing situation appropriate responses rather than have one protocol applicable to every case. Also, nearly half the seniors who reported a negative interaction with police recall experiencing some form of mistreatment, specifically a lack of respect, compassion, or understanding from the responding officer. Seniors need to feel

appreciated, understood, and reassured that their problems are important and that they are doing the right thing by reporting.

### Perspectives on community services providing care and support to elderly persons

There is a recognition of the difficulties and stresses inherent in the provision of care to elderly person in facilities. Participants with loved ones in long-term care facilities vocalized a lack of regulations in privatized care and retirement homes and supported creating a provincial caregiver registry, a seniors' Ministry, or an office parallel to Children's Aid Society, to enforce safety protocols, annual evaluations, and mandatory seniors' specific training for staff and volunteers. . Bank personnel should also be adequately trained to identify suspicious behaviour, safely report suspected cases, and study ethical and legal issues concerning abuse in order to improve the atmosphere and reduce the potential for problems. It was also suggested for employers to deliver seminars to educate employees about the seriousness of elder abuse and its' impact on seniors.

### Seniors' empowerment

Older adults can play a role in empowering their peers to disclose abuse. Seniors need to encourage other seniors to speak up, to communicate openly with friends, families, and support groups. Also, encouraging seniors to stay actively engaged within their communities can improve relationships, enhance awareness, and reduce victimization. Seniors and victims to be encouraged and empowered to acknowledge and accept the abuse before they can seek the help that they need to end it.

Strategies to raise awareness and increase knowledge about seniors' issues include mass media advertisements geared towards older and younger generations, more organized events and workshops for seniors and their families focusing on preventing and responding to abuse. Messages in the media should be broadcast over the radio, aired during popular television shows, inserted into regular mail (for example in hydro or telephone bills), available at the doctors office, and published as weekly articles in the local newspaper. Rural residents expressed wanting to see a community events calendar printed and delivered to each home. These tactics could reach out to those seniors who currently live too distant to receive or obtain knowledge about local social gatherings and events.

Seniors mentioned wanting to see more printed materials with information on how to identify abuse and organizations offering supports, programs, or services to educate and notify seniors and victims of abuse that there is help available to them. Educational resources need to describe various forms of elder abuse, list available supports for seniors (provincially and locally), as well as print information about legal options, protection, and police involvement. Participants from greater urban settings disclosed wanting to see more information about the reporting process, who's involved, what to expect, and possible outcomes, in addition, materials should be available in multiple languages so not to further marginalize seniors from ethnic backgrounds.

Communities need to take more interest in including seniors in events and seniors need to take more interest in being involved. An inclusive society diminishes the chance for abuse as less people may go unnoticed and unsupported. Larger involvement should raise awareness and motivate interest in social action or personal change amongst older adults. Offer events in multiple languages, have messages seen and heard in obvious places, and seek to bridge the different generations. Participants in each focus group specified inter-generational education as the best way to combat and address ageism, because it teaches young people respect and compassion for elders, and vice versa. Moreover, education on seniors' issues including elder abuse can help to resolve future reporting problems, fear, and ignorance about abuse by preparing and educating the young for when they grow older.

### **5.3 Areas for Action**

A clear message from older Ontarians is they want improved access to existing services and an improved police response to elderly persons seeking assistance to stop abuse. Current mechanisms for reporting require a shift toward a more seniors' friendly approach, one that is non-threatening, and conducive to disclosure and reporting. Short-term strategies should include the adoption of more "senior friendly spaces", while more long-term solutions require schemes that address exclusion, isolation, shame, and security as well as decision-making behaviours, specifically those rooted in fears. While seniors are interested in participating in the prevention of abuse, they do not assume full responsibility for the elimination of abuse against elderly persons. Seniors want to be team players in a coordinated effort, working with police and seniors' service providers on strategies to alleviate the abuse of their peers.

#### Isolated seniors

Most at-risk for abuse or victimization are seniors who are isolated and/or live alone. Marginalized seniors and those living in remote communities can benefit from increased outreach, engagement, transportation programs, and home visits from plain-clothes police officers, social workers, and other field representatives. Increased contact with the community can create new trusting and caring relationships, resulting in increased opportunities for identification and disclosure of abuse.

Peer Mentor Programs are a valuable way to increase outreach, information exchange, and activity amongst the elderly. Seniors rely on and learn from one another, and may sometimes be more comfortable speaking to someone from their own age group. Seniors involved in prevention and intervention initiatives insist that using seniors as volunteers to help other seniors is the best approach to minimize exclusion. Programs could also hire volunteers to deliver community resources to seniors, or arrange weekly visits with those living in remote and hard to access communities.

Seniors need more self-help resources, which often provides information to older adults on what to do if they suspect or are at-risk for abuse, and where to go for help. While most communities do have resources for seniors (in one form or another) seniors in the

group express difficulty accessing the information or it is unavailable in diverse languages. A need for coordinated access to information was suggested by seniors in order to increase awareness of around available community supports. Printed materials such as pamphlets, directories, event calendars, and other resources need to be delivered directly to the homes and residences of older adults, so that information is immediately available to those in need. This service would have greater impact in isolated neighbourhoods. In addition, greater doctor involvement, house-calls, and legislation mandating reporting responsibility will help to increase identification of abuse or neglect amongst older adults.

### Ethno-cultural seniors

Ethno-cultural seniors emphasized the need to create prevention programs and action plans specific to multi-cultural and newcomer seniors. Current public service announcements target and speak to mainstream society and English speaking communities, and do not send the message into ethnic communities. Specifically, information on seniors' supports is rarely translated into languages other than French and available within communities. Knowledge about what can be done for seniors, the role of police officers, and information regarding legal process and rights were identified as crucial to preventing and reporting of crimes against seniors in ethnic neighbourhoods.

### Reporting

Seniors describe the current reporting system as being insensitive and unresponsive to their needs or to those living in abusive situations. Automated answering services that required them to make additional phone calls or operators and officers who lacked compassion annoyed callers. Service users recall experiencing insensitivity to cultural and age differences and lack of understanding from officers and community workers. Suggestions include additional training for staff and police officers responding to calls of abuse. The curriculum in schools could offer more than a few courses and perhaps provide full training or specialization in seniors' issues, offering tips on communicating with and responding to older victims of abuse. Also, re-evaluate follow-up procedures and work on developing and implementing policies and protocols that are situation specific and avoid jeopardizing confidentiality or disclosing the identity of the caller.

Security of confidentiality and anonymity are important to both seniors and victims reporting abuse. If these are not safeguarded, seniors and victims are less likely to report any crime or incident to the police or service providing agency. The operation of a provincial 24-hour referral or help- line, specifically for seniors, answered by a trained live operator, with an easy to remember phone number, would be useful for those in distress or wanting to remain anonymous. A local organization could support this referral line, provided that staff was trained and available to answer the calls. Alternatively, the police could promote non-emergency phone numbers at local police departments as an option to calling 9-1-1. Both would provide less intimidating and pressured environments for persons seeking assistance by emphasizing communication and choice.

Discussion on alternatives for reporting focused on friendly disclosure as well use of on-line reporting methods. While this method may not appeal to all seniors, as some report lower comfort levels using computers, making added use of on-line reporting websites, which can offer a greater degree of anonymity and discreetness, may be a successful strategy for those geographically or socially isolated, and the younger generations of seniors.

## 6. Working Group Results

### 6.1 Key Issues Raised by Seniors

Table 4 outlines the key issues and obstacles preventing elderly persons from disclosing or reporting elder abuse as identified by seniors, seniors' service providers, and police who participated in the working group sessions between June and October 2007.

Table 4

<b>SUMMARY LIST OF OBSTACLES BY REGION</b>					
<b>KEY ISSUES</b>	<b>Northwest</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Northeast</b>	<b>Southwest</b>
<b>Individual Beliefs and Anxieties</b>	Emotional Barriers		Individual Beliefs and Anxieties		Lack of Awareness and Empowerment
<b>Ageism and Public Apathy</b>	Ageism	Public Apathy and Ageism	Systemic Discrimination and "isms"	Lack of Understanding	Age Discrimination
<b>Lack of Resources</b>	Lack of Funding	Lack of Political Will and Interest	Lack of Actual and Perceived Financial Resources	Lack of Adequate Resources and Funding	Lack of Resources
<b>Bureaucracy</b>	Red Tape and Bureaucracy	Lack of Coordinated Systems and Structures	Lack of Political Interest and Infrastructure	Internal and External Politics	Bureaucracy
<b>Geographic Isolation</b>	Geographic Isolation	Geographic and Social Isolation			
<b>Lack of Training</b>	Lack of Trained and Appropriate Supports	Lack of Elder Abuse Specific Resources			
<b>Lack of Collaboration and Communication</b>			Lack of Collaboration and Leadership	Lack of Communication and Resources	
<b>Societal Barriers</b>					Societal Barriers

## 6.2 Areas for Action

An overview of strategies identified to empower Ontario seniors to report elder abuse as developed by seniors, seniors' service providers, and police who participated in the working groups between June and October 2007, is provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5

AREAS FOR ACTION	SUMMARY LIST OF COMMUNITY STRATEGIES BY REGION				
	Northwest <sup>8</sup>	East	Central	Northeast	Southwest
<b>Public Awareness and Education</b>	Marketing & Media Campaigns	Enhanced Social Consciousness	Education and Awareness	Education and Public Awareness	
<b>Seniors' Specific Training and Stakeholder Education</b>	Comprehensive Elder Abuse Education and Training	Consistent Standardized Education and Training		Police Training	Awareness, Education and Training for all Stakeholders
<b>Comprehensive Community Partnerships and Collaboration</b>	Comprehensive and Inclusive Partnerships		Community Collaboration	Resources and Partnerships	Community Mobilization
<b>Increased Cultural Sensitivity and Greater Respect and Understanding Toward Seniors</b>	Cultural Sensitivity and Respect for Individuality	Intergenerational Respect and Education	Building Relationships with Stakeholders	Sensitivity to the Needs of Older Adults	Take it to the Seniors
<b>Community Response, Supports and Resources</b>	Comprehensive Community and Support Programs	Accessible, Supportive and Responsive Systems	Early Intervention, Support and Resources	Safety Measures and Protection	Effective Dedicated Response Teams
<b>Access to Senior Specific Supports and Programs</b>	24-hour Multilingual Support Line				Access to Information and Assistance
<b>Government Involvement and Interest in Elder Abuse</b>	Agency and Legislation Accountability	Seniors' Specific Justice and Safety	Policy and Legislation		Needs Assessment

<sup>8</sup> Participants in this working group involved youth from the Thunder Bay Drama Interact program, in addition to seniors, seniors service providers, and Police.

### 6.3 Partner Responses: Action Plans

While regional comparisons show similar concerns exist across the province, such as ageism, bureaucracy, lack of resources, and the need for enhanced community response, each working group called attention to issues specific to their community that require further attention and long-term solutions. In response to the issues and concerns raised by seniors, the following is an overview of regional strategies under each of the areas for action. Areas for community action are derived from the ideas generated by participants at each of the five working group sessions. For each of the areas for action<sup>9</sup>, participants recommended strategies and identified key stakeholders who need to be involved to carry out the plan. As such, the recommendations contained within each of the areas for action serve as guidelines for local agencies, community organizations, police, and individuals in the development of further strategies, programs, and services supporting Ontario seniors.

#### A) Northwestern Ontario

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Government Involvement	Drive the political (seniors') agenda and increase interest in elder abuse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase agency and legislative accountability;</li> <li>▪ Bring like-minded, concerned individuals, groups, and agencies together to prepare a report on the community;</li> <li>▪ Develop a lobbying strategy that targets all 3 tiers of government; and</li> <li>▪ Use face to face visits, meetings, and letter writing campaigning process</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Various local elder abuse committee members;</li> <li>▪ Support from community agencies and individuals; and</li> <li>▪ Support from police and municipal politicians.</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Put in motion prior to provincial election times.</li> </ul>	

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<sup>9</sup> Each group was randomly assigned to an area for action. Due to the ratio of groups to areas for action, not all areas were used in this activity.

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Public Awareness & Education	<p>Increase public awareness via education and marketing campaigns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Define and focus on all forms of elder abuse;</li> <li>▪ Emphasis on creating positive and empowering advertisements (use photographs showing seniors in groups);</li> <li>▪ Promote diversity and translate posters into various languages;</li> <li>▪ Create public service announcements which clearly define and identify different types of abuse;</li> <li>▪ Send the message “you are not alone”; and</li> <li>▪ Have a clear referral number, advertised for long periods.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat or a new seniors’ Ministry</li> <li>▪ Information provided by seniors and seniors’ organizations</li> <li>▪ Support from municipal and provincial politicians</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 12 months for development before implementation</li> </ul>

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Access to Senior Specific Supports, Programs and Services	<p>Utilize technology to overcome isolation barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Survey existing Information Technology available in the North Western Ontario communities;</li> <li>▪ Offer a 24-hour multi-lingual support line;</li> <li>▪ Create a community access point or seniors portal;</li> <li>▪ Buy and/or borrow computers; and</li> <li>▪ Designate an agency or Ministry to maintain the service</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN’s)</li> <li>▪ Statistics Canada or Census Canada (survey)</li> <li>▪ Public agencies and private businesses to donate computers</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 years research and implementation</li> <li>▪ On-going</li> </ul>

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Stakeholder Education	<p>Mandatory comprehensive seniors' specific training and creation of a list serve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement additional education and training requirements for all seniors' service providers;</li> <li>▪ Identify what exists regionally and gaps in training;</li> <li>▪ Create a list serve to share information;</li> <li>▪ Create a website to host all training sessions;</li> <li>▪ Widely advertise training opportunities amongst stakeholders;</li> <li>▪ In education - offer financial incentives for younger generations to be directed to specializing in seniors' care; and</li> <li>▪ Create and simplify on-line mandatory provincial training for anyone working with seniors.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>RESPONSIBILITY</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (ONPEA) to coordinate training, opportunity postings, and maintain the list serve</li> <li>▪ Ontario Seniors' Secretariat to host the web-training sessions</li> <li>▪ Caregivers and seniors' service providers to attend the training sessions and provide feedback to the community and workplace</li> <li>▪ Community colleges and universities</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 9 – 12 months of mandatory provincial training, including web-training courses and access to list serve</li> </ul>

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Comprehensive Community Partnerships and Collaboration	<p>Promote and support inclusive partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide opportunities for ongoing dialogue by organizing monthly face to face or teleconference meetings;</li> <li>▪ Frequent discussion of stakeholder and partner involvement to increase understanding of each other;</li> <li>▪ Bi-monthly correspondence via email;</li> <li>▪ Designate police officers to meet with as many stakeholders as possible within the community; and</li> <li>▪ Facilitate meetings between seniors and agencies, including the police</li> </ul>
	<p><b>RESPONSIBILITY</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Police services</li> <li>▪ Volunteer seniors for peer support</li> <li>▪ Outreach workers within agencies to coordinate meetings</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 12 months to ongoing</li> </ul>

**B) Eastern Ontario**

<b>AREA FOR ACTION</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
Increased Public Awareness and Education	<p>Enhance social consciousness and expose ageism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create more public service announcements and find more air time;</li> <li>▪ Include printed information in mail outs;</li> <li>▪ Implement Grand-Friends school programs in all Ontario schools to bridge the intergenerational gaps;</li> <li>▪ Use drama skits showing perpetrators, survivors, victims, and families; and</li> <li>▪ Canada Post stamps for elder abuse (put in USCO and CARP magazines)</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ONPEA, USCO, and other seniors' organizations</li> <li>▪ School boards and students (youth)</li> <li>▪ Police and other government agencies</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 12 months development; delivered annually</li> </ul>

<b>AREA FOR ACTION</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
Community Response, Supports and Resources	<p>Create an accessible and coordinated community response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop community protocols through roundtable meetings with stakeholders to clarify roles of each agency and assign accountability and responsibility;</li> <li>▪ Set-up coordination office in local areas for in-take, referral, and follow-up calls (24-hour help-line);</li> <li>▪ Form a consultation team to respond to elder abuse cases by recruiting and identifying partners and creating a Memorandum of Understanding amongst partners;</li> <li>▪ Create a resource directory of seniors' services using local databases – create a website or seniors' portal; and</li> <li>▪ Designate maintenance and management of the database to a government agency or non-profit organization.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Council on Aging and other seniors' organizations</li> <li>▪ Seniors advocacy groups and non-profit organizations</li> <li>▪ Police, lawyers and doctors on consultation teams</li> <li>▪ Ontario Victims Services Secretariat</li> <li>▪ Volunteers from the community (seniors, social workers)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 12 months to develop protocols/build consultation team</li> <li>▪ 6 months to research/implement the directory</li> <li>▪ On-going consultations and resource updates</li> </ul>

<b>AREA FOR ACTION</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
Government Involvement	Government lobbying for seniors' specific justice and safety: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Solidify formal coalitions with the intent to lobby for funding;</li> <li>▪ Begin a letter writing campaign; and</li> <li>▪ Rally annually on June 15<sup>th</sup> and October 19<sup>th</sup> (on Parliament Hill and Queens Park).</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ United Senior Citizens of Ontario members and partners</li> <li>▪ Elder abuse networks</li> <li>▪ Seniors in the community</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ June to October 2008 and annually</li> </ul>

<b>AREA FOR ACTION</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
Stakeholder Education	Develop and deliver effective training and response tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Form a multi-disciplinary committee;</li> <li>▪ Standardize education and training; and</li> <li>▪ Form a committee to develop seniors' specific training and curriculum for police, lawyers, judges, and service providers.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Police</li> <li>▪ Lawyers and judges</li> <li>▪ Seniors (to provide input)</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 year</li> </ul>

<b>AREA FOR ACTION</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
Cultural Sensitivity and Greater Respect and Understanding Toward Seniors	Promote individual commitment to addressing seniors' issues and volunteerism: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employ initiatives in local schools which include high-school students volunteering for credits and seniors volunteering to support programs;</li> <li>▪ Corporate involvement to develop an Adopt-a-Senior program;</li> <li>▪ Target banks, financial institutions, and drug companies with a senior client base.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School boards</li> <li>▪ Students (children and youth)</li> <li>▪ Seniors</li> <li>▪ Corporate management and employees</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 year to on-going</li> </ul>

**C) Central Ontario**

<b>AREA FOR ACTION</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
Government Involvement	<p>Inform policies and legislations governing seniors and increase political interest and infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seniors to lobby all 3 levels of government to ensure that services delivered to seniors are appropriate and accessible;</li> <li>▪ LHIN's to advocate for seniors and put seniors issues on the agenda;</li> <li>▪ Provide statistics and demographics; petition;</li> <li>▪ Designate coordinator at all levels via sub-committees and working groups;</li> <li>▪ Tap into organizations to provide volunteer professionals and senior level executives chosen by skill set to provide expertise and manpower to improve infrastructure and streamline service delivery at minimal costs.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LHIN's and other seniors' service providers</li> <li>▪ Seniors</li> <li>▪ Seniors' advocacy groups</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 year at a time with annual proposals</li> </ul>

<b>AREA FOR ACTION</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
Public Awareness and Education	<p>Increase public awareness, education and funding resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use existing groups to address abuse issues facing older adults by lobbying, using letter and e-mail campaigns, and meeting with local politicians;</li> <li>▪ Increase press releases on seniors activities and first person stories.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gerontological Association</li> <li>▪ Canadian Elder Law Association</li> <li>▪ CARP, USCO, and seniors clubs</li> <li>▪ Local media outlets (news channels and daily papers)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 year</li> </ul>

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Comprehensive Community Partnerships and Collaboration	<p>Improve collaboration and leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make sincere efforts to listen to each other and appreciate each others roles toward the common good;</li> <li>▪ Tie funding to partnerships with clear measurable objectives in place to evaluate progress;</li> <li>▪ Seek involvement and input from MP's , MPP's, and seniors;</li> <li>▪ Create a stable support and response network for seniors to increase probability of reporting; and</li> <li>▪ Identify vision and mandates of each partner and try to diminish duplication of services.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>RESPONSIBILITY</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Police</li> <li>▪ Community Care Access Centres</li> <li>▪ Prevention and intervention educators, support workers, and councillors</li> <li>▪ Retirement communities, nursing homes, seniors</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Immediate and on-going</li> </ul>

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Enhance Community Response, Supports and Resource	<p>Address individual beliefs and anxieties held by seniors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focus on early intervention;</li> <li>▪ Host multi-cultural and multi-educational sessions in the community; educate across cultural networks;</li> <li>▪ Make elder abuse acceptable to talk about by diversifying the service providers and improving contact with police and seniors' service providers;</li> <li>▪ Increase awareness for housing, safety and medical support services;</li> <li>▪ Create a province-wide social service that will provide support solely to seniors; and</li> <li>▪ Provide a mediator and translators at all events.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>RESPONSIBILITY</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seniors' service providers</li> <li>▪ Seniors (attend meetings and provide peer support)</li> <li>▪ Police</li> <li>▪ Local media to advertise events and continue education</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 to 6 months to learn about best practices</li> <li>▪ On-going</li> </ul>

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Cultural Sensitivity and Greater Respect and Understanding Toward Seniors	<p>Eradicate systemic discrimination and the “isms”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Grassroots education sessions to seniors in multiple languages; create a political voice;</li> <li>▪ Joint meetings with seniors, agencies, and governments;</li> <li>▪ Media releases and promotion of events (translated);</li> <li>▪ Host events to promote PEAAD &amp; WEAAD (provincial and world elder abuse awareness days);</li> <li>▪ Build more empathy towards seniors;</li> <li>▪ Journalists to do stories of interest;</li> <li>▪ Lobby the media to showcase positive stories and positive imaging;</li> <li>▪ Empower seniors to make decisions and take control of their lives;</li> <li>▪ Programs that follow “senior friendly space”; and</li> <li>▪ Use statistics to identify and anticipate future needs for a national education campaign that promotes response and reporting protocols.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seniors</li> <li>▪ ONPEA, CNPEA, OSS, USCO</li> <li>▪ Seniors networks, agencies</li> <li>▪ Police</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 12 – 24 months for media releases and event coordination</li> </ul>

**D) Northeastern Ontario and First Nations Communities**

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Government Involvement	<p>Create a Seniors’ Ministry to increase political and individual commitment and community resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create local peer groups with use of volunteers;</li> <li>▪ Make available “senior friendly spaces”;</li> <li>▪ Language and culturally sensitive services and support.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seniors and seniors’ service providers</li> <li>▪ Government and police</li> <li>▪ Grassroots organizations and advocacy groups</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Immediate and on-going</li> <li>▪ Continuous definition of roles and responsibilities</li> </ul>

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Increased Cultural Sensitivity and Greater Respect and Understanding Toward Seniors	<p>Implement training workshops within organizations, agencies, and in the broader community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Uses a train-the-trainer format;</li> <li>▪ Context will be community and service specific to meet the needs and expectations of participants;</li> <li>▪ Generate a more service specific response to elder abuse;</li> <li>▪ Seniors to assist in the development and delivery of training to increase input on the seniors issues and sensitivity to the needs of older adults;</li> <li>▪ Partner with women’s shelters and crisis centres; and</li> <li>▪ Emphasize as a continuous learning experience and not a one-shot training deal.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Police and victims services</li> <li>▪ Seniors and seniors’ service providers</li> <li>▪ Medical professionals and caregivers</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 0 – 12 months needed for effective training</li> </ul>	

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Public Awareness and Education	<p>Multi-sectoral approach to raising awareness and understanding in the general public:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordinate efforts of government ministries;</li> <li>▪ Develop printed and easily disseminated materials;</li> <li>▪ Multi-media public service announcements;</li> <li>▪ Adopt a similar approach to Neighbours, Families, and Friends program for domestic violence;</li> <li>▪ All stakeholders to support dissemination of materials;</li> <li>▪ Police to facilitate information sessions with seniors;</li> <li>▪ Identify and solidify corporate sponsors;</li> <li>▪ Highlight effective community responses to crime;</li> <li>▪ Enhance understanding of community responses to crime; and</li> <li>▪ Demystify the reporting process and outline safeguards for victims and family members.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Police</li> <li>▪ Seniors’ service providers and caregivers</li> <li>▪ Corporate sponsors, private businesses</li> <li>▪ Seniors and members of the general public</li> <li>▪ Media</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 18 months for development, province-wide roll out and distribution of materials and training aids</li> </ul>	

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Community Response, Supports and Resources	Establish a community response network to deal with elder abuse and seniors' issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct case consultations and case reviews;</li> <li>▪ Use a multi-disciplinary approach to the issue</li> <li>▪ Stakeholders and partners mandated to fulfill their roles to guarantee help and confidentiality;</li> <li>▪ Police to assure proper follow-up is completed; and</li> <li>▪ Develop procedures to ensure continuity and fluidity of response and care.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commitment by all stakeholders</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Immediate and on-going</li> </ul>

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Improved Access to Seniors Specific Supports and Programs	Create a seniors Peer Support program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish a central volunteer location which would be community specific;</li> <li>▪ Establish an organization to coordinate or share coordination of the volunteer program of peers;</li> <li>▪ Police to refer victims to the Peer Support program;</li> <li>▪ Seniors to volunteer and recruit members into the group; and</li> <li>▪ On-going support and education involved – resources supported by service providers and seniors themselves.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seniors' service providers, seniors and police</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 0 – 6 months to establish and implement program</li> </ul>

**E) Southwestern Ontario**

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
<p>Access to Senior Specific Supports and Programs</p>	<p>Mapping of services throughout the region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a regional committee;</li> <li>▪ Enlist seniors to volunteer and be advocates within communities;</li> <li>▪ Send out a survey or audit service providers to measure in-coming calls and demographic information;</li> <li>▪ Send out a survey to seniors to gauge their general knowledge of elder abuse and seniors’ issues;</li> <li>▪ Share the information from the survey to the public;</li> <li>▪ Use information from the survey as an opportunity to fill gaps in service delivery;</li> <li>▪ Use survey as an opportunity to obtain feedback on developing new initiatives and programs in each community; and ultimately</li> <li>▪ Increase access to information and assistance for seniors.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>RESPONSIBILITY</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Members on the regional committee</li> <li>▪ Seniors and seniors’ organizations</li> <li>▪ Community centres, seniors’ service providers</li> <li>▪ Canada Post to assist with survey/mass mailing</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 4 – 6 months</li> </ul>

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
<p>Community Response, Supports and Resources</p>	<p>Creation of a seniors’ support line and effective dedicated response teams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not labelled as “elder abuse line”;</li> <li>▪ Lines to be localized;</li> <li>▪ Lines to be answered by seniors or trained multi-lingual staff, not an answering service</li> <li>▪ Hours to vary by community;</li> <li>▪ Advertised in pharmacies, doctors offices and spaces common to seniors in the community;</li> <li>▪ Tear-away phone numbers for seniors to take with them rather than have to write it down; and</li> <li>▪ Response “teams” to include one officer and one social worker or counsellor.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>RESPONSIBILITY</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seniors network or elder abuse committee</li> <li>▪ Dedicated officers and front line workers</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TIMEFRAME</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 year</li> </ul>

<b>AREA FOR ACTION</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
Increased Cultural Sensitivity and Greater Respect and Understanding Toward Seniors	<p>Intergenerational education to combat age discrimination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Police to explain abuse against seniors with examples and legal definitions;</li> <li>▪ Volunteer community educators from local police departments, government agencies, and community organizations; they can also act as liaisons;</li> <li>▪ Drama-interact theatre presentations;</li> <li>▪ Develop grade specific programs and presentations (elementary and high-school)</li> <li>▪ Seniors and students together deliver a session to school groups on age related issues;</li> <li>▪ Emphasize the positive side of being a senior; and</li> <li>▪ Match seniors and students following the education session to bridge the gap;</li> <li>▪ Take it to the seniors and let them be actively involved in the development and delivery of the program.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School boards, principles, and students</li> <li>▪ Regional police services</li> <li>▪ Parents of children/children of seniors</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 years for research, development, implementation and recruitment</li> </ul>

<b>AREA FOR ACTION</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
Community Partnerships and Collaboration	<p>Reduce bureaucracy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop one standardized system;</li> <li>▪ Develop a provincial mandate and memorandum of understanding;</li> <li>▪ Revise the Freedom of Information Act;</li> <li>▪ Increase resource sharing;</li> <li>▪ Introduce and legislate mandatory reporting;</li> <li>▪ Employ restorative justice practices and alternative measures instead of applying legal consequences; and</li> <li>▪ Accommodate and be sensitive to the needs of seniors.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Government and politicians;</li> <li>▪ The legal system and justice officials;</li> <li>▪ Service providers administrating alternative measures and restorative justice programs;</li> <li>▪ Medical professionals and caregivers</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Immediate and on-going</li> </ul>

AREA FOR ACTION	ACTION PLAN
Public Awareness and Education	<p>Create a directory of (seniors) services for each community and share that locally and provincially to minimize isolation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Include names, addresses, contact information, hours of service and services provided and available;</li> <li>▪ Encourage police to volunteer with the project and to provide resources;</li> <li>▪ Seniors' service providers can provide a list or report on organizations they have dealt with in the past;</li> <li>▪ Update and review annually similar to the phone book; and</li> <li>▪ Use community volunteers or sponsors to distribute the resource (could include postal workers or grocery and food delivery services and be available at the hair dressers, pharmacies and at religious spaces).</li> </ul>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seniors, seniors' service providers, and police</li> </ul>
	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 0 to 12 months to create a directory, locate funding and volunteers</li> </ul>

## 7. Recommendations

Recommendations for issues requiring further attention are based on the following criteria:

- Does it reflect the views of Ontario seniors?
- Does it develop partnerships between Ontario seniors and other partners?
- Does the recommendation address the needs of Ontario seniors and those most at-risk for elder abuse?
- Does the recommendation build on existing resources?
- Can the impact of this recommendation be measured?

Recommendations have been grouped into four directions for action:

- A) Strengthening Partnerships
- B) Policing, Reporting, and Response
- C) Information and Coordination of Services
- D) Investing in Programs to Support Ontario Seniors

### A) Strengthening Partnerships

1. Regional consultation teams: Each region should appoint or form a consultation team to respond to elder abuse cases and deal with the impact of victimization on elderly

persons. It should include representatives from the senior community, front line staff, seniors' organizations, lawyers, doctors, and police, in addition to higher level executives, chosen by skill set, to provide expertise and guide development of a Memorandum of Understanding between partners to clarify roles and assign accountability. The consultation team should advise regional partners in the development of comprehensive policies, protocols, and programs to mitigate the harm to seniors, families, and victims of abuse, and work with various levels of government on curbing the incidents of victimization amongst older adults in Ontario. There should be sub-committees to address specific issues and types of elder abuse (i.e. financial, physical, neglect and psychological abuse).

Impact: Seniors input into decision-making on policies affecting seniors and victims of abuse. Increase in understanding of the roles of each agency and coordination of services, leading to a continued inter-disciplinary response to elder abuse and increase in disclosure.

2. Forge partnerships with the private sector and businesses: Public agencies and seniors' organizations should support and expand initiatives that work with businesses and financial institutions to improve safety and prevention of abuse among older adults, as well as provide local volunteering and contribution opportunities, such as Adopt-a-Senior programs, computer equipment donation programs, and employee training seminars.

Impact: Increase in identification and reporting rates. Increase awareness and sensitivity toward seniors and decrease isolation.

## **B) Policing, Reporting, and Response**

3. Increased community involvement and prevention education: Police services should recognize the importance of community presentations and forums in providing the necessary knowledge and skills to those seniors most at risk for abuse, by maintaining and expanding the number and range of workshops, seniors' events, and consultations provided in the community and seniors' centres. Designate an officer or liaison within each community to respond to seniors issues, with a demonstrated sensitivity to issues of the specific group, and evaluate their effectiveness.

Impact: Increase the number of organized seniors' events in the community. Stimulate community interest and awareness about elder abuse and methods for disclosure. Increase contact between seniors and police officers in the community and reduce crime in the targeted areas. Education strategies should be independently evaluated for effectiveness in preventing fear and crime or victimization amongst seniors.

4. Staff and front-line workers working for the common good: The province should ensure that staff who work with older adults on safety and health concerns, including police, long-term care and public health nurses, and social workers, are adequately trained and supported in this vital work. A list of all front-line staff that provides services to seniors should be created in order to identify potential students for additional seniors'

specific training. Develop appropriate curriculum or training aids that include facts, tips, and resources on seniors and aging; working with particular vulnerable groups including mentally ill persons; cultural diversity; identifying and responding to suspected abuse; and referral to other community services, including multicultural and ethno-specific agencies. Seminar and peer training opportunities should be provided to all staff and students within post-secondary institutions.

Impact: More coordination amongst staff who provide assistance and respond to calls of elder abuse. An identification of gaps in training, best practices, and ways to incorporate an integrated response on this issue. Decreased sense of fear and insecurity in older adults and victims.

### **C) Information and Coordination Resources, Services, and Supports**

5. A central information point for seniors: The province of Ontario should develop a comprehensive database on community resources for seniors, accessible by internet and telephone, and multi-lingual. The database should include a continually updated inventory of who is doing what across the province and promote the health, safety, and well-being of older adults, including contact numbers, definitions of abuse, project summaries, success stories, and legal advice. The resource directory could be prepared by a community organization with relevant expertise and resources.

There should be as many access points as possible to this directory. The province or whichever agency is overseeing its' delivery, should develop and implement a comprehensive communication strategy which ensures that seniors, families, and individuals can find out about this information from a variety of sources, such as Community Care Access Centres, community organizations, police stations, libraries, seniors' centres/clubs, pharmacies, banks, councillors offices, social clubs, and public health offices.

Sources of funding should be explored to print the resource. The communication strategy should add this possibility and include when it is necessary and appropriate to inform police when a crime has occurred or is suspected to have occurred.

Impact: Wide application and use of resources by seniors and organizations. Increase in self-help, disclosure, and reporting, in addition to improved access to community information, increase in community initiatives, and a decreased duplication of resources. Rise in the number of newcomer seniors accessing community supports and services.

### **D) Investing in Programs to Support Ontario Seniors**

6. Coordination of intergenerational programs in schools across Ontario: Police should assist in the coordination of school boards, community agencies, the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat and other partners to promote intergenerational education programs, such as the Grand-Friends Program, Storytelling, drama interact and volunteer credits. These education and prevention initiatives should be aimed at elementary and high-school students and involve caregivers, family members, and seniors themselves. Seniors can

take leadership by ensuring that all intergenerational programs include anti-ageist program elements. Additionally, school boards and police can ensure that information about these programs is available to all parents and caregivers by developing information networks.

Impact: Increased sensitivity and empathy toward seniors and a decrease in ageist behaviours and crimes against the elderly. Increase in the number of people reached by this education.

7. Peer mentoring: Community agencies and seniors' service providers should establish volunteer support groups that involve seniors developing supportive personal relationships with other seniors.

Impact: A community-based ongoing response to seniors' issues which empowers older adults to make decisions and to take control of their lives. Increased network of support, increased number of seniors actively engaged in the community. Programs should be evaluated every 3 years for effectiveness in preventing fear and crime or victimization.

## **8. Conclusion**

The research involved multiple consultations with seniors and service providers to obtain their perspectives on how to effectively mobilize a coordinated response to seniors seeking assistance to stop abuse and victimization. An intended goal of Project SAV was to increase the sensitivity and awareness of participants to factors contributing to risk and underreporting of elder abuse, and the impact of elder abuse on seniors and other vulnerable groups. The recommendations identify community-driven priority action areas and key stakeholders who need to be involved to support successful integrated and coordinated community action. Moreover, they address identified barriers to disclosure faced by older adults and as a result, present a guideline for local agencies, community organizations, police, and individuals in the development of further strategies, reporting mechanisms, and services supporting Ontario seniors.

Community Mobilization Empowering Seniors Against Victimization  
List of Advisory Committee Members

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Community Mobilization Empowering Seniors Against Victimization  
List of Provincial Working Group Session Participants<sup>10</sup>  
June – October 2007

NAME	ORGANIZATION OR AFFILIATION	CITY	REPRESENTING SECTOR
Emma Lehmberg	Sir Winston Churchill CI	Thunder Bay	student-youth
Kelly Brunwin Harding	Alzheimer's Society	Thunder Bay	service provider
Deb Tully	Ontario Provincial Police	Thunder Bay	police
Agnes Hardy	N/A	Thunder Bay	student-youth
Caren Ashmore	Ontario Provincial Police	Thunder Bay	police
Gloria Mckay	Seniors Fraud Stoppers	Thunder Bay	senior
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<sup>10</sup> Only the names of those participants who consented to being identified in the final report have been mentioned.

Final Report: Community Mobilization Empowering Seniors Against Victimization  
6340-U1 United Senior Citizens of Ontario

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Final Report: Community Mobilization Empowering Seniors Against Victimization  
6340-U1 United Senior Citizens of Ontario

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Final Report: Community Mobilization Empowering Seniors Against Victimization  
6340-U1 United Senior Citizens of Ontario

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