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Chair

Ms. Niki Ashton

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP)): I call this meeting to order, please.

We have one presentation in our first panel today. It is from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. We have with us Jacques Paquette, senior assistant deputy minister in the income security and social development branch, and Ellen Healey, director of the social programs division, community development and partnerships directorate, income security and social development.

I understand, Monsieur Paquette, that you will be making the presentation today. You have 10 minutes. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Jacques Paquette (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Income Security and Social Development, Branch, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development): First of all, thank you very much for inviting us to this committee. We're very pleased to be here, and I certainly commend the committee for the work it is doing on this issue of elder abuse involving mainly elder women.

Needless to say, the issue of elder abuse is growing and is of great importance to the Government of Canada and Canadians. That being the case, the Government of Canada has taken action to increase awareness of elder abuse, including financial abuse, and to address this issue.

Information and statistics on the incidence and prevalence of elder abuse are limited due to the lack of research on the reporting, as well as a lack of awareness of signs and symptoms. I believe you have heard that as well from other witnesses. Based on available data, it is estimated that between 4% and 10% of older adults in Canada experience some form of abuse, and it is also estimated that only one in five incidents of abuse is reported.

This situation is of growing concern with the proportion of seniors expected to rise. Today, one in seven Canadians is aged 65 or over. By 2036, nearly one in four Canadians will be a senior.

The oldest cohort of seniors is expected to grow significantly as well. By 2036, Statistics Canada projects, one in 13 Canadians will be 80 years old or over, compared to slightly fewer than one out of 25 in 2010. This fact is also of concern since those who are of advanced age are at the greatest risk, as they are more likely to experience disability, dementia, or dependence on others for care.

The federal government is committed to supporting seniors and curbing elder abuse in all its forms. Let me describe briefly some of the most significant actions undertaken in the last few years.

In 2007, the Government of Canada created the National Seniors Council. One of the council's first priorities was to prepare a report based on their examination of elder abuse through regional consultations. They reported two key conclusions. The problem of elder abuse was serious and more widespread than previously thought, and raising awareness was an important first step to combatting elder abuse. In fact, the work undertaken by the National Seniors Council contributed to the development of the federal elder abuse initiative.

[Translation]

The Federal Elder Abuse Initiative was \$13 million, three-year special effort to provide a focussed and coordinated federal approach to help seniors and others recognize the signs and symptoms of elder abuse, and to provide information on available resources and support.

The Inter-Departmental Initiative was lead by HRSDC, in collaboration with the Department of Justice, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The cornerstone of the Federal Elder Abuse Initiative was a national elder abuse awareness advertising campaign, called *Elder Abuse - It's Time To Face The Reality*, launched in 2009, which included television, print and web components. The ad campaign provided information on the signs and symptoms of elder abuse and how to access local/provincial/territorial resources and services.

The campaign generated a lot of reaction and interest. For example, over 165,000 elder abuse information kits have been ordered through the 1-800-O-Canada number, and the web presence on seniors.gc.ca has received over 86,000 hits. Quantitative research conducted to examine the campaign's impact concluded that a significant increase in awareness had occurred. Fifty-eight per cent of respondents recalled the ad campaign. As well, the Department of Justice commissioned a public opinion poll which found that elder abuse awareness had increased by 11 percentage points since 2009, and that nine out of 10 Canadians, or 93%, said they were aware of the term "elder abuse". As well, Canadians were more likely able to identify the various types of elder abuse than they were two years ago, and their ability to name various types of abuse had increased significantly.

The federal initiative also led to the development of a collaborative provincial and territorial resource document, and several provincial campaigns on elder abuse have been launched which complement the federal advertising campaign.

For example, the Government of Quebec, as part of its 40-point plan to fight elder abuse, developed a television ad campaign featuring Yvon Deschamps to draw attention to the problem of elder abuse. Beyond the advertising campaign, information and resource tools were developed. In January of 2010, funding was provided to six national professional organizations—for example, occupational therapists, dental hygienists, social workers, housing managers, nurses, and legal officers—for the development of tools to help front-line workers recognize the signs of elder abuse and find ways to address it.

The Federal Elder Abuse Initiative sunsetted in March, 2011, after having achieved its specific goals.

[English]

HRSDC is now targeting its efforts to combat elder abuse through the new horizons for seniors program. The new horizons for seniors program was created in 2004 to help ensure that seniors are able to benefit from and contribute to the quality of life in their communities through social participation and active living.

The program now pursues several objectives, including support for social participation and the inclusion of seniors and for expanding awareness of elder abuse, including financial abuse. Since 2007, 32 elder abuse awareness projects have been funded. As a result of these projects, over 170 tools have been created and disseminated, and over 31,000 seniors have directly participated or benefited from these projects.

Commitment to this program has been deep-rooted, as reflected through successive budget increases. The initial program funding was increased from \$30 million to \$35 million in 2007. In the last two budgets, annual funding increased by a total of \$10 million, bringing the total of NHSP to \$45 million.

The new horizons for seniors program is now HRSDC's main vehicle for addressing elder abuse. Calls for proposals have been the preferred tools to fund projects under this program.

The first call for proposals in 2007 focused on promoting awareness and increasing knowledge of abuse of older adults through development and dissemination of awareness and educa-

tional resources, tool kits, and communications products for seniors, service providers, professionals, community-based organizations, and the public. For example, la Fédération des aînés et aînées francophones du Canada has developed an awareness campaign and a number of workshops that are specifically suited to the needs of francophone seniors living in minority settings outside of Quebec.

The second call for proposals in 2009 focused on reaching out to ethnocultural groups, and on networking and information sharing among organizations and others active in the prevention of elder abuse. For example, the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse developed a series of culturally appropriate tools for Spanish-speaking communities, along with a transferable how-to manual for other organizations wishing to address elder abuse awareness and prevention in any emerging ethnocultural community.

A current call for proposals builds on these results by moving projects to a broader reach. Projects will support cross-disciplinary work in community strategies that build on awareness, prevention, and intervention, while continuing to reach out to underserved populations and to train front-line personnel working with seniors, those who are best positioned to identify possible situations of abuse.

Given the nature and the complexity of the issue, all levels of government have a role to play in addressing elder abuse. The federal, provincial, and territorial forum of ministers responsible for seniors has recognized the importance of taking action on elder abuse and has made it one of their key priorities. In 2007, the ministers hosted an FPT elder abuse forum, held in conjunction with the third annual Canadian conference on elder law. The forum participants focused on identifying collaborative actions and partnerships across organizations and health, social, and justice systems that should be considered by communities and governments in order to better respond to elder abuse. Another forum in 2008 focused on the financial abuse of older adults. That was the forum on the financial abuse of seniors.

Five priority areas emerged throughout the discussion at both of these forums to address elder abuse and the financial abuse of older adults: education for older adults, training for professionals, legislative frameworks, public awareness, and access to information and specialized services.

One of the outcomes from these events was the creation of a series of seven education and awareness fact sheets on the prevention of elder abuse and, more recently, a new series of eight fact sheets for seniors on financial planning and protection from financial abuse. The FPT forum fact sheets were distributed throughout the country and were disseminated during World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, which is held annually on June 15.

More work is being planned to address elder abuse issues. The existing elder abuse TV ad is planned to run in late November 2011, and a new TV ad focusing on financial abuse is planned to air in early 2012. These advertising campaigns will be funded through the Government of Canada central advertising fund managed by the Privy Council Office.

• (1540)

Financial abuse is one of the most prevalent forms of elder abuse. It's not surprising that at their June 2011 meeting, the FPT ministers responsible for seniors identified financial abuse as one of its top priorities for this year.

The FPT forum will be looking into existing resources and materials to help safeguard the elderly from financial abuse and raise their awareness of the risks and responsibilities related to assigning powers of attorney and entering into joint accounts. The forum will work with relevant stakeholders to identify gaps in understanding and to develop information resources geared towards raising awareness among seniors and front-line workers of the benefits and risks of naming a power of attorney or opening a joint account.

HRSDC continues to pursue new avenues. For example, we had a preliminary discussion with the Canadian Bankers Association on how front-line workers in the financial sector can help protect seniors from fraud and financial abuse, and we are supportive of exploring partnerships to advance work in this area.

In the Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada committed itself to proposing tougher sentences for offences involving the abuse of elderly persons.

We recognize that more work is needed to better understand elder abuse and its impacts. The need for baseline information and hard data on elder abuse is real. HRSDC is supporting the national initiative for the care of the elderly, as well as a two-year research project on defining and measuring elder abuse and neglect. The result of this research will lay the foundation for future work on the measurement of elder abuse and neglect.

We will continue to work with other federal departments and agencies, the provinces, the territories, professional associations, and non-government organizations to take steps to detect and prevent the exploitation of older Canadians. This was...I was going to say that this was a brief overview. Well, that was an overview. I will be happy to answer your questions.

• (1545)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Paquette.

We will begin a seven-minute round.

[English]

Ms. O'Neill Gordon.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to welcome our guests. It certainly is great to have you with us today.

Our committee holds this topic very dear to our hearts and so does our government. We have heard many witnesses speak about the different aspects of this great cause. Our government, with the introduction of the new horizons programs, has put many dollars towards this, some \$45 million. I have seen many different uses of it in my riding, uses that are very beneficial to the seniors.

I have to say that one of the most beneficial ideas that came about was making people aware of the problem, particularly with the ads. I'm wondering if you could share some other ideas that might be even more beneficial from a justice or legal point of view.

Mr. Jacques Paquette: I'll say a few words about the new horizons for seniors program, and then I will invite my colleague to give some examples of projects that are pursuing this objective.

The program works at two levels. The first is what we call pan-Canadian projects. These are at the national level. These are only on elder abuse. Usually we call for a proposal. We have projects that are bigger; the level of funding can be up to \$250,000 per year over three years.

The other component is the community projects. These are the small projects, usually up to \$25,000. The program pursues several objectives. I like to refer to this, because elder abuse is one of the objectives, but we also use that program to work on prevention. We know that isolation puts seniors at risk. Developing projects that will connect seniors is, to our mind, going to support the objective we want to achieve. We know that in many cases the solutions come from the communities. People know their communities. When we talk about being able to see where elder abuse happens, that's really the place it should happen, not thousands of kilometres from the place.

Maybe I could invite Ellen to give you a couple of examples of the projects that are doing this at the local level.

Ms. Ellen Healey (Director, Social Programs Division, Community Development and Partnerships Directorate, Income Security and Social Development, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development): You asked for specific ideas. I was just going through the project list of things that we funded in the past. I'll just point out a few things that jump out at us.

One is work with kids. We had a project in which seniors worked with young adults, putting on skits and theatre performances that could actually animate what abuse is. That is seen as a learning opportunity that's a little bit more direct and perhaps a little bit more in tune with the target audience.

We've had a number of smaller projects in which we've seen seniors helping seniors. Working at the community level, they come together and conduct workshops for other seniors on things such as personal safety in the home and safety measures when dealing with family members. Again, it's about looking for those senior volunteers, perhaps in the service-providing organizations, who can turn around and provide that immediate assistance in a community setting. These ideas are coming up from the community to build that capacity and those resources for the longer term.

• (1550)

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: As well, when we see community projects, we also see a lot of positive action. They become more involved within the community. That's one thing our government is working for with the new horizons program, because we want to see seniors working together and doing initiatives that make life better for them.

The committee is also aware of the active involvement of local detachments and elder abuse awareness initiatives. Is this involvement mandated nationally? Does RCMP headquarters involve itself in this awareness initiative?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: I was going to say that I understand the RCMP is going to appear before the committee right after we do, so maybe they will be in a better position to provide additional information, unless, Ellen, you want to come in.

Ms. Ellen Healey: Our program doesn't mandate that they be involved, but as I mentioned earlier, community projects come up at the local level and, in some cases, they seek partnerships with local service providers. In some communities that's a natural fit and they involve them from the get-go in the project development, but we don't mandate that.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Thank you.

The Chair: You have two minutes left. Would anybody else like to take it on?

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Thank you very much.

Again, to our guests, thanks very much.

Mr. Paquette, I was curious when you talked about financial abuse being one of the most prevalent forms of elder abuse. Anecdotally, I get that, but I'm trying to understand it. What research did you do to determine that, or how did you choose to ultimately focus on that particular aspect of concern when you ran your TV ads and your promotion?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: I would say two things.

First, that information is based on some preliminary studies that have been done, as well as on some of the surveys that have been done with people. That is what they have identified most often as being the most important or as occurring most often. We always have to be careful with the statistics. As we said, statistics are kind of difficult sometimes because we need to do a lot more research.

Also, on the other side, part of one of the projects that we're funding is that we don't consider there to be a single, well-approved definition used by everybody—

Mr. Ed Holder: We found that as well.

Mr. Jacques Paquette: —so when we look at some of the reports we're getting, it's sometimes difficult to compare them and be sure that our numbers are right.

Mr. Ed Holder: In fact, I might add that when we've had various guests appear and we have talked about various studies, you'd think there would be, as a baseline, an absolute common definition of elder abuse, and . I gather.... Again, we all have a sense of what that is, but I don't have a feeling that there's one—quote—version. Maybe that's reality, because that can expand and change as well, but I think that is part of the challenge.

Do I have time for—

The Chair: Actually, we're past the time.

Mr. Ed Holder: Then I'll have a chance a little later on.

Thank you.

The Chair: That's perfect.

Thank you, Mr. Holder.

We'll move to Ms. Freeman.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair

Thank you very much for being here, Mr. Paquette and Madam Healey.

I'd like to commend you on the success of the crucial first steps that HRSDC has been taking to empower seniors.

This committee has heard that a lack of social housing for senior women is a contributing factor in senior abuse. Which program that you would have funded would have contributed to creating a housing strategy for senior women?

• (1555)

Mr. Jacques Paquette: For homelessness, because that's the angle, there are two programs being supported by the portfolio of this department. One is the homelessness program per se, and the other is specifically housing. Housing is under the responsibility of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

I think that my colleague, the director general responsible for the homelessness program, appeared before this committee at one point and explained some of the efforts that were conducted to address homelessness for women. Some specific projects have been put in place to try to address that issue, because, as you said, that's one factor.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: It's definitely a contributing factor. Thank you.

We have identified the fact that in some provinces long-term care facilities are not subject to inspection or minimum standards of care. This is also a contributing problem. Which programs from new horizons or FEAI have implemented inspections or standardization of care?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: Well, absolutely not...what I would say is that the question you're raising concerning long-term care facilities is the responsibility of the provinces. I would think that the responsible provincial Minister of Health, for example, would be the one that would be looking into this.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Right. So if we wanted to legislate minimal standards, we'd have to speak to Health Canada.

Mr. Jacques Paquette: No, what I'm saying is that this is a provincial authority, so I don't think Health Canada can legislate the management of long-term care facilities that are falling under provincial—

Ms. Mylène Freeman: We could maybe include it in minimal standards when we renegotiate the Canada Health Act.

Mr. Jacques Paquette: I'll leave that to Health Canada to answer.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: We would very much like to talk to Health Canada, of course. Thank you.

We have identified also that, again, seniors are getting very different access to medicare-covered health services, depending on where they live—in rural areas or cities—or if they're aboriginal, or depending on what province they are in. Are there any programs to address this inequality?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: Are you asking about how provincial health care is provided to the citizens depending on where they live? Is that your question?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Yes, that's exactly what I'm talking about.

Mr. Jacques Paquette: Okay. All I can say is that this department is not dealing with health, for sure—

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): On a point of order, Madam Chair—

The Chair: Ms. Young.

Ms. Wai Young: —that's a health question, not a seniors abuse question.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I'll move on.

We have identified also that, while programs sometimes exist to train police, lawyers, and judges about seniors abuse, in many cases these programs or tools are patchy. Could you tell us if there are any initiatives to fund training tools that could be used across the country?

Ms. Ellen Healey: Yes. In the federal elder abuse initiative, we actually had some funding set aside to start working with professional service-providing organizations where we're now seeing them taking a baseline curriculum and then developing and customizing it for their membership, so that when they are working with seniors or meeting or serving seniors, they are starting to understand the signs in order to be able to identify elder abuse and understand what their responsibilities are to report a professional service provider.

It's starting to put them more in touch with what their obligations are. But more importantly, in my view, it is helping them to ask the question, "I wonder..." or "what if...?" They're meeting a senior and they've been trained on what the indicators are, what some of the markers are, so they can then possibly go to the next step as is appropriate.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: This committee has also heard from Dr. Lynn McDonald, from the national initiative for the care of the elderly. She was given a half a million dollars from HRSDC, which is great, to create the tool for defining and measuring elder abuse.

She said, though, that without a study of prevalence, she has no idea how to best put this tool to practice. She says the last study of prevalence was done in 1999, and it wasn't very good from a research perspective. I noticed that you also stated in your presentation to the committee that there's a lack of research being done in terms of seniors' abuse. Dr. McDonald said, and I quote: "If we don't know the nature of the problem, we don't know what type of treatment to offer people. If we don't know the nature of the problem, we don't know who is eligible for services".

Do you know when there will be a study of prevalence for elder abuse in Canada?

• (1600)

Mr. Jacques Paquette: At the moment, and because we need basic information, as well as to agree on a definition—I think that's the question being asked—we are funding Canada's national initiative for the care of the elderly. That's a two-year research project that is going to develop an operational definition, create measurement instruments that will be reliable, and also identify and address ethical considerations for the investigations.

We're supposed to get the results of this research in 2012—so next year—and based on that, we will be able to go one step further. As I said, there are some basic elements that we are missing. When I say “we”, I mean all of those people who are trying to address this issue. We really count on this to be able to have a solid base to go further.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Thank you.

If there's any time left, I'll pass it to—

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We have seven minutes for the Conservatives.

Ms. James.

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our two guests, Mr. Paquette and Ms. Healey. It's certainly good to hear from both of you today.

I think we can all agree that our government has recognized the seriousness of elder abuse, whether it be physical neglect or financial abuse.

Prior to my being elected to the House, I was a candidate and campaigned on a number of issues. I'm just wondering whether you have seen an increase in funding to seniors over the last number of years, compared to maybe 10 years ago. Have you seen more attention being given to this issue overall?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: First of all, as a result of the creation of the National Seniors Council and the recommendations of the first report, we've seen the establishment of the special initiative, the federal elder abuse initiative, which had funding of \$3 million over three years.

Following this, almost at the same time, as I said, there was also additional money given to the national seniors program in 2007. There was \$5 million given at that time. With the end of the federal elder abuse initiative, which was in fact a special push to increase the awareness, what we've seen in the last two budgets is an additional \$10 million for the new horizons for seniors program. That's annual money that was added to the budget, bringing the budget to \$45 million.

There are things that you don't necessarily see. I'm not talking about, for example, the old age security, if you're talking about seniors in general. There are other elements that were added to this. What I should note, for example, is that the new horizons for seniors program was increased by \$10 million.

At the same time, when I was talking about the awareness advertisement that will go through in November and January, that's not coming from the money in the new horizons for seniors program. We managed to get this from another source of funds, which is the centralized advertising fund. In other words, that campaign would be funded through this source of funds, so it's not even showing in our numbers.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

Do you have an exact figure on how much has been invested in seniors through the different programs that you've just talked about? I was trying to add them up. You said \$3 million and \$5 million, and I heard \$10 million more, for a total of \$45 million for the new horizons program. Is that what I heard correctly?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: That's right. At the moment, the annual budget for the new horizons for seniors program is \$45 million per year.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

You mentioned the new ad campaign. I wanted to ask a question about that. You said that prior existing one was going to be re-released in late November and a new one was going to come out in early 2012.

Mr. Jacques Paquette: That's correct.

Ms. Roxanne James: We actually had a previous witness here who stated that the problem with that ad campaign—unless I misunderstood—was that the police department received an abundance of calls that they were not able to actually handle.

I just want to clarify and understand fully. I recall seeing that ad, but maybe my memory is setting me adrift here. Could you explain to me whether those ads directed people to contact the local police directly? Or was there another contact number or agency they were supposed to reach?

● (1605)

Mr. Jacques Paquette: That's a very interesting question in a way, which will bring me to say something else as well.

But I'll start at the beginning. The ad had a 1-800-O-Canada number at the end of it. What the advertisement was saying, basically, was that if you want to know more, if you need some tools or whatever, to please contact the number. There was also information on the website. That was really the first element: we wanted to provide the tools to people to be able to address that.

That brings me to a second question. I said also that elder abuse is under-reported. We know that. So what will happen is that our numbers will go up because we are going to raise awareness, and we have to be conscious of that. We want people to report it. We want people to be aware of it. So in fact, we hope that in a way the numbers will be up because there will be more reporting.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

I want to ask one more question. I hope you can answer this. You mentioned that after the National Seniors Council, which was created in 2007, did their study, they came out with a report, and you indicated that the first step was to raise awareness. What do you think the second step is?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: Oh, I think there are many elements that were put in place. The awareness is not only the first step but is also something we'll have to keep doing, because we're not finished with that at this stage.

The second thing is that it was important to start developing tools for front-line service providers. We have been working on this, and we have to keep working on it, because in some cases the needs are quite specialized, in a way. We need to ensure that people can identify the signs and know what to do. That's another thing that we will keep working on.

I should say that the third thing is that it's very important for us to continue to work very closely with the provinces because, in fact, the provinces are very much responsible for many of the tools on the ground. It is a coordination of all levels of government that will allow us to achieve the results we want to achieve.

Ms. Roxanne James: I'm going to try to get in one last question. You mentioned an element in the Speech from the Throne about making a commitment to address seniors abuse through legislation. Given the fact that your statistics indicate that elder abuse is going to continue to rise, based on our aging population, do you believe that we need to really take a look at this and address it more carefully through legislation?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: I think the government commitment is pretty clear. I would say that what you have here is a way to use all the tools available to address that issue, and this is one among others. If you ask me, this one alone won't make the difference, and another one alone might not make the difference. It's the combination of all these elements that will make a difference in the longer term.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

Do I have time? Can I squeeze in one more?

The Chair: No, we're done. Thank you very much.

Now we'll move to Ms. Sgro.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thanks to you both for the good work you do on behalf of all Canadians.

There's an issue we're trying to deal with here when we talk about elder abuse in Canada. From the work you've done and from your initiatives, I'm sure you've learned a lot of statistics about just how prevalent the abuse is, over and above the financial abuse. What else have you learned through this process? Also, are you planning to disseminate that information to other organizations that are working on this, the front-line workers? We've heard from many of the organizations that are struggling to deal with this issue. Are you going to be sharing that information with them as well?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: Yes. I would say that one of our main objectives—and I think it's also the objective of all of our partners—is to ensure that we can share all of the information we have.

As you said, first of all, it's difficult to get the information, but we are learning, not only from the research that is being done, but also from the service providers. Some of the tools that have been developed are very useful. We have done this in the past, but we are going to put even more emphasis on ensuring that the new projects

that are being developed, even if they are specialized in some cases, can be replicated in other places in Canada. This is something we are working on at the moment, as we speak.

We also notice that when you start pushing the issue, you realize that many challenges arise. I was referring to the power of attorney, for example, where what the ministry has realized is that there can be two angles to that tool. It's a very useful tool, but at the same time we have to make sure it's not being used to support financial elder abuse.

Sometimes it's easier, as you can imagine, to identify the problem than to find a solution. This is why it is so important to have not only all levels of government but also all partners trying to find some of the appropriate solutions.

For data, for any information that we have, there are a few surveys that have been done, and what we know from these numbers is that it's sometimes difficult to compare one with another, because definitions are different and so on. That's part of the issue that we absolutely want to solve, because with the little information we have, we want to make sure that it will be useful to help us target the right person at the right place.

• (1610)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Ms. Healey?

Ms. Ellen Healey: On your first question about dissemination, we already are disseminating, but we do it passively through our agreements. In most of the project descriptions and for the work done in them, since the proponents are very proud when they reach the point that they have a pamphlet or fact sheet or video, they have a dissemination plan. Most projects are working very actively; we close most of them in March.

I would also add that we met with our agreement holders in January 2011. We were quite pleased at how many accepted our invitation. We had a day, and I think that if I had my time back, I would have made it a day and a half. The energy in the room to exchange information about what they had done in itself created a network. What we could see happening that day was that people were saying, "I'll call you", and they were taking home materials. Hopefully one of the things we've learned is that we may be able to reduce the amount of overlap and duplication, because people are coming up the curve.

The second thing we learned that day was that there is an immense desire to start working on community response initiatives, whereby they start to work outside the silos a little, because they can't do it all on their own. It's fine to have a pamphlet, but if you have to go to another service provider to work on a solution or response, you have to figure out the dynamic to come together.

That's one of the things we're hoping to do in our next call for proposals: to see whether community groups and larger-scale projects can start to push the envelope a little bit on those types of protocols and see how you bring those pieces together to form a holistic, seamless solution.

Hon. Judy Sgro: When we're talking about the financial abuse issue, whether it's through abuse of the power of attorney or just abuse of a bank account, how do you get into nursing homes and retirement homes with this kind of information? It's a very delicate thing.

I suspect that there's probably a huge amount of what we would term financial abuse going on, yet you can't... One of the witnesses we had the other day was suggesting that there was a particular clause in Bill C-13 involving the banks that they had some concerns about. You don't want to take away the independence of an individual, and usually it's family involved. I think we're caught, in some ways, in trying to help and trying to protect them from themselves. Sometimes they don't want to be protected and helped either, yet we call it...and it is financial abuse in many ways. It's very difficult to help everybody.

Mr. Jacques Paquette: I cannot agree more. This is part of the issue. The reason it's so difficult is that very often it's a relative, a member of the family, who is involved, and very often that's why it's important to break the isolation. You have people who are really isolated and depending on the one person and so on, who are, by definition, vulnerable. I would say that the key player in this—and I was referring to the FPT forum—is that the provincial ministers also are asking exactly the same question and trying to see what the solution should be and what tools they have. It will work only if all of us, with the different tools at our disposal, use a concerted approach to see how we can approach it.

On our side at the federal level, we are concentrating on awareness at the national level and also on developing tools for the service providers, while the provinces are dealing with a lot of front-line issues. It's a combination of these efforts that will make a difference. But as you said, it's a very complicated and difficult problem. It's not easy to solve.

•(1615)

The Chair: That brings us exactly to seven minutes. Thank you very much, Ms. Sgro.

Now we'll move for five minutes to Mr. Holder.

Mr. Ed Holder: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Paquette, you scared me deeply when you gave a statistic in which you said that by 2036 one in 13 Canadians will be 80 years of age or over. I did the math and I will be one of those. That makes me somewhat concerned, so I take this subject quite seriously, I might tell you.

One of the things you said as well in your opening remarks, or close to them, was that between 4% and 10% of older adults experience some form of abuse, and it's estimated that one in five incidents of abuse is reported. We've had variations of that, but not too far off that, from previous guests who have testified.

What I'm trying to understand is how we go from real numbers, which presumably come when charges are laid or through various

reports within the system in place currently, to this obviously much more significant challenge whereby we go basically to one out of five being reported. How do we know that?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: Do you mean how do we know that it is under-reported...?

Mr. Ed Holder: How do we know that four out of five incidents aren't reported? I ask that honestly because I'm trying to get my head around it.

Mr. Jacques Paquette: Right. I think that when you talk to service providers, for example, and some of the people who are on the front lines, that's an estimation; it cannot be more than that. Very often, they may have encountered some situation in which the person is not willing to talk about it, but you can guess that there's something.

That's part of it. I don't know how much this was discussed in the meeting in January when you had everybody together. But it is only an assumption. The situation could be worse and that's probably what the issue—

Mr. Ed Holder: Well, you see, that would be point. It could be worse than that or it may not be.

When we as a government and prior governments before us have dedicated moneys to increase awareness and provide education and the like to deal with what is a very real issue, is that as good as it's going to get? A kind of "best guess" scenario...? I don't know how you can get it any more finely tuned, but when you say that one out of five is reported, that means 80% aren't. That's significant. If it's more than that...oh my goodness, that's really bad.

I'm asking the question as to how you substantiate that, especially when the governments of the day, at whatever level—federal, provincial, or municipal, for that matter—and in their various roles provide support. How do we know how real that number is? I don't denigrate anybody who suffers from any kind of abuse at all, but how do you substantiate it?

Ms. Ellen Healey: Initially, it would be anecdotal. I've heard someone say to me that a bad family member is better than no family member, which leads me to my previous comment about community response models.

To try to bring the rate down, you have to first of all empower seniors to actually act, when they're able to act, with confidence and courage. But you also need that community response to come in behind them. In the form of a community involvement model, one would hope—and that could be the hypothesis—that you would see the reporting rate go up, and then down because the solutions are coming in behind.

Mr. Ed Holder: Isn't there an irony to this, too? The more education we provide and the more accepting we are that it's okay to report on abuse, the more the statistics will go up, which makes it look as though abuse is increasing, when in fact we don't know that. What we want to do is create an environment—and this is one thing I've seen in the collaborative efforts of the federal government with provinces—to increase education and to make it not only acceptable but more compelling to report.

Aren't we in a bit of a catch-22? We could probably anticipate that the numbers are going to get significantly higher as people are more comfortable with reporting various types of abuse. Do you have a thought on that?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: Yes. I would say two things.

The first is that awareness can have two impacts. One is that people will be ready to report because now they will recognize it. In fact, what the campaign really did was put a name on it. Before, people didn't necessarily think in terms of abuse. Now—according to the campaign, it's pretty clear—everybody knows about it. Nobody can say “I didn't know that” or “it doesn't exist” or whatever. So on the one side, there might be additional reporting.

On the other side, when you start putting names on things, it is possible that people will realize that some of the things they were doing were not right. They might stop doing them. What we hope when we have these campaigns is to achieve both: that on the one side, people will talk about this, and on the other side, people will stop doing what they were doing.

• (1620)

Mr. Ed Holder: We're basically holding it out there so that people can see that it's there and then respond.

Mr. Jacques Paquette: Exactly.

The Chair: We're over our time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Holder.

Merci, monsieur Paquette.

We will now move to Ms. Mathyssen.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for being here. We appreciate the information and also the effort you have gone to.

I have a question. On Tuesday we heard from Judith Wahl. She's the executive director of the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly. Madam Wahl told us that the ad hoc nature of new horizons grants meant that organizations were busy putting together proposals and were so busy doing short-term proposals that the real work wasn't being done.

I'm wondering, why not give some core funding? One of the things we've heard over and over in this committee—I've been here for almost six years—is that the ad hoc nature of funding undermines what organizations can do on the ground and that there has to be core funding. It seems to me that this would apply to elder abuse as well.

Could you comment and tell us why there is no core funding? Why is there nothing substantive so that something real can happen?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: There are probably a few things I could say about this. Core funding is a concept that we as a government tried to move away from, and in fact did move away from many years ago, because we noticed that core funding sometimes was bringing us away from results and some of the outcomes we were hoping to have.

In fact—I'm going back to the program—we have two types of projects. For the big ones, the pan-Canadian ones that will have a structural impact, I would say, if I can use those words, we're talking about \$250,000 per year over three years, so multiply that by three. We're talking about potentially significant projects at the national level. When you do a three-year project, you have a lot of stability in terms of being able to develop something that is quite significant. That's the approach for the pan-Canadian projects that are purely on elder abuse.

At the local level, we are doing exactly the opposite. What we want is to have a small amount that can be used quickly on some of the interventions in the local community that they would find useful and which we can also multiply across the country. What you will see with NHSP is that in fact all small communities around the country are able to have a project because of the way the funding is provided. Very often, we have heard also that the NHSP grant that is given is used to test the solid projects and then allow them afterwards to get additional funding from other sources.

There are different advantages in the way we are approaching these issues through that funding mechanism.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: By other sources, do you mean private sources?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: One person, for example, was telling me that he was able to get money from foundations and from provincial authorities as well, because the grant allowed him to in fact demonstrate that the project could work in the longer term.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: But if they don't get that funding, are they then dead in the water and it doesn't go ahead...?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: In that case, he got it.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: But what happens when they don't?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: When they don't, it's because they didn't make the demonstration that it would work.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Okay.

One of the things that your report says is that projects “will support”—that suggests to me that it's sometime in the future —“prevention and intervention”. This project started in 2007; we're four years in. What kinds of concrete things have happened as a result in terms of prevention and intervention?

• (1625)

Ms. Ellen Healey: I think what we're seeing as a result of these projects, and I assume you're referring to the big, large-scale, pan-Canadian projects in which we're actually seeing.... Am I correct? Or are you talking about the local projects?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I'm just referring to the report that was presented. I'm looking at page 7, where it says “projects will support”. I suppose they could be pan-Canadian; I'm not sure.

I'm quoting from your remarks, Mr. Paquette.

Ms. Ellen Healey: We've had two call for proposals under this component. What we're now seeing is that the tools are arriving, the DVDs are arriving, and the workshops or dissemination sessions are happening within the communities to start spreading the word but also for educating, for training. We're training seniors to help seniors. We're training family members and those who work with seniors in a professional capacity to actually identify and then understand what they can do and where they can take it from there.

We're hoping the next step would be more multidisciplinary work that brings people together, having them moving out of the silos and working more collaboratively for community-based solutions. We have the information tools.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: But we still have a long way to go for something that we can say is actually preventing—

The Chair: Excuse me. I overran the clock because there was some lack of clarity on what we were talking about.

We'll now move on to Ms. Ambler.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for being here today and presenting to us.

My first question is about the second call for proposals under the new horizons program that is specifically reaching out to ethnocultural groups. Can you tell us a bit more about that call specifically and also about outcomes? Is it too early to see any outcomes or to have made any measurements? Or has that been done? You mention the example of the Spanish-speaking communities who took advantage of this call. Were there any other ethnocultural groups who applied for and received funding under this tranche?

Ms. Ellen Healey: Yes. I'm just looking at my project list here. I'll tell you who we have worked with.

The call for proposals did have a specific priority in the second call, which was in 2009. We worked with: the Chinese community in Calgary; the Philippine community in Manitoba; a number of South Asian and Middle Eastern communities in Guelph in southern Ontario; the Korean community in Toronto; and the Spanish-speaking community, through the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. They received an expression of interest from Mexico for their materials.

The materials have been produced in their languages of origin, but importantly, they're now using seniors in their language communities to help with the dissemination, the expression, and the explanation of what is in these tools and what they actually mean. Again, we've integrated senior elders in those ethnic communities to work with the tools and the resources. The projects are coming to fruition.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: That's great. And they're in their own language, obviously.

Ms. Ellen Healey: That's correct.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Great.

On the same theme of measuring outcomes, you mentioned, Mr. Paquette, that the need for baseline information and hard data is important. This government evidently agrees with you, because HRSDC is supporting the two-year research project of the national initiative for the care of the elderly that you also mentioned in your remarks, that particular study on defining and measuring elder abuse and neglect.

Can you please tell us what the funding amount from HRSDC for that study is, if you know what it is? Also, please explain to us the importance of measuring outcomes as it relates to elder abuse.

• (1630)

Ms. Ellen Healey: The study funding was \$567,000. It began in January 2010.

In terms of measuring the outcomes, Dr. McDonald suggested to you—I read her transcript—that you need good definitions, because that's really how you're going to understand who is in need of assistance, what level of services is required, what the resources are that go with that level, and how best to deliver the services. But without those definitions around which to coalesce, it's very difficult to—

Mrs. Stella Ambler: —measure the product—

Ms. Ellen Healey: —and measure the intervention and the outcome from the intervention.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: —without knowing where you're starting from.

Ms. Ellen Healey: Precisely.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Right. Thank you.

I have one more question about the advertising campaign. You mentioned that funding came from another source. Is that the Privy Council? How does that work? How old is this funding? Was it through legislation? I'm new here, so I don't know how Privy Council funding works. Maybe you could explain it to me.

Mr. Jacques Paquette: I'm not sure that I will be able to give you the history of the fund, but basically the idea is that for major advertising campaigns for the government, instead of having departments going in all directions, they have a central fund, and they then establish the priorities for the year to come to see what the main issues should be that we should address through it.

There is a setting of priorities. They do that basically every year or year and a half, because you have to buy space and so on. At that time—last year, basically—they said that next year one of the campaigns should be on elder abuse and financial abuse. That's how the funding is allocated.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Ms. Healey, do you have any idea what dollar amount of that budget was put toward elder abuse advertising in particular?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: It's very much in line with what was done during the federal elder abuse initiative, so we're probably around the \$4 million mark for the campaign. There are the two campaigns, because as I said, there is one round in November, and there will be another one in January. January's will specifically target financial abuse issues.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Financial abuse? That's the upcoming ad campaign?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: There is one in November, which is the rerun of what we have. January's will be a new one specifically targeting financial abuse issues.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you.

The Chair: We're over time, actually. Thank you very much, Ms. Ambler.

That concludes our panel.

Thank you very much, Ms. Healey.

Thank you, Mr. Paquette. Did you have something to add?

Mr. Jacques Paquette: Yes. We'll leave behind a little card that we produced. I'm speaking to the MPs, in a way. You might find it useful. There are two pages here showing all of the elder abuse provincial resources, and when people are coming to your offices and you're wondering who to refer them to, you might find that useful.

The Chair: That's excellent. Thank you. We'll take it from here; I'm assuming it's bilingual. If I can grab it, the clerk will take it and we'll disseminate it.

Thank you very much.

We'll break for a few minutes for our next panel.

• (1630) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1640)

The Chair: I think we can get started. Our witnesses and our guests who are here today seem to be ready.

I'd like to begin by welcoming our two panellists from the RCMP, Brenda Butterworth-Carr, chief superintendent and director general of the national aboriginal policing services, and Barbara McMorro, constable, policy and program analyst, national aboriginal policing services, contract and aboriginal policing.

I understand, Ms. Butterworth-Carr, that you will be making the presentation. You have 10 minutes. We're looking forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr (Chief Superintendent, Director General, National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to come and speak with you today.

As indicated, my name is Brenda Butterworth-Carr. I have approximately 24 years with the RCMP, and I'm currently the director general of the national aboriginal policing and crime prevention services.

The RCMP recognizes that elder abuse is an unfortunate reality in our society. With an increasing aging population, this issue is and will continue to be a focus of our organization.

What are we doing about it?

In 2008, the Government of Canada announced the RCMP's national crime prevention services as a partner in the federal elder abuse initiative.

The RCMP coordinates activities in support of this initiative in three important ways: one, developing prevention, public awareness, and internal police awareness programs; two, conducting research, needs assessments, and environmental scans; and three, identifying tools, information, resources, and best practices to enhance our police tool box, which assists our officers in dealing with elder abuse.

At the national level, the RCMP also provides support to RCMP divisions across Canada.

The RCMP has over 750 detachments, and it is our members at the local level who conduct investigations into reports of elder abuse in our communities. They also carry out elder abuse awareness initiatives pursuant to the RCMP's crime prevention mandate. The following are a few examples of what is carried out at the divisional level.

In Newfoundland, they partnered with the local seniors resource centre, health care agencies, and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary to develop a publication titled, *Looking Beyond the Hurt: A Service Provider's Guide to Elder Abuse*. The guide informs professionals on the dynamics of elder abuse as well as the support and services available within the community.

In Manitoba, the RCMP collaborated with the Winnipeg Police Service and partner agencies to develop the "It's Everybody's Business" video, which is designed to get the word out that the prevention of elder abuse really is everybody's business. Manitoba RCMP also partnered with seniors and students to develop the Seniors are Cool program. The program promotes discussion with students on issues such as abuse and neglect and focuses on what students can do to promote respect for older adults.

Within the Yukon Territory, the RCMP created a family violence manual that includes information on the many forms of elder abuse, such as psychological, financial, and sexual abuse, as well as various forms of neglect.

While the RCMP takes great strides to promote elder abuse awareness and prevention, we recognize that we simply cannot do it alone. We stress the importance of establishing networks and/or formal partnerships with external community partners that can assist us in conducting research on elder abuse and delivering prevention and awareness programs.

I'll take a moment to highlight two such partnerships.

In 2009, the RCMP was one of three partners in a national project entitled, "Seniors Learning and Knowledge Exchange Program: A National Senior Abuse Response/Prevention Project". The RCMP elder abuse coordinator was the lead police representative for the project. Upon completion of the project, the RCMP then initiated dialogue with other specialized senior abuse units within seven other partnering police agencies.

The RCMP is partnering with the National Institute for the Care of the Elderly, also known as NICE. NICE is a non-government agency made up of an international network of researchers, practitioners, students, and seniors dedicated to improving the care of older adults in Canada and abroad. The RCMP has reviewed and approved three tools developed by NICE for distribution to front-line RCMP officers across the country. They include: the *Elder Abuse Assessment and Intervention Reference Guide*; the *Resources for Older Women* guidebook; and the officers' investigation guide, *Theft by Persons Holding Power of Attorney*.

In addition to the programs and initiatives I have touched on, both the RCMP's internal and external national websites host information dedicated to the general awareness of the forms, signs, and impact of elder abuse. We also prominently feature information on elder abuse during Elder Abuse Awareness Day in June of each year.

• (1645)

The RCMP national crime prevention services have also developed the *Seniors' Guidebook to Safety and Security*, which you have all received a copy of today. The publication was recently updated to include more in-depth information on the subject of elder abuse, and it will be going to print shortly.

While the list of initiatives I have touched on today is not exhaustive, I hope it has given you some insight into the importance the RCMP places on the issue of elder abuse.

I thank you again for inviting me here. I look forward to answering your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Butterworth-Carr.

We'll go to our first round of seven-minute questions.

Ms. Bateman.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you so much for being here with us today. You've provided us with excellent material. I really want to know when this is coming out in print, because this is a very useful document.

I have a number of questions and I will get in as many of them as possible.

First of all, the other day a witness said that the federal government is doing a great job of raising awareness through what we're doing on elder abuse—we had done a national advertising program—but that sometimes officers, when they receive a call, aren't ready to handle it. I'm wondering, for the benefit of the committee, if a senior calls a local RCMP detachment in Manitoba, where I come from, or anywhere in this good country, what happens? Can you walk us through what the officer does and how the officer helps a senior?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Madam Chair, in response to the question, essentially if someone makes a complaint to any detachment within RCMP jurisdiction, they are asked a number of questions to determine the basis for the initial complaint. Through the course of that, once a determination is made, then a response is formulated. So every single call that's ever made to a policing detachment within the RCMP jurisdiction is in fact responded to.

As for members not being aware of what to do, I'm certainly unaware of that, but I do know that the responsibility is to respond to the complaint accordingly.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Okay. I'm heartened to hear that, because we had testimony just the other day from Jean-Guy Soulière, president of the National Seniors Council, who was concerned about that. I'm delighted to hear that your officers are briefed.

How are you educating the officers? Is this part of their normal training?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: We actually implement training at what's commonly referred to as Depot Division, in Regina, Saskatchewan, where we have our primary training facility. All RCMP cadets receive elder abuse training as part of the family violence initiative or the training modules that we have in the applied police sciences. They would in fact receive that in their initial training stages.

Of course, this particular module speaks to and teaches our cadets at that level how to appropriately respond to elder abuse through role-playing and with guest speakers. We have elders who actually come in on site, and members are given that first-hand experience and interaction with elders.

The cadets also have a number of reading assignments that are attached to this particular teaching module, so it's a combination of both. We have a significant number of hours dedicated to that.

• (1650)

Ms. Joyce Bateman: I'm so very glad to hear that they are given the tools to support the elderly.

I'm very interested in how, in your presentation, you spoke about the work you're doing in partnership with the National Institute for the Care of the Elderly and that in fact you are offering staff time to review and approve the tools they are developing. You mentioned some of them.

We understand there are about 15 federal departments and agencies working on this issue. Could you briefly talk about some of the agencies and departments you're working with in support of the federal government's elder abuse initiative?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: I'm just looking for the material to ensure that I'm providing an appropriate response.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: No worries.

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: We actually sit with a multitude of representatives from each of the following departments and agencies within crime prevention services, which is the unit that I'm actually responsible for at a national level.

We participate in the federal, provincial, and territorial working group on family violence, which is led by the Department of Justice. We participate in the Family Violence Prevention Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group, which is led by the Public Health Agency of Canada. We participate in the family violence initiative interdepartmental working group, which is led by the Public Health Agency of Canada. We participate in the family violence sub-working group on aboriginal family violence, led by PHAC. We participate in the family violence initiative DG steering committee. We also participate in a sub-working group on honour-based violence, led by the Department of Justice.

Of course, there is another multitude of committees with which we interact, those involving: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada; the Correctional Service of Canada; first nations and Inuit health; the Public Health Agency of Canada; Statistics Canada; Human Resources and Skills Development; Status of Women; Citizenship and Immigration Canada; Public Safety; the Department of Justice; the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation; the Department of National Defence; and provincial and territorial governments.

So I think that ultimately we participate absolutely everywhere we possibly can to ensure that we're leveraging partnerships to address this important issue.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Thank you so much.

You spoke in your presentation about the Seniors Are Cool presentation or collaboration in the RCMP Manitoba detachments, for which they collaborated with the police service. Could you just talk a little bit about how you've engaged youth in this important initiative?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Essentially, in one of our training pieces we have youth as part of a consultation piece, to ensure positive interactions between youth and our elders. The Seniors Are Cool program itself involves seniors and students and a presentation to students on seniors.

It explores the students' perceptions of seniors and what being old means to students, so it's very much an interactive dialogue among members, seniors, and students who are participating. It also promotes discussion on the meaning of bullying and explores the notion of abusing others for personal gain or neglecting the needs of others. The program focuses on what students can do to promote respect for older adults within our communities.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: What is the age target—

The Chair: Actually, Ms. Bateman, we're over time.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Okay. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go now to Ms. Freeman, who will be sharing her time with Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for being here.

I've been looking at the seniors' guidebook since I got it a few minutes ago. It's really great. This information is targeted to seniors, but I notice that it's available online. Do you have data on how often this guidebook is being downloaded and consulted?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: I do not have that information readily available, but I can certainly obtain it. We do have the means to obtain that information, and I can come back to the committee with that.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: That would be great.

I'd also like to know if it's being distributed in hard copy, too, since it is for seniors, and I'd be worried that putting it online wouldn't necessarily get it to the target audience. Is it being disseminated in hard copy or are there plans for it to be?

• (1655)

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Madam Chair, essentially the booklet is being distributed nationally, so we distribute it to those who request it in hard copy format. We also ensure that each of our 750 detachments has a copy of it. I'll just note that the guide is being updated currently, and the new edition will be distributed in hard copy as well as electronically.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: That's great. Thank you.

I have one other quick question. Could you just quickly go through what the protocol is when local detachments get reports of elder abuse?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Depending on the nature of the complaint, there might be a requirement for a member to physically go to the location of the complainant. Or perhaps the complainant has called in looking for some sort of support. Each complaint that is made, either on behalf of an elder or by the elder themselves, is dealt with on an individual basis and then responded to.

In terms of something that's more severe, typically the appropriate response would be to ensure that the individual's safety, health, and well-being are priorities, and then it would go from there.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: So putting the senior first is a priority.

I'll give the rest of my time to Ms. Mathysen.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

I'd like to add my thanks for your expertise in this.

We're going to be writing a report. This report will go to the House of Commons and we will be asking the government for specific actions.

What would you recommend? What do we still need to do? I know that the RCMP has done a great deal of work in awareness and there is an effort to deal in a sensitive and very kind way with those seniors who you come in contact with. So what do we still need to do, beyond this awareness campaign and reaching out to community partners?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Well, as government officials...it's not really my place to provide that advice. Essentially we're here to respond to questions about elder abuse and so forth and to the kinds of requests that are being made on behalf of the parliamentary committee.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: So you have no recommendations. In the course of your work, there's nothing you've seen that you would like to suggest so we could do our work better. Is there nothing at all or you can't...?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Ultimately, in terms of our proactive approach and community policing as a whole, we're engaged in looking at a holistic approach: prevention, awareness, education, and intervention and the enforcement piece of that. That's really the role of the RCMP.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Is all the work done? Have we arrived? Are we finished?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: I would suggest that there are always opportunities for more work to be done. As an organization, the RCMP is very aware of ensuring that we continue to leverage those partnerships with our other agencies and the multitude of the ones I have listed.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Mathysen.

We'll now move to Mrs. O'Neill Gordon.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being with us today. We certainly appreciate all the work you do. I certainly agree with you that you see a lot. It's definitely an unfortunate reality in our society that we have to face such a sad thing as elder abuse.

This is a topic that very dear to our government's heart and to all of us here. We were just discussing the \$45 million that's put each year into the new horizons program. We know that this provides many opportunities, projects, and advantages for seniors. I especially like the different crime prevention mandates you mentioned here in different provinces, especially the Seniors are Cool one and the youth involvement in that.

Do you know if every province has some kind of a mandate to go ahead and put on different programs like that? Maybe they're not same, but are different provinces engaged in things like that?

• (1700)

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Madam Chair, in essentially every province and territory where the RCMP has jurisdiction, we

have some type of program or initiative. Let me give you a couple of examples.

In the province of Nova Scotia, we have the police academy program for the older adult division, which is essentially a 12-hour workshop spread over six weeks. It focuses on skills and safety principles for older adults. Each week, participants are introduced to new safety and security issues and are given handout materials for further reference. In the final week, participants are presented with a certificate and are encouraged to share the information they have learned with other older adults.

In Alberta and British Columbia, the ACE initiative has what is referred to as the ageless wisdom initiative. This initiative was developed in consultation with the National Aboriginal Policing Services branch and Aboriginal Policing Services in British Columbia. It's a series of workshops, targeted specifically to seniors groups, about issues concerning safety, frauds and scams, abuse, and victim services.

In Labrador and Newfoundland, *Looking Beyond the Hurt: A Service Provider's Guide to Elder Abuse*, is a publication available to front-line service providers. It was prepared by the Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador, health care agencies, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, and the RCMP to inform professionals about the dynamics of elder abuse. It also outlines provincial and federal legislation related to elder abuse. The goal of this guide is to assist service providers in being alert to the signs of elder abuse and to prepare them to look beyond the physical hurt.

In the Province of Prince Edward Island, the RCMP is represented on the board of directors of the seniors safety program. The program itself provides isolated, vulnerable, and community-dwelling seniors with personal safety, home safety, and health information. Two program coordinators are currently funded for this. The information, delivered by the program coordinators to seniors in their own homes, is designed to help reduce their fear of crime, their vulnerability to frauds and scams, and their susceptibility to unscrupulous salespersons and contractors.

In Saskatchewan, we have additional programming. Community policing is working with the Ministry of Justice to train RCMP members, victims' services, and community members on the provincial legislation—the Victims of Domestic Violence Act—and how this tool is applicable in older-adult abuse investigations and complaints. It also addresses how to recognize older-adult abuse. The *NICE Elder Abuse Assessment and Intervention Reference Guide*, along with the relevant fact sheet associated with it, is distributed to all RCMP police employees in Saskatchewan.

Then, of course, in Manitoba, which I mentioned previously, they have an initiative that's referred to as boot camp for older adults, which is sponsored and coordinated by a local resource group. It runs for two hours a week for six consecutive weeks. Older adults are referred to as cadets. Presentations are made to groups of seniors on personal safety, home security, substance abuse and addictions, emergency preparedness, elder abuse, falls prevention, identity theft, fire safety, safe driving, Internet safety, frauds and scams, safe banking, and estate planning and policy procedures.

Essentially, every province and territory where the RCMP has jurisdiction or a detachment has some type of program or initiative on working with our elders.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: I'm from New Brunswick. I don't know if you mentioned New Brunswick or if we have something there. I don't remember your saying.

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: That would be part of one of the groups I listed. Where the RCMP has policing jurisdiction, New Brunswick does in fact have a program that is very similar to the ones used in the other provinces and territories I referred to.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Okay.

What data can you provide on the extent of reported elder abuse in these communities and on the trends over time?

Do you find, as well, that these initiatives are helping seniors better themselves? Do they benefit from them?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Madam Chair, unfortunately, I do not have specific data related this. What I can say, though, is that based on the awareness and the amount of effort on all levels, we have in fact, through our proactive nature, been able to intervene and prevent abuse and have provided awareness among our elders. Unfortunately, I do not have empirical data on that.

• (1705)

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: I, too, want to thank you for this material that you brought to us today.

I'm wondering if the seniors guidebook is distributed to many seniors or is it just in public places? Is it something that is available to seniors as well?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: In response to the question, we make our material available to everyone; hence the reason that it's also posted online. We ensure our detachments have an appropriate amount to distribute to their seniors, and often we'll ensure that material is provided at our seniors centres. In one province in particular, they actually meet within the homes of our seniors and would provide the material first-hand.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Yes, because many seniors in their own homes would not have access to computers or going online. We certainly encounter this in a lot of ways, so a hard-copy book like this would certainly be of benefit.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Neil Gordon.

Given that Madam Sgro isn't here, we will move on to Mr. Holder for five minutes.

Mr. Ed Holder: Thank you very much, Chair.

I'd like to thank our guests for being here, but particularly may I say to both of you thank you for your service to Canada. That's important to say, from all parliamentarians, and I know we all share that. Your outstanding commitment is beyond reproach. Please take that message back from parliamentarians to your fellow officers.

I was looking at page 7 in your book. Just out of interest, those aren't euros, are they? That looks like euro dollars as opposed to Canadian dollars.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ed Holder: Maybe that's me, I'm not sure. It's not critical, and I do have some serious questions.

One of my colleagues opposite said, quite correctly, that we will be doing a report at the end of these series of meetings. She mentioned that we will be doing recommendations. While that's true, I should add for the record that in terms of the testimony we've heard, we are also going to be talking about the state of the union—in other words, what the government is doing. I just want to clarify that it isn't just about all the things that need to be done but about consideration of what has been put in place as well.

Madam Butterworth-Carr, by your testimony I was very surprised and impressed with the various initiatives the RCMP is engaged with across the country. I was quite struck by the various types of involvement. If I could take us there for a moment, to both of you, I was curious about your involvement with national aboriginal policing in particular.

In your role, do you find the RCMP's approach in dealing with aboriginals different from dealing with non-aboriginals as it relates to senior abuse, and if so, how, please?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Madam Chair, in response, I think it's important to note that essentially how we respond is very much about whatever report or complaint happens to come forward. We ensure that people are definitely treated equally.

We recognize that within our indigenous communities certainly there has been some history, so we work very hard at ensuring we have an appropriate response, regardless of the sex or ethnicity or background lifestyle or relationship of the victim to the offender. We want to ensure that any of our responses are done in an appropriate and thorough manner.

Mr. Ed Holder: I would have no doubt that they are done in a thorough manner.

In terms of your experiences, and appreciating the jurisdiction of the RCMP versus some provinces where they have their own police forces, what are you finding are the most common types of abuse in terms of seniors? I think we'd all like to know if you have a sense of that.

What's the most common? What would the top few issues be? Do you have some feeling for that?

• (1710)

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Essentially we see virtually everything in terms of the type of abuse. Our elders come forward with complaints or families come forward with complaints. There's a variety of areas, including certain forms of abuse such as fraud, assault, sexual assault, uttering threats, harassment, and so forth. There are other areas that we would look after in terms of the finance piece. We see virtually everything.

As to whether one is more prevalent or not, unfortunately I'm not able to respond to that at this time. I can certainly acquire that information and bring it forward. I'm not aware of any theme of one over the other.

Mr. Ed Holder: Madam Chair, I think it would be useful to know if there are some aspects of seniors abuse that are more prevalent.

If you have the ability to do that, we as a committee might find that useful.

I find it interesting that again in your testimony you made a reference to one of the various pieces you have. I would like to echo my colleague's comment about the quality of the seniors guidebook, having looked at it briefly. You have a number of programs in which you engage the community. You've chosen one of the tools—approved by the RCMP, developed by NICE—for distribution to your RCMP officers as a resource for older women. There must have been some rationale that this was a particular target group that was worth the focus of the RCMP.

Is that a reasonable comment?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Again, that's based upon a partnership in which we are one of several partners. Ultimately, the material that's being distributed through NICE is supported as a multi-agency approach. That would be one of the reasons why we share that particular information.

The Chair: Actually, we're over time, Mr. Holder. Thank you very much.

If you could please forward any information you have in terms of those statistics to the clerk of the committee, that would be very important for the study we're doing.

Thank you very much.

We'll now move on for five minutes to Ms. Brosseau.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Thank you very much.

Thank you both for taking the time to spend with us and to answer our questions. It's very important.

I'm new to this committee, so bear with me if I pose some different questions.

This is a great book. I find that it's going to be a great resource. In my riding, we have a lot of seniors. I haven't met all of them—that's impossible—but I've been to seniors' homes and had a chance to really talk with them and hear about their problems and their worries.

I'm looking at this book and I think it's great, but it doesn't mention sexual abuse or physical abuse. I know that you don't want to go into great detail about it, but this is a guidebook. I don't know who this is intended for. Is it intended for seniors? Is it intended for personal care workers? Is it intended for retirement homes? I'm trying to understand this book a little better.

Thank you.

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Madam Chair, in response, essentially the guidebook is intended for a number of audiences. We utilize it to train internally within our membership as well as externally. Ultimately, this is an older version of our guidebook; we do have a piece that's actually been updated. The bilingual booklet will be available as well.

The additional information that we anticipate having covered... sorry, I have the wrong piece of paper here, so please bear with me. Essentially, the additional information that will be in the new guidebook on elder abuse specifically speaks to forms of elder abuse such as neglect by self or others; physical abuse; sexual abuse and exploitation; psychological and emotional abuse; and economic abuse, which is stealing or misusing an elderly person's money or possessions. Those factors will in fact be included in the updated material.

To reiterate, the guide itself is really a teaching tool as well as an awareness tool for the elders themselves.

• (1715)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: I think this is great.

We heard from a witness earlier who told us that usually only one in five cases of elder abuse is reported. Would you say that elders would report their abuse? Is it a family member or somebody working with them who would report? What's most common?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: With respect to the reporting piece, we actually receive that in a number of various ways. We receive it from neighbours. We receive it from family members. We receive it from individuals themselves. As for what the most common reporting is, ultimately we usually receive that from other family members or caregivers or workers themselves.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Do you find in the work the RCMP does that you deal with more problems of elder abuse in rural communities or in urban centres? Or is it just about the same across the board?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Madam Chair, I don't have that information readily available, but I can certainly bring it back to the committee for your awareness.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: I really appreciate that.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Could I ask a quick question?

When an officer goes to a home or responds to a complaint, how difficult or how easy is it to lay charges? How often are charges actually laid, and do you have the tools? Do we have enough laws to lay charges against those who perpetrate elder abuse?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: In response, Madam Chair, certainly within the Criminal Code there is a variety of offences that provide the police of the jurisdiction the ability when certain criteria are met.

When a member responds to a residence or to a complaint, the member will take a series of factors into consideration. Again, if there's a form of abuse, whether it's fraud, assault, sexual assault, uttering threats, criminal harassment, or another offence under the Criminal Code, we certainly will have that ability, as long as we have enough information from the victim, the witness, or whoever else may in fact be considered within the police investigation report that goes to the crown. After that point, the Department of Justice in the respective area would take over.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: So there are enough laws on the books to address this.

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Certainly with respect to the Criminal Code offences that we would respond to, there are a significant number of them available to police, as well as various pieces of provincial and territorial legislation that assist police.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Mathysen.

We now have five minutes for a member of the Conservative Party.

Ms. James.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

I just want to reiterate my colleague's expression of gratitude and respect for you. I would also like to utter the same respect for you. My father is a retired police officer from Toronto and I actually put any law enforcement right across this country pretty high up on the list of people I'm impressed with. Thank you very much for being here.

Witnesses from HRSDC were here previously and mentioned that four out of ten older adults experience some form of abuse. They stated that only one in five incidents is actually reported. I know that my colleagues across the floor have also touched on this. The question we had previously was that if only one in five is reported, how do we know that there are actually four other cases that are going unreported?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Unfortunately, I don't have that information in terms of statistics. What I can say, though, is that with the number of initiatives and such, we certainly recognize that it is an issue. Also, based upon the types of tools, as well as awareness material and the amount of investment that the members in the field in our various detachments are engaged in, we definitely recognize that this is an issue and we are responding to it accordingly.

Ms. Roxanne James: If incidents are going unreported—let's say that statistic was correct—why do you think that is?

• (1720)

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: I would suggest that there are various reasons why individuals might not necessarily come

forward to make a complaint, or to say they have been the recipient of abuse, given that it's very personal in nature. Perhaps there's embarrassment attached to it, or there are other circumstances. I think it's very much an individual piece. I think we see more reporting when someone has a sense of empowerment, and part of the awareness program is to ensure that empowerment within our elders.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

I'm just wondering if one of the aspects is that the person who has been abused or is suffering physical abuse might feel that the person who's doing the abusing, whether it's a close family member or someone outside, will not be punished justifiably if apprehended by law enforcement and the abuse might return at some point in the future.

Do you think that's a reason why someone might be leery about reporting it? In case the abuser returns to the home or the situation and the abuse continues or even gets worse...?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: I think it's one of those things where it's on an individual basis. Especially when it's very personal in nature, individuals, for a variety of reasons, make complaints or do not. That could certainly be a factor. But I would be generalizing about why one would be more prominent than another as far as people reporting or not reporting is concerned.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

I know that you touched on the Criminal Code of Canada, and there are certainly a lot of laws there that are not necessarily enforced. A previous witness indicated they were really shocked that age was not considered to be a factor in sentencing for crimes against seniors. Many seniors, given their age, are more vulnerable physically and mentally and are not necessarily able to defend themselves from physical abuse, neglect, or even financial abuse. Would you agree that age is not really considered in sentencing within the court system?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: The RCMP maintains a victim assistance policy that requires members to inform victims of the services provided by victim services and to make an offer for referral with consent. I speak to that specifically because this refers to any person or group that is susceptible to physical or emotional injury: a person who is vulnerable because of their age, disability, or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, and is in a position of dependence.

Whether it's through victim services or the investigation itself, a person's age could very well be referenced in the court documents presented to crown counsel. On where it goes from there, I'm not in a position to speak to that, of course, because that's in the Department of Justice.

The Chair: We're out of time, Ms. James.

Thank you very much.

Is there somebody from the NDP who has a question?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Sure, I'll take a quick question.

I imagine that you are sometimes faced with situations where what's happening is not really a crime. For instance, in this elder abuse suspicion index, they say that one of the ways to identify elder abuse, as it's defined broadly, is to ask, "Have you been upset because someone talked to you in a way that made you feel shamed or threatened?" That is abuse, but it's not a crime. There might be neglect when no one is there to take care of the person, or poverty, or isolation in living in rural areas where there isn't really the ability to get to services, etc. What do you do when you're faced with those situations?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: When we receive a call for service, regardless of the nature of the call it's important that whichever police person responds takes into consideration all of those factors. That's where victim services, whether within a police agency, the community, or elsewhere, certainly have the opportunity to link that in.

It's also where we rely very heavily on our partnerships. If we recognize that there are things that don't perhaps reach the threshold for Criminal Code investigation or won't likely result in charges, we definitely make sure that we rely on our partnerships. Whether it's health services or another agency, we can look at addressing the unique needs of the individual.

• (1725)

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Our task is to get rid of senior abuse, but crime legislation is not really going to address the problem. I'm getting the sense that there needs to be a holistic approach to giving seniors access to services. Maybe the government could be facilitating you in doing that. Do you have a comment on that?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Madam Chair, essentially it goes back to one of the comments I made earlier with respect to the RCMP and policing, and specifically crime prevention and community policing. It's really about utilizing the community as a whole to respond. Regardless of the individual and the background and so forth, it's not just an RCMP issue, it's a community issue, and we have to respond in that manner.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Thank you very much.

I'm okay, Madam Chair.

The Chair: You can have two minutes.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Okay.

In regard to utilizing the community, do you often find that the resources on the ground, the resources you need in order to do the kind of job you want, are thin? Do we need more resources on the

ground in terms of the kind of abuse that my colleague has referenced?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Generally speaking, depending upon the area and location, we certainly have been able to respond accordingly. I think we can always use more resources regardless of the community we're in.

I do recognize, having provided policing services within small northern communities myself, that you utilize the people who are in the community in addressing the root issues.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Is that lack of resources, or perhaps that need for extra resources, something that we would find in northern remote aboriginal communities? We've been talking a great deal in this committee about violence against aboriginal women. Certainly seniors fall into that category. I wondered if that was something you might be aware of or could comment on.

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Madam Chair, that's where we rely heavily on our partnerships. We recognize that policing is certainly just one piece of the approach.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We do have a couple of minutes left. Would somebody like to take that?

Go ahead, Mr. Holder.

Mr. Ed Holder: Thank you.

With regard to reporting of seniors abuse, when there is a claim from an elderly person about abuse, is laying a charge against an alleged perpetrator mandatory? How does that process work?

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Madam Chair, it completely depends upon the nature of the complaint, the type of abuse. Certainly if it's violence in a relationship, then there is a mandatory piece that we will respond to accordingly. There are other alternatives. The approach from the RCMP really depends upon the type of abuse.

Mr. Ed Holder: You see, I was thinking about that, and you know, with things like fraud, if you can track and follow the paper trail, that's one thing. With severe physical abuse, there might well be obvious signs. But when it comes to other forms of abuse, especially when you're dealing with somebody who is quite elderly or who may have mental health issues...which regrettably are often more common with some older persons.

I'm just trying to get a sense of how hard it is to deal with someone in that situation in terms of establishing a level of proof. That has to be a tremendously challenging thing.

• (1730)

C/Supt Brenda Butterworth-Carr: Again, Madam Chair, it would be completely dependent upon the situation. It's very difficult to respond to what are in essence hypothetical situations. It depends upon the level of abuse and the multiple factors associated with it.

If there is a disability, then we would use services to interact appropriately. If there is a language issue, then we would draw upon other services to respond to that. It really depends upon the actual incident itself.

Mr. Ed Holder: Yes, and—

The Chair: That brings us to 5:30, Mr. Holder.

Thank you very much for your presentations, Ms. Butterworth-Carr and Ms. McMorrow.

Before I forget, I'm wondering if we could ask for all the materials you referenced earlier related to the elder abuse module used in training the cadets. That, with the other information, would really

help us with the study we're undertaking here. You can forward that to the clerk.

Mr. Holder.

Mr. Ed Holder: Before we wrap up, Madam Chair, I'd like to officially welcome our two newest members to the committee—Ms. Mathysen, who I know very well from the tenth-largest city in Canada, and Ms. Brosseau.

We're delighted to have you here.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you very much, Mr. Holder. I appreciate that. I think perhaps I should be welcoming you to this committee, because I've been here a long, long time.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

This meeting is adjourned.

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