



## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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### Elder Justice Coalition Welcomes Progress on Coercive Control Reform

OTTAWA, ONTARIO – On May 4, 2026, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights (Justice Committee) adopted an amendment to Bill C-16, the *Protecting Victims Act*, requiring that Parliament initiate a review five years after the bill receives royal assent "to consider, among other things, the criminalization of coercive or controlling conduct in relationships other than intimate partner relationships." The proposed amendment comes amid growing legal recognition in Canada of coercive and controlling behaviour as a serious form of family violence, including in the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Ahluwalia v. Ahluwalia*.

The Elder Justice Coalition recognizes the significance of the proposed offence's focus on coercive control in intimate partner relationships, and its predominant impact on women in this context. Coercive and controlling behaviour is widely understood to be a serious form of family violence and it is a well-established precursor to intimate partner homicide. The Coalition supports efforts to strengthen criminal law protections for domestic abuse victims.

In *Ahluwalia*, the Supreme Court recognized a new tort of intimate partner violence arising from patterns of coercive and controlling conduct. The Court emphasized the dependency, vulnerability, and breach of trust that can characterize coercive control in intimate partnerships. Although the case concerned intimate partner abuse in the civil law context, the Coalition welcomes this evolving legal recognition of coercive control as a serious form of interpersonal harm and the broader conversation it may prompt regarding other relationships characterized by trust, dependence, and vulnerability.

As Canadian law increasingly recognizes the serious harms associated with coercive control, the Coalition commends the Justice Committee for recognizing that coercive control also occurs in non-intimate partner contexts, including those involving relatives and caregivers of older adults. “This review is a good signal that government recognizes the harmful consequences coercive and controlling behaviour can have on older Canadians,” said Andrea Silverstone, CEO of Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society. “The Coalition appreciates the attention being given to this societal problem and the momentum it creates for reform.”

However, the Coalition believes that five years is too long to wait for further study and consultation. Coercive control affecting older adults outside intimate partner relationships is a pressing issue that demands more immediate legislative action. “Delaying consideration leaves elder abuse victims without adequate criminal law protection from coercive and controlling behaviour by those they trust and depend on, including adult children, grandchildren, and caregivers,” said Marta Hajek, CEO of Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario. “The seriousness and prevalence of this harm warrant a more urgent response.”

This significant delay places Canada behind other jurisdictions, such as England & Wales, which criminalized coercive control in both intimate and family relationships in 2015. “The Justice Committee’s amendment is a meaningful step, but a five-year delay is difficult to justify given that there is over a decade of international experience to draw on,” said Heather Campbell Pope, a lawyer and the founding director of Dementia Justice Canada. “Older adults experiencing coercive control by relatives and caregivers need timely recognition and protection under Canada’s criminal law.”

Bill C-16 provides a two-year coming-into-force period to allow the justice system, including law enforcement, to prepare for the new offence as it relates to intimate partners. While the Coalition recognizes the practical considerations underlying implementation, it is not immediately clear why coercive control in relationships involving relatives would be excluded from that same preparatory timeline. It seems reasonable to consider that this period could also be used to prepare police and other justice actors to recognize and respond to coercive control in the context of elder abuse.

At clause-by-clause consideration, the Justice Committee had an opportunity to include this broader scope within the existing two-year implementation and training period; however, an amendment to expand the scope to relatives was defeated. Although the Justice Committee’s commitment to a future parliamentary review is an important acknowledgement of the issue, the Coalition remains concerned that elder abuse victims experiencing coercive control by family members and caregivers will continue to lack adequate criminal law protection in the meantime.

The Coalition looks forward to continuing to engage with parliamentarians to advance comprehensive and timely criminal law reform on coercive control for older Canadians.

## **ABOUT THE ELDER JUSTICE COALITION**

The Elder Justice Coalition is an ad hoc group of organizations from across Canada calling for a coercive control offence to protect elder abuse victims.

### **More information**

For more information on the proposed coercive control offence and elder abuse, please visit Dementia Justice Canada's [webpage](#).

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## COALITION MEMBERS

**Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE)** is the first and oldest legal clinic in Canada with a specific mandate to provide a range of legal services to low-income older adults. Its legal services include individual and group client advice and representation, public legal education, community development and law reform activities.

**Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council (AEAAC)** is a province-wide network of professionals committed to addressing elder abuse and neglect. AEAAC supports prevention and intervention efforts by providing resources and education, and by strengthening Coordinated Community Response (CCR) teams across Alberta. Through these multidisciplinary teams and its Safe Spaces Initiative, AEAAC helps create safe, trusted environments where older adults feel valued and supported.

**BC Association of Community Response Networks (BC CRN)** is a provincial non-profit dedicated to fostering safe, inclusive communities where vulnerable adults are valued and protected. Through active coordination, advocacy, education, collaboration, and relationship building, it supports local community response networks to create awareness and prevention of adult abuse, neglect, and self-neglect.

**Brainwell Institute** is an independent think tank that elevates evidence to ignite change and revolutionize thinking about dementia and brain health.

**Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health (CCSMH)** focuses on supporting older adults' mental health through knowledge translation (information, resources, professional development and clinical guidelines) and advocacy. Its mission is rooted in evidence-based approaches, compassionate advocacy, and the unwavering belief that every older adult deserves the best possible mental health care. The CCSMH is under the umbrella of the Canadian Academy of Geriatric Psychiatrists.

**CanAge** is Canada's national seniors' advocacy organization, working to improve the lives of older adults through advocacy, policy, and community engagement.

**Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (CNPEA)** builds awareness, support and capacity for a coordinated pan-Canadian approach to the prevention of elder abuse and neglect. It promotes the rights of older adults through knowledge mobilization, collaboration, policy reform and education.

**Dementia Justice Canada** is a small non-profit dedicated to advocating for the rights and dignity of people with dementia. A particular focus is criminal justice reform.

**Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO)** is a charitable, non-profit organization, recognized for its leadership in elder abuse prevention, providing awareness raising educational forums, training multi-sectoral front-line service professionals, and creating tools/resources for all to better understand and appropriately respond when supporting older adults at-risk or experiencing increasingly complex issues of elder abuse.

**Entente Education Canada** is a national social enterprise, providing non-profit group insurance designed primarily for people who work in or have retired from the education sector. With more than 88,000 members and 100,000 plan participants across Canada, Entente offers leading group health insurance, meaningful opportunities for community engagement, and advocacy focused on healthy aging and environmental stewardship. Entente is a dynamic, bilingual, member-engaged organization.

**HelpAge Canada** is the only registered Canadian charity and international NGO focused solely on partnering with communities to improve the lives of older people in Canada and around the world.

**International Longevity Centre Canada (ILC-Canada)** is a human rights-based organization focused on older persons, created in 2015 and situated in Ottawa, Ontario. Its mission is to propose ideas and guidance for policies addressing population aging based on international and domestic research and practice with a view to bettering the lives of Canadians. It does this through a human rights lens, through knowledge development and exchange, recommendations of evidence-based policies, social mobilization, and networking.

**National Institute on Ageing (NIA)** improves the lives of older adults and the systems that support them by convening stakeholders, conducting research, advancing policy solutions and practice innovations, sharing information, and shifting attitudes. Its vision is a Canada where older adults feel valued, included, supported, and better prepared to age with confidence.

**Prevent Elder Abuse Manitoba (PEAM)** is a provincial network dedicated to raising awareness, fostering collaboration, and promoting strategies to prevent the abuse and neglect of older adults across Manitoba.

**Sagesse** works to disrupt the structures of domestic violence by addressing the underlying social norms, inequities, and patterns of coercive control that limit autonomy and shape people's lived experiences. We understand abuse as a purposeful pattern of controlling and coercive behaviours that erode a person's agency, relationships, and sense of self, and our values of courage, vulnerability, curiosity, and equity guide us in challenging those conditions.

**Seniors First BC** is a 31-year-old charitable, non-profit society that promotes the dignity of older adults, free from abuse of any kind. It provides information, support, legal advocacy, and referrals to older adults across British Columbia with issues affecting their well-being, as well as those who care for them.

**Yukon Council on Aging (YCOA)** is an organization whose vision is that all Yukon seniors (55+) can flourish and thrive as they age, and age in place for as long as possible. Its services include a home and yard maintenance program; providing information and assistance in applying for Pioneer Utility Grants (home heating); wills and estate planning; presentations on dementia; and more.