



Future Us: A Roadmap to Elder Abuse Prevention

A Pan-Canadian Engagement Strategy
for Anyone and Everyone



CANADIAN NETWORK *for*
the PREVENTION of ELDER ABUSE
RÉSEAU CANADIEN *pour la* PRÉVENTION
du MAUVAIS TRAITEMENT des AÎNÉS

Partners & Advisors

The Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (CNPEA) is the lead in developing the *Future Us* strategy, working in partnership with advocates, professionals and researchers from across Canada. They include:

Bénédicte Schoepflin

Executive Director, Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

Celeste Pang

PhD, Senior Research Officer, 2SLGBTQI Health, Aging and Housing, Egale Canada

Diana Cable

Director, Policy and Research, CanAge

Kathy Majowski

RNBN, Board Chair, Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

Kiran Rabheru,

MD, Geriatric Psychiatrist, Professor of Psychiatry, University of Ottawa; Chair, Steering Group, Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People

Krista James

National Director, Canadian Centre for Elder Law

Laura Tamblyn-Watts

Founder and CEO, CanAge

Margaret Gillis

President, International Longevity Centre Canada; Co-President, International Longevity Centre Global Alliance

Margaret MacPherson

Research Associate, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, Western University

Marta Hajek

Executive Director, Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario

Olive Bryanton

PhD, Citizen Advisor

Patrick Power

RSW, Citizen Advisor

Raeann Rideout

Director, Partnerships & Outreach, Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario

Raza Mirza

PhD, Assistant Professor (Status) University of Toronto, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, Institute for Life Course and Aging; Network Manager, National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE)

Sandra Hirst

BScN, PhD, Associate Professor Emeritus-Nursing, University of Calgary; Board Vice Chair, Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse



CANADIAN NETWORK for
the PREVENTION of ELDER ABUSE
RÉSEAU CANADIEN pour la PRÉVENTION
du MAUVAIS TRAITEMENT des AÎNÉS



Consultations

Consultations were held with leaders from provincial/territorial elder abuse prevention networks:



Consultations were also held with advocates, professionals and government staff in provinces and territories that do not have a regional network in:

- New Brunswick
- Nova Scotia
- Nunavut
- Quebec
- Saskatchewan

This project has been funded by the Department of Justice Canada.



Department of Justice
Canada

Ministère de la Justice
Canada

Designed by: [Tess Widdifield Consulting](#)

Translation by: [MOSAIC BC](#)

A note about language: *Future Us* uses the term “elder abuse” throughout the document, recognizing that the World Health Organization and most governments refer to the issue using this language. There are regional differences, including Québec, where it is referred to as “mistreatment” (maltraitance). We recognize that “elder” is different from the term “Elder” as it is used in Indigenous and collectivist communities.

Future Us refers to “older people”, “older adults”, and occasionally “seniors” interchangeably and without an age specification. The term “regional” is used interchangeably with Provincial/Territorial.

Future Us is not intended to speak for peoples or communities. It is a dynamic document meant to spark and advance a national dialogue on elder abuse in Canada.

Our aim is for this engagement strategy to grow and evolve, as local communities adopt it and governments recognize the urgent need to align investments and focus on prevention.

Future Us is for individuals in any community who have concerns about the current state of the health and well-being of older people. It is our hope that we can work together from very different places to achieve a common goal of elder abuse prevention across the country. In working together for the future of us, may we also find healing in the action to sustain us on the journey.



If you have questions about this document, please reach out to CNPEA at futureus.cnpea@gmail.com

- i** You may copy, download, distribute, display, and otherwise deal freely with this publication. Please acknowledge the source of this publication, do not modify or use for commercial purpose. We invite you to share any Roadmap-inspired work you are undertaking at futureus.cnpea.ca/map.

Executive Summary

We all have a role to play to end elder abuse. *Future Us* is a pan-Canadian engagement strategy that has been developed for people of all ages. The roadmap is for citizens, advocates, professionals and leaders in communities and governments to help us work from different parts of society on a shared project to prevent violence and abuse of older people in their homes and communities. Our future is up to us.

The scope is pan-Canadian. We need to acknowledge inequities and discrimination against older people at a societal level. Age is a protected ground under the Canadian Human Rights Act. The current normalization of ageism must be addressed because it condones and sets the stage for elder abuse. Age-related issues need to be tackled as a whole society, as a pan-Canadian project of social change.

The primary strategy is engagement. Everyone has a role to play, but first we need to understand the issues to be addressed, potential roles, and the many different opportunities to contribute to positive social change.

True engagement is broad and diverse. For this strategy to work, it is fundamental to create opportunities to tap into the experience and wisdom of diverse communities. The idea of one voice “representing” whole groups of people around a single table is an impossible task. It can lead too often to tokenism and competing priorities. Instead, true engagement requires giving people the means to convene themselves. A series of facilitated community dialogues can create space for local populations and groups to offer multiple perspectives that are more representative of the whole community.

Start from where you are. This report sets out a roadmap with “how-to” practical suggestions and examples of best practices and policies. The roadmap is a starting point. The actions we suggest should spark dialogue and generate more ideas and actions as people engage. There are many different routes to the common destination of prevention.

Change is already happening. Across the country, there are trailblazers and innovators in every community who are committed to shifting our social norms to value older people and the different experiences of aging. Different levels of governments have made investments, albeit in an uneven way. We are in motion. *Future Us* aims to consolidate and build on what is already working.

Let's learn how to pool our actions to achieve collective goals. To be successful, we must work collaboratively and systematically toward large scale social change, valuing all contributions and building relationships as we go. We will build the road as we walk it.

Future Us sets out three broad goals:

- 1 Prioritize** elder abuse prevention in every community.
- 2 Establish and support elder abuse prevention networks** at local, regional and national levels. Networks are critical infrastructure for information sharing, knowledge mobilization, research, and ongoing engagement across sectors and communities.
- 3 Teach everyone** to recognize warning signs of abuse and neglect, how to respond safely and effectively and where to refer in the community to find help.

Let's set a 5-year aspirational goal

By 2026:

- ✓ Elder abuse is recognized as a priority issue in every province and territory with a strategy.
- ✓ Elder abuse prevention networks are established and funded at local, provincial/territorial and national levels.
- ✓ Ongoing public education is delivered through elder abuse prevention networks.

The Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse will provide updates on our progress.

It will take all of us to achieve such large goals. We need collective action that holds a steady lens on the underlying issue of ageism. Working together can open hearts and minds to the full experience of aging. It will also allow us to tap into the rich diversity in perspectives and experiences to inform the path along the way. We are working to create a better world for ourselves and for the generations that will come after us.



Ask yourself

What quality of life do you envision for yourself as you get older?
What do you hope for your children and grandchildren?

Join us - you have a lot to contribute, and we need you.

Look for these icons:



RESOURCES

Find existing resources and initiatives that can support the recommended actions.



ACTION

Look for the actions recommended for different roles and levels of engagement.

What's in the Roadmap?

Future Us is designed as a practical guide for a wide audience. It is intended to serve as a pan-Canadian action plan with many routes to the shared destination of elder abuse prevention. **The roadmap has five sections:**

i If you know what you are looking for, click on one of the corresponding sections below to access it directly. You can also use the tabs situated on the right-hand side of each page to navigate between sections.

1

Start the journey

- What we know about ageism and elder abuse
- Where we are starting from

2

Future Us: three goals to guide the way

- Prioritize prevention of elder abuse in every community
- Establish elder abuse prevention networks at local, regional, and national levels
- Teach everyone to recognize, respond, and refer

3

How you can contribute as:

- Citizens
- Advocates
- Organizations
- Employers/Leaders
- Professionals
- Researchers
- Communities
- Governments

4

The big picture

- Global initiatives and the potential for collective impact

5

Conclusion

SECTION 1

Start the journey



What we know about ageism and elder abuse

“ Age is one of the first things we notice about other people. Ageism arises when age is used to categorize and divide people in ways that lead to harm, disadvantage and injustice and erode solidarity across generations. Ageism takes on different forms across the life course. A teenager might, for instance, be ridiculed for starting a political movement; both older and younger people might be denied a job because of their age. ”

— World Health Organization, 2021

- Ageism increases the risk for elder abuse.
- Elder abuse is preventable. The current systemic response is crisis-oriented. As a society we need to move upstream, toward prevention.
- Elder abuse is a societal issue. We need a collective approach to make social change to address ageism and elder abuse. The ecological model described by the World Health Organization can help us better understand this.



Ageism increases the risk for elder abuse.



FACT

A 2012 Canadian survey of 1,500 adults found that:

35% of Canadians admit they've treated someone differently because of their age.

80% of survey respondents believe seniors age 75 and older are seen as less important and are more ignored than younger generations.

63% of seniors who completed the survey age 66 and older say they have been treated unfairly because of their age.

Read more: [Report on Ageism by Revera and the International Federation on Ageing](#)



Although it is experienced most often in later life, ageism can affect people at all stages of the life course. Ageism is not taken as seriously as other forms of discrimination. Yet, it has the same economic, social and psychological impacts. Ageism is a kind of violence that causes serious harm to individuals and to society.

COVID-19 is teaching us about ageism: Older people represent the highest population deaths from COVID-19. Age is only one factor of the death rates that combine with poverty, housing and healthcare. The “warehousing” of older people in congregate care settings shows ageism in action and testifies to the devaluation and erosion of human rights and lack of care for seniors in our society.

Less is known about the COVID-19 experience of older people living in the community. The lack of data itself is a signpost of ageism. [2016 Census data](#) shows that the majority of seniors (93.2%) live in private dwellings. Without data, the issue of elder abuse remains invisible, deep in the shadows of the pandemic. What we value in society gets measured and funded.

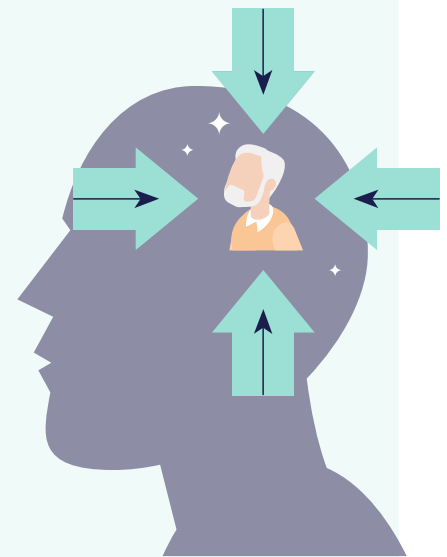
SECTION 1



ACTION

Ageism is so common that you may not be aware of the ways in which it shows up in your actions and attitudes. It takes ongoing education and reflection to recognize ageism. It takes practice to change your ideas and behaviours.

Start from where you are. Pay attention to how you treat older and younger people. We can learn to recognize and address inequality wherever we find it.



We need leadership: Addressing ageism and other social inequities aggravated by COVID-19 is a larger issue for governments. Political will and visionary leadership are required to bring about significant social change to respond to future pandemics.

Safe and affordable housing, a basic income, quality healthcare and food security should be protected human rights. Meeting the basic needs of citizens of all ages can limit the impact of future pandemics. There is an urgency to act. If systemic changes are made so that basic survival becomes less precarious for so many Canadians, [there is strong evidence that interpersonal violence rates will also decrease.](#)

Elder Abuse: the case for prevention

The World Health Organization defines elder abuse as:

“ a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person. ”

Elder abuse has serious consequences for individuals, communities, and society. Impacts include serious physical injuries, long-term psychological consequences, and family breakdowns, with cascading impacts across sectors including justice, social services and healthcare.



FACT

Gender-Based Violence

People of all genders experience and commit violence and abuse. Women are most often the victim of family violence. Research has shown that it is male family members (spouses, adult sons, and grandsons) who are responsible for the most serious injuries and deaths of older women.

We need to understand gender differences to be able to target interventions.

Read more: [Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability](#)

Forms of Abuse (cnpea.ca)

Physical abuse includes hitting an older adult or handling the person roughly, even if there is no injury. Giving a person too much or too little medication, or physically restraining a person are also forms of physical abuse.

Sexual abuse occurs when somebody forces an older adult to engage in sexual activity, this may include verbal or suggestive behaviour, not respecting personal privacy, sexual touching, or sex without consent.

Emotional abuse includes threats, insults, intimidation, or humiliation, treating the person like a child, not allowing them to see their family and friends.

Financial abuse occurs when somebody coerces, threatens, or persuades older adults out of their money, property, or possessions. Misusing a power of attorney is a common form of financial abuse.

Violation of rights and freedoms occurs when someone interferes with an older adult's ability to make choices, especially when those choices are protected under the law.

Neglect is a failure to provide the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, a safe shelter, medical attention, personal care, and necessary supervision. Neglect may be intentional or unintentional.

Systemic violence / structural violence refers to rules, regulations, policies, or social practices that harm or discriminate against older adults.

Prevalence in Canada

In 2015, the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE) carried out a [national elder abuse prevalence study](#). It found that:

- The aggregate prevalence for abuse was 7.5% of the population (n. 695,248) in the previous year.
- The aggregate prevalence for mistreatment was 8.2% (n. 766,247). Mistreatment includes elder abuse and neglect.
- Risk factors for elder abuse and neglect include depression, a history of abuse as a child, youth or adult, living with someone who is financially dependent, and being female.
- In 81% of reports, it was a spouse, family member, friend, neighbour or acquaintance causing the harm.

If the majority of harm is being caused by people who are in relationship with older people, then we need to educate and engage all citizens to recognize and respond to abusive behaviour with people they know and care about, as early as possible.

Prevention means working directly with family members who act abusively to reduce their risk for future harm and to engage them in safety planning.

Approaches to prevent, detect, and address elder abuse need to be placed within a cultural context and considered alongside culturally specific risk factors. Elder abuse should be considered using gender-based and intersectional analyses.

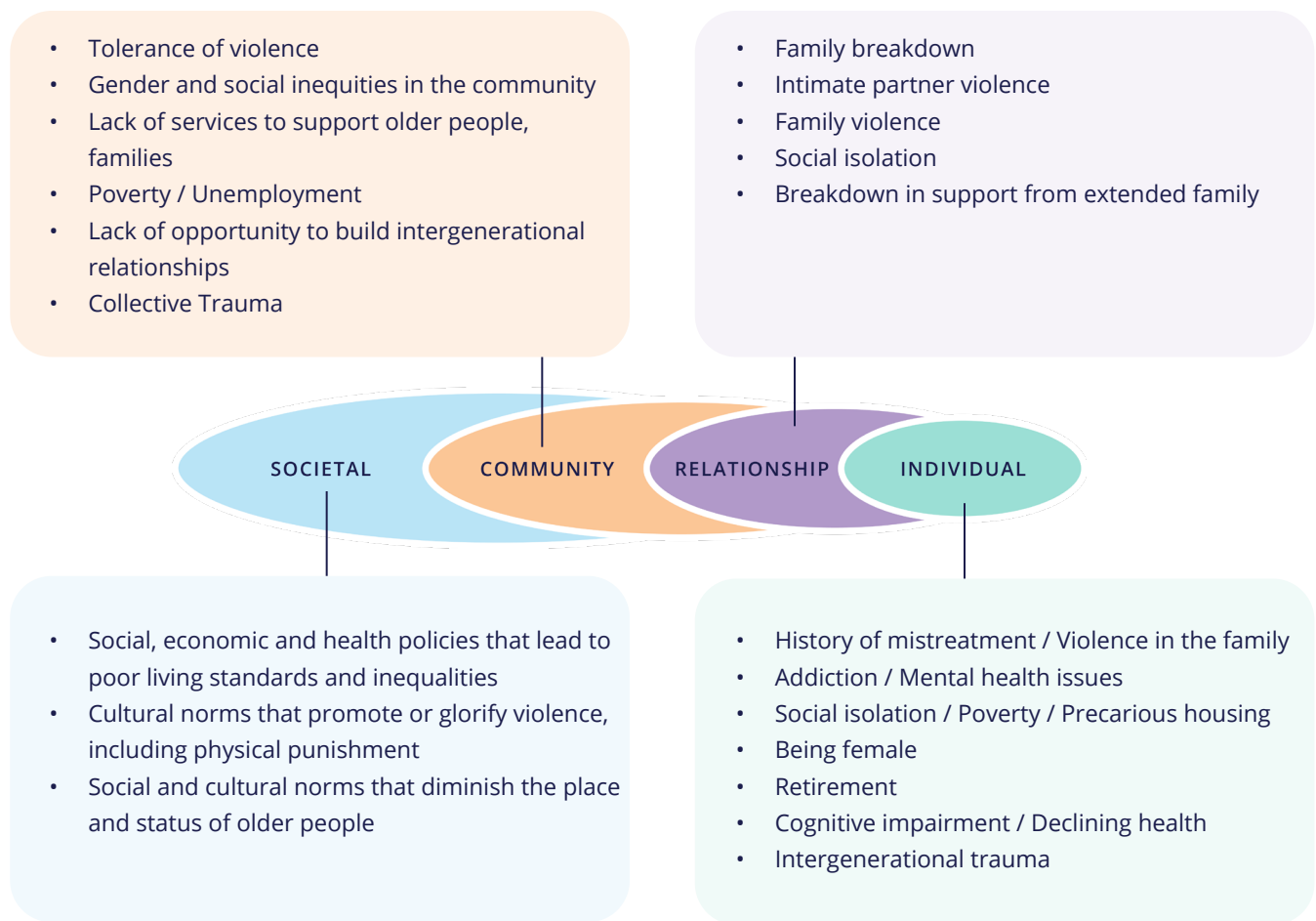
Unless both primary health care and social service sectors are well equipped to prevent, identify and deal with the problem, elder abuse will continue to be underdiagnosed and overlooked.

Elder abuse is a societal issue

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that no single factor can explain why some people or groups are at higher risk of violence in their relationships, while others are more protected. Interpersonal violence is the outcome of interaction among many factors at four levels—the individual, the relationship, the community, and societal. Violence is not just an individual issue.

The framework below shows the social system that creates the conditions for elder abuse to grow. This doesn't mean that individuals aren't responsible for their actions – they are. But to make large-scale social change, the entire system needs to be engaged in the change process, working at the different levels toward targeted response and prevention.

Contributing Factors: the Ecology of Elder Abuse



Source: [World report on violence and health](#) edited by Brug, E. et al. Geneva, World Health Organization 2022 (adapted)

As a society, we need to move upstream toward prevention

The entire elder abuse response system is crisis-oriented. Waiting to react until a crisis occurs is the most expensive, least effective response possible. As a society, we need to move upstream toward early intervention and prevention, with a clear commitment to include populations that are made more vulnerable by inequity and discrimination.

The WHO model can help us identify different kinds of interventions that can be combined to address the conditions that make elder abuse more likely. We need aligned actions and responses by individuals, organizations, communities and governments.



SECTION 2

Three goals to guide the way



Future Us Goals

This section will look in more detail at the three *Future Us* goals. Examples of practices and policies are listed under each of the goals.

- 1. Prioritize prevention** of elder abuse and neglect in every community to recognize the pervasiveness of the problem, with action and meaningful engagement that builds relationships at the community level.
- 2. Establish and support elder abuse prevention networks** at local, regional, and national levels. Networks provide the critical infrastructure for information sharing, knowledge mobilization, research, and ongoing engagement across sectors and communities.
- 3. Teach everyone** to recognize warning signs of abuse and neglect, how to respond safely and effectively and where to refer in the community to find help.

All three goals can be understood as work that is already in progress in many parts of the country. This section provides suggestions for action that can contribute to further progress.



GOAL 1

Prioritize prevention of elder abuse in every community

To achieve a pan-Canadian goal, ageism and elder abuse prevention must be priority issues for communities and governments across the country.

Prevention means

- Identifying and addressing ageism in policies and practices.
- Taking steps to prevent elder abuse from happening through education.
- Developing strategies to reduce social isolation.
- Responding effectively as a system when violence or abuse has already occurred.

Ideally, each level of government will recognize the need to address and prevent elder abuse without prompting. When that doesn't happen, community leaders and citizens can work to engage elected officials in their home ridings. Elder abuse is a non-partisan issue. Prevention is in everyone's interest.

Primary prevention aims to prevent violence or abuse from happening in the first place.

Secondary prevention works to reduce the impact of harm when violence or abuse has already occurred.

Tertiary prevention focuses on reducing long-term impacts and consequences and preventing escalation for future occurrences.

We need direct services

Secondary and tertiary prevention require direct services in the community that provide support, assess, and manage risk to reduce harm, and coordinate services for existing situations of elder abuse.

There are few or no dedicated elder abuse services to support older people and families experiencing elder abuse in most communities across Canada. Funding for family violence may include elder abuse, however, the experience on the ground is that the resources go toward younger families.

Few professionals have specialized training to be able to recognize or respond to warning signs. Elder abuse remains even deeper in the shadows of the shadow pandemic of domestic violence.

Existing services are crisis-oriented and limited to the crisis. Provinces with adult protection laws such as New Brunswick, have developed services that are accessible and that can be comprehensive, but only after the crisis of violence has occurred.

In most of the country, violence against women, counselling, mental health and addiction services frequently have long waitlists for those who cannot afford to pay for services. As a society, we have few resources to support older people who are at risk, or who are experiencing elder abuse.

Every community needs direct services for older people that should include:

- Trained professionals in social services, justice, and healthcare sectors who have expertise in elder abuse
- Community coordination and case conferencing
- Counselling and system navigation support for victims and family members
- Risk management services that can work with those acting abusively, to reduce risk for future violence and abuse
- Housing and healthcare support.

The chronic lack of direct services for families experiencing elder abuse reflects the real-world impacts of systemic ageism and the structural violence that ignores the needs of older people.

By 2037, the number of Canadian citizens 65 and older will have increased since 2017 by 68%. There is an urgent need to fund direct services in local communities to prevent and respond to elder abuse now. Every community can take stock of available services and work together to align resources and build capacity to address elder abuse. Governments have a responsibility to work together and invest in prevention that is concentrated on the health and well-being of older people.

How can we start on the path to prevention in my community?



ACTION

Set a local goal with a timeline to have your municipality identify elder abuse as a priority issue.

Policy example: The Ontario government implemented Community Safety and Well-being Plans in 2019. Municipalities were required to develop and adopt community safety and well-being plans, working in partnership with police services/boards and various other sectors, including health/mental health, education, community/social services, and children/youth services. In communities where elder abuse was not explicitly included in the plan, the policy provides an opportunity to advocate for inclusion of elder abuse.

GOAL 2

Establish and support elder abuse prevention networks

This goal is directed to all levels of government, with a call to action to prioritize elder abuse and to build the infrastructure of networks with annualized funding to support their work.

What is an Elder Abuse Prevention Network?

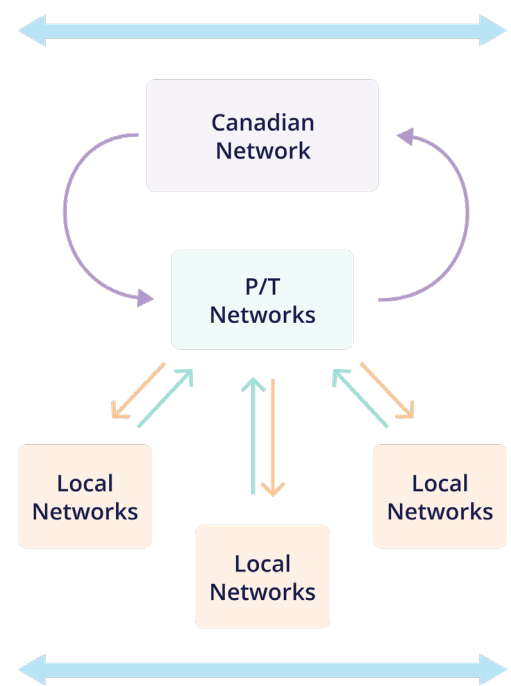
Elder abuse prevention networks are composed of citizens and professionals from multiple sectors working together to address ageism and elder abuse in their communities. They are often volunteer-based, doing critical work, currently with little or no ongoing funding.

We have a lot to build on.

There are existing local and regional networks in 6 provinces and territories. Four regional networks are funded annually by provincial/territorial governments. Local networks are groups of volunteers doing the ongoing work to educate and engage their communities.

The Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (CNPEA) currently operates without sustained funding, dependent on project work. As the lead for dissemination of *Future Us*, CNPEA is already set up to serve as the backbone organization, connecting all networks across the country.

Expecting volunteers to do this work to address complex, systemic issues is an example of ageism in action. Every community needs a dedicated, funded network to hold the focus on ageism and elder abuse, doing the long-term change work on the issues in their community. There is still a huge role for volunteers but with better support.



An infrastructure of networks allows information to flow up, down, and across

SECTION 2

What can Elder Abuse Networks do?

Funded, formalized networks:

- **Deliver public education** – from tailored, community-specific programs to pan-Canadian tested materials, to build skill and achieve consistent learning outcomes across the country.
- **Enhance community coordination** – networks do not provide direct service, but they can convene service providers working across sectors on prevention and response to ensure a coordinated community response.
- **Participate in knowledge sharing / mobilization** – the Canadian Network can serve as the backbone organization that connects through provinces and territories to move and share knowledge up, down and across the system. An important resource for communities and governments.
- **Contribute ideas, experience, and innovations** at regional and federal network tables about how to advance the pan-Canadian goals.
- **Support collective action** on national priorities by learning to pull together on common goals for meaningful impact at the local level.

What is already in place?

- ✓ Eight provincial and territorial governments have already identified abuse and neglect of older adults as a priority issue since 2000.
- ✓ Each has an elder abuse strategy and has directed some resources toward the identified issues.
- ✓ There are six established provincial and territorial elder abuse prevention networks.
- ✓ In Québec, the government funds regional coordinators to support community coordination and engagement.
- ✓ Four have varied amounts of annualized funding from provincial/territorial governments.

Existing networks:

British Columbia Association of Community Response Networks (BC CRN): bccrns.ca

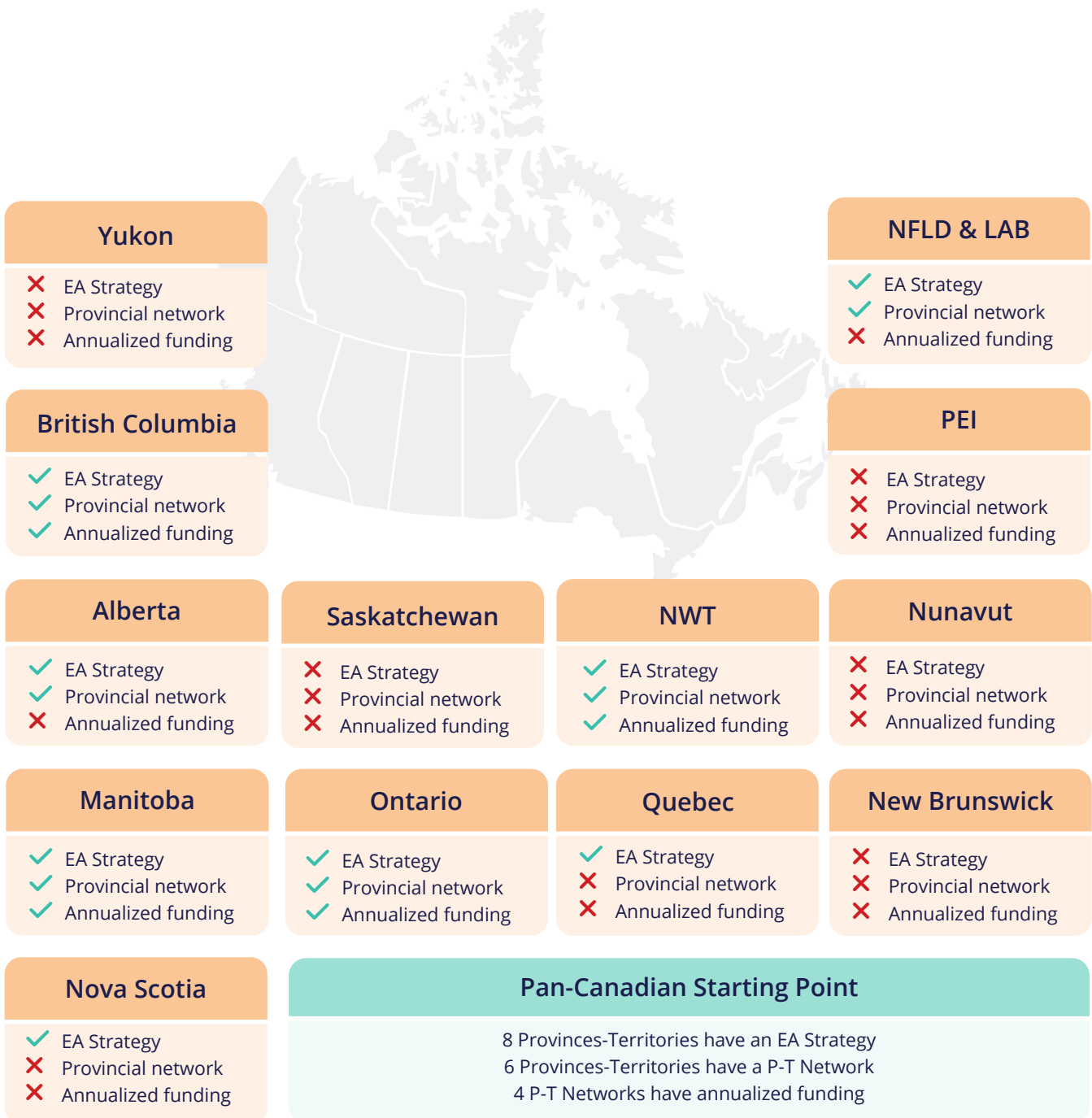
Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council (AEAAC): albertaelderabuse.ca

Prevent Elder Abuse Manitoba (PEAM): preventelderabusemanitoba.wildapricot.org/

Northwest Territories Network (NWT Network): nwtnetwork.com

Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO): eapon.ca

SeniorsNL: seniorsnl.ca



SECTION 2

A big idea: cost-share funding for networks across Canada

Cost-sharing is a way to build the connectivity between jurisdictions. Engaging every province and territory makes it pan-Canadian. Matching incentives from the federal government could flow to provincial/territorial governments who in turn, flow funds to municipal governments.

Incentives acknowledge the shared responsibility and non-partisanship needed, in service to the greater public good. This approach will sustain the momentum across election cycles and changes in government. It will result in ongoing learning and development that can inform decision-makers at all levels of government.

Draft estimates show the cost-effectiveness for a comprehensive plan of action that moves us as a society toward the prevention and early intervention of elder abuse. The Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse can serve as the backbone organization for the system, supporting the provincial / territorial networks that in turn support local networks.

- **\$9.5M annual investment by the federal government**
 - \$3M core funding for Canadian Network - \$6.5M for incentives to P/T governments
- **\$2.5M annual investment by provincial/territorial governments**
 - \$700K core funding for P/T network - \$30K for 60 local communities
- **\$30K annual investment by municipal governments**
 - Core funding for local network



EXAMPLE

The British Columbia government currently provides \$1.3M / year in an envelope of funding to the [BC CRN](#) that decides how best to use the funding to support a coordinated community response. Annualized funding has allowed the network to become well established and highly effective over the last ten years. BC CRN continues to grow and in March 2022, includes 81 community response networks serving 233 communities.

The Alberta government is funding a project through the provincial elder abuse council ([AEAAC](#)) to pilot case managers in Albertan communities. If the project proves successful, case management could be attached to the work of local networks as part of the coordinated community response model.



GOAL 3 Teach everyone

Teach everyone to:

- ✓ Recognize warning signs of elder abuse and indications of increasing risk
- ✓ Respond safely and effectively
- ✓ Refer to find help and support

The goal to “teach everyone” builds on the second goal and is a primary activity of the elder abuse prevention networks. Education is critical. Bystanders often do not respond in helpful ways because they are not sure what to do.

Research into domestic homicides has shown that it is the neighbours, friends, family members and coworkers who are the bystanders closest to the family experiencing violence. They know that violence and abuse is happening but don’t know what to do about it. Preparing the general public to recognize-respond-refer can lead to early intervention and support. There is some urgency. Recent years have seen an uptick in homicides by spouses and family members that involve older people. Older women are most often the victim of homicide by male family members.



EXAMPLE

The Ontario government provides annualized funding to Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario ([EAPO](#)), the provincial network mandated to implement Ontario’s Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse.

EAPO delivers educational programs, training, and information about elder abuse. They also develop resources and support the coordination of community services.



RESOURCE

It's Not Right! Neighbours, Friends and Families for Older Adults (INR) is a pan-Canadian public education campaign that has been funded by the federal government, piloted in every province and territory.

In provinces where there are funded elder abuse networks, the work of educating and engaging all citizens is ongoing. All funded networks are using the It's Not Right! resources.



Potential future work:

- ✓ Expand It's Not Right! materials for diverse audiences
- ✓ Develop professional curriculum to recognize-respond-refer
- ✓ Develop a companion pan-Canadian ageism campaign

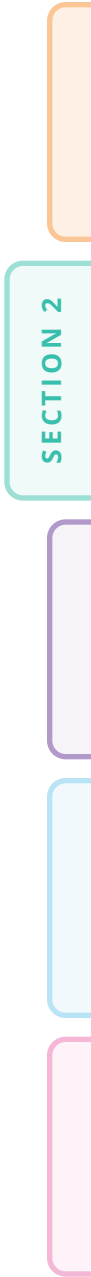
Goals give purpose and direction

The three pan-Canadian goals create a shared horizon for prevention and response. Common goals allow for local and regional distinctions and acknowledge that we are starting this journey from different places and at different points of development. It is no less a shared journey. Achieving collective impact that leads to prevention of elder abuse will take slow and steady progress with sustained investments over time.



ACTION

Find your allies and stay connected with your local/ provincial network and with the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. [Tell us about your experiences, challenges and achievements.](#)



SECTION 3

How you can contribute



A Differentiated Approach: Roles and Opportunities to Engage

To become engaged, people need a vision with clear ideas for the different roles they can play. In this section we will explore a variety of roles and opportunities for contribution. They include:



What can citizens do as supporters?

As citizens, we are neighbours, friends, family members, and co-workers.

LEARN to recognize warning signs of elder abuse, how to respond safely, effectively, and supportively when you are concerned about an older person. Find out where to refer to available services and supports.

- ✓ Participate in an [It's Not Right!](#) presentation or workshop
- ✓ Teach yourself – visit [cnpea.ca](#) to learn about your options
- ✓ Learn about ageism – reflect on your attitudes about getting older
- ✓ Start a conversation about aging
- ✓ Reach out to an older adult you are concerned about. Offer your support.

RECOGNIZE – RESPOND – REFER is the foundational knowledge that everyone needs to have. Social change theory suggests that with complex issues, teaching everyone two or three basic skills that allow a person to engage in the issue when they encounter it in daily life can fundamentally change things.

PERSIST: There are so many people who care about the safety and well-being of older people working toward a more equitable society. Individual efforts belong to the big picture of Canada and this diverse engaged community that spans the country. Even if you can't see progress, keep the focus on doing what you can to support the common goals. Stay the course. You are not alone.

What can citizens do as advocates?

FIND OUT: Does your municipal government identify elder abuse as a priority issue?

- If yes, congratulations, this is the first destination point of the journey achieved in your community. [Click here and check that your community is on the map.](#) Next steps will involve finding out how your municipal government takes action to address the issue.
- If no, then find others in your community to figure out how to work toward the goal. Check if there is a local elder abuse network. Set a goal and a deadline to name elder abuse as a community issue that is recognized by your local government.
- Age-Friendly communities are doing important work that can be aligned with this goal. Find out if the Age-Friendly mandate in your community also includes elder abuse. If not, propose it. Start the conversation about ageism and elder abuse in your community.

ENGAGE elected officials in their home communities. Ask them to support this strategy and to use their power and influence to support *Future Us* goals. Ask them to engage their political party. Emphasize the need to do prevention work.

- Make elder abuse an election issue. Ask candidates to name elder abuse as a priority issue. Ask for their help to achieve the goal.
- Hold an all-candidates meeting with a focus on ageism and elder abuse.
- [See the Future Us toolkit.](#)

BE RELENTLESS in your expectation that local elected politicians, from all parties and all levels of government, will act to support the health and safety of older people.



ACTION

Support yourself as a citizen-advocate - join with others

- ✓ Join your local elder abuse network – start one if there isn't one in your community.
- ✓ Connect with your regional elder abuse prevention network (existing in BC, AB, NWT, MB, ON, NFLD, as of 2022)
- ✓ [Join the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse](#) – stay in touch, tell us what you are doing, building, overcoming, achieving.
- ✓ Connect with an advocacy organization such as [CanAge](#).

What can organizations do?

Many organizations in all sectors are already working toward greater equity and have prioritized the need to root out all forms of discrimination in the organization’s operations, policies and procedures. Ageism and elder abuse should be included in education, professional development and policy review.

There is also federal and regional legislation that identifies workplace violence and harassment as workplace hazards. Stereotypes about older adults may create barriers to recognizing warning signs of harassment, violence, or discrimination that older staff may be experiencing. Employers are responsible to protect the safety of all workers.

Any organization that interacts with the public should be trained to recognize warning signs of elder abuse and to know what to do when they become aware of potential situations. National and regional elder abuse networks are a great resource to ask about available training.



EXAMPLES

Policy: Manitoba’s Credit Union Central of Manitoba (CUCM) made training on financial abuse a mandatory training for all staff.

Practice: Manitoba’s CUCM and Prevent Elder Abuse Manitoba (PEAM) collaborated to develop an award-winning online training course on financial abuse of older people by family, friends or caregivers. Available through CUSOURCE, the Canadian Credit Union Association offers the training to credit unions across Canada. Over 4,000 credit union employees have taken the course since 2014.

If you are an employer / leader:

- ✓ Organize an It's Not Right! Presentation/workshop to educate staff on elder abuse and to open a dialogue in your organization about ageism.
- ✓ Provide professional development on ageism and elder abuse to prepare staff to recognize warnings signs and to know how to respond when:
 - the victim / offender is a co-worker
 - working with clients / the public
- ✓ Include age and ageism in diversity and inclusion policies, human resources, and employee engagement programs.
- ✓ Develop elder abuse and privacy policies to provide staff and volunteers with guidance on how to respond to concerns about adults who may be being abused.
- ✓ Increase/Practice equity as an organization
 - Commit to becoming trauma -and violence- informed (TVI), using principles that can mitigate harms of systemic ageism and other forms of discrimination.



RESOURCES

- CanAge's Policy Book VOICES, recommendations for organizations.
- DVatWork provides online training and tools for Canadian employers to address workplace domestic violence. The website is funded by the Government of Canada.



If you are a professional working with seniors in any capacity:

- ✓ Learn to recognize, respond and refer to warning signs and indications of increasing risk of abuse or neglect.
- ✓ Apply TVI principles in your policy and practice.
- ✓ Learn about ageism as a form of structural violence that can cause unintentional harm by individuals and organizations.
- ✓ Find out if your regulatory body or College has policies related to elder abuse response, including policies regarding privacy and confidentiality of information.



EXAMPLE

Practice example: [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

Address inequity by becoming trauma -and violence- informed (TVI).

Implementation of TVI principles at the organizational level has potential to build bridges across sectors in a way that can transcend and unify disciplines and mandates, enhancing community coordination.

TVI is a Canadian innovation that builds on earlier trauma-informed work developed in the US.

What can researchers do?

Research provides the evidence we need to guide policy and action. We need a strong commitment to progressive research with a gender-based and intersectional lens to keep up with the needs of a diverse and aging population.

Suggested Principles for Elder Abuse Research in Canada

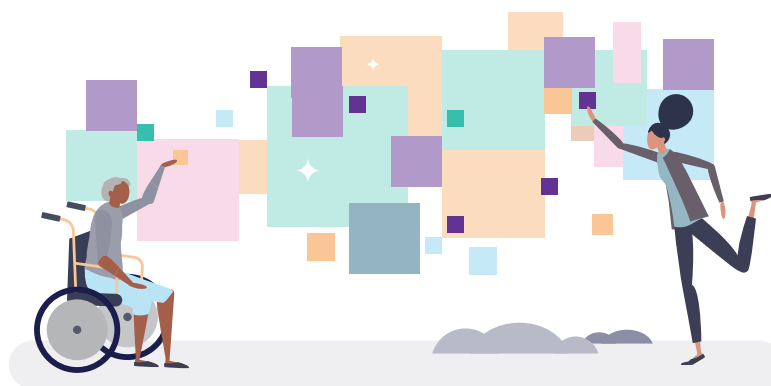
1. Recognize Expertise
2. Pay Attention to Systemic and Structural Issues
3. Engage Community, Build Capacity
4. Appreciate Distinct Experiences

1. Recognize Expertise

Historically, academically trained researchers, legal professionals, as well as service providers have been considered experts in the field of elder abuse research. Conventional understandings of expertise in recent years have expanded to embrace different ways of knowing, in the sense that all knowledge is situated knowledge. A more expansive understanding of “expertise” includes lived experiences and diverse professional backgrounds that can be included to develop, pursue, and mobilize elder abuse research.

2. Pay Attention to Systemic and Structural Issues

Researchers can advance gender-based and intersectional analyses to help us understand how policies and social norms create disparity across groups of older people. Strong critical analysis can facilitate understanding of ageism as a form of systemic violence that shapes the individual experience of elder abuse in diverse populations. Examining structural issues de-individualizes elder abuse and helps create understanding of underlying causes and promising solutions.



3. Engage Community, Build Capacity

“Nothing about us without us”: the concept that no policy or research should be decided upon without the participation and direction of those whom it involves and affects. Researchers can advance community-engaged and led research that builds capacity, meets community needs, and builds on existing knowledge.

4. Appreciate Distinct Experiences

Appreciating distinct experiences entails both the involvement of historically underrepresented groups in research, as researchers and participants, and a continued reflexive and intersectional approach to research design and analysis. Project designs need to build in ongoing reflection with respect to participant positionality and how power is used and shared in the group.



EXAMPLE

[Promising Practices for Housing Women who are Older and Fleeing Violence or Abuse](#) (Atira Women’s Resources Society Report – Canadian Centre for Elder Law)



EXAMPLE

Centering Indigenous Leadership in the Sustainability Development Goals (Peterborough, Ontario) profiled in Tamarack’s [A Guide for Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals in Your Community](#).

Pathways to Consider

Pathway 1: Topical

What are the strengths and gaps in elder abuse research to build upon and expand?

Pathway 2: Resources

Research requires funding. Directing resources towards community-engaged, intersectoral, and multi-year projects will enhance the state of knowledge on elder abuse as well as knowledge-mobilization and intervention efforts.

Pathway 3: Coalition Building

Elder abuse does not exist in a vacuum; nor does research. Consider areas of shared concern, commonality, and bridge-building across the research lifecycle.

What can communities do?

The actions for communities are written for different types of communities, including municipalities. More ideas for governments follow.

Any type of community can:

- ✓ Take time to learn about ageism and elder abuse as a group.
- ✓ Engage members of the community in talking about the experience of older people and how ageism and elder abuse is impacting your community.
- ✓ Host intergenerational events that bring people of all ages together to build relationships between the generations, and to talk about the health and well-being of the community through an age lens.
- ✓ Engage the local government and elected officials in dialogue about the importance of addressing ageism and elder abuse. Inform them what it means for your community and what steps your group is taking to address the issues.
- ✓ Implement these actions using TVI informed principles set out by the Public Health Agency of Canada as steps to increasing equity as a community.

What Is Community Anyway? (ssir.org)

“ A community is not a place, a building, or an organization; nor is it an exchange of information over the Internet. Community is both a feeling and a set of relationships among people. People form and maintain communities to meet common needs.

Most of us participate in multiple communities within a given day. Communities often sit within other communities. For example, in a city, in a neighborhood—a community in and of itself—there may be ethnic or racial communities, communities based on people of different ages and with different needs, and communities based on common economic interests.

Communities form institutions—what we usually think of as large organizations and systems such as schools, government, faith, law enforcement, or the nonprofit sector. Equally important are communities’ informal institutions, such as the social or cultural networks of helpers and leaders. ”

Convene community dialogues to engage people in the issues and gather collective input: Learn how elder abuse manifests in high and low-income communities, Indigenous and diverse communities, disability groups, in different faith communities, in rural and in urban communities. What are the unique needs? What is the common ground? What is needed to address barriers to accessing support? Communities have deep self-knowledge and when engaged in meaningful ways, can be empowered to act collectively in the interests of all citizens.

The Age-Friendly movement is an excellent example of work that is already happening in many communities. It could be expanded and aligned to include elder abuse and to increase the support for older people who may be experiencing abuse or neglect.



RESOURCE

[The Tamarack Institute](#) has twenty years of Canadian experience in supporting large-scale social change through community engagement to achieve collective impact on a variety of issues. While they are not working (yet) on ageism specifically, there are many useful resources that can ignite your imagination and support the actions recommended in this roadmap.

For example, Tamarack has developed a [guide for communities](#) that are working to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. City officials and civil society leaders in many parts of Canada are using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework for local priorities. SDGs include ending poverty, addressing gender-based violence and increasing equity.

What can governments do?

Recognize ageism as an equity issue. Locate ageism in a larger context. People of all ages need an income above the poverty line, affordable housing, secure food, quality healthcare, safety and support with human rights observed and protected on a healthy planet. Until we address the fundamental inequities at a societal level, we will be dealing with the cascade effect of trauma and violence that results from ongoing poverty, discrimination, and colonization.

We cannot afford to live in a society in which only some people matter. What we tell ourselves about others is both a reflection of the values of our current society, the community in which we have grown up, and the ways in which we have internalized and uphold those values. We need equity and unwavering respect for life to guide us in all aspects of working for positive social change. We need the different levels of government, both bureaucrats and politicians, engaged in social change as partners.

Invest in the elder abuse infrastructure:

Federal government:

- ✓ **Endorse *Future Us*** to support the pan-Canadian evolution of ideas, information, and innovations.
- ✓ **Fund CNPEA** with annualized funding. Incent provincial-territorial governments to establish networks.

Provincial/territorial governments:

- ✓ **Establish / sustain** provincial-territorial networks to ensure ongoing regional connection with local communities and to plug into the Canadian network as partners.
- ✓ **Incent** municipalities to establish local elder abuse prevention networks.

Municipal government:

- ✓ **Establish / sustain** local elder abuse prevention networks to build relationships, convene and connect multi-sectors, learn to manage risk as a community, ensure engagement of diverse communities.

Further actions:

- ✓ Develop national multimedia campaigns on elder abuse and ageism, similar to the [2022 Dementia Awareness Campaign](#).
- ✓ Educate public servants in all departments on elder abuse and ageism.
- ✓ Engage regional and local networks to provide the training.
- ✓ Convene and host community dialogues to educate and engage citizens.
- ✓ Provide funding for diverse groups to convene themselves. Build community processes to gather input that can help develop actions to address the specific issues identified.
- ✓ Implement these actions using trauma -and violence- informed principles set out by the Public Health Agency of Canada as steps to increase equity as a country.

If you are a politician or bureaucrat:

Ageism, abuse and neglect of older adults are non-partisan issues. All political parties and government departments are citizens with a stake in our collective future:

- ✓ Politicians can educate themselves on the issues in their home ridings:
 - engage in dialogue with older people, local experts and advocates
 - develop an appreciation for on-the-ground pressures to provide service to older people who are experiencing violence and abuse.
- ✓ Politicians can engage their party in advancing the *Future Us* strategy.
- ✓ Politicians can insist that guidance from experts and research is sought out prior to developing elder abuse policy.
- ✓ Politicians can include the perspectives of older people in developing elder abuse policy.
- ✓ Bureaucrats can educate themselves on ageism and elder abuse issues as citizens and as public servants in positions to inform elected politicians.
- ✓ Politicians and bureaucrats can engage with community leaders and advocates to build relationships that support greater collaboration and coordination.

SECTION 4

The Big Picture: Align with global initiatives



The Big Picture: Align with global initiatives

See yourself in the big picture. We can align with international initiatives and participate in global change. Elder abuse initiatives work from shared overarching goals of respecting human rights, supporting equity, and sustainability.

We don't all have to do the same projects to achieve the common goals that benefit all people and the planet. In fact, the work of social change is to localize global goals, make them your own, give them meaning in your home and in your community. By having different experiences and ideas to draw from, and including everyone in the process, diversity becomes our strength.

Call for a UN convention on the Human Rights of Older People

Older people have the same rights as everyone else: we are born equal, and this does not change as we grow older. Even so, older people's rights are mostly invisible under international law.

A UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons is necessary to enshrine older people's rights. With a convention, and the assistance of a Special Rapporteur, governments can have an explicit legal framework, guidance and support that would enable them to ensure that older people's rights are realised in our ageing societies.

Numerous organizations are working to mobilise campaigners and urge governments to support a UN convention for the Rights of Older People.



RESOURCES

- [Strengthening Older People's Rights: Towards a UN convention](#)
- [Age with Rights](#) campaign by the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People



United Nations: Sustainability Development Goals

The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

At its heart are the [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.



Three of the goals align with *Future Us* and lend themselves to the prevention of elder abuse:

- Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being
- Goal 5: Gender Equality
- Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities



ACTION

Many communities in Canada are working to localize the SDGs. Similar to the action on Age-Friendly movement initiative noted earlier, if your community is already working on achieving the SDGs – advocate for explicit inclusion of elder abuse as a priority issue to be addressed.

The Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030)

The [United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing \(2021-2030\)](#) is a global collaboration, aligned with the last ten years of the Sustainable Development Goals. It brings together governments, civil society, international agencies, professionals, academia, the media, and the private sector to improve the lives of older people, their families, and the communities in which they live.

Fundamental shifts are required to foster healthy ageing and improve the lives of older people and their families and communities; not only in the actions we take but in how we think about age and ageing. Two of the four goals align with *Future Us: Age-Friendly Environments and Combatting Ageism*.

The World Health Organization: Global Report on Ageism (2021)

WHO published the first [Global report on ageism](#) in 2021 with recommendations for action.

“ We must raise visibility of and pay closer attention to ageist attitudes and behaviors, adopt strategies to counter them, and create comprehensive policy responses that support every stage of life. ”



The potential to achieve collective impact

The daily work of prevention happens in homes and communities. Individuals are supported in relationships with each other, in organizations, and in different kinds of communities. Organizations and communities are supported by government policies and funding. Each level of the social system aligns under a shared commitment to human rights, equity and sustainability.

The proposal to build and sustain infrastructure in the form of local, regional and national networks will create a circulatory system by which information, innovation and ideas can travel throughout the system. It will connect us as individuals. A pan-Canadian engagement strategy provides a broad umbrella to work together to achieve collective impact. Large scale social change is always possible. It just takes time, relentless commitment, and must involve all levels of government and the broader society.

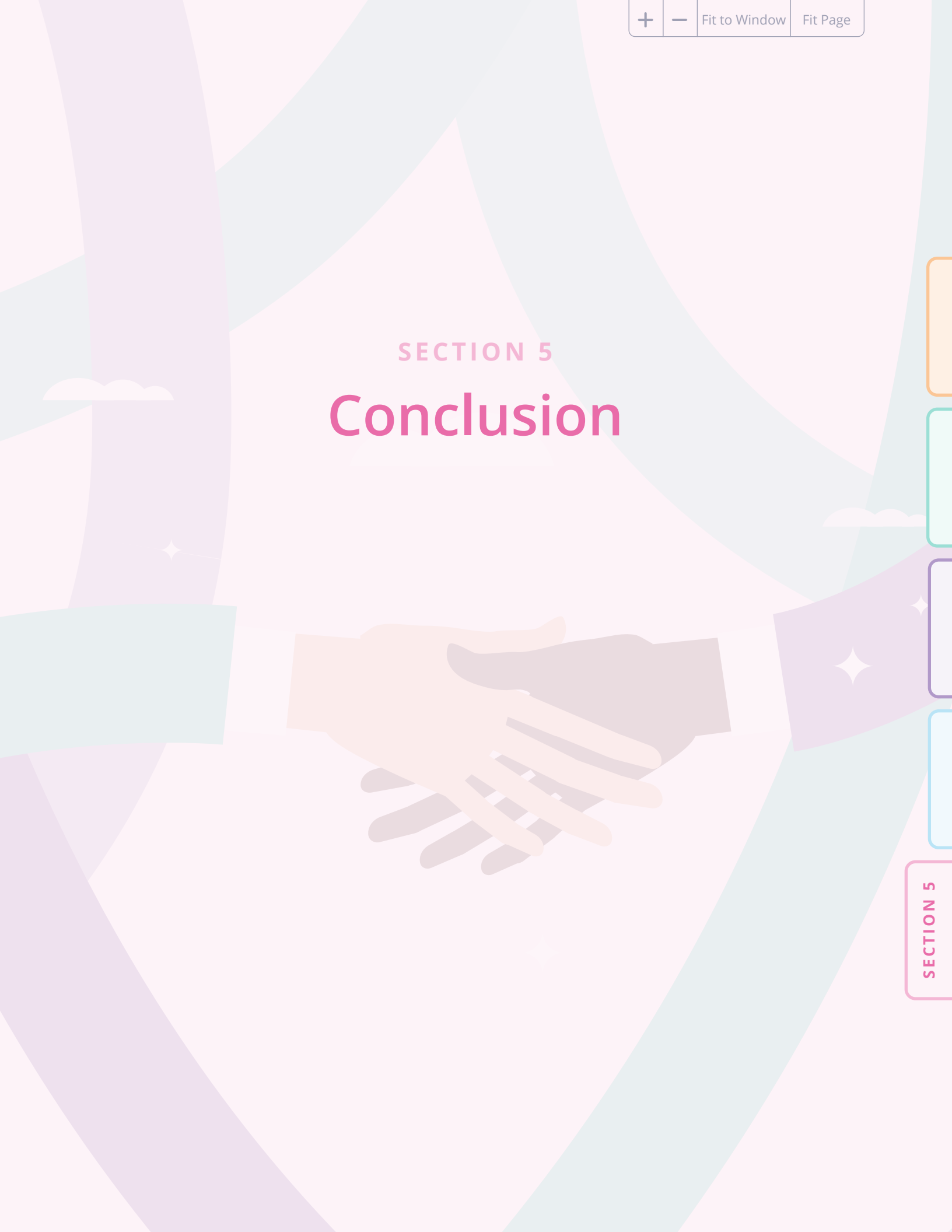
Future Us: The Ecology of Prevention



SECTION 4

SECTION 5

Conclusion



- SECTION 5

Conclusion

The health and well-being of citizens across the lifespan must become the primary economic and social drivers to serve the best interests of our country today and for the generations to come.

Future Us has been developed as a pan-Canadian engagement strategy. The plan can become part of the national seniors' strategy and complement related initiatives such as long-term care and dementia specific strategies. Relationships are the core of *Future Us*. This is legacy work that needs champions and leadership.

Future Us is envisioned to be:

- 1 Implemented** in local communities across Canada.
- 2 Led** by non-profit elder abuse prevention networks at local, regional and national levels.
- 3 Financially supported** by three levels of government.



The proposed actions will:

- ✓ Increase awareness of ageism at individual and system levels
- ✓ Educate and engage citizens in activities that directly contribute to increased social support for older adults who may be victims of violence or neglect
- ✓ Engage diverse communities in expansive dialogue
- ✓ Tap into the wisdom that comes from lived experience and local expertise
- ✓ Find and energize champions – reduce isolation inherent in social change work
- ✓ Increase equity through relationship-building and commitment to ongoing dialogue
- ✓ Build infrastructure of networks that connect us
- ✓ Integrate funding through three levels of government
- ✓ Sustain the work through election cycles
- ✓ Mobilize knowledge - identify and do more of what is working
- ✓ Coordinate and align communities and initiatives working toward prevention
- ✓ Provide direct experience of achieving collective impact for the common good.

It's a good list. It will take all of us to achieve it. *Future Us* is designed to be picked up and used by people in every community. You can start today.

Future Us: 5-year aspirational goal

By 2026:

- ✓ Elder abuse is recognized as a priority issue in every province and territory with a strategy.
- ✓ Elder abuse prevention networks are established and funded at local, provincial/territorial and national levels.
- ✓ Commitment to ongoing public education is delivered through elder abuse prevention networks.

Join us!

Head to our *Future Us* website futureus.cnpea.ca and check your community on our map.

Share any Roadmap-inspired work you are undertaking at futureus.cnpea@gmail.com.



Learn more about CNPEA at www.cnpea.ca

[Become a member](#) to receive our updates

Get in touch with us about *Future Us* at futureus.cnpea@gmail.com

  @cnpea



Share on Facebook



Share on Twitter



Send via Email

