



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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ELDER JUSTICE COALITION

Legislative Advocacy Day:
Coercive Control of Seniors

OTTAWA, ONTARIO - The Elder Justice Coalition is an ad hoc group of organizations calling for a coercive control offence to protect elder abuse victims. Our aim is to bring our voices together during a Legislative Action Day on Parliament Hill, where we plan to engage with politicians and their staff, urging them to extend a coercive control offence beyond intimate partners to include abusive adult children and others in positions of trust and dependence.

Elder abuse victims were excluded from the last attempt to criminalize coercive control (Bill C-332), which received unanimous, all-party support in the House of Commons. This advocacy effort aims to unite voices and ensure older victims are no longer overlooked. “Coercive control can profoundly devastate older people’s lives,” said Laura Tamblyn Watts, CEO of CanAge, Canada’s national seniors’ advocacy organization, and a global expert on ageing and law reform. “A coercive control offence that includes abuse within relationships of trust and dependence would recognize the reality of their experience and help close a critical gap in protection.”

Coercive control can trap older people, particularly older women, in relationships where they lack access to money, housing, care, or independence. Those with cognitive impairments such as dementia may be particularly unable to seek help. “When an older person is controlled or manipulated by a person they depend on, the harm often goes unnoticed,” said Bénédicte Schoepflin, executive director of the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. “Recognizing coercive control in these relationships would give these victims the legal protection they deserve.”

“Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO) recognizes the urgent need to recognize and address coercive control as a critical form of elder abuse—particularly among older adults

living with cognitive impairments, because it involves patterns of manipulation and isolation that diminishes an individual's autonomy, independence and dignity, often under the guise of protection or care," said Marta Hajek, CEO of EAPO.

Parliament is expected to revisit coercive control legislation, with the NDP indicating that MP Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre) is working to strengthen the earlier proposal. "This is an encouraging sign," said Heather Campbell Pope, a lawyer and sole director of Dementia Justice Canada, a small nonprofit dedicated to enhancing access to justice for people with dementia. "Lawmakers have already shown they recognize the harm caused by coercive control. This time, we're urging them to ensure older victims, especially those harmed by adult children and others in positions of trust, are not left behind."

Other jurisdictions are already leading the way. In Queensland, Australia, the coercive control offence covers a broader range of relationships beyond intimate partners. At Simon Fraser University, elder law expert Professor Margaret Hall is conducting international comparative research on how jurisdictions worldwide have criminalized coercive control outside the intimate partner context. Her research will help inform the Elder Justice Coalition's advocacy and strengthen the case for legislative action in Canada.

A [GoFundMe](#) has been launched to support this legislative advocacy initiative, tentatively scheduled for early February 2026. The goal is \$25,000 to help send elder justice representatives to Ottawa, fund legal research and advocacy materials, and support participation by other organizations.

"Elder justice advocacy has long been underfunded," said Campbell Pope of Dementia Justice. "This fundraiser will help advocates come together in Ottawa and draw attention to elder abuse victims who too often go unheard."

The Legislative Action Day is a crucial opportunity to push for criminal law reform that recognizes coercive control in all relationships of trust and dependency, ensuring older victims are safeguarded and abusers are held accountable.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

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.

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.

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.

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.

Additional organizations may be announced in due course.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION DAY

Tentative Date

Thursday, February 5, 2026

Ottawa, Ontario

This is a fixed sitting date for the [House of Commons](#) and [Senate](#).

More information

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

Contact

Laura Tamblyn Watts
CEO
CanAge
Email: laura@canage.ca
Phone: 647-969-6793

Heather Campbell Pope
Founder/Director
Dementia Justice Canada
Email: heather@dementiajustice.ca
Phone: 613-710-0366