



## WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

The President of the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers, Helen Biales, urged ACER-CART members and the public to reflect on the needs of the abused elderly. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is on June 15, 2009. This special day started in Madrid in 2002 when countries throughout the world adopted the United Nations International Plan of Action on Ageing. This Plan recognized the importance of preventing abuse and neglect of older adults.

Canada has been recognized internationally as a leader in raising public awareness of abuse of older adults and in developing approaches to deal with the issue.

“Canadian retired teachers and their provincial organizations are well-placed to promote this cause,” Biales noted. “All older people have a right to be treated with dignity and respect.”

While abuse can be physical, emotional, verbal, sexual and spiritual, financial abuse is the most common form for older adults. As well, neglect can be part of abuse when it involves not doing something such as providing the older person with food, shelter, medication, or care. The challenge is to eradicate the myths and stereotypes surrounding such abuse, and to help older people and their families to have a clear route to follow when making an allegation of abuse to a local authority.

Abuse most often occurs within the family, by a spouse, children, and/or grandchildren. They can also be friends of the older person. Canadian research indicates that between 4 and 10% of older adults experience one or more forms of abuse or neglect at some point from someone they trust and rely on. Only about one in five cases of abuse comes to the attention of community agencies or authorities.

Abuse and neglect of the elderly is a complex problem and may reflect ageism. It may be part of a cycle of family violence, or be opportunistic behaviour. It may also reflect a lack of understanding about older adults and ageing.

“No one deserves such mistreatment and we as retired teachers need to work together to ensure our colleagues and friends are not abused,” stated Biales. “Every province has help available through community resources, and the police. Some provinces also have established Seniors Abuse phone lines.”

ACER-CART represents about 165,000 retired teachers in provincial associations found in all of Canada’s provinces and the Yukon.

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**For further information contact:**

Helen Biales  
President, ACER-CART  
Windsor, Ontario  
Home phone: (519) 944-1737  
Email: [hbiales@mnsi.net](mailto:hbiales@mnsi.net)

Norbert Boudreau  
Executive Director, ACER-CART  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Home phone: (613) 828-9194  
Email: [boudreaun@sympatico.ca](mailto:boudreaun@sympatico.ca)