

## BREAKING THE SILENCE

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**“Abuse thrives in secrecy and if you can break the silence you often break the abuse.”<sup>1</sup>**

Few cases of abuse of older Canadians become the major newstory of the day. The ones that do are often those sensationalized under the caption of “granny bashing”. The vast majority of incidents where older people are mistreated by someone they rely on for basic needs, both physical and emotional, are not reported.

The Committee heard of many cases where older men and women had been subject to abuse. They provide a grim picture of the experiences of those seniors who face financial, physical, and psychological abuse on a daily basis. The Committee is convinced that breaking the silence that surrounds this issue and breaking the patterns of abuse must be everyone’s concern.

### Case 1:

A couple had three children, two sons and one daughter. When the husband died, he bequeathed all his possessions to his eldest son provided that he keep his mother with him. After a few years, the son threw his mother out and kept the house for himself. The mother went to live with her second son who persuaded her to buy a house with the \$10,000 that she had left. He went to see a lawyer, and the title deed was written in the name of the son only. The mother lived with this son for two years and then he too threw her out. She ended up with her daughter who had to have her basement finished and who incurred expenses to keep her mother with her.

In this case, the *New Brunswick Marital Property Act* would allow the woman to avail herself of the law in order to get the marital property, but she didn’t. In the case of her second son, clearly it was robbery. The *Criminal Code* allows for police intervention, or at least the common law allows for cancellation of such

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<sup>1</sup> McKenzie, 8:6.