

The Committee recommends:

23. That the federal government, in consultation with other levels of government, provide funding and other support to facilitate the establishment of seniors advocacy services in the provinces and territories similar to these currently operating in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec.

C. Emergency Services

The issue of shelters for elderly victims of abuse was raised by several witnesses. Three forms of shelter are presently available in all provinces or territories for victims of wife assault—transition houses, “second stage” shelters for longer-term accommodation, “safe” houses in private homes. These are funded at different levels and by different methods including per diem funding for each individual sheltered; by bed space available; by “block” funding for a range of services; or a combination of the above.

Many witnesses argued that the primary focus must be to keep the elderly person in their own home and have the abuser leave. It was acknowledged that there was a place for transition houses but that more creative ways could be found to provide supportive housing for people who couldn't stay in their own homes or who didn't have homes. Nova House, a rural women's shelter in Selkirk, Manitoba, received funding to develop materials and to look at housing alternatives for older victims of abuse.⁸⁹ The Committee heard that there are a number of concerns related to the older Canadian and the existing system. For elderly women, limitations on physical access and the psychological environment may create problems. For elderly men, no access to existing shelters set up for victims of wife abuse is possible. For older native people, there is a need for culturally sensitive services in either separate or integrated shelters.

The Committee agrees that elderly people should be supported in their own homes wherever possible. However, the members also recognize that this is not always possible and that emergency shelter may be necessary.

⁸⁹ Ducharme, 5:8.