

argued that: "long-term prevention depends on changing attitudes and values that result in abuse."<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Podnieks of the Ryerson School of Nursing agreed that: "Our biggest thrust should be towards education to prevent elder abuse."<sup>49</sup>

Education was viewed as a crucial factor in dealing with the social, health and legal aspects of the issue of abuse of older Canadians. As Judith Wahl of the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly suggested: "We identified education as a key area in which we should do work, because it was clear that you can't solve, or even approach, this problem by this case-by-case assistance." She went on to point out the need for greater dissemination of accurate information among all sectors of the community:

With education we identified that there was a great deal of misinformation on the issue. Many people thought you couldn't do anything. They weren't identifying that many of these incidents of elder abuse were in fact crimes and could be pursued through the criminal justice system. They were not identifying that many services already existed in the community that were in fact of great assistance to the seniors who were abused, everything from the home support workers to home care, someone's own doctor. There was a range of help already out there that was not being tapped into.<sup>50</sup>

The Committee heard the strong and unanimous message from witnesses that education to increase public awareness is vital to changing attitudes, values and behaviours that result in abuse. Providing information is a major part of this and the Committee commends the Family Violence Prevention Division of Health and Welfare Canada who currently provide advice, information and materials through the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence for individuals who write them or who telephone at 1-800-267-1291.

The Committee agrees that education is the main path to be taken in preventing elder abuse. Information on the issue needs to be developed and when developed, needs to be widely disseminated throughout the population.

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<sup>48</sup> Darrah, 2:5.

<sup>49</sup> Podnieks, 3:9.

<sup>50</sup> Wahl, 5:19.