



# An Advocacy Strategy to Address Elder Abuse in Peel

Community Seminar Report

July 2023

Funded by the Region of Peel through the 2022 Community Investment Program  
Change Fund

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## Introduction

On Thursday, June 22, 2023, Family Services of Peel (FSP) - Peel Institute of Research & Training (PIRT), in collaboration with Peel Elderly Abuse Prevention Network (PEAPN), hosted a seminar called, *An Advocacy Strategy to Address Elder Abuse in Peel*. At the seminar, the Advocacy Strategy plan was shared, and meaningful feedback was gathered from seniors in the Peel community and service providers to help finalize the project's goals and action steps. The event brought together older adults living in Peel, members of FSP's seniors' social tables and seniors' clubs, service providers from local agencies, members of the PEAPN and Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO), and a Member of Provincial Parliament. The seminar succeeded in building awareness of the Advocacy Strategy project, and the importance of safeguarding the well-being of seniors.

## The Seminar

The seminar was held from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm on Thursday, June 22, 2023, at the Mississauga Grand Banquet and Event Centre, at 35 Brunel Road. As the project was conducted using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach, engaging the community, seniors' groups, organizations, clubs, and committees were critical to ensure that the Advocacy Strategy plan is closely aligned with the needs, wants, and capacities of stakeholders.

Invitations (see Appendix A) were sent out in May and were distributed at the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) event on June 1st. Event registration took place via a Google Form registration link or by emailing the research team. A total of 80 guests attended the event. They included service providers from agencies serving seniors in Peel, members of PEAPN and EAPO, and 53 older adults from seniors' clubs and programs across the Region.

A letter of support from The Honourable Kamal Khera, Minister of Seniors, was read during the opening **remarks** by Sandra Rupnarain, FSP Executive Director.

Nina Tangri, Member of Provincial Parliament for Mississauga – Streetsville, participated in the seminar and spoke of the importance of addressing elder abuse.

Y Media Group, the largest South Asian Media House in Canada, was represented at the seminar. They covered the event and shared news of the Advocacy Strategy on their YouTube page, as well as broadcasting it on Channel Y. Coverage of the event by Y Media Group can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZsG5SZolTY>

Sandra Rupnarain opened the event. She described the project's efforts that led up to this day and spoke of the important collaboration between Family Services of Peel (FSP) - Peel Institute of Research & Training (PIRT), and Peel Elder Abuse Prevention Network (PEAPN).

The research assistants led an icebreaker activity with the attendees and established a positive sense of community, before diving into the academic portion of the event.

Chairperson Maria **Zigouris and** Sylvia Knight-Yard, **Co-Chair, provided** an overview of the Peel Elder Abuse Prevention Network (PEAPN), describing its purpose, goals, and initiatives.

Dr. Marlinda Freire, M.D., F.R.C.P. (C), the keynote speaker for the event, gave an eloquent presentation. Dr. Freire is a psychiatrist, with expertise in anxiety disorders, cognitive behavioural therapy, mental health, and trauma-related issues affecting immigrants, refugees, and victims of human rights violations. She has 46 years of clinical and community-based work experience supporting traumatized and displaced populations. Dr. Freire spoke about her personal journey into old age, marking critical life milestones and experiences along the way. She described how social determinants of health, such as immigration, gender, and class, influence well-being across one's lifespan.

After the keynote presentation, Monica Riutort, Director of PIRT, and Sarah Costantini, Research Assistant, presented the Advocacy Strategy plan, titled, *Enhancing the Lives of Seniors in Peel: An Advocacy Strategy to Address Elder Abuse*. Ageism and elder abuse in its various forms, were discussed. The demographics of seniors in Peel Region, and rates of elder abuse were presented. Details were provided about the framework that guided the project and the development of strategic goals. This provided a contextual overview of the need for an advocacy strategy to address elder abuse and the needs of seniors more broadly within the Region of Peel. Following the contextual overview, the goals and action steps, developed based on primary data collected from interviews and focus groups, as well as secondary data from the literature review and demographic analysis, were outlined. Monica Riutort closed the presentation with questions for the audience to support them in the provision of constructive feedback relating to the advocacy strategy plan.

Before launching into a discussion with the community, Nina Tangri, MPP, Mississauga-Streetsville, addressed the audience. She emphasized the importance of such an event and the significance of developing an advocacy strategy to address elder abuse, as well as the needs of seniors, more broadly. She offered her support to the community to address their concerns related to elder abuse and to the successful outcome of the Advocacy Strategy.

After MPP Nina Tangri's address, the event shifted to community feedback. Guests were asked to reflect on and discuss specific questions, including:

1. What do we need to do to promote the advocacy plan?
2. What are your thoughts on this advocacy plan?
3. What role can you play as a member of the community or a community organization in moving this advocacy plan forward?

Guests engaged in small group discussions before rejoining the larger group to share responses and thoughts as a community. Guests were provided with paper to write down their thoughts and ideas, which were collected after the event to ensure all feedback and ideas for further advocacy strategy development were captured. A research assistant from PIRT took detailed notes during the large group discussion to record the ideas. Following a fruitful discussion, the guests were gratefully acknowledged for their participation and feedback.

After a lunch break, the attendees gathered for the final portion of the event, in which seniors from the Peel community engaged the audience in **music** and dance performances. A woman from the South Asian community gave a dance performance. Eight members of the Chinese

Seniors Social Table performed 4 songs, accompanied by a band that included a banjo, violin, and guitar. Lastly, the Hispanic Seniors Social Table performed two dances, which got the whole room up and dancing with them.

Sandra Rupnarain, FSP Executive Director, closed the event, summarizing key comments from the feedback given, and thanking everyone for their participation.

## **Feedback Shared**

During the discussion, attendees discussed a range of topics related to the advocacy strategy plan, highlighting what they viewed as strengths and offering suggestions for action steps. The seniors had a great deal to offer in terms of what they wanted to see within this advocacy strategy.

### **The Strength of the Plan**

Attendees shared that the advocacy strategy holds several strengths. A group of service providers supported the critical need to address the issue of isolation that many older adults experience. The community highlighted that with a focus on building resources for activities, prioritizing intergenerational initiatives, and promoting educational workshops, there will be more community involvement opportunities for seniors. The development of short-term and long-term action steps was regarded as beneficial. Some service providers found these steps to be realistic in nature, in relation to the capacity of organizations.

The Advocacy Strategy's focus on education and awareness was regarded as a major strength across all groups. Seniors at a couple of tables indicated that many older adults do not recognize that they are being abused, and educational initiatives will enable increased recognition amongst seniors. Lastly, the focus on intergenerational initiatives and engagement with younger populations was seen as beneficial by seniors and service providers. This was highlighted as a way for younger generations and older adults to learn from one another, gain respect for one another, combat discrimination and prejudice against older adults, and reduce abuse.

### **Additional Suggestions for Action**

The seniors' groups had several suggestions for action steps and areas to address within the advocacy strategy. One area indicated by two seniors' groups is technology. They feel that rapidly changing technology is a barrier to older adults feeling included as equal participants in society. They want initiatives created that support older adults in navigating technology as it changes. Another factor seniors would like to see addressed is government benefits for seniors. They would like efforts made to explore ways for seniors to access government benefits, that would allow them to make use of healthcare and other services that are not covered by provincial healthcare.

Furthermore, seniors want to see strategic plans aimed at enhanced housing options for older adults that will allow them to live in residential communities with other older adults. They specifically indicated the need for these housing options to be income-based. This would facilitate access to community-based living for all members of the community. Older adult

participants stated that they would like to see a hotline established, that older adults could use to report elder abuse and to learn about resources on how to get support.

To facilitate efforts to enhance education and awareness of elder abuse, older adult participants recommended developing short dramas about elder abuse and the need to address it. They supported the idea of developing and implementing social media campaigns, that would reach youth, adults, and seniors. These suggestions were thought to help people better understand elder abuse and the needs of older adults across a wider audience. It was recommended that meetings or workshops be held on a regular basis to discuss a series of specialized topics on elder abuse and other needs of older adults. They would like to share stories within the meetings and across communities to help spread awareness.

## **Conclusions**

Overall, the community seminar was a highly successful event garnering wide attendance and further insight into the implementation of the Advocacy Strategy for the Region of Peel. Several participants expressed their appreciation for this event and the development of the advocacy strategy plan to address the well-being of seniors. Discussion from the community highlighted areas for further consideration in finalizing the advocacy strategy plan during the project's final month.

## Appendix A

### Seminar Invitation



Come And Join Us as We Present

# AN ADVOCACY STRATEGY TO ADDRESS ELDER ABUSE IN PEEL

Join us as we present to you a formal advocacy strategy to increase awareness about elder abuse and advocate for improved resources and supports to protect the wellbeing of seniors in Peel and beyond.

	<b>DATE</b> JUNE 22, 2023		<b>LOCATION</b> Mississauga Grand Banquet and Event Centre 35 Brunel Rd. Mississauga, ON		<b>TIME</b> 10:30 AM TO 2:30 PM
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**REGISTER HERE:**

**Please register via the Google form:**  
<https://forms.gle/FpDDT2LAHPV76wUa6>

**For more information, please contact:**  
scostantini@fspeel.org OR rmann@fspeel.org

**Website:**  
<https://fspeel.org/peel-institute/>