



World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is June 15

BC Notaries Offer Advice to Detect and Prevent Financial Abuse

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Vancouver, BC – In recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15, BC Notaries are sharing signs of financial abuse and advice on how to protect seniors.

According to HealthLinkBC, [more than half](#) of reported elder abuse cases involve financial abuse, defined as using a person’s money or property without their consent or fraudulently, as in financial scams.

“Elder abuse can happen at the hands of strangers, acquaintances and—most sadly—even family members,” said Daniel Boisvert, a Notary in Delta and President of BC Notaries Association. “Families and professionals on the front lines, such as first responders, healthcare providers, and bank and credit union employees need to know what signs of abuse to watch for in order to intervene appropriately.”

Key indicators of financial abuse include a sudden decrease in bank balance, investments or other savings; a notable change in financial decision-making or lifestyle; or withdrawal from family or social interactions due to stress, fear or shame.

Some key forms of financial abuse include:

1. Pressuring a senior to loan or gift money or other items of value;
2. Selling a senior’s property or belongings and using the money for themselves;
3. Tricking or pressuring an elderly person into signing a contract or changing their Will.

BC Notaries help many seniors ensure their assets are safeguarded by legally documenting their wishes so they don’t fall victim to a scammer or abusive family member. Notaries review the individual’s situation and ensure they have a current legal Will, and advise if they would benefit from creating a Power of Attorney or Representation Agreement.

“BC Notaries help many seniors ensure their assets are safeguarded by legally documenting their wishes so they less easily fall victim to a scammer or abusive family member,” said Tarja McLean, a Notary in Kelowna.

BC Notaries are also highly trained to ensure a client is making their own decisions of sound mind. Notaries conduct private interviews with individuals to discuss their wishes and related legal planning documents.

“There are occasions when, while speaking with the senior client alone, they say they are feeling pressured by a family member and don’t want to change their will,” said Morrie Baillie, a Notary in Victoria. “For that reason, it’s important for us to speak with the client in confidence on their own.”

1. Legal Will

Through documenting their wishes in a legal Will and ensuring it is up-to-date, a senior can independently decide how they would like the proceeds of their estate to be distributed. A Notary has a duty to ensure any changes to a Will are done with the senior's permission and that they are fully informed when making these decisions.

2. Power of Attorney

The person trusted with Power of Attorney—a designation to manage finances and legal affairs—should be well-known, trustworthy and accountable to the older adult, and involve that person in the decision-making process if the person is capable and competent. In cases of financial abuse, this does not happen. A BC Notary can help clarify and designate the Attorney's roles and responsibilities. This should be done while the signatory is independent and of sound mind.

3. Representation Agreement

In cases where the senior may have diminished capacity and cannot make a Power of Attorney, they may still be capable of making a special Representation Agreement. This type of agreement provides a designated individual with decision-making authority that typically includes minor and major health care, personal care and living arrangements, but can also include legal affairs and routine management of financial affairs. A Notary Public can advise you on the best approach for your needs and create the appropriate agreement.

If you have concerns about an elderly person living alone and at risk, or you believe they may be a victim of financial abuse, you can report this to the [Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee](#).

About BC Notaries:

BC Notaries are a select group of over 400 legal professionals commissioned by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. For nearly 100 years these highly trained legal advisors have provided non-contentious services, including land law, real estate transactions and all the important personal planning tools available to the people of our province: Wills, Powers of Attorney, Representation Agreements and Advance Directives. Throughout history, Notaries have been recognized as individuals of impeccable integrity practicing in a Tradition of Trust. A Notary's word, signature, and red Notary Seal are time-honoured testaments to the character and skill of these caring professionals.

The BC Notaries Association promotes and supports British Columbia Notaries Public in all communities of the Province and advances the standing of its members and awareness of their services to the public. For more information, or to find a Notary by location, name or language please visit notaries.bc.ca.

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Editors: Local Notaries are available in many areas of BC to discuss preventing elder abuse.

Media contacts:

Karen Cook
604-551-9074
karen@cookpublicrelations.com

Brenda Jones
604-312-1070
Brenda_jones@shaw.ca