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WORLD SENIOR/ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY PROMPTS REMINDERS

WHITEHORSE – The Yukon is using the first World Senior/Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15 as a learning opportunity for territorial residents, Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers said.

“The abuse and neglect of our seniors and elders happens far too often,” Cathers said. “We want to raise public awareness of how to deal with this sensitive issue.”

In Canada, Senior/Elder Abuse Awareness Day is supported by Ministers Responsible for Seniors. It was intended to create awareness about abuse and neglect of older adults, and provide community based groups with educational materials.

“We’re starting by sending out information in relation to senior/elder abuse, and by pointing out that the *Adult Protection and Decision Making Act* is in place,” Cathers said. “Both of these initiatives demonstrate that as a government we are aware of senior abuse as an issue, and that we have identified and taken steps to help communities and individuals address the problem.”

The *Adult Protection and Decision Making Act* came into effect in September 2005.

Abuse of older adults refers to actions taken that harm an older person or jeopardize their health or welfare. The World Health Organization says abuse and neglect of older adults can be a single or repeated act that can occur in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust or where a person is in a position of power or authority.

Abuse can be physical, emotional, verbal, financial, sexual or spiritual. Financial abuse is the most common form of abuse. Neglect often involves not doing something such as failing to provide food, shelter or medical care.

“We like to think we live in a society where we honor and cherish our seniors and our elders. Last week was Seniors Week and we celebrated locally with a tea and special events in our residential facilities. This week we have to face a more serious issue of how to ensure our older citizens are supported as well as protected from people who would possibly abuse or neglect them,” Cathers said.

Information packages have been provided to all seniors’ groups throughout the Yukon, as well as health centres, social workers, RCMP and First Nations. A series of fact sheets on abuse of older adults is available on-line at www.hss.gov.yk.ca/seniors.

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