NATIONAL SAFETY SYMPOSIUM:
CRIME PREVENTION AND INDEPENDENT LIVING

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

APRIL 28-30, 2005

OTTAWA, CANADA

OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE
SERVICE DE POLICE D'OTTAWA

Working together for a safer community
La sécurité de notre communauté, un travail d'équipe

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTRES

NATIONAL SAFETY SYMPOSIUM:
CRIME PREVENTION AND INDEPENDENT LIVING

Funding Sponsors

OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE
SERVICE DE POLICE D'OTTAWA

Working together for a safer community
La sécurité de notre communauté, un travail d'équipe

Untapped
Untold
Unlimited

Independent
Living

*Building a
Better Canada
for All*

Public Safety and
Emergency Preparedness Canada

Sécurité publique et
Protection civile Canada

Written by Cameron Crawford
L'institut Roeher Institute

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

In 2003 the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) received funding from the National Crime Prevention Partnership Program, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada for *"Crime Prevention and Independent Living; A Pan-Canadian Initiative for People with Disabilities"*. CAILC is a non-profit, national bilingual umbrella organization supporting a network of 26 member Centres across Canada to promote the full participation and integration of persons with disabilities. Centres are run by and for persons with a wide variety of disabilities. To find out more about CAILC and the Independent Living philosophy that guides the programs and services delivered by member Centres, visit us on the web at **www.cailc.ca** or **www.accva.ca**.

CAILC believes that this crime prevention initiative meets a recognized and urgent need. As the federal government's National Crime Prevention Strategy has identified, people with disabilities face a disproportionate rate of crime due of limitations in mobility and dependence on others.

In the words of Traci Walters, CAILC National Director: "Canadians with disabilities are twice as likely to be victims of violence - 67% of women with disabilities have been physically or sexually assaulted as children. Every year in Canada, 15,000 children suffer permanent or long-term disabilities as a result of abuse or violence. These are just a few of many alarming facts regarding disabled persons that have been virtually left un-addressed."

The overall goal of this project was to build the capacity of local disability organizations including the national network of CAILC member Independent Living Resource Centres (ILRCs), first time responders and local communities to work together and share information on crime prevention programs and initiatives for people with disabilities.

Specifically, the project had three central objectives:

1) To highlight the particular circumstances of crime and victimization towards people with disabilities in Canada through increased information sharing between and among law enforcement agencies, disability organizations, service providers, and people with disabilities;

2) To develop information, resources and dialogue about crime prevention and disability;

3) To develop and enhance networking and partnerships at the local and national levels between law enforcement agencies, front line workers, disability and community organizations, ILRCs and persons with disabilities.

To realize project objectives, a central component of this initiative was the development and delivery of the *National Safety Symposium: Crime Prevention and Independent Living.* For the symposium CAILC brought together consumers, police and first time responders, service providers, disability organizations, and government agencies from across Canada, to learn about our respective initiatives and to gain mutual understanding of our different experiences and points of view. It also afforded the opportunity to work together to develop recommendations for an inclusive national crime prevention strategy.

On behalf of CAILC and its network of member Centres, I take this opportunity to thank our partners the Ottawa Police Service, and funding sponsor the National Crime Prevention Partnership Program, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada whose financial and in-kind contributions made the symposium such a success.

The Crime Prevention project was completed in June 2005. However, CAILC remains committed to promoting positive relationships and partnerships between the disability community, first time responders, police services and government agencies to reduce the vulnerability of persons with disabilities to violence and abuse and to build safer communities for all.

Paul-Claude Bérubé
National Chairperson

Traci Walters
National Director

Left: *Traci Walters CAILC National Director; Opening Panel:, Linda Zaluska, Native Elder; Larry Hill, Deputy Police Chief of Ottawa Police Service;*
Right: *Anthony DiMonte, Chief of Ottawa Paramedics; Esther Roberts, Coordinator CAILC Crime Prevention Project; Lisanne Lacroix, Executive Director, National Crime Prevention Centre; Sandra Carpenter, Centre for Independent Living Toronto and Jim Derksen, Disability Advocate.*

I. OVERVIEW

This report provides an overview of key themes that emerged at the National Safety Symposium: Crime Prevention and Independent Living, The Symposium was convened and hosted by the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) and the Ottawa Police Service in Ottawa, April 28 – 30, 2005.

A. National Safety Symposium

The National Safety Symposium drew together 200 participants from around Canada. It placed a focus on addressing violence/abuse and other crimes against people with disabilities.

Participants included roughly equal numbers of:
- Police;
- Staff and volunteers from CAILC's federation of Independent Living Resource Centres (ILRCs) and other Non Government Organizations (NGOs) in the disability sector; and
- Consumers, i.e., people who themselves have disabilities.
- As well, a few officials from the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario participated.

During the first two days of the Symposium, participants listened to panellists and dialogued on a range of issues. These included:
- Effective models of partnership between police and ILRCs;
- Issues, concerns and progress involving people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder;
- Crime prevention in the area of personal care and abuse (including institutional, attendant and family abuse);
- Issues and experiences of first responders' (e.g., police, fire and ambulance personnel);
- Training packages, programs and tools for police and other first responders;
- Safeguards and the new community living styles of people with disabilities;
- Tools for independent living and for the disability community;
- Social policy;
- Inclusive communities as a means of crime prevention; and
- Key learnings from the perspective of police, other first responders, service providers and government.

On the first two days of the Symposium there were three plenary sessions, one open microphone session and twelve breakout discussion groups. Note takers were assigned to each of these discussions. Note takers coded participants' comments according to the following scheme:

- Context (i.e., challenges/difficult issues with which participants were presently dealing and positive practices that can be built upon);
- Vision and directions for the future (i.e., key outcomes to be achieved; principles to guide thinking and action; specific actions to be taken and measures to be adopted); and
- Potential linkages, partners, allies and indications of "Who should be doing what?"

At a half-day plenary session on the final day of the Symposium, key themes were summarized and participants provided concrete ideas about future directions and next steps.

B. Aim and Structure of the Present Report

The aim of the present report is to provide an overview of key issues and challenges that emerged at the Symposium and a suggested way forward for stakeholders to address violence, abuse and other crimes against people with disabilities.

In some Symposium sessions there were discussions about people with disabilities as offenders or alleged offenders. The general approach in the present report was to:
- Keep the focus on people with disabilities as potential victims. Where possible, ideas were incorporated on how to address the risks of offenders becoming victims in the criminal justice system.
- Incorporate knowledge about responding to offenders that is generally applicable to responding in situations that involve harms against people with disabilities.

Information about people with disabilities as offenders/ alleged offenders has been earmarked for further attention in another context.

This report is organized according to the following broad themes:

I. The Basic Problem

II. Susceptibility of People with Disabilities to Abuse and Violence

III. Problem Identification

IV. Society's Response

V. The Legislative, Policy and Procedural Base for Action

VI. Moving Forward: Vision, Core Values and Guiding Principles

VII. Next Steps

VIII. Summary and Conclusion

Several of the sections of the report are divided into sub-themes. These are described in context.

C. People and Organizations Who Contributed to this Report

- Traci Walters (National Director, CAILC), Esther Roberts (Crime Prevention Project Co-ordinator, CAILC) and Marsha Dozar (M. D. Associates) played key roles in designing the Symposium.
- The Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy was a partner in this initiative. Ottawa Police Service was a partner in this project providing organizational support along with in-kind support and funding for the Symposium.
- Note takers were from the CAILC staff: Jihan Abbas, Susan Forster, Jennifer Newman and Sara Jarvis.
- Cameron Crawford, President of the Roeher Institute, assisted these people in designing the process for note takers, provided the summary of key themes on the final day of the Symposium, facilitated the discussion on future directions and next steps, and wrote the present report.

Many other people are to be acknowledged, without whose efforts neither the Symposium nor this report would have been possible. These people are:

- Lisanne Lacroix, Executive Director, National Crime Prevention Strategy
- Vince Bevan, Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service
- David Pepper, Director of Community Development, Ottawa Police Service
- Laurie Fenton, Community Developer, Ottawa Police Service
- Uday Jaswal, Sergeant, Ottawa Police Service

CAILC also thanks the National Project Advisory Committee, guest speakers, presenters, moderators, volunteers, CAILC staff and ILRC staff who contributed to the Symposium.

Left to right: Linda Zaluska, Native Elder; Larry Hill, Deputy Chief, Ottawa Police Service; Lisanne Lacroix, Executive Director, National Crime Prevention Strategy

I. THE BASIC PROBLEM

The National Safety Symposium was convened in part because organizers knew that people with disabilities are disproportionately vulnerable to abuse and violence. The general point has been well established in the research literature and was underscored by a range of statistics and other information that were presented in one of the panel discussions on the first day of the Symposium.

Moreover, sexual and emotional abuse can *cause* chronic depression and other psychiatric conditions. Other forms of violence can cause physical, cognitive and other disabilities as a result of physical trauma to the head, limbs, sense organs, etc.

The particular concern was raised that Canada's population is aging, with 1 in 13 people over 65 years at risk for dementia and 1 in 3 over 85 years at risk for the same, Alzheimer's disease being a major form. It was reported that 60% of people with dementia do 'wander' from their usual place of residence and that, if not found within 12 hours, half of these people will eventually be found injured or dead. The concern was also expressed that seniors and severely disabled persons are at risk of dying earlier than they should because of a reduced standard of medical care that is given them. Said one respondent, "The medical profession has a code of silence; pathologists bury the work of doctors."

The point was made that people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and intellectual/developmental disabilities are more susceptible than others to sexual harassment and other abuses because they may not understand when they are in harm's way. The view was also expressed that too many people with FASD, intellectual or learning disabilities are in the criminal justice system, where they are being victimized.

Concern was expressed about the disproportionate numbers of children with disabilities in the child welfare system and the need for social workers to have better training and awareness as a safeguard against unjust apprehension.

Many participants at the Symposium expressed the view that people with disabilities do not have access to equal rights and protection under the law, are less likely than others to have crimes against themselves prosecuted and, if drawn into the criminal/legal systems, are very vulnerable to further victimization.

While the prevalence of violence and abuse against people with disabilities was acknowledged, the point was also made that present research and information systems do not do a very good job of bringing the problem to attention. In part this is because crime statistics do not flag cases according to victims' disability status as they do in relation to gender and race. As well, many cases go unreported so even the statistics that are available give a skewed impression of the extent of the problem.

II. SUSCEPTIBILITY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

Focusing on the person with a disability as victim or potential victim, the discussions at the Symposium touched on why people with disabilities are susceptible to violence and abuse. Presenters and participants explored personal risk factors (i.e., factors that are inherent in the person) and situational risk factors.

A. Personal Risk Factors

People with disabilities are over-represented among people victimized due in part to vulnerability that stems from personal characteristics. For example:

- People with mobility disabilities may have difficulty moving out of harm's way.
- People with agility disabilities may have difficulty fending off various harms.
- People who are blind or who have other vision disabilities may have difficulty seeing that they are in harm's way and seeing opportunities to exit from those situations.
- People with intellectual disabilities may not understand that they are in harm's way or that unacceptable actions have been perpetrated against themselves.
- People with communicative difficulties may have difficulty telling others about the risks or harms experienced.
- People dealing with mental health issues may not know that their depression or other condition is not typical, and may find it difficult to appreciate or care about the risks to which they are exposed and the extent of the harms done to themselves.

In some instances people may not know that they have a disability. For example, FASD is often not formally identified/diagnosed. Because people with FASD tend to have difficulty learning through observation, issues of violence and abuse against themselves can raise questions for themselves about whether abuse or violence has in fact occurred. For police and other first responders questions may arise such as, 'Does this person have a disability?' or, 'Is there a mental, physical health or other issue at play, here?'

B. Situational Risk Factors

Symposium participants identified a range of situational factors that place people with disabilities at risk of violence and abuse. Among these are the increased chances of being poor, isolated, reliant on others, in dangerous living situations, unaware of their legal rights and of

being socially vulnerable in other ways, which include power differentials, lack of knowledge transfer and lack of training of service providers. Broad social attitudes and system forces can aggravate these factors.

High unemployment is reportedly a common characteristic of victims of abuse/violence. Many people with disabilities are not employed or are poor on other grounds. As poor people with disabilities can't usually 'buy their way out' of an abusive group home or other professional-client situations, and have often been on wait lists for a long time before receiving any formal supports, they may feel they have few realistic options other than to continue with the supports and services that are presently available, even though these may be abusive.

As well, many people with FASD and psychiatric disabilities are homeless, or, in the words of one Symposium participant, "are going from place to place". These people are exposed to various harms that come with being 'on the streets' or in transient living arrangements.

Victims with disabilities are often isolated from others. As most offences against people with disabilities occur in the personal or family home, are chronic rather than isolated incidents and are under-reported, the incidents are largely hidden from others' scrutiny.

Many people with disabilities have to rely on others to address their needs (e.g., for attendant support). As perpetrators are rarely strangers, people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to violence and other harms. Perpetrators can gain access to exploitive situations as employees through social service agencies.

People with disabilities may not know what healthy 'boundaries' are, e.g., the differences between an intimate personal friendship and a professional-client relationship in a service context with an attendant. Accordingly, some people with disabilities may not appreciate when professionals have transgressed these boundaries. Service providers have a duty to reflect seriously on boundary transgressions and the impacts on clients.

The reliance of people with disabilities on systems and people for support can render some individuals particularly vulnerable. For example, owing to 'attachment disorders' and not knowing how to show affection and attention to loved-ones, children and youth with FASD often end up in multiple foster placements. Such young people face more chances of being abused given the sheer numbers of caregivers to which they are exposed.

So called 'secure units' in long term care facilities or 'gated communities' are not necessarily secure; residents with time on their hands can figure out how to confound security measures. For example, a participant at the Symposium spoke about how a family member, who has a tendency to wander, figured out how to get into the community to get a coffee by following visitors and staff as they drove their cars off premises.

Many people with disabilities live in low-income housing and communities where the risks of harm are comparatively high.

Moreover, not only are the vast number of buildings inaccessible to people with disabilities, they are also inaccessible in terms of emergency plans for first responders such as fire professionals. In emergency situations these professionals face the additional challenge of effectively communicating with people with disabilities in order to avoid misunderstanding and injury.

People with disabilities are in many instances not aware of their legal rights. Accordingly, they may not be aware of the legal bases and tools that could support them to 'push back' against violent or abusive people and situations.

People with disabilities can be vulnerable to various harms as a result of power differentials such as those based on gender, physical strength and agility, knowledge and social status.

Lack of knowledge transfer is a problem for children and youth with disabilities who move out of the child welfare/Children's Aid Society system as adults. For these young people, records of difficult behaviours are not usually transferred to other providers of support. Nor is information about how these behaviours have been managed effectively, nor information about contact people who have been able to help when the young people have needed this. It would be helpful if such information were available after young people leave the system so the adult services system and first responders to emergencies could be adequately responsive.[1]

Symposium participants pointed out that private home service providers typically receive no CPR training, no information about family members to contact, no information about the medical histories of people they are supporting, and no standardized expectations by funders. Access to such training and information would be helpful not only for the service providers but also for first responders in emergency situations.

Societal forces can reinforce individual risk factors so that individuals learn to be compliant, dependent and, because of the multiple barriers and challenges people with disabilities face, to accept abusive situations as 'just the way things are'. Individuals may not know that they can and should expect more for themselves.

General beliefs about and attitudes towards disability can reinforce negative possibilities, such as the view that people are 'better off dead than disabled', that people with disabilities are not quite human or are paying for their own or their parents' sins.

---

[1] *The Winnipeg ILRC is developing transition plans with people 16 years of age so important information will be transferred.*

Negative social attitudes can translate to overt hostility towards people with disabilities, increasing the chances of victimization.

Societal myths compound the problem, such as the myth that 'No one would ever hurt a person with a disability', and myths concerning disability and sexuality, e.g., that people with disabilities are all sexual 'takers' or that all are 'saints'. Such myths diminish community scrutiny of situations and actions that may be abusive.

Public policy and programs can aggravate the risks and harms to which people with disabilities are exposed. For example, people with disabilities experience disproportionate levels of marginalization because they often lack adequate incomes and the supportive services they need. Accordingly, they are often not fully at liberty to avoid or remove themselves from high-risk situations.

Top left: David Pepper, Ottawa Police Service
Top right: RCMP Constable Annie Gagnon with Symposium delegate
Above, from left to right: Sergeant Uday Jasway, Ottawa Police Service;
Inspector Mike Flanagan, Ottawa Police Service and Traci Walters National Director.

III. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Symposium participants pointed to a range of issues that can confound identification and reporting of violence and abuse against people with disabilities. People with disabilities may have difficulty communicating harms for a variety of reasons, may fear the consequences if they do report, and face a range of barriers that can discourage reporting. Others in the community may lack the information and awareness they need in order to be proactive in identifying situations of risk or harm.

A. Naming and Reporting

People with disabilities may not report violence and abuse against themselves for a variety of reasons. They may not be aware of their right to report abuse, so working to educate people about their rights is important. They may be fearful of police, which is reportedly a common problem. They may have difficulty reporting because of communicative disabilities (e.g., disability in the area of speech, hearing or both). They may have difficulty telling their stories in ways that are consistent, e.g., a person with an intellectual or psychiatric disability may confuse details such as the sequence of events. Others may have difficulty telling their stories in ways that will be believed, e.g., a person who has low education and limited verbal communication skills. Others feel too ashamed to tell what happened to them, a problem that can affect men as well as women.

> "People with communication disabilities are being abused and cannot communicate their abuse, are misunderstood or are not believed after disclosure. There is a huge population of people who have communication disabilities and there are not many services and supports available to assist them."
>
> "The symptoms of FASD can be mistaken for signs of what first responders would see as guilt in an interviewing situation."
>
> "[Concerning people with developmental disabilities in institutions], reporting is minimal, so even with the high stats the abuse is understated."
>
> **– Participants at the Symposium**

It was reported at the Symposium that many incidents are not reported because victims fear the criminal justice process.

Others fear the potential consequences to themselves if they do report, e.g., reprisal or loss of essential supports, even though the person providing the support is a perpetrator.

Symposium participants said that people who do report are often devalued and tend not to receive the necessary support during and after disclosure.

As well, persistent and varied barriers make it impossible for many people to navigate through the transportation, social and health services, policing and justice 'system' to tell their stories.

B. Detection

Symposium participants identified a range of factors that can both aid and hamper detection of violence and abuse against people with disabilities. Useful measures include emergency lines and other systems that automatically 'flag' first responders that the place of origin of an emergency call is the residence of one or more people with disabilities.

One such system that was discussed is one in the United Kingdom that employs telephones with panic buttons. The telephones are pre-registered with an agency. When used, the operator is provided with information about the person making the call.

In a Canadian program called Lifeline, telephone numbers of family, friends and neighbours of people with disabilities are maintained by a central agency. In the event of an emergency, the person with a disability presses a button on a two-way communication device that is worn. The emergency call goes through to Lifeline, who can discuss the problem with the person seeking assistance, and who can then call family members or neighbours for assistance. Police, fire and other agencies are called if appropriate.

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association has sought to have its clients' telephone numbers registered with police and fire departments. The fire department in Ottawa has information that enables it to know when a call emanates from the home of a person with a disability. The city of Duncan has stickers that can be affixed to the windows of homes of people with disabilities.

Hampering factors are that the information in emergency systems is sometimes not kept current and the monitoring services may be more costly than what people with disabilities can afford.

Other communication difficulties hamper detection as well. For example, first responders may not understand the difference in emergency calls between people who are drunk, on medications or disabled. First responders need training on such issues and need to be careful in their attitudes towards people who are calling in.

Similarly, police and service organizations may not understand that challenging 'behaviours' may be a person's only way of communicating. What may be indications of abuse or violence against a person may be seen instead as the complainant's behaviour problem.

> "Sometimes people communicate, through seemingly non-compliant, angry and even violent behaviour, that they don't want to be in a situation. First responders need to understand this, try to communicate with the person [and] find someone who the person trusts to assist with the communication."
>
> – Participants at the Symposium

Community policing can ensure that police officers are routinely in contact with people who live in group homes or who gather at Independent Living Resource Centres, a measure that can increase the 'comfort level' of people with disabilities in their dealings with police and that can discourage incidents of abuse and violence from occurring in the first place. It is not clear how widely such practice prevails, however.

A further hampering factor is that service providing organizations may not know the signs of abuse and may lack the will to act on evidence of abuses that have occurred.

Top left: Throat Singers
Top right: Jim Derksen, disability advocate
Above, centre: Symposium delegates

IV. SOCIETY'S RESPONSE

In discussing the response of the community to violence and abuse against people with disabilities, Symposium respondents focused on the need for effective response capacity of individual organizations and effective coordination across people and organizations.

A. Response Capacity of Individual Organizations

Organizations that should be responding to issues of violence and abuse against people with disabilities may not exist in some communities. This was flagged as a particular problem in rural communities.

> **"A person with a disability could disclose abuse issues, but there would then be nowhere to go for assistance."**
>
> **"Young children's special needs are unaddressed in schools and communities. Only 3% of school-aged children with learning disabilities get the help they need."**
>
> **"There are no services in place to assist the individual needs of FASD clients."**
>
> **– Participants at the Symposium**

In communities where supportive services are in place (e.g., shelters, distress lines, emergency transportation), the services are often physically inaccessible and unable to provide the range of supports needed. Such supports would include attendant service, financial assistance and effective communication support.

> **"Many people with speech communication disabilities are misdiagnosed with intellectual disabilities. They are often not taught to read due to misdiagnosis. Their communication speed is at about 10 words a minute, which leads to miscommunication and frustration."**
>
> **– Participants at the Symposium**

Lack of organizational policy on accessibility was flagged as a key issue, as were rigid accessibility policies based on hard and fast rules rather than on general principles such as universal design. Policies driven by insurers rather than by the needs of service users were also identified as problematic.

The inaccessibility of services points to a deeper problem: organizations' lack of 'ownership' or responsibility for understanding and responding to violence and abuse against people with disabilities. For example, organizations that provide various supportive services to people with disabilities may not know when abuse has occurred or how to respond effectively. Organizations that respond to issues of violence and abuse may not have made it a significant priority to ensure they are serving victims with disabilities.

" 'Protecting Ourselves' was a one year proposal that was accepted. We worked with Ottawa police to determine how and if the safety needs of people with disabilities are being met in Ottawa and to recommend ways to improve supports for people with disabilities. The project took place in 2001-2002. Activities included surveying community organizations and police. 12 out of 29 organizations surveyed in the community did not have a crime prevention policy in place. It was hoped that the survey would encourage more to consider putting a policy in place."

"Kids with intellectual disabilities who have been sexually abused don't get taken through criminal justice system because their stories change."

"The court system is underexposed to this issue."

"Police protocols can happen in response to a death and Coroner's inquest, but it can take that much to mobilize a force."

"The key issue, once a project ends, is incorporating it into core programming so that knowledge and expertise is not lost. Funding being tied to projects is a continuing issue. As well, once a project ends, the challenge remains of how to meet expectations that have been created by the supports provided through the project."

"Once agencies have created protocols on response to abuse disclosure, in many instances they fall by the wayside."

"In a recent survey 48% of police suggested the need for more training to improve their knowledge base on disability. When the survey was conducted there was no real training for police on disabilities."

– Participants at the Symposium

General services for victims typically know little about people with disabilities so don't understand the risks and other challenges people with disabilities face. Such services tend to know still less about the victimization of people with disabilities and receive very little professional development on such issues. Consequently, the organizations tend to lack the knowledge and skills that are needed to respond effectively.[2]

Country-level crime statistics typically make little mention of people with disabilities as specific targets of violence and abuse, so it can be difficult for organizations to make themselves better informed.[3]

---

2 Only 19% of victim services that were recently surveyed by Statistics Canada have dedicated programs to address the needs of people with disabilities. See Statistics Canada (Thursday, December 9, 2004).The Daily, "Victim services". Retrieved June 6, 2005 from **www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/041209/d041209a.htm**.

Organizations that may want to place a significant focus on the victimization of people with disabilities will need time to develop staff expertise, policies and procedures, and may have to invest in various physical and other accommodation measures. However, such organizations are typically funded for short-term projects of a year or less in duration. It can be very difficult for organizations to put in place a sustained program of prevention and response on the basis of short-term, unpredictable funding.

> **"Organizations, agencies, and services providers are not working with their clients as effectively as they could. In fact many people who need assistance are not getting it; people are 'slipping through the cracks'. Some people cannot get help because they do not completely meet certain criteria or are simply just not being referred to the appropriate services."**
>
> **"The tracking of murder stats of disability is not done."**
>
> **– Participants at the Symposium**

B. Coordinated Response across People and Organizations

Not only are there issues with the capacity of individual organizations to respond to the victimization of people with disabilities, the organizations that should be responding often have tenuous – if any – communication, coordination or working linkages amongst themselves; they tend to operate largely in isolation from one another.

As well, such organizations may not engage people with disabilities in awareness raising and professional development, in exploring the problems/issues, or in developing solutions.

> **"One hurdle to developing a[n advisory] committee is getting representation from people with disabilities themselves, not just from agencies or organizations that work with people with disabilities."**
>
> **– Participants at the Symposium**

---

3 *A recent exception is Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2001).* Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2001*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry, p. 10. Reported incidents of 'hate crimes' against people with disabilities likely understate the magnitude of the problem. See, for instance, Statistics Canada (Tuesday, June 1, 2004). "Pilot survey of hate crime", in* The Daily*. Ottawa: Author. Retrieved May 31, 2005 from* **www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/040601/d040601a.htm***. Symposium participants seldom identified overt 'hate' as a motivating factor behind the harms that people with disabilities experience.*

V. THE LEGISLATIVE, POLICY AND PROCEDURAL BASE FOR ACTION

In order to stem and respond to violence and abuse against people with disabilities it would be helpful if police and community organizations had a clear basis in law, policy and procedures for doing so. However, Symposium participants identified a number of issues that leave a relatively weak legislative, policy and procedural basis for action.

For example, because of present rules of evidence and interpretations of those rules, many cases never make their way to the judicial process, let alone through that process. This is particularly likely where, due to disability, victims lack strong verbal communication skills or where they tend to confuse the sequence of events and other matters of fact. Police are likely to filter such cases from reaching Crown Attorneys on the presumption that Crown Attorneys will not take the cases forward in courts in any event. If police do present such cases, Crown Attorneys are likely to filter such cases from the judicial process on the presumption that judges will find victims' testimony weak or faulty. It is as if the judicial system was designed to protect everyone but the people most vulnerable to a range of harms and least able to clearly tell others about those harms.

The point was also made at the Symposium that punishments are disproportionately lenient in cases where parents have killed their disabled children and in other cases that involve crimes against people with disabilities[4].

The Criminal Code is silent about many of the harms and mistreatments that people with disabilities experience. Criminal offences involve fairly major violations of the person. The Criminal Code does not address the verbal and emotional abuses to which people with disabilities are often subjected.

To the best of the knowledge of participants at the Symposium, there was no specific national policy framework or strategy to target and address issues of violence and abuse against people with disabilities over the long term. Roeher subsequently found that Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) does mention people with

---

4 *See also Sobsey, D. (2005). "Minimal data" prepared for the North American Regional Consultation: UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children with Disabilities. Edmonton: Author.*

disabilities as a group slated for priority attention. However, it is telling that Symposium participants – many of whom are directly involved with issues of violence and abuse against people with disabilities – generally didn't seem to know about the NCPS' focus on people with disabilities and didn't perceive that strategy to be placing major emphasis in this area.[5]

Project advisory and symposium committee members

---

[5] *Roeher's search of the website for the NCPS found that a total 2,154 projects were funded under the initiative since 1997. The search was performed at* **www.prevention.gc.ca/en/projects/index.asp** *on May 31, 2005. The Government of Canada committed $145 million over four years (2001-2005) for Phase II of the NCPS (retrieved May 31, 2005 from* **www.crime-prevention.org/en/aboutus/phases.htm***l). A total of $160,200 was spent on 5 projects since 1997 with a specific focus on issues of disability. These initiatives were funded in fiscal years 2000, 2001 and 2002. Expenditures on NCPS programs with a specific focus on disability, then, have amounted to about 0.1% of total program expenditures in recent years.*

VI. MOVING FORWARD: VISION, CORE VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Symposium participants confirmed that people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to a range of harms, identified some of the personal and situational factors that render people susceptible to harms, explored challenges that have to be addressed in reporting and detection, and pointed to the need for community agencies to be better equipped in terms of expertise, resources and coordination amongst themselves to respond effectively. Participants also had opportunities to articulate their vision of the way things should be, as well as core beliefs and values, and principles for guiding actions. This section of the report provides an overview of participants' vision, beliefs and values, and guiding principles.

A. Vision

Symposium participants envisioned a future where:
- People with disabilities are valued as equals, are fully included in their communities and live as safely and securely as others, there.
- Community members are aware of people with disabilities and understand what it means to live with a disability.
- People with disabilities have greater independence through community-based support and empowerment measures.
- A comprehensive, accessible and inclusive community assistance program is in place for people with disabilities.
    - It involves individuals with disabilities, their families and informal networks, the educational, police and justice systems, and other community supports and services. These stakeholders are well informed and collaborate effectively to prevent and address mistreatment.
- The social services system operates in ways consistent with the principles of the *In Unison* accord (e.g., personalized approaches, flexible, responsive, portable, empowering, etc.)
- There is good communication between service providers and people with disabilities.
- An ethical framework is in place to guide service provision to ensure that personal – professional boundaries between the providers and users of disability supports are not crossed.
    - That framework has been designed to ensure that dismissive, mean and other inappropriate actions by caregivers are addressed at first showing so these do not escalate into overt abuse and violence.

---

6 *Available on June 2, 2005 at **http://socialunion.gc.ca/pwd/unison/unison_e.html***

- Effective measures are in place to prevent FASD and to support children and youth with FASD.
- People with disabilities are not disproportionately in situations of risk stemming from low income that expose them to harms (e.g., having to live in dangerous neighbourhoods; not having alternative service/support options to abusive ones).
- People with disabilities understand their rights, what to do and where to go in the event of harm.
- Accommodations are in place as a matter of course for victims of violence/abuse in disclosure situations.
  - Victims are made to feel comfortable, respected and supported. Responders use clear, plain language free of jargon, double negatives, and complicated or leading questions. Responders try various approaches to elicit information when the victim seems not to understand what the responders are asking. Interviews are recorded in ways that are non-intrusive. Where necessary, people knowledgeable about people with disabilities, and who have the complainants' trust, are involved to assist in the interview process.
- Victims who report violence or abuse have significant say concerning the course of interventions to be undertaken by authorities.
  - This is so people are not re-victimized and disempowered by the system that should be working on their behalf.
- First responders understand how to address cases in which people with disabilities have been victimized.
  - Responders have prior training and ready access to detailed information about individuals' medical conditions, medications and other details consistent with effective intervention to address the harms experienced.
- Supportive, accessible follow-up services for victims are in place.
  - These include shelters, counselling, interpretation services, etc.
- Victims are referred to such services and have ready access to them.
- Cases of violence and abuse against people with disabilities are prosecuted. Sentences are at least as rigorous as those meted out in cases where victims do not have disabilities.

B. Core Beliefs and Values

Participants' vision for the future rests on core beliefs and values that would inform how new arrangements would function. These core beliefs and values are as follows:

- All people are equal and share inherent dignity and worth.
- All people have the same right to be treated with respect and to live free from mistreatment in safety and security.
- All people aspire to freedom and self-determination.
- All people are vulnerable to harm. However, people have different vulnerabilities that stem from their particular lifestyles, personal conditions and situations.

C. Guiding Principles

Principles emerged at the Symposium for guiding future actions of stakeholders in securing the safety and well-being of people with disabilities. Those principles are as follows:

- Presume that cultures and systems can render people more vulnerable but that vulnerability can be reduced by managing relationships and by implementing intentional safeguards that are geared to people's specific situations.
- Move 'upstream'. Don't be content with just responding to mistreatment: anticipate and take actions to prevent it.
- Identify and collaborate with other stakeholders in the safety and well-being of people with disabilities. Strong partnerships in the community can assist in sustaining the good work that short-term projects have begun.
- Accommodate places, procedures and information resources to the needs of individuals, taking into account physical, sensorial, communicative, cognitive and cultural needs.
- Maintain a cross-disability focus.
- Formulate policy with the needs of people in mind (instead of budgets or insurance companies) and formulate policy based on principles instead of rigid rules (e.g., on principles of universal design, safe accessibility, social reintegration, etc.)
- Continue learning through diverse methods (e.g., dialogue, role play, mock rescue and intervention scenarios, workshops, reading, etc.)
- Find out about and share knowledge concerning values-based approaches and concrete initiatives that work.
- Value, welcome and facilitate the inputs of people with disabilities in professional development and in rendering places, procedures and information more accessible.

Above: Traci Walters presents certificate of appreciation to Larry Hill, Deputy Chief, Ottawa Police Service.

At the closing plenary session, Symposium participants had a chance to react to a summary version of the findings that are reported in Sections I – VI of this report. Overall, Symposium participants found that the findings were consistent with the issues and ideas they had discussed.

At that plenary session, participants also had an open discussion on priority 'next steps'. Participants were asked to indicate the single-most important things that need to be done in the next two years or so to address issues of crime/harm against people with disabilities.

Participants were 'walked through' the following themes as a way of framing their priorities:

- Shedding light on the basic problem (i.e., getting details on the prevalence of violence and abuse against people with disabilities);
- Addressing the susceptibility of people with disabilities to abuse and violence;
- Addressing the issue of problem identification (reporting and detection);
- Strengthening society's response (developing internal capacities of organizations and coordination arrangements);
- Strengthening the legislative, policy and procedural base for action; and
- Strengthening funding for long-term collaboration and actions.

In addition to spelling out measures that are most needed in those areas, participants were asked to consider who would be involved and how the needed measures would be implemented. The following is a summary of that discussion.

A. Shedding Light on the Basic Problem

Symposium participants acknowledged the need for more details on the prevalence of violence and abuse against people with disabilities. Better information could be gleaned if police 'incident reports' were to indicate the disability status of victims and if crime statistics were to be organized in ways that provide some profile of cases that involve victims with disabilities.

It was suggested that such information might already be available in present information systems but difficult to retrieve. It may be necessary to resort to freedom of information provisions in order to gain access to the information.

The need for information on the disability status (e.g., FASD) of the prison population was also indicated.

As crimes against people with disabilities are in many cases not reported, even a better system for indicating cases of violence against people with disabilities is likely to yield a skewed impression of the extent of the problem. To address this issue it was recommended that people with disabilities have better access to centres independent of police where they can go and tell their stories. This, it was felt, would help increase the comfort level of people with disabilities, which would increase reporting and which would also help increase awareness among people with disabilities.

Not only is it important for stakeholders to have more and better information, it is also important that the public in general be made more aware of the problem of violence and abuse against people with disabilities. To that end, a social marketing strategy was suggested, in the words of one participant, "to put the issues into people's faces so there is better awareness…"

B. Addressing the Susceptibility of People with Disabilities to Abuse and Violence

A few of Symposium participants' suggestions on addressing the susceptibility of people with disabilities to abuse and violence focused on personal factors that could be addressed to reduce risks.

For example, the point was made that people with disabilities need to be given better knowledge or training on their own capacities for self-protection.

As well, through networking, self-help and sharing their stories, people with disabilities could become more aware of risks and how to address these.

Most of participants' comments, however, focused on situational factors that need to be addressed.

For example, the issue of loneliness and isolation requires significant attention. Community agencies could help to deal with this problem by assisting to put in place informal support networks around people with disabilities. Better social inclusion practices are needed as a general rule to overcome the social exclusion that often results from 'special needs' programming. Community awareness of the risks and harms that people with disabilities face could be increased through social marketing, public awareness and similar campaigns. More social contact between people with and without disabilities would deter the potential mistreatment of people with disabilities and would increase the chances of detection.

As well, the present practice within the service sector of discouraging service workers to provide a 'friendly ear' to the people served may need to be revisited; in some cases people with disabilities want someone to talk with. However, service organizations typically have little funding to provide such friendly visiting.

Participants identified as a major issue the need for physical accessibility improvements. There is presently no access to many buildings and services even in emergency situations. In effect, basic human rights and safety are denied as a result of inaccessible premises.

The need for better continuity of attendant and other support services was raised. There can be a great number of service providers in the lives of people with disabilities. Said one participant, "the more attendants involved in providing care…the more likely and open they [people with disabilities] are to abuse." In order to promote such continuity, human service workers need better training and better pay. Symposium participants identified the need for an overall labour strategy to promote better service arrangements. Without better training and pay, care workers and attendants will continue to be undervalued and turnover will continue to be high.

As well, services need to be configured so that the direct service personnel are accountable to the people served, not just to their agencies.

Proper training for service managers is required so they can proactively spot problems. The practice of promoting good care providers to management was cited as a problem in that such people may lack the qualities needed for effective management.

The general poverty of people with disabilities, and the short-term 'shoestring' budgets of disability organizations were presented as significant problems. Poor people are at risk of a range of harms and are less likely than others to have the resources needed to move into safer circumstances. Under funded organizations are hampered in their capacity to be as supportive as they would prefer to people who experience mistreatment.

The present service system was presented as disrespectful, abusive, degrading and in need of attention. People with disabilities are required to continually prove their neediness in order to have access to basic human rights and to have their needs met. It can also be exhausting for able-bodied people (e.g., family members) to have to continually advocate on behalf of people with disabilities for basic needs such as shelter and supportive services.

It was suggested that 'hate crimes' legislation should include people with disabilities as a protected group and that law reform efforts should revise statutes to impose harsher penalties for crimes against people with disabilities. However, perhaps better awareness of legal provisions currently in place is also needed. Section 718.2 (a.1) of the Criminal Code already provides that judges should, when sentencing, take into account issues of bias, prejudice or hate against people with disabilities and other designated groups. Section 153.1 is a fairly new section that specifically prohibits the sexual exploitation of people with disabilities and imposes penalties as serious as those for the sexual exploitation of minors. Having said this, to date the hate propaganda sections of the Criminal Code (318-319) do not recognize people with disabilities as a protected group.

C. Addressing the Issue of Problem Identification (Reporting and Detection)

Most of participants' comments on how to address the issue of problem identification focused on measures to support victims.

For instance, the need for advocates was raised. Such advocates could assist people with disabilities to understand abuse for what it is and support victims to disclose it to others. The point was made that the Ontario Advocacy Act (1992) envisioned the availability of such advocates but the Act was later rescinded.

The need for a country-wide citizen advocacy system such as that in the United States was discussed, as were Canada's comparatively weak, locally-based and fragmentary advocacy arrangements.

It was suggested that the women's movement and civil rights movement should be studied for best practices. The point was made that women and black communities felt as isolated in the 1950s as people with disabilities presently feel. It was indicated that those movements have lessons to teach on how women and people of colour broke out of their social isolation.

Participants indicated that better service alternatives and 'unbundling' of resources are needed. Presently, people may have no choice in the attendant they have when that service is linked to people's housing arrangements and when housing is linked to disability income. For a victim, there may not seem to be much point in reporting an abusive situation when there is no practical alternative. Unbundling of resources would enable people to stay in their own homes and arrange for alternative providers of service, i.e., increased choices and flexibility for victims.

Better networking within the disability community would also help people recognize abuse for what it is, to understand that they are not alone in experiencing it, and to find confidence to tell others their stories.

In terms of detection by others, people with progressive disabilities may lack effective supports until their condition has become very involved. For them and for others with disabilities, depression, withdrawal, 'accidents' and bruising may be perceived as features or results of the disability rather than as indications of potential abuse that warrant attention in their own right. Service agencies need to be vigilant, here.

D. Strengthening Society's Response

Symposium participants recommended several measures to strengthen society's response to violence and abuse against people with disabilities.

For instance, there is a need for agencies to be providing 'around the clock' services for victims. Said one participant, "9 to 4 service is ineffective. People with disabilities don't get abused only during regular business hours."

Where regular social agencies aren't available in the evenings or early mornings, people with disabilities may have to make inappropriate use of police resources. It was suggested that organizations need to be established that are equally available to the police and to people with disabilities to provide information and other support. The point was also made that some people with disabilities need an outlet separate from police to interact and deal with.

In terms of strengthening coordination across agencies, there is a need for inter-organizational working groups and committees. These should involve people with disabilities.

Community crime prevention councils can allow for better communication between the community of people with disabilities, police and other communities. Such councils are in place 'here and there' across the country and could be instituted more widely.

A police network (e.g., chiefs of police) could be established across Canada to discuss issues of violence and abuse against people with disabilities, the value of conferences such as the Symposium, and so on. Said one participant, "We need the commitment of police across Canada, not just isolated pockets."

To that end it was suggested that case studies and the profiling of positive initiatives could generate better coverage of violence and abuse issues across the country and could serve as a basis for establishing working partnerships between police and the disability community.

The point was made that police departments' own protocols that target issues of violence against people with disabilities are worthy of attention and greater profile, even though government ministries may not formally require these.

Police were encouraged to participate in professional development on issues of violence and disability and to find ways of interacting with community organizations of people with disabilities.

Means of communication with people with disabilities on issues of violence and abuse have to be broader than computer-based approaches. Symposium participants acknowledged that computers and the Internet will need to be part of the strategy. However many people with disabilities do not have computers[7] and electronic accessibility is a significant issue for blind people.

It is also important in their communications that police and support workers 'speak the language' of the disability community, undertake collaborative initiatives and use methods and formats for presenting information that are accessible and appealing to the intended users.

---

7 *The Canadian Council on Social Development found that people with disabilities are less likely than others to have used a computer in the reference year and are much less likely (28.6% compared with 46.1%) to have Internet access at home. See Canadian Council on Social Development (2002).* Disability Information Sheet No. 7., *"Focus on Technology among Persons with Disabilities." Ottawa: Author. Retrieved June 2, 2005 from* **www.ccsd.ca/drip/research/dis7/dis7.pdf**

E. Strengthening Laws, Policies and Procedures for Action

Participants at the Symposium drew attention to a few measures that would strengthen the basis in law, policy and procedures for stakeholders to address violence and abuse against people with disabilities.

For example, law reform initiatives and test cases are needed. However, symposium participants did not spell out specifics.

Crown Attorneys responsible for issues of violence and abuse against persons with disabilities could be designated – similar to Crown Attorneys and courts that specialize in domestic violence cases. Where Crown Attorneys specialize, there tends to be better review of case law and evidence, better attention to the needs of victims, improved efficiency of the judicial process and better access to other requirements for trying the cases (e.g., research, accommodations). In effect, such cases become the Crown's responsibility. Chief Crown Prosecutors, who are responsible for designating Crown Attorneys in geographic regions, could be lobbied to implement this kind of specialized function.

In Canada, criminal cases rely on legal precedents. But it is difficult to establish precedents when cases of violence and abuse against people with disabilities are seldom brought forward into courts. One means of beginning to deal with this issue would be to try to raise the awareness of Crown Attorneys and the judiciary by ensuring they are invited to conferences such as the National Safety Symposium. Another would be to try to strike up collegial relationships with Crown Attorneys or judges who have the potential to become 'champions' on issues of violence and disability with their own peers.

The evolution of measures for providing evidence by video in the United States was singled out as a potentially useful method for receiving evidence from complainants/witnesses with disabilities. Canada has provisions for testimony through video links in Sections 714.1 and 714.2 of the Criminal Code.

While Symposium participants provided some practical suggestions in the area of law and policy, they also raised several conundrums. For example, Canada is presently governed by a system that presumes innocence. At a crime scene, an articulate person will be a key statement maker or witness. But often the person with a disability is less likely to be an articulate person. The challenge is to foster the credibility of the witness who has speech or other communication problems while also meeting the burden of proof.

As well, courts are typically backlogged and cases involving victims with disabilities are fairly rare occurrences. In a congested system, 'unique' cases are less attractive as they may be perceived as requiring more time and effort at trial. How, then, to ensure that cases involving victims with disabilities are more regularly represented in courts so these cases, too, will be tried in turn?

F. Funding for Long-Term Collaboration and Actions

Participants turned their attention to the issue of funding so police and community organizations will be able to develop sustained internal capacity to deal with issues of violence and abuse against people with disabilities, as well as the capacity to network, provide community training and so on. Given the difficult funding environment in which many organizations find themselves, participants found this a challenging discussion. Two suggestions that emerged were as follows.

Police and community organizations could revisit existing priorities and reallocate present money in order to utilize those funds more effectively to target issues of violence and abuse against people with disabilities. They could support the reallocation of current funding based on the human rights and justice requirements of people with disabilities as fellow citizens and human beings.

Organizations should try to be creative in their funding applications. For example, in proposals that have a heritage, human rights, social services or health focus, organizations could include a budget line for activities that will address violence and abuse issues. Organizations should try to ensure that future efforts continue to build on previous projects and accomplishments with a focus on addressing harms against people with disabilities.
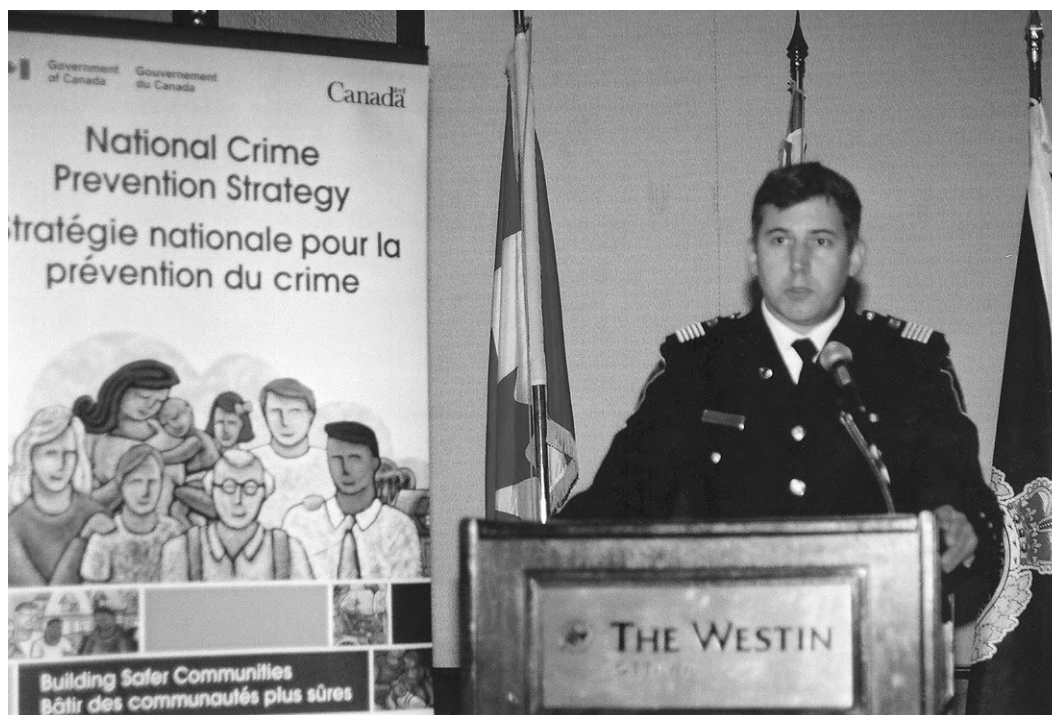
Above: Anthony DiMonte, Chief Ottawa Paramedics

VIII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Participants at the National Safety Symposium met for two and a half intensive days to explore issues of violence and abuse against people with disabilities. Participants included police, staff from Independent Living Resource Centres and other NGOs in the disability sector, as well as consumers with disabilities.

Participants confirmed the disproportionate levels of violence and abuse against people with disabilities and the need for more and better information on these issues.

They identified factors inherent in individuals that render people vulnerable, such as particular disabilities that can make it difficult for people to get out of harm's way, difficult for them to see or understand that they are in harm's way, and difficult to appreciate or care about the harms to which they are exposed or the extent of the harms done.

Participants also identified situational factors that render people vulnerable. These include the increased chances of being poor, isolated, in unsafe situations, reliant on others, unaware of their legal rights and of being socially vulnerable in other ways, including power differentials, lack of knowledge transfer and lack of training of service providers. Broad social attitudes and system forces can aggravate those factors.

Symposium participants explored some key issues that need to be addressed so victims will come forward with their stories and so they'll be believed. These include attention to a range of communication issues, to the likelihood of reprisal or loss of essential supports in the event of disclosure, victims' need to be treated respectfully and to have access to support during and after disclosure. Myriad other barriers can make it very difficult for victims to navigate the transportation, social, health, police and judicial system so they can come forward with their stories.

Measures that would enable organizations to be more proactive in detecting the harms that people with disabilities are experiencing include emergency monitoring and call systems, training on how to interpret various patterns of communication, community policing strategies that establish routine contact between police and people with disabilities, and measures within organizations to ensure they know the signs of abuse and have the will to act appropriately on indications of abuse.

Participants found that various measures need to be in place to strengthen the response capacity of police and other organizations. Providing for *any* response capacity is a key challenge for rural communities. Ensuring the accessibility of organizations in a position to respond is another major concern, as is cultivating the sense that these organizations in fact have a responsibility to respond and to equip themselves to do so effectively. For that to

happen, governments need to give some attention to long-term funding so organizations can develop the expertise and make the other investments needed for sustained responsiveness to the violence and abuse that people with disabilities are experiencing. Coordination measures are needed so that police and other community organizations work collaboratively on these issues instead of in isolation from one another.

Factors that leave Canada's legislative and policy base weaker than desirable to foster effective prevention and response are rules of evidence that, in effect, can lead the judicial system to largely ignore issues of violence and abuse against people with significant communicative or cognitive disabilities. Participants indicated the need for more rigorous sentencing where crimes have been perpetrated against people with disabilities, and for measures in the Criminal Code or in other legislation that would deal with the verbal and emotional abuses to which people with disabilities are often subjected. More emphasis on the victimization of people with disabilities is warranted in the National Crime Prevention Strategy of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada.

Participants at the National Safety Symposium talked about their vision for a better situation for people with disabilities. Essentially, people with disabilities would be fully included as valued citizens, with equal rights to live in safety and security. The community services and justice systems would be accessible, responsive and collaborating effectively. Social services would be guided by clear ethical principles and would be operating in ways consistent with the federal/provincial/territorial *In Unison* accord. People with disabilities would not face disproportionate poverty nor the risks and harms that poor people are more likely to face. Victims would be made comfortable and supported in disclosure, would have ready access to follow-up services and would have significant say in the course of interventions on their behalf. First responders would have access to the training and information they need to ensure effective responses in emergency situations. Cases of violence against people with disabilities would be prosecuted and sentencing would be at least as rigorous as it is in cases where victims do not have disabilities.

Symposium participants' core beliefs and values revolved around the notions that all people share equal and inherent dignity and worth, have the right to respectful treatment, aspire to live in freedom and have the right to live free from mistreatment in safety and security.

Participants also presented a range of guiding principles to inform the actions of police and other community organizations.

Priorities for action include measures for garnering more and better information on incidents of violence and abuse against people with disabilities, measures to reduce people's susceptibility to mistreatment, to increase the likelihood of reporting and detection and to strengthen the responsiveness of organizations, individually and in collaboration with one another. Those

priorities for action are detailed in Section VII of this report, as are suggested measures to improve Canada's legal, policy and funding systems. What may turn out to be a particularly useful strategy would be for CAILC and other organizations to lobby for the designation of Crown Attorneys who would have a mandate to specialize in cases that involve victims with disabilities

Participants indicated a strong desire to continue meeting to further their dialogue and collaboration, nationally, regionally and locally. If even that much occurs as a result of the National Safety Symposium, significant improvements over the present situation are likely to be achieved.