



**Submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage
BILL C-10: An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and
consequential amendments to other Acts**

SUBMITTED BY: Defend Dignity

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Defend Dignity <https://defenddignity.ca/> exists to end all forms of sexual exploitation in Canada. As a national organization, we have worked with victims and survivors of sexual exploitation across Canada since 2010. We also have a strong focus on educating communities and individuals on the various aspects of sexual exploitation to protect Canadians. As part of these efforts we have developed a youth training curriculum in partnership with another organization and we have hosted numerous conferences and webinars on relevant topics.

Our work supporting individuals who have been sexually exploited and interacting with communities to strengthen prevention efforts gives us insight into the harmful impact sexually explicit material has on children and sexually violent material has on society.

It is through the lens of victim/survivor support and community protection that we submit this Brief. We fully support MP Viersen's proposed amendment to section 3 of the Broadcasting Act and ask that all committee members vote to protect children and communities from the detrimental effects caused by exposure to harmful material.

This Submission will focus on the damaging impact that exposure to sexually explicit material has on children and the urgency to protect them. It will also explain some of the dangers of broadcasting sexually violent material, especially as it relates to the safety of women, children, and racialized people groups.

Part A: Protecting Children from Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material

1) Children are spending more time online due to the pandemic

In October 2020 Statistics Canada reported that 64% of parents were very concerned about the amount of time their children were spending online since the pandemic started¹. Acting to protect children in online spaces is more urgent than ever before as they rely on the internet for school, socialization, and entertainment.

2) Exposure to sexually explicit material is detrimental to children's well-being

We interact with a lot of parents during our education initiatives. Their most common concern is how to protect their children from the harms of viewing sexually explicit material. Numerous studies have shown the negative impact that exposure to pornography and hyper-sexualized media can have on children. These include:

- Mental health issues such as depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem
- Increased likelihood of accepting sexual violence & “rape myths”
- Increased risk of girls being sexually harassed and boys committing sexual harassment²

Another risk of exposure to sexually explicit material is that predators often use it to groom children. It normalizes sexual abuse. Protecting children from viewing this content can also prevent them from being easy targets to potential abusers.

3) The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) recently adopted General Comment 25

General Comment 25 focuses on children's rights in the digital space. The CRC advises:

“States parties should take all appropriate measures to protect children from risks to their right to life, survival and development. Risks relating to content, contact, conduct and contract encompass, among other things, violent and sexual content, cyberaggression and harassment, gambling, exploitation and abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and the promotion of or incitement to suicide or life-threatening activities, including by criminals or armed groups designated as terrorist or violent extremist³”

Adopting MP Viersen's amendment allows the Government of Canada to comply with the CRC's directive to protect children from viewing sexual content online.

¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/2020004/s8-eng.htm>

² <https://www.gaildines.com/the-porn-crisis/>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/GCChildrensRightsRelationDigitalEnvironment.aspx>

Part B: Preventing the Broadcasting of Sexually Violent Material

1) Sexually violent material perpetuates discrimination and abuse

The Canadian government condemns horrendous crimes such as rape, incest, and child sexual abuse, and yet videos depicting these very crimes are being broadcasted widely on the internet. The British Journal of Criminology recently published a study⁴ that found sexual violence was frequently depicted on mainstream pornography sites. The Times commented on the findings of the study:

“An analysis of 131,738 titles on the homepages of Pornhub, XHamster and XVideos found that one in eight showed non-consensual or incestuous acts, including where the subjects were described as drugged, unconscious or “very young”. More than 8,000 titles referred to physical aggression or forced sexual activity, even when the researchers excluded representations of consensual bondage, discipline and sadomasochism (BDSM) practices.”⁵

Furthermore, pornography often perpetuates racism. A 2020 study found that black women were more likely to be the targets of sexual aggression than white women. Similarly, black men were more likely to be violent and less intimate with their partners than white men⁶.

2) Connection between sexually explicit material and sexual exploitation

Some people who consume sexually explicit material that depicts violence or other harmful practices later want to try what they have watched, which can create a demand for sexual exploitation. In a study of 100 women who were selling sex in Vancouver, 67% reported that pornography was made of them while in prostitution and 64% had been upset by an attempt to force them to perform an act that customers had seen in pornography⁷. In addition, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics has uncovered evidence of sexual abuse, CSAM, rape, sex trafficking, non-consensually shared materials, etc. featured in videos on Pornhub⁸. Their investigation has revealed how it is hard to verify the consent and age of individuals featured in sexually explicit content online, which gives even more reason to prevent violent versions of this content from being broadcasted.

⁴ <https://academic.oup.com/bjc/advance-article/doi/10.1093/bjc/azab035/6208896>

⁵ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/porn-sites-used-by-children-show-criminal-sex-acts-zsl5x6rjd>

⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341354859_Worse_Than_Objects_The_Depiction_of_Black_Women_and_Men_and_Their_Sexual_Relationship_in_Pornography

⁷ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1363461505052667>

⁸ <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/ETHI/StudyActivity?studyActivityId=11088039>

Protecting children from the harms of sexually explicit material and society from the dangerous impact of violent sexually explicit material must be a priority. As an organization working to end sexual exploitation in Canada, we call on all members of the committee to support MP Viersen's proposed amendment to section 3 of the Broadcasting Act.

Thank you for your work to ensure broadcasting contributes to a healthy and thriving Canadian society.

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