



December 16, 2021

The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, PC, MP
Minister of Canadian Heritage

The Honourable Karina Gould, PC, MP
Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

The Honourable Marci Ien, PC, MP
Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth



Arnold Viersen, MP
Peace River—Westlock

Dear Ministers,

As Parliamentarians, we have a duty to address the evolving public health and safety issues around pornography, much of which is violent and misogynistic. Pornography can produce real-time violent repercussions when viewers – both male and female – begin to believe that what is seen on the screen is acceptable and normal. Just this past week, singer Billie Eilish was the latest to discuss the harmful impacts of pornography on her at a young age: "I think it really destroyed my brain and I feel incredibly devastated that I was exposed to so much porn. The first few times I, you know, had sex, I was not saying no to things that were not good. It was because I thought that's what I was supposed to be attracted to." She added that viewing abusive content left her suffering from nightmares.

I would like to bring to your attention to a study commissioned by the United Kingdom's Government Equalities Office entitled *The relationship between pornography and harmful sexual behaviours* (February, 2020). In this qualitative interview study, frontline workers from social, justice and medical sectors who work with clients exhibiting harmful and violent sexual behaviours towards women were interviewed to explore the impact of pornography as a factor in the continuation of these behaviours.

I encourage you to read the entire report (see attached), but here are some key takeaways:

- Most frontline workers spontaneously mentioned pornography as an influential factor for harmful sexual behaviours towards women and girls. All acknowledged it as a factor when it was later introduced into the discussion.
- 6 dangerous narratives can be communicated through pornographic content to consistent and high-risk viewers: consent is not required, male pleasure is all that matters, women should look like porn stars, sex is free of consequences, violence is commonplace and that women enjoy this violence, and that aggressive sexual acts are commonplace.
- Interviewees expressed that when violent and degrading pornographic content interacts with other harmful factors throughout society, a context is created where harmful sexual behaviours towards women and girls are seen as permissible.

Ottawa

Room 1070
The Valour Building
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Tel: 613.996.1783
Fax: 613.995.1415



Arnold.Viersen@parl.gc.ca
www.mparnold.ca

Constituency

Box 4458, 5124–50 Street
Barrhead, AB T7N 1A3
Tel: 780.305.0340
Fax: 780.305.0343
Toll Free: 1.800.667.8450

It is tragic that today our youngest citizens still have just as much access to online pornography as Canadian adults do. Our laws do not require pornographic websites to verify the age of users before accessing content, allowing youth on one side of the screen, unlimited access to violent and misogynistic material. According to the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, this is a form of child sexual exploitation.

Further, the investigation conducted by the Standing Committee on Ethics of MindGeek/Pornhub earlier this year demonstrated that on the other side of the screen, there is violent, exploitative, and non-consensual content hosted by this Canadian company's websites and across many others. Women and children are still having videos of their sex trafficking, rape and child exploitation shared online across both pornographic and mainstream platforms. In Canada, companies are not required to verify the age and consent of individuals in the content they publish and many profit from this exploitation.

Canada must work to protect women and children from exploitation and violence on both sides of the screen. The Prime Minister has said: "There's issues around pornography and its prevalence now and its accessibility, which is something I'm really wrapping my head around as a father of kids who are approaching their teen years."

Ms. Sophie Grégoire Trudeau has also raised similar concerns: "The objectification of the female body, the normalization of pornography, and rape language and culture is destroying the self-esteem of our girls and is an insult to the spirit of our boys."

As Ministers, I urge you to work to develop legislation and policies that protects women and girls from all forms of violence, especially when it comes to the real-time consequences of the unlimited access to violent and exploitive pornographic content.

In particular, I believe that your Government should undertake the following:

1. Establish a research committee to better comprehend the individual, interpersonal, and societal level consequences of pornography consumption and connections to violence against women.
2. Fund research into the impacts of exposure of pornography on youth.
3. Enact a meaningful online age verification mechanism for minors (Bill S-210).
4. Implement all recommendations from the 2021 unanimous report of the Standing Committee on Ethics, including requiring platforms to verify of age and consent of those depicted.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I would be honoured to work with you toward these goals.

Sincerely,



Arnold Viersen, MP
Peace River – Westlock