

Ottawa

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

Constituency

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



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Arnold Viersen, MP

Peace River—Westlock



September 21, 2022

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez, PC, MP
Minister of Canadian Heritage
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

It has been 638 days since the Prime Minister Trudeau stated that the Liberal government was “actively working on new regulations that require online platforms to remove all illegal content.” This was in response to the New York Times story: *The Children of Pornhub – Why does Canada allow this company to profit off videos of exploitation and assault?* A few days later, Minister Steven Guilbeault, then Minister of Canadian Heritage, promised the introduction of an online harm bill within three weeks.

Here we are, over a year and a half later, and your government has yet to introduce a single bill to address online harms. In the meantime, today in Canada, there are young women and youth fighting big porn companies like MindGeek – on their own – because content featuring their exploitation or intimate images continues to be published by these companies.

Kids should not have to fight these battles by themselves.

The consultations you held last fall on the potential online harms’ legislation revealed significant disagreement across stakeholders on how best to address the five categories of harmful content – child sexual exploitation content, the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, terrorist content, content that incites violence, and hate speech.

Following this, Expert Advisory Group on Online Safety that your government launched this past spring agreed on putting responsibility on platforms however there was broad disagreement when it came to measures enforce and regulate content.

I believe it is important to take a careful approach to online regulation. However, ‘getting it right’ as you emphasized in March, does not preclude you from taking action right now to protect kids and those most at risk of exploitation. To this end, I would like to make two recommendations:

...2/



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

1. Table Immediate Legislation Addressing Child Sexual Exploitation and Non-Consensual Sharing of Intimate Images

I would urge you to heed the advice of the expert advisory group and take an approach that differentiates between illegal and legal yet harmful content. Child sexual exploitation material (CSAM) and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images are illegal and grievously harmful to their victims. While there was much disagreement between the experts over broader approaches, they agreed that *'particularly egregious content like child sexual exploitation content would require its own solution.'*

I am confident that legislation targeting these two online crimes through a combination of legislative and regulatory measures as well as a duty of care approach would find near unanimous support in Parliament. At a meeting on child protection, earlier this spring hosted by your colleague Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, we heard from longtime child advocate UK Baroness Beebin Kidron who urged us to come together across party lines and focus on what we all agree on: protecting youth and vulnerable persons from online exploitation.

Fighting CSAM and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images are significant and have broad-based support. We must take immediate action to protect youth and exploited adults now.

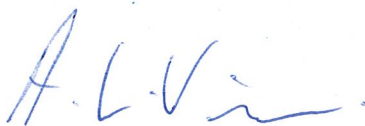
2. Implement the 14 Recommendations of the Ethics Committee Report: Ensuring the Protection of Privacy and Reputation on Platforms such as Pornhub

As you know, unanimous reports from Committee are rare. However, when they do occur, we should take notice and take action. The report tabled by the Standing Committee on Ethics on June 17, 2021 was unanimously adopted by Committee members, including the 14 recommendations to the Government of Canada. To date, none of these recommendations have been acted on.

I am confident that legislation introduced by your government to implement or address these 14 recommendations will find strong support, both within Parliament and across our country.

Thank you for taking the time to review my concerns and recommendations. Addressing online harms is undoubtedly a challenging task however, I remain hopeful that we can work together with our colleagues in each party to take immediate action and make our country and communities safer.

Sincerely,



Arnold Viersen, MP
Peace River – Westlock

Enc: Recommendations from the Ethics Committee Report: Ensuring the Protection of Privacy and Reputation on Platforms such as Pornhub