

harmless to the viewers. After all, under section 3(1)(h) of the *Broadcasting Act*, broadcasters “*have a responsibility for the programs they broadcast.*” According to this thesis, government has a duty to protect the mental and physical health of Canadians given its role as guardian of societal values. In accordance with this principle, government must demand, through the regulatory body (the CRTC), and at the request of the latter, that broadcasters prove that television programming is a safe consumer product.

Parents have the moral responsibility to transmit their values, and those of the society around them, to their children. The Committee is aware that, notwithstanding the fact that parents must exercise a certain control over the audiovisual materials entering the home, they must not and cannot be solely held responsible for controlling television violence. In fact, the question of parental control raises a host of issues of a practical and enforcement nature, as well as socio-psychological ones.

Government, as responsible social guardian, has the responsibility to protect societal values. This responsibility is exercised frequently by our governments through existing legislation such as the *Criminal Code*. The Committee is also aware that the role of the legislator cannot be to control everything but that its duty is, first and foremost, to protect societal values. Faced with constantly changing values, governments have the difficult task of accurately assessing the pulse of the population on any given issue and, with the help of expert advice, public input and parliamentary scrutiny, adopting policies, programs and legislation which will best respond to the many conflicting factors involved.

In asking their government to legislate against television violence, the Canadians who have signed Virginie Larivière’s petition have exercised their democratic right of freedom of expression. However, by legislating against television violence, the government would be curtailing the freedom of expression of others, including broadcasters, advertisers, artists and television viewers. The challenge that our society faces is to recognize that television violence may be destroying the values which keep us together as a civilization, and to find a way to control it without violating our fundamental democratic right to freedom of expression. Confronted with these realities, the Committee has come to the conclusion that broadcasters must do more than simply broadcasting.

We believe that the overall approach we are recommending, as suggested by many of our experts and witnesses, will meet that challenge. The people of this country must be given the means to make their own well-informed choices. This approach carries with it the notion that individuals should have at their disposal the necessary information and the technical means to make appropriate television viewing choices, for themselves and for their children. A socially responsible and accountable broadcasting industry, cooperative federal and provincial governments, and the grass roots efforts of concerned citizens and groups will make this possible.

Helping individuals make well-informed television viewing choices will be one important step toward dealing with the larger problem of societal violence. It will also enhance our values and strengthen the ties that bind our social fabric.