

*I think we need to recognize that all too frequently our stereotype of violence misleads us. We tend to think of most violence as involving people who are strangers to each other — someone jumps out of the bushes and robs or assaults or sexually assaults a victim. What we know with a considerable degree of confidence is that most violence involves people who know each other, not people who don't know each other.*

*...What that suggests to me is that violence is all too frequently a kind of problem-solving behaviour in which people attempt to manage conflicts with others to their satisfaction. Lacking other means, or not appreciating the desirability of using other means, they resort to violence.*

*I think you begin at a level of substructure. You attempt to educate people about the inappropriateness of violence in its many forms as a way of dealing with and resolving conflict. I think a distaste for and lack of appreciation for violence in media, would, hopefully, flow quite logically from that.<sup>120</sup>*

Witnesses strongly recommended using a variety of educational tools, including public service announcements which advise viewers about the harmful effects of violence, public awareness campaigns prepared by anti-violence advocates, media literacy programs and documentary films about violence in society, such as those produced by the National Film Board. Of these suggestions, media literacy programs were highlighted most often as an essential educational tool.

Explaining to the Committee what media literacy should mean, the Chairman of the CRTC, Keith Spicer, said it should include explaining to children the positive potential of television as a cultural instrument, how to recognize good programs and be discriminating about what they watch. In other words, “*we want to make every child, by the time they get to be an early teenager, a pretty good self-censor.*”<sup>121</sup>

For some strategists, public education and media literacy programs seem to offer considerable promise for dealing with the problem of television violence. For example, in his address to the Hincks Institute Conference, the Minister of Communications stated that “*the key to success in this issue is not in governments running our lives for us. It is the educated choice of viewers and parents that will make the difference.*”<sup>122</sup> Others, such as Alan Mirabelli, from the Alliance for Children and Television (ACT), were less optimistic about the potential influence of media literacy programs. He stated “*that media literacy can deal with only from five to ten percent of the problem, given the nature of our schooling, so we must be realistic about our expectations.*”<sup>123</sup>

The Committee finds the wide range of expectations for media literacy programs somewhat disconcerting. In addition, we were not made aware of any formal evaluations of the actual effectiveness of any existing media literacy programs. Nevertheless, we found a consensus in the academic literature and among the witnesses that media literacy programs which include components on television violence should be developed and become part of the educational agenda for both children and adults.

**RECOMMENDATION No. 5** — The Committee recommends that the federal government take action to encourage provincial governments to survey their media literacy policies and programs to determine whether they specifically address the issue of violence on television and reach groups outside the educational system such as parents, other adults, and pre-school children.