

use of television, said organizing committee chairman Dr. Laurier LaPierre. The longer-term objective is to develop pathways and structures for ongoing initiatives in collaboration with parents, teachers and other community groups.¹¹⁷

The Committee shares the view of the founders of the National Action Group that pursuing these types of undertakings is crucial to dealing responsibly with violence on television. The Committee wishes the National Action Group every success in achieving its commendable goals.

RECOMMENDATION No. 4 — The Committee strongly endorses the recent establishment of the National Action Group on television violence and recommends that the Minister of Communications provide financial support to, and maintain close contact with, its progress.

D. PUBLIC EDUCATION

Education was listed as the “*second great tool of change*” in the five-point strategy for dealing with television violence, announced by the Minister of Communications at the recent Hincks Institute Conference.¹¹⁸ Public education would serve at least two important functions in combatting violent entertainment on television. Education would raise public awareness, thereby changing attitudes towards television violence, and it would encourage television audiences to make more responsible personal viewing choices.

With respect to changing attitudes by raising public awareness, a number of witnesses reminded the Committee of the important role which education has played in shifting public attitudes towards smoking and drunk driving. As well, Jan D’Arcy, Senior Policy Analyst for the National Film Board pointed out that education, backed by sound research, can lay the groundwork for any necessary legislative action:

In the mid or late 1970s, when motions were passed in meetings by people asking that smoking not occur in the room during the meeting, the motions were inevitably defeated. Those motions were seen as being moved by people slightly off the wall, by marginal social activists. Twenty years later, all sorts of legislation has occurred regarding smoking in public places. I think several things occurred in that period to have that major shift. The first was public education in a large way, which was both co-ordinated and well resourced, and the second was major research. It was after attitudes changed that legislation became very easy.¹¹⁹

Professor Vincent Sacco explained to the Committee that education should do more than deal with the narrow issue of violence on television:

When I say “education”, I don’t mean education in a narrow and specific sense. I don’t think it is simply a matter of teaching people that violence on television is the thing you shouldn’t be interested in. I think it has much more to do with teaching a kind of unacceptability of violence in society much more generally. I think schools are one obvious place where that kind of agenda can be pursued.