

The Committee recognizes, as virtually all witnesses pointed out, that violence on television is symptomatic of the larger problem of increasing violence in society. For instance, Florian Sauvageau of the University of Laval noted: "*No doubt violence on television is one of the causes of this broader phenomenon, but poverty, racism and unemployment are certainly just as important causes as violence on television.*"¹¹³ An examination of the broader picture of violence is beyond the scope of this Committee's mandate, but members are convinced that there is a much larger and serious problem, which demands a comprehensive study in Canada.

RECOMMENDATION No. 2 — In view of the fact that violence on television is symptomatic of the larger problem of violence in society, the Committee recommends that a joint federal-provincial task force be convened to inquire into all aspects of societal violence — interrelationships, causes, effects and remedies — including, but not limited to, media violence, domestic violence, and racial violence.

The Committee further recommends that the findings of the joint federal-provincial task force be set out in a White Paper.

B. CANADIAN RESEARCH ON TELEVISION VIOLENCE

The Committee recognizes that the information and ideas exchanged in public discussions about television violence must be based on sound, up-to-date research. In this vein, we note that although a wealth of American information exists on the subject of television violence, there are very few current reports from a Canadian perspective.

Witnesses who appeared before the Committee identified many unanswered questions. For example, they pointed out that Canadian society is generally considered to be less aggressive and violent than that of the United States, but most of the studies of violence in television to date are American. Accordingly, Canadians do not really know what their own attitudes and standards are with respect to violence on television, as distinct from their neighbours to the south. The Committee also heard that Canadians do not know enough about the effects of importing violent U.S. programs into the Canadian context. Certainly, we do not know how Canadians' values, culture, and behaviours are affected by imported, violent programming. One witness observed that Canadians do not know the truth about the market demand for violence. We are told by the industry and the media that people want to watch violent television, but we do not seem to hear this message from most Canadians, as evidenced by the over 1.3 million signatures on Virginie Larivière's petition. In another case, a witness emphasized that we need to know what programs Canadian children are watching; specifically, whether enough quality programming is being produced for our children and whether or not it is all being used. Finally, one witness suggested we need to know whether particularly impressionable members of our society are influenced more adversely by television violence — for example, whether children living in abusive families are more prone to be influenced by violent programming. These are just some of the questions witnesses have told the Committee that Canadians need researchers to answer.¹¹⁴

The Committee is impressed by the ground-breaking Canadian research that is now being done, such as that conducted by the Centre for Youth and Media Studies at the Université de Montréal, and we believe that it should be encouraged by governments. The Committee is also convinced that a better understanding of the Canadian situation is needed; to achieve this, a much larger pool of up-to-date knowledge about violence on Canadian television needs to be developed.