

A. PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS

The Committee is encouraged by the quality and growing quantity of public dialogue, particularly of late, surrounding the issue of television violence. We would like to see this vital activity continue with added vigour. In order for positive steps to be taken against violence on television, the free flow of information must be encouraged and must continue. Exchanges of information are essential to shape Canadians' understanding of violence on television and violence in general.

Our understanding of what constitutes violence/violation is evolving. Regulators, educators, broadcasters, journalists and others need to be kept current in order to do their jobs effectively. The dimensions of the problem should be mapped out from philosophical, research, and practical perspectives, and made widely available.¹¹⁰

The process of defining what constitutes unacceptable violence on television should not be a static one. Acceptability is governed by values, which are not themselves static, and require ongoing review. In the Committee's view, public debate of the social values determining the threshold of tolerable violence on television is healthy and important to the evolution of society's understanding and treatment of television violence. The Committee is mindful of the comments made in this regard in the CRTC's *Summary and Analysis of Various Studies on Violence and Television*:

By debating the values involved, it will be possible to determine what is socially acceptable in terms of television violence and appropriate treatments for it. For this reason, debate should be encouraged. It is also appropriate that the debate be ongoing since values change over time. What was deemed acceptable thirty years ago, in the depiction on television of male/female relationships is not necessarily the same today. The same argument applies to violence.¹¹¹

The Committee recognizes that various public forums should be used to foster discussions of Canadians' values respecting television violence, as well as other forms of violence. The venues could range from community meetings and conferences on television violence to more formalized CRTC public hearings, parliamentary committee hearings, or government task forces, depending on the particular issues under discussion.

At this point, the Committee believes that more informal types of discussions, such as meetings and conferences, would be most beneficial rather than official hearings. The informality of a meeting or conference has the advantage of speed and freshness and should therefore facilitate the type of lively, timely, and interactive dialogue that is now needed. Furthermore, the Committee agrees with the Chairman of the CRTC, Keith Spicer, who stated recently *that we need to develop a permanent dialogue because the issue of television violence will never go away.*¹¹²

RECOMMENDATION No. 1 — The Committee recommends, in view of the importance of maintaining current, open and widespread public dialogue on the subject of television violence, that the federal government encourage and facilitate a process of public meetings and conferences devoted to television violence and related issues.