

*So I think that we do have to be careful, and I must say I'm very pleased that the committee is being very cautious on this point. I think we have to be very careful that we don't use television violence as a convenient scapegoat for all the ills of society. I think that television should take its share of responsibility, but I don't think that we should think that if we manage to have a smaller number of TV murders or car chases that we're going to have a vast improvement in our social fabric.<sup>58</sup>*

Concern about the influence that television violence can have on public life, on children, on teenagers and on crime is a fairly recent phenomenon according to Professor George Gerbner, a leading international authority in this field. Transcending the methodological problems that researchers have experienced in their search to establish or disprove a cause and effect relationship, there remains public concern about the presence of violence on television. Whether the relationship between television violence and violence in society is simply a correlation and not one of cause and effect, it remains that the public is concerned about the presence of violence on television. This concern was heightened by the massacre of 14 women at the Montreal École Polytechnique and by the epic crusade of Virginie Larivière. Keith Spicer highlighted this in his presentation:

*I'd like to emphasize the deep debt all of us owe Ms Larivière for her moral leadership and for creating a sense of public urgency that has made it much easier for all of us who seek lasting solutions for combatting violence.<sup>59</sup>*

A witness from the Vanier Institute of the Family, speaking on behalf of the Alliance for Children and Television, emphasized that today's children are not obtaining "cues for appropriate behaviour" because too little time is left after the time spent in school, sleeping and watching television:

*Consequently, the diversified "lived" human experience that they can bring to tonight's television is reduced. . . The experience the child brings to tonight's television is last night's television. Therein lies the problem. . .*

*Children have to have cues for appropriate behaviour from somewhere. I got them from the community I lived in. Children now get them from television, because there is no community.*

*That is the bottom line. The living context children develop in will provide the cues for appropriate behaviour. In their absence, they will find them from somewhere.<sup>60</sup>*

Our brief study has led us to realize, as many of our witnesses have noted, that insufficient research exists in Canada on the amount of violence on Canadian screens, its origin, who watches it and when, and what are its effects on individuals and groups. If the ongoing initiatives to reduce the amount of violence on Canadian television screens should fail, and if a higher level of government action should subsequently be required, it seems to the Committee that the government would then need more Canadian evidence than presently exists. Professor Eileen Saunders argued that we need to know a lot more about the reception practices of viewers in order for an intervention strategy to succeed: