

*... the first problem is that the scientific evidence of harm is at best uneven and more often inconclusive, weak and contradictory. You will notice, for example, in the CRTC research summaries that the best we can conclude when we look overall at these research projects is that there is a likelihood — and I underline likelihood — of a possible positive correlation to aggressive behaviour. Even that is found to exist only in the short term: it does not have a long-term effect.<sup>53</sup>*

Committee members have benefitted from the two reports published by the CRTC in May 1992, *Summary and Analysis of Various Studies on Violence and Television*<sup>54</sup> and *Scientific Knowledge About Television Violence*.<sup>55</sup> The latter report is an overview of more than 200 scientific studies about violence on television and its effects in terms of aggression and anti-social behaviour. In the news release issued at the time the reports were made public, Keith Spicer, Chairman of the CRTC, said of the effects of television violence:

*While our report indicates that there is a link, although not necessarily one of cause and effect, between television violence and violence in society, common sense also tells us that this must be true. Look at how television helps to set fashion trends, introduce new ideas and expressions into our everyday conversation, or change purchasing patterns throughout the marketplace. Why else do advertisers spend millions on television commercials, if there is no impact on our behaviour?<sup>56</sup>*

In his speech to the Toronto's C.M. Hincks Institute on 19 February 1993 and in his opening remarks before the Committee a few days later, Keith Spicer added:

*I would emphasize what I believe most fair-minded people accept: TV, although by its own publicity an extremely influential medium, is plainly not the only factor encouraging violence in our society. Deep-seated economic, social, cultural and family factors also play a role: massive economic dislocation; too-readily-tolerated mob violence; widespread family break-ups; latch-key children; overly permissive education systems; sports become blood-sports — these are just a few of many factors making violence more familiar, and thus less shocking. And TV is not the only medium to mirror and magnify violence: movies, magazines and newspapers all contribute. . .*

*... Of course, over-the-air Canadian TV is far from being all we call television: U.S. networks, pay and specialty services, satellite TV, video games, and movies on rented video are all there on Canadian TV screens. . .<sup>57</sup>*

The experts and other witnesses confirmed that indeed, if there is a correlation between television violence and violence in society, the cause and effect between these two factors remains the subject of much controversy. Both expert and lay witnesses also confirmed that many factors contribute to violence in society and that the part played by television violence can only be estimated and amounts to an unknown fraction. Sandra Macdonald, who appeared before the Committee as a representative of the CFTPA, and who was previously Director General of Television at the CRTC (in which capacity she commissioned the two CRTC reports on television violence), urged a cautious approach rather than a search for a scapegoat: