

INTRODUCTION

On 18 November 1992, the House of Commons referred the petition of Virginie Larivière on television violence to the consideration of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture. The petition was initiated by Virginie Larivière following the robbery, sexual assault and murder of her 11-year-old-sister Marie-Ève. While grieving for her sister, Virginie came to be convinced that television violence may have been the cause of her sister's death. Over the next eight months, with the help of her family, she started a crusade to gather the signature of Canadians across the country who felt as she did. With more than 1.3 million signatures, the petition called for citizens to boycott violent television programming and for the government to pass legislation requiring television networks to make progressive reductions in the violent content of their programming over a ten-year period.

Earlier, on 12 February 1992, the House of Commons referred a motion by Larry Schneider, M.P., to the Committee calling for a full review of the media's portrayal of violence, particularly with respect to women and children, and seeking better ways to protect innocent Canadians from being exposed to such gratuitous violence without interfering unduly with artistic freedom or freedom of the press.

Members of the Committee met on 24 November and 3 December 1992 to discuss their approach to the subject referred by the House of Commons. It was agreed to begin the study with an initial series of briefings by experts on television violence and criminology and to follow these with public hearings. Given conflicting activities in its schedule, the Committee decided at the end of the public hearings to establish a Sub-Committee on Television Violence in order to concentrate on the drafting of its report. These efforts, and the review and approval later given by the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture, led to the present report.

The Committee recognized that this subject is complex and agreed that the report should consist of a preliminary survey of the facts, issues, and possible responses. The Committee was helped a great deal in the choice of its possible responses by the flurry of initiatives that took place during the course of the study. The subject came alive in many directions at the same time: initiatives were taken by the Minister of Communications, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the broadcasting industry, the television program production industry, and many associations and institutions concerned with violence in the entertainment industry. These actions and activities, along with others, are described in this report. The Committee wishes to thank these individuals, associations and institutions for their generosity in sharing their ideas and comments with us.

During the course of our study, the Committee reviewed a wide range of possible solutions to the problem of violence on television. We concluded, given the complexity of the problem, the variety of potential remedies, and the importance of safeguarding freedom of expression, that adopting a framework of innovative, co-ordinated, co-operative and graduated responses would be most appropriate. Some of the mechanisms considered included public forums, research, education, consumer action, cross-border collaboration, funding for Canadian productions, regulatory controls and amendments to legislation. The range of responses directed at individuals, the industry and