

**Submission to the Standing Committee
on Canadian Heritage**

Bill C-327
An Act to Amend the
Broadcasting Act
(reduction of violence in television broadcasts)



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Canadian Teachers' Federation
Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants

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The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) is the national voice for teachers in Canada on education and related social issues. Our membership includes teacher organizations in every province and territory representing 220,000 teachers across the country.

We appreciate the opportunity to present this submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage as it debates Bill C-327, an *Act* to amend the *Broadcasting Act* (reduction of violence in television broadcasts). Next to parents, who best understand the impact that media violence has on our young, teachers often stand as witness to the physical and psychological fallout from media violence. With your permission, we will speak to what we know, and to what we see that is needed.

We will speak to more than just media violence by way of T.V. We will speak to our concerns about bullying and violence that has the potential to or does directly affect our schools, students and teachers, through all entertainment and communications media.

What We Know

On November 19, 2003, we released the results of a landmark national survey of 5,756 students in Grades 3 to 10, titled **Kids' Take on Media** (this survey was made possible by a Government of Canada grant through the Department of Justice's National Crime Prevention Centre). Among the results were the following:

- ◆ 48% of Canadian kids aged 8-15 have their own T.V. (this was in 2003!) and 35% have their own VCR
- ◆ 75% of kids in grades 7-10 watch restricted movies at home
- ◆ In grade 7, 25% of children have personally rented an R-rated video
- ◆ 60% of boys in grades 3-6 play video and computer games almost every day
- ◆ One of the top choices for both Francophone and Anglophone boys in grades 3-6 is Grand Theft Auto, an ultra-violent action game aimed at mature audiences, which involves murder, bludgeoning and prostitution
- ◆ In grades 3-6 roughly 30% of kids claim that they never have any adult input about what T.V. shows they can watch (by grade 6 - 50%; by grade 8 – 60%)
- ◆ With game playing, adult involvement is as follows:
 - In grades 3 and 4, the top figure for parental involvement never rises above 50%
 - By grade 7, almost 75% of adults never tell children what video or computer games they can or cannot play
- ◆ 51% of kids in Grades 7 to 10 stated that they had witnessed imitation or some “violent act” from a movie or T.V. show. (“Violent acts” can include imitating a dangerous stunt. It does not necessarily mean aggressive violence is directed against another person)

Perhaps the most important finding?

The **Kids' Take on Media** study shows that *children and adolescents whose parents supervise their T.V. viewing and who discuss violence, racism and sexism in the media, are more likely to be aware of the negative impact of media violence. Many children, however, are on their own.*

In response to this survey the Canadian Teachers' Federation, with partners like the Media Awareness Network, Canadian School Boards Association and Canadian Home and School Association, developed a Tips Bulletin for Parents and a Teacher/Student Activity Guide.

Other Findings

In more recent data from teachers, we see the following:

- ◆ In our 2005 CTF National Teachers' Poll
 - 78% of teachers reported witnessing a student physically assaulting/intimidating another student
 - 75% of teachers reported witnessing a student verbally abusing another student

In the 2006 CTF National Issues in Education Poll, the public was asked what they considered as serious problems in community schools. Tied for first, as most serious, was bullying and violence (76% said very or somewhat serious, 44% of which was very serious).

In November 2007, in a release of the most comprehensive survey of teachers ever conducted in Canada, titled "School Teachers in Canada: Content, Profile and Work", the following is found:

- ◆ In response to the question "to what extent do to the following hinder the accomplishment of your duties" (when considering various school concerns)
 - The second highest response of teachers (51.1%) was "intimidation or bullying among students"

Now, we come to the most recent form of threat and potential violence by way of a communications media; one that we have targeted as a major component of this whole issue: Cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is described as "The use of information and communication technologies such as email, cell phone, pager text messages, instant messaging and websites to support deliberately repeated and hostile behaviors that is intended to harm others"

*Bill Belsey-teacher
Founder of bullying .org*

"We call it an online culture of cruelty"

*Cathy Wing
Media Awareness Network*

This is an issue closely linked to violence in television broadcasting as many of the same assumptions on context and outcomes are relevant in promoting an “ambivalence” towards the use of violence in our daily lives.

In July 2007, at the CTF AGM in Toronto, a mandate was given for our organization to address this rapidly emerging issue. What do we know about it?

In an extensive study of Canadian youth conducted between 2003-2005 by the Media Awareness Network entitled “Young Canadians in a Wired World” (5,200 children grades 4 through 11) we find that:

- ◆ 94% go online at home
- ◆ 86% have their own email accounts
- ◆ 89% of grade 4 students play games online
- ◆ 34% of students in grades 7 to 11 report being bullied while 2% report being severely harmed
- ◆ 59% report assuming another identity on the internet. Of these; 17% say they pretended to be someone else because “I can act mean to people and not get into trouble”

The most recent survey on the topic (initial findings released Feb 2008) involving 2,000 students in Toronto (grades 6 and 7 and grades 10 and 11) was conducted by Associate Professor Faye Mishna from the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto. The findings include the following:

- ◆ 21% reported being cyberbullied
- ◆ 35% reported cyberbullying others
- ◆ 46% have a computer in their bedroom
- ◆ 33% have given a password to a friend
- ◆ 28% have watched someone else being bullied online
- ◆ 67% of parents don’t supervise internet use

Finally, results from most recent CTF National Issues in Education Poll, conducted in February 2008, reveals:

- ◆ 85% of the public are familiar with the term cyberbullying
- ◆ 34% indicated that they were aware of students in their community school being cyberbullied
- ◆ 91% believe that parents should become knowledgeable and responsible in monitoring their child’s activities with the Internet and electronic communication devices
- ◆ 71% believe that the development of legislation that better protects students and teachers from cyberbullying would be “somewhat” or “very” effective in preventing cyberbullying
- ◆ 56% believe holding Internet service providers and wireless telephone providers accountable if their services are used for cyberbullying would be “somewhat” or “very” effective
- ◆ 70% believe School Boards should hold students accountable even if the cyberbullying originates from outside the school

We cannot ignore the obvious. It is clear that for teenagers the Web has become a “virtual hangout”. For instance, it was reported in Net Business News in May 2007 that in the U.S. more than 70% of girls 15-17 use social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook. Our children are adopting and adapting to the new communication technologies. However, with the new opportunities come some new negative realities.

Cyberbullying combines the devastating psychological affects of both verbal and social bullying; however, the impact can be even *more* profound because the child who is being victimized often doesn't know who's doing the harassing and many people can covertly witness or join in the bullying.

Therefore, we are here today to speak not only to the issue of violence on T.V., but to threats, bullying and violence through all communications media. We include in this the threat of “cyberbullying”

Bill 327 may or may not be a particularly good tool to address this issue. However, something must be done. The CTF is addressing the issue of media violence and, in particular, cyberbullying, in two ways:

1. Using opportunities to educate the public, parents, children, teachers, school boards and governments on the issue; and,
2. Searching for ways in which the regulatory framework can further serve to protect everybody from the negative impact of violence and the inappropriate use of communication technology.

If we extend these strategies to this discussion we would recommend:

Education

- ◆ Funding support for continued research into bullying and violence through any medium
- ◆ Development of resources and supports to assist students, teachers and parents in appropriate responses to perceived and realized media threats and violence

Protection

- ◆ Development of more appropriate classification and monitoring mechanisms on the part of Federal regulatory bodies in light of the development of even more violent and reprehensible video games
- ◆ Amendments to the Criminal Code that make the law more reflective of the capabilities of emerging technology.
- ◆ The development of a National/International legal/collaborative framework to address the hosting/delivery of offensive/illegal/inappropriate materials from outside our country (i.e. ISP providers)