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[www.TheEFC.ca/Pornography](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Pornography)

## Time to act

This is a crucial time to act to protect children and youth from pornography, both in front of and behind the screen.

Children and youth are exposed to sexually explicit and violent material online at younger and younger ages. Videos of child abuse and rape, and images posted without the knowledge or consent of the youth portrayed, are routinely hosted on free porn sites, with lifelong, devastating consequences.

Will you join us in asking the government to require pornography sites to verify their consumers are adults and hold pornography sites accountable for hosting videos of child and youth sexual abuse?

## Why now?

- A successful online campaign (Traffickinghub.com) and recent news coverage have raised needed awareness of this issue. The Canadian Parliament is paying attention. This new attention opens a window for change.
- During the pandemic, children and youth are spending even more time online, increasing the risk of both encountering abusive content and of filming and sending videos of themselves without realizing the consequences
- The use of online pornography is anonymous, freely available and increasingly accessible
- Free pornography sites host content that is cruel and degrading, including child sexual abuse and rape videos.

## What can we do?

You can join this important battle by praying, by contacting your MP and by sharing this information with your friends and family. The more we ask for change now, the more likely it will happen. We can help our friends and families become more aware of the impact of online sexual exploitation on children and youth. Together, we can ask for new laws to protect them.

**Getting ready** – Find your MP’s contact info using your postal code at

[www.ourcommons.ca/members/en](http://www.ourcommons.ca/members/en).

Find the Senators in your province at <https://sencanada.ca/en/senators/>.

**Making contact with your MP** – For greater impact, contact your MP in more than one way. For example, send a letter and then follow up with a phone call. Send a letter after a phone call or meeting. See [www.TheEFC.ca/CivicEngagement](http://www.TheEFC.ca/CivicEngagement) for more tips on simple, effective action.

## Sample interactions with government officials

### Leave a message with MP’s staff

- Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I live in the riding on \_\_\_\_\_ street, in \_\_\_\_\_ community. I appreciate the way your office serves our community.
- I’m calling today because I want to let our MP know that I’m concerned about the impact of pornography on children and teens – in front of and behind the screens. Violent and degrading pornography has a significant and negative impact on the youth viewing it. And the consequences for children and youth whose sexual abuse is filmed, shared or uploaded without their knowledge or consent, and watched over and over again, are devastating.
- Can you let our MP know that protections for children and youth are urgently needed, and that I’d like him/her to take steps to put that protection in place? Thanks for speaking with me.

### Meet with your MP

- MPs are likely having meetings by video, rather than in person, because of the pandemic.
- Call to request a meeting. Be ready with a brief reason for the meeting, such as “I’m concerned about images of child and youth sexual abuse being shared on pornography sites and I’d like to meet to talk about this issue.”
- Expect to meet for about 20-30 minutes.
- Be prepared with a brief description of why you’re concerned and the action you’d like the MP to take. Use wording from the Talking Points (below).

### Write or send an email to your MP and Senators from your province

Dear [MP or Senator’s name],

Thank you for your hard work for our community. I am writing to you because I am very concerned about the impact of pornography on children and youth.

Children and youth are harmed on both sides of the screen. They are harmed by viewing violent and degrading pornography. They are also harmed when child sexual abuse material and non-consensual sexual images of youth are posted, viewed and downloaded from porn sites.

Children see sexually violent and cruel content on online porn sites at younger and younger ages. There is very little to protect them. Research tells us that youth exposed to these images are more likely to accept sexual harassment and violence, and to engage in riskier sexual activity.

Children and youth are also being harmed behind the screens of online pornography sites. Youth whose images are posted on porn sites often suffer devastating consequences. Popular free porn sites host videos of child sexual abuse or rape. The impact on the children and youth abused behind the screen is lifelong and causes extreme harm.

We need to hold pornography sites accountable. They must be required to put meaningful age verification in place to protect children and youth from viewing violent and degrading pornography. They must not be allowed to profit from sexual exploitation or child sexual abuse.

I am asking you to take steps to address these harms and to raise this important issue in Parliament.

Sincerely,

[your name]

[your address]

### Talking points to use or choose from

1. **No one should profit from sexual exploitation or child sexual abuse.** Canada urgently needs to hold pornography sites accountable. Porn sites profit from videos of rape and child sexual abuse that are posted on their sites, and they don't act to find and remove those videos.
2. At least ten of the most popular porn sites in the world are owned by a company named MindGeek, which has offices in Montreal.
3. The journalist [Nicholas Kristoff recently wrote in the New York Times](#) about rape and child sexual abuse videos hosted on Pornhub and the **long-term devastating impact on the youth in the videos**, and asked: "So a question for Trudeau and all Canadians: Why does Canada host a company that inflicts rape videos on the world?"

4. **Access to all porn is regulated by law – except when it's online.** Most provinces classify films with explicit sexual activity, and cinemas limit access by youth. Municipalities prohibit minors from accessing sex shops and porn magazines, which must be shelved at a specific height. Kids cannot buy a porn magazine, but they can freely and easily access online sites like Pornhub.
5. **Retailers verify the age of consumers in many areas of public health,** such as alcohol or cigarettes. You can't buy cigarettes or alcohol without proof of age. You shouldn't be able to access material which has been shown to harm social and psychosexual development of children without proof of age.
6. **There are already internet sites that require age verification,** such as gambling sites. It can be done for pornography sites as well. Other jurisdictions, like the U.K., are passing laws that require porn sites to have meaningful age verification in place for their consumers.
7. **The mainstream of online pornography is sexually violent and cruel to an extent unimagined in the past.** Sites like Pornhub are full of content that violates existing laws in Canada related to child pornography, trafficking, consent, rape and sexual assault.
8. This material is now easily accessible, affordable and anonymous online. **There is very little to protect children from being exposed at younger and younger ages.** Many children, and most teens have seen sexually degrading images online, often accidentally or incidentally.
9. For many children and youth, their formative sexual experience and education will be with the porn they encounter online.
10. When PornHub deleted over 10 million videos in response to the NYT article, users on Twitter decried the move, lamenting that "all of the good content is gone" from the site.
11. **It is a criminal offence for any Canadian to produce, possess or share images of child sexual abuse or to share images without consent.** Sites like PornHub should be held criminally responsible for hosting and profiting from such content.

## Frequently asked questions

*How is online porn any different than porn magazines that have been around for decades?*

Pornography today has become far more violent and degrading than it was in the past. What is now mainstream in pornography is aggressive, violent and dehumanizing. The themes of dominating and humiliating women are common.

*Will it make any difference if my MP hears from me?*

Even if your MP doesn't agree with your concerns or seems reluctant to act, hearing that a constituent cares tells an MP and their political party that they should pay attention to the issue. A constituent asking for action can also motivate a sympathetic MP to do more.

*How would porn sites be able to verify the age of viewers?*

There are online sites that already ask for age verification, such as gambling sites. The U.K. passed a law requiring age verification for commercial pornography sites and is currently working on putting regulation in place.

*What if someone says it is anti-sex or prudish to limit porn sites to adult consumers viewing images of adults who have given their consent?*

Limiting portrayals of child sexual abuse and non-consensual images on pornography sites is not anti-sex, it is anti-abuse. Commercial pornography sites must comply with existing laws against sharing, possessing or hosting images of child pornography.

## What experts are saying

Lianna MacDonald, executive director of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, which operates Cybertip.ca, in [testimony at the Health Committee on April 11, 2017](#):

Since 2014, Cybertip.ca has averaged approximately 3,000 reports per month. It is through our work over the last 14 years that our agency has witnessed the growing proliferation of child sexual abuse on the Internet. The misuse of technology has accelerated the propagation of child pornography, normalized the sexualization of children, and made it abundantly easier for offenders to actively participate in this illegal behaviour.

...In our experience, both adult pornography and child pornography have become increasingly disturbing over the years, including elements of sadism, bondage, torture, and bestiality. It is important to recognize that the reports made to the tip line come in from members of the public who have come across some of this disturbing material on the public Internet. There are no usernames or passwords required to gain access. We frequently receive reports relating to adult and child pornography that is in plain view on popular social

media platforms. The fact that this content is encountered by members of the public so often and in such public places is a significant public health concern.

Dr. Gail Dines, president of Culture Reframed, in [testimony at the Health Committee on April 11, 2017](#):

MindGeek controls eight of the top ten most travelled free porn sites in the world, controlling most of the distribution side of the value chain. Its top three free porn sites attract close to 100 million visitors and over 488 million page views a day.

This free porn model delivers porn to boys on a scale never seen before. Because you don't need a credit card, or proof of age, it is the perfect way to deliver hard-core porn to boys at the very stage in their development when they are sexually curious and their brains are wired for novelty and risk-taking. Absent robust sex education programs, porn has now become the major form of sex education in the world across the globe. This means that violent hard-core porn is shaping boys on a level we've never seen before.

Although MindGeek is headquartered in Luxembourg, with offices across the USA and Europe, 800 of its more than 1,000 employees work from their Montreal office.

Dr. Sharon Cooper, CEO of Developmental and Forensic Pediatrics, in [testimony at the Health Committee on April 11, 2017](#):

The presence of Internet pornography and its easy availability to children and youth present a significant threat to the psychosexual development of children and youth today. This threat to the children, the inability of their parents to provide protections, and the resultant aberrant sexual behaviour decisions by more and more groups of teens and older adolescents really provides a clear road map of a threat to society. Therefore, looking through the lens of the ecological model, Internet pornography affects the child, the family, the community, and society.

Cordelia Anderson, founder of Sensibilities Prevention Services, in [testimony at the Health Committee on April 11, 2017](#):

Consent doesn't matter in pornography. Indeed, sex is framed as sexual abuse and aggression, and women's needs don't matter. Pain and degradation are simply to be tolerated. That's why, in a survey of children in the U.K., an 11-year-old boy asked, "If I have a girlfriend, do I need to strangle her when I have sex with her?" The girls were asking if they had to have anal sex even if it hurt, and if they had to be shared with their boyfriends' friends.

[“The effects of pornography on children and young people – Research Summary,”](#) The Australian Institute of Family Studies (the Australian government’s key research body in the area of family well-being), December 2017:

The most dominant, popular and accessible pornography contains messages and behaviours about sex, gender, power and pleasure that are **deeply** problematic. In particular, the physical aggression (slapping, choking, gagging, hair pulling) and verbal aggression such as name calling, that is predominantly done by men to their female partners.

Dr. Kim Roberts, professor and head of the Child Memory Lab at the Wilfrid Laurier University department of psychology, in [testimony to the Health Committee on April 4, 2017](#):

But let's say you're abused as a child, and you're now a teenager, a young person, an adult, and maybe you have children of your own, and someone says to you, “You look familiar. Have I seen you somewhere before?” ... These are really quite serious crimes. Because that child may have already gone through the process of trying to get themselves back to a psychologically healthy place, which in itself is a challenge, once this starts again, either when photographs come to light, or when there's a prosecution of someone who is using those photographs, the victim has to be notified and this starts all over for them.

My main point here is that any trauma that children might feel from being abused is not just a one-time thing. It's not just when they remember the abuse that things are bad. This is a lifelong thing for them.