

NEWS RELEASE



Arnold Viersen
Member of Parliament
Peace River – Westlock

MP Arnold Viersen Introduces M-47 On The Public Health Effects of Violent Sexual Material

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Ottawa, ON – Arnold Viersen, Member of Parliament for Peace River—Westlock, announced the introduction of Motion M-47 today in the House of Commons which reads:

That the Standing Committee on Health be instructed to examine the public health effects of the ease of access and viewing of online violent and degrading sexually explicit material on children, women and men, recognizing and respecting the provincial and territorial jurisdictions in this regard, and that the said Committee report its findings to the House no later than July 2017.

“Violent and degrading sexually explicit material, in which the majority of violence is directed at women, is easily accessible to anyone with an access to the internet, without restriction,” said MP Viersen. “As the medical community has discovered, this is having a significant harmful impact on the mental, emotional and sexual health of children, women and men.”

“When we consider well-known reports of sexual violence like Rehtaeh Parsons, Amanda Todd, Jian Ghomeshi, and the Dalhousie dentist students, as a nation, we are compelled to ask ourselves where the individuals in these reports get the notion that sexually violent and degrading attitudes towards women and children is normal and acceptable,” said MP Viersen.

“I believe that if we are to change the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence against women we must start at one of the root causes. Easy access to messages and visuals online that condone violent pornographic templates for our youth is setting the stage for what is the “norm” when it comes to the treatment of females,” said Leah Parsons, Executive Director of the Rehtaeh Parsons Society. “If my daughter was treated as a human being and not an object to conquer she would still be here today. Societal messages directly influence rape and violence towards women.”

The 1985 Fraser Committee Report, the last major public study on sexually explicit material in Canada, found that sexually explicit material in pre-internet 1985 perpetuated “lies about aspects of women’s humanity” and denied “the validity of their aspirations to be treated as full and equal citizens.” While the 1985 Fraser Committee Report called for significant action to combat the violence and degradation in sexually explicit material, including a thorough revision of relevant sections of the *Criminal Code*, its recommendations and legislation were never adopted by Parliament.

“It is appalling that the last time Canada studied the impact of violent sexually explicit material was 30 years ago, before the invention of the internet,” said MP Viersen. “This is a public health issue, it’s a women’s equality issue and it is time for Parliament to make this a priority.”

Today is also International Women’s Day and Canada’s theme for 2016 is ‘Women’s Empowerment Leads to Equality’.

“One hundred years ago, women in my province of Alberta won the right to vote and were greatly empowered by it,” said MP Viersen. “Tragically, today women across Canada still face inequality and challenges to full empowerment due to attitudes shaped by the explosion of violent and degrading sexually explicit content online.”

Mr. Viersen received the 37th spot in the lottery for Private Members’ Business. He will have an opportunity in June to bring forward a motion or bill for debate in the House of Commons. Unlike motions of resolution, Motion M-47 is drafted as an order in reference which, if adopted, would require the Standing Committee on Health to undertake this study.

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