

PORNOGRAPHY:

A Public Health Crisis

Summary of research on the harms of pornography and an action plan to address it in Canada.

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I INTRODUCTION

Defend Dignity exists to end all sexual exploitation in Canada. Commercial sexual exploitation includes: pornography, strip clubs, escorts, massage parlors, and prostitution. All involve the selling of sexual services which undermine the dignity of women, men, and children and are detrimental to a healthy society.

Defend Dignity works upstream of the commercial sexual exploitation issue in order to lessen the number of victims that end up downstream drowning in the waters of exploitation. Pornography is sexual exploitation. It is also the usual precursor; the entry level into purchasing others in a face to face encounter. Dr. Susan McIntyre of Mount Royal University in Calgary says this in “The Role of Technology in Human Trafficking,” a white paper prepared for Microsoft in March, 2015:

The impetus behind this study was to explore the role of technology in human trafficking and sexual exploitation. As the literature indicates and our study agrees, viewing pornography is often the catalyst to further involvement as consumers. The men in our study [51 men from three western provinces in Canada who were attending a Prostitution Offender Program, meaning that they had been charged for the first time and were participating in a court diversion program] began viewing pornography at very young ages, in some cases younger than 11 years of age.¹

Pornography is so tightly linked to all forms of commercial sexual exploitation that it is crucial that a Canada wide strategy be created to counteract it. We believe that

¹ McIntyre, Susan, “The Role of Technology in Human Trafficking”, Microsoft White Paper, March, 2015



treating it as a public health crisis is key to addressing its harms and seeing it curbed in our country.

Pornography needs to be seen as a harmful social issue from a public health perspective because it involves problems that affect an individual or groups of people beyond their capacity to correct them. Once we see it as a social issue, the responsibility shifts from the individual to holding external social causes or influences accountable.²

Pornography should be treated in the same way as tobacco is currently treated – a public health issue. There are many similarities between tobacco consumption and pornography consumption.

When people began to recognize the health consequences of smoking, our initial approach was to educate the individual and encourage him or her to stop smoking. Over time, despite the industry's denial, it became evident that smoking was addictive and the harm was done to the individual and to the public all for the industry's profit. 'The pornography industry now, in many ways equates with the dominance of the tobacco industry and social norms of smoking of just a few decades ago.'³ Now that research has documented pornography's harm to individuals and the public – especially children – it is time for a societal response on this issue as well.⁴

² Wallack, L, Woodruff, K, Dorfman, L, & Diaz, I (1999), *News for a Change: An Advocate's Guide to Working with the Media*, Los Angeles. Sage

³ Eberstadt, M, *Feature: Is pornography the new tobacco?*, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, April/May, 2009

⁴ Anderson, Cordelia, *Why Pornography is a Public Health Issue*, Collection of Papers from Symposium to US Congress, July, 2015



Pornography is very harmful to our children and adolescents. Gail Dines, Professor of Sociology, Wheelock College, Boston, MA, Founder and Chair of Culture Reframed says: “Ignoring the role porn plays in socializing our children and youth is a dereliction of our collective duty to protect the safety and well-being of the next generation.”⁵

There are forces at work beyond what I can control as a parent. “If a parent manages to protect their children from any exposure in or outside of the home, their children are likely to be affected by the attitudes, behaviours and expectations of others who were exposed.”⁶ Consequently, pornography must be treated as a public health crisis.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the realities of pornography, its effects on today's culture and the consequential harms to all of us, but in particular to our children. Addressing pornography as a public health crisis enables individuals, families, organizations and government to develop appropriate responses and solutions. Suggested action plans for individuals, families and our governments are included. A description of Direct-Action campaigns that Defend Dignity is undertaking is also included.

⁵ Dines, Gail, *Today's Pornography and the Crisis of Violence Against Women and Children*, Collection of Papers from Symposium at US Capitol, July, 2015 pg 5

⁶ Anderson, pg 14



II What is pornography in today's culture?

“Particularly on the Internet, where much of pornography today is consumed, the type of sexuality depicted often has more to do with violence, extreme fetishes and mutual degradation than with sexual or emotional connection.” Pamela Paul, author of Pornified.

Print pornography which predates the internet is considered soft core porn by today's standards. Television, movies, and advertising all regularly include images that not long ago would have been considered pornographic.

The coming of the internet has unleashed a tsunami of images that are violent, fuel rape culture, are misogynistic and desensitize the viewer.

A. Violent

The language and images in pornography are almost entirely violent and contribute to violence against women. A study called “Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-Selling Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update” from 2010 concludes:

Of the 304 scenes analyzed, 88.2% contained physical aggression, principally spanking, gagging, and slapping, while 48.7% of scenes contained verbal aggression, primarily name-calling. Perpetrators of aggression were usually male, whereas targets of aggression were overwhelmingly female. Targets most often showed pleasure or responded neutrally to the aggression.⁷

⁷ <http://pornharmresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/Violence-Against-Women-2010-Bridges-1065-85.pdf>



Porn actors are also subjected to ongoing scenes of abuse and violence. Those leaving the industry tell stories of physical trauma. Porn viewers soon begin to absorb the images into their belief systems. They become not only consumers of these violent images, but their own sexual behaviour becomes violent towards women due to the normalization of this kind of pornography.

Dr. Mary Anne Layden, Director, Sexual Trauma and Psychopathology Program Center for Cognitive Therapy, University of Pennsylvania has researched the violent nature of today's pornography and concludes that the adult use of pornography leads to the following beliefs and practices⁸:

- More acceptance of violence against women
- More adversarial sex beliefs
- Increasing their estimates of how often people engage in sex with violence
- Creating more sexually violent fantasies to get aroused
- Engaging in more sexual harassment behaviors
- More likelihood of forcing a woman sexually
- Using physical coercion to have sex
- Using verbal coercion to have sex
- Using drugs and alcohol to sexually coerce women
- Being an adult sex offender
- Being a child molester
- Being an incest offender
- Engaging in sexual abuse of a battered spouse
- More willingness to have sex with 13-14 year olds
- More sexual attraction to children
- Having sexually abused children

Pornography depicts violence against women in most of its images.

⁸ <http://pornharmresearch.com/2013/12/talking-points-porn-sexual-violence-research/>



B. Fuels Rape Culture

Pornography portrays women deriving pleasure from physical abuse and therefore enables men to develop attitudes that allow for violence against women. Men become increasingly more comfortable with the idea of rape.

A common image in pornography is that of the woman saying “no,” but really meaning “yes.” It blurs the lines around consent. Particularly with children, it influences young boys to falsely believe that girls want to be raped, that they are meant to be sexually objectified and used. Pornography normalizes rape.

Rape and sexual violence reporting is rapidly escalating in high schools and colleges. There is a direct correlation between that and the viewing of pornography. The 2014 reporting of a group of Dalhousie University students using misogynistic and rape culture language on social media is indicative of the reality of pornography outcomes.⁹ In the compilation of research on sexual violence and pornography, Dr. Mary Anne Layden finds that porn consumers develop the following beliefs and practises¹⁰:

- Believing a rape victim enjoyed rape
- Believing women in general enjoy rape
- Believing a rape victim experienced pleasure and “got what she wanted”
- Believing women make false accusations of rape
- Believing rapist deserve less jail time
- More acceptance of the rape myth
- More self-reported likelihood of forcing a woman sexually

⁹ <http://www.metronews.ca/news/halifax/2014/12/16/allegations-of-sexually-charged-comments-at-dalhousie-university-disturbing-not-surprising-expert.html>

¹⁰ <http://pornharmresearch.com/2013/12/talking-points-porn-sexual-violence-research/>



- More self-reported likelihood of rape
- More likelihood of future rape
- Having engaged in rape
- Having engaged in date rape
- Having engaged in marital rape

C. Misogynistic

Today's pornography is based on the domination and hatred of women. Prominent themes are the humiliation and degradation of women. Women are referred to with derogatory terms and always reduced to sexual objects. It's important in the world of pornography that women are to be used and abused by men. "[Pornographers] offer men sexual gymnastics and circus acts that are saturated with cruelty toward women; they sexualize the degradation of women."¹¹

This world is often different from the real world where men are required to work alongside of, live with, and relate to women as equals. It becomes much easier to hate women that are believed to be less than human and only objects for a man's gratification. "It is especially important for the pornographers to shred the humanity of the women in the images, as many porn users have sustained and intimate relationships with women in the real world."¹²

¹¹ Jensen, Robert "The Cruel Boredom of Pornography", Last Exit, September 24, 2008, <http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rjensen/freelance/boredom.htm> (accessed January 2, 2009).

¹² Dines, Gail, *Pornland*, pg 63



D. Desensitizes

The nature of pornography and the wiring of our neural pathways are such that the viewer is constantly looking for the next high; the next set of images that will bring arousal. Adult sex scenes are soon not enough to satisfy. A tolerance has built up which means more deviance is needed to produce the same results. That has led to teens and children being the most searched for on porn sites and a greater acceptance of bestiality and other more sexually deviant behaviour. “The combination of hyper-realistic imagery, moving pictures, and rapid-fire bombardment of images appears to mean also that chronic consumers both become visually desensitized, and find themselves viewing depictions they themselves would once have regarded as taboo or off-limits.”¹³

Dr. Norman Doidge, author of *The Brain That Changes Itself*, says: “When pornographers boast that they are pushing the envelope by introducing new, harder themes, what they don’t say is that they must, because their customers are building up a tolerance to the content.”¹⁴

¹³ Layden, Mary – Anne, *The Social Costs of Pornography, A Statement of Findings and Recommendations*, The Witherspoon Institute

¹⁴ Doidge, Norman, *The Brain That Changes Itself*, pg 105 (Penguin Books, 2007)



III WHY SHOULD PORNOGRAPHY BE TREATED AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS?

“Porn is a social issue because the harm it creates affects individuals or groups beyond their capacity to correct it.”¹⁵

Increasingly, clinicians are seeing the harms and devastation of pornography from women, men and children present in their offices in North America.

Dr. Jill Manning, a marriage and family therapist says: “Those who claim pornography is harmless entertainment, benign sexual expression, or a marital aid, have clearly never sat in a therapist’s office with individuals, couples or families who are reeling from the devastating effects of this material.”¹⁶

There are organizations in the United States which are calling for pornography to be treated as a public health issue in much the same way that the country responded to findings that tobacco caused many health issues decades ago.¹⁷ Just as tobacco was once considered harmless, pornography has been widely accepted as an individual’s personal prerogative and harmless choice. However, there is growing research to prove otherwise. Pornography’s harms to children in particular warrant a public health approach.

¹⁵ Anderson, Cordelia, *Why Pornography is a Public Health Issue*, Coalition to End Sexual Exploitation Summit, 2014

¹⁶ Manning, Jill, *The Impact of Pornography on Women: Social Science Findings and Clinical Observations in The Social Costs of Pornography: A Collection of Papers* (Princeton, N.J.: Witherspoon Institute, 2010)

¹⁷ Calfas, Jennifer, *Pornography foes: Make this a health issue*, USA Today, July 14, 2015



The world's largest porn site is found in Montreal. It boasts 35 million users a day! The number of porn users exceeds those of websites like Netflix and YouTube dramatically. The influence of pornography on today's culture and society is tremendous and needs to be given serious consideration.

A. The Connection to Other Forms of Commercial, Sexual Exploitation

Pornography is a form of commercial, sexual exploitation. That reason alone constitutes treating porn as a public health issue.

Dr. Melissa Farley, executive director at Prostitution Research and Education, compares pornography to prostitution and trafficking and says:

The same kinds of violence against women are perpetrated in pornography, prostitution and trafficking. Disconnecting trafficking from prostitution and pornography normalizes most of the sex industry. Pornography is a business enterprise – the industry documents sexual assaults of individuals and then makes a profit from those misdemeanors as a result. But because pornography is legal, it is more difficult to tackle, expose and take action against the offenses than those of prostitution and sex trafficking.¹⁸

The [US] Department of Justice and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children both recognize that pornography is an element that adds to the

¹⁸ Calfas, Jennifer *Pornography foes: Make this a health issue*, USA Today, July 14, 2015
Farley, Melissa, *Pornography, A Public Health Crisis*, US Capitol Symposium, July 14, 2015



serious problem of sex trafficking. Many traffickers are found with filming equipment and cameras to create and sell pornography.¹⁹

B. The Harms of Porn

Pornography is harmful to the consumer, families, relationships, and to society as a whole. The lure of pornography to enhance the viewer's sexual experience, in fact disappoints, as it often has the opposite effect in a consumer's real life. Dr. Mary Anne Layden says:

I have also seen in my clinical experience that pornography damages the sexual performance of the viewers. Pornography viewers tend to have problems with premature ejaculation and erectile dysfunction. Having spent so much time in unnatural sexual experiences with paper, celluloid and cyberspace, they seem to find it difficult to have sex with a real human being. Pornography is raising their expectation and demand for types and amounts of sexual experiences; at the same time it is reducing their ability to experience sex.²⁰

Pornography is driven by a "4-A locomotive" which races down the track of our culture. Pornography is addictive, accessible, anonymous and affordable.

1. ADDICTIVE

A very significant reason pornography use is harmful is that it is addictive. Dr. Donald Hilton, Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Neurosurgery of the University of Texas Health Sciences Center at San Antonio says:

¹⁹ E. McGinnis, *The Horrifying Reality of Sex Trafficking*, www.Beverlylahayeinstitute.org

²⁰ <http://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/>



Pornography is a biologically addictive medium that alters brain reward and motivation systems in a negative way.... Virtually every study looking at addiction has shown shrinkage and abnormality in the reward areas and in judgment centers [of the brain]. These include addictions to drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine, and opiates, and to behavioural addictions such as to food, sex, the internet, and as we have discussed, pornography.²¹

Some of the brain's neurotransmitters are behind pornography addiction. The neurotransmitter, Dopamine, provides us with feelings of enjoyment and reinforcement during rewarding activities, including drugs of addiction, as well as pornography. The release of dopamine also motivates us to continue with or crave rewarding activities more. Testosterone also plays a role in porn addiction. Its production is increased when sexual cues are picked up. "Because testosterone is slow to dissipate, men who habitually view pornography cause their own chemical imbalance. This high testosterone level increases their sexual awareness far above normal. Sexual fantasies are sparked by everyday objects and even modestly dressed women are seen as provocative."²² Oxytocin is yet another chemical at play and is often referred to as the bonding hormone. It plays a major role in sexual bonding because it is released in climax. "For the porn user instead of bonding to a real mate, the porn viewer's brain bonds to the image, video or situation, especially when the activity is reinforced through

²¹ Hilton, Don, *Pornography and the Brain Public Health Considerations*, US Congress Symposium, July 14, 2015

²² Black, Sam, *The Porn Circuit*, Covenant Eyes, 2013, pg. 11



repetition.”²³ Norepinephrine also plays a role in sexual arousal and sexual memory.

“It helps us burn emotional experiences in our minds.”²⁴

Due to this brain chemical cocktail, it becomes easier to see how pornography becomes addictive. “Continued use of pornography carves neural pathways in the brain,” according to Dr. William Struthers in Wired for Intimacy.²⁵ “Repetition matters. But because sexual activity launches such an amazing fireworks show in our brains, it takes less repetition to build these porn pathways than it would for us to engrain cravings for other activities.”²⁶ The brain will often also respond to related stimuli because “a superhighway is connected to the rewards circuitry. This superhighway has many entrance ramps; sexual cues are seen everywhere and sexual fantasizing comes easy.”²⁷

As already noted above in II D, pornography desensitizes. Many porn users find they need a greater amount or more varied and deviant porn to activate a state of arousal that achieves that sought after release of dopamine.

Like a path is created in the woods with each successive hiker, so do the neural paths set the course for the next time an erotic image is viewed. Over time these neural paths become wider as they are repeatedly traveled with each exposure to pornography. They become the automatic pathway through which interactions with women are routed. The neural circuitry

²³ Ibid, pg. 12

²⁴ Ibid, pg. 11

²⁵ Struthers, William, *Wired for Intimacy. How pornography hijacks the male brain*, 2009, pgs 86, 106

²⁶ Black, Sam, *The Porn Circuit*, Covenant Eyes, 2013, pg. 16

²⁷ Ibid, pg. 17



anchors this process solidly in the brain.... All women become potential porn stars in the minds of these men. They have unknowingly created a neurological circuit that imprisons their ability to see women rightly.... Repeated exposure to pornography creates a one way neurological superhighway where a man's mental life is over-sexualized and narrowed. It is hemmed on either side by high containment walls making escape nearly impossible."²⁸

As people often grow increasingly tolerant of the images they see, they often become disgusted with their own pornographic pursuits, but are unable to stop – a true sign of an addiction.

2. ACCESSIBLE

Due to the internet, there is a tsunami of pornographic images available at your fingertips anytime and anywhere, wherever there is WIFI or data enabled devices. According to Covenant Eyes, an internet accountability and filtering program, by 2017, a quarter of a billion people are expected to be accessing mobile adult content from their phones or tablets, an increase of more than 30% from 2013. Mobile adult video chat alone will have a compound annual growth rate of 25%. One in five mobile searches is currently for pornographic material.²⁹

²⁸ Struthers, William, *Wired for Intimacy*, 2013, pg 85

²⁹ <http://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/>



3. ANONYMOUS

Pornography is something you can do in private. All you need is WIFI or data access and you can log onto the millions of porn pages available without ever having to sign in or let anyone know you are logging on.

Gail Dines, in [Pornland](#), says “A key factor driving the growth of the porn market has been the development of technologies allowing users to buy and consume porn in private, without embarrassing trips to seedy stores or video rental shops.”³⁰

Gone are the days of leaving your house to walk into a triple-x video store or covering up the cover of the magazine you just purchased.

4. AFFORDABLE

Nine out of ten porn viewers only ever access free internet pornography. There is a plethora of every type and genre of pornography that comes at no monetary cost to the consumer.

C. Harms of Pornography on Children

The brains of young children are being bombarded with graphic, extreme internet pornography, causing significant harm. The average age of first exposure to internet pornography is 12 years old and is declining. By age ten, 32% of children have been exposed to pornography. Also, 53% of boys and 28% of girls ages 12-15 use sexually explicit pornography via the internet.³¹

³⁰ Dines, Gail, *Pornland*, Pg 48

³¹ Allen, Ernie, Former President and CEO, International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, *Why Finding a Solution is So Difficult*, Collection of papers from Symposium at US Capitol, July, 2015, Pg 47



Today, many children and teens look to pop culture and the internet for information on sex, gender and relationships more than they do their parents or other trusted adults. As already described, the harms of pornography are only more alarming as we consider our children's healthy development.

ADOLESCENTS' VULNERABILITY TO ADDICTIVE POWER OF PORNOGRAPHY

As discussed earlier under the Harms of Pornography, pornography can become addictive and even more so in the brains of our young people. "Adolescents are more vulnerable to the molding and addicting power of pornography. They elaborate DeltaFosB, a brain protein important in addiction more potently than adults. Their frontal reward and control areas are not fully pruned and myelinated until the mid to late 20s."³²

Adolescents are more vulnerable to the negative effects of pornography because of the frontal cortex of their brains.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

Youth with greater pornography exposure have been found more likely to:³³

- Have sex at a younger age
- Engage in risky sexual behaviour
- Have negative attitudes toward using condoms

³² Hilton, Don, Symposium, Pg. 25

³³ Owens, E.W. Behun, R., Manning, Jill., & Reid, R. (2012). The impact of internet pornography on adolescents: A review of the research. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity* 19,99-122



- Have oral sex, anal sex, and sex with multiple partners, which increases their risk for sexually transmitted infections
- View women as sex objects
- Have attitudes that support violence against women
- Believe 'rape myths' – beliefs that justify or defend rape
- Report decreased empathy for rape victims
- Choose not to intervene when witnessing college sexual assault
- Have increasingly aggressive behavioural tendencies
- Report increased interest in coercing partners into unwanted sex acts
- Experience increased difficulty in developing intimate relationships with partners
- Report decreased sexual interest in their girlfriends or wives
- Develop compulsive internet use

A representative Swedish study on adolescent boys has shown that boys with daily consumption of pornography showed more interest in deviant and illegal types of pornography and more frequently reported the wish to actualize what was seen in real life.³⁴

ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION

Young male pornography users are more likely to experience erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation and delayed ejaculation.

In one study, 58% of male pornography users (average age twenty-five) had erectile dysfunction with women but not with pornography. Internet pornography is making a generation of men who can only have sex with pixels but not with people. They may have a greater desire for sex but they have a reduced ability to engage in sex in a healthy way.³⁵

³⁴

http://www.researchgate.net/publication/47298591_Frequent_users_of_pornography._A_population_based_epidemiological_study_of_Swedish_male_adolescents

³⁵ Leyden, Mary-Anne, *Sexual obesity: Research on the Public Health Crisis of Pornography*, Collection of papers from Symposium at US Capitol, July, 2015, pg. 37



ADULT SEX OFFENDERS OF CHILDREN

A well-known practise of adult sex offenders of children is to use pornography to groom children and youth into thinking that sexual acts with adults is normal.

Pornography is used to break down natural sexual inhibitions, to educate children on the mechanics of what is expected of them and to bring them into sexual contact with other adult abusers or with other children expected to perform sexually.³⁶

SEXTORTION

With the advent of smartphones, we are seeing 'sextortion' cases on the rise. Child abuse images taken by an abuser or a peer can be easily spread via the internet resulting in blackmail of the child. Resultant issues of depression, shame and guilt have resulted in suicides. The case of Canadian, Amanda Todd³⁷, is such an example. Canadian Cybertipline reports have escalated. On average, Cybertip.ca receives over 3,000 reports and 80,000 page views per month.³⁸

PORNOGRAPHY'S EFFECTS ON GIRLS

While the most common users of pornography are boys, girls using porn are growing with the same negative outcomes.

³⁶ Cooper, Sharon, M.D., CEO, Development and Forensic Pediatrics, *Pornography: Sex Education for the Developing Brain*, Collection of Papers at the Symposium at US Congress, July, 2015, pg 26, 27

³⁷ <http://nobullying.com/amanda-todd-story/>

³⁸ <https://www.cybertip.ca/app/en/about>



Females who were exposed to pornography as children are more likely to accept the rape myth and are more likely to have sexual fantasies that involve rape. Adult females who have been exposed to pornography were more negative about their bodies and think their partners are more critical of their bodies. Females, similar to the males, have reduced support for the women's liberation movement. Also similar to the males, females think rapists deserve less time in prison. In my own research, I found that the more pornography young adult females use, the more likely they are to become victims of non-consensual sex.³⁹

Pornography teaches girls their value is tied up in pleasing men through their sexual behaviour.

IV AN ACTION PLAN FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

A. For Yourself

The first step in protecting yourself from pornography is to install accountability software such as Covenant Eyes.⁴⁰ All online activity including websites visited, videos watched, and chat rooms entered are all listed in an accountability report shared with an accountability partner of your choosing. Accountability goes a long ways in helping to maintain a porn free life.

If you are a viewer and find that even with accountability software installed, staying free of pornography is difficult, consider finding help through a sexual addiction

³⁹ Leyden, Mary-Anne, pg. 38

⁴⁰ www.covenanteyes.com



counselor⁴¹. An online program, Fortify⁴², designed for teens and young adults by Fight the New Drug⁴³ is also experiencing great success rates.

B. For your family

Parents must start having conversations about porn and healthy sexuality. With the average age of exposure between 10 and 12 years of age, parents need to overcome awkwardness and start the conversation and keep it going. Sex is a beautiful gift that must not be destroyed by pornography. Parents need to be proactive in opening communication doors so that their children will find them to be a good resource on sex. Some excellent resources to help you in this are the books: [Good Pictures, Bad Pictures⁴⁴](#), [Good Pictures, Bad Pictures Jr⁴⁵](#) and [30 Day Sex Talks⁴⁶](#) and [How to Talk to Your Kids About Pornography⁴⁷](#)

Just as having accountability software is good for adults, it is good for children as well. Also, having a good software filter on all internet enabled devices in the home is necessary to better protect children. Covenant Eyes is a good source for this kind of filter.

⁴¹ <http://iitap.com/>

⁴² www.fortifyprogram.org

⁴³ www.fightthenewdrug.org

⁴⁴ <https://defenddignity.ca/product/good-pictures-bad-pictures/>

⁴⁵ <https://defenddignity.ca/product/good-pictures-bad-pictures-junior/>

⁴⁶ <https://defenddignity.ca/product/30-days-of-sex-talks-ages-3-7/>

⁴⁷ <https://defenddignity.ca/product/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-porn/>



Take time to understand and monitor the Apps and social media that your children are accessing on their devices. Many of these are gateways to pornography. Become media literate, so that you're aware of what your children are being exposed to regularly in the culture. The best way to counteract this is by maintaining open communication with your children to discuss the positive and negative aspects of media's influence.

C. Defend Dignity's REVEAL

Defend Dignity has developed a conference called REVEAL. People will learn about the sexually exploitive and pornified culture we live in along with practical ways to respond by attending this event. Parents will learn how to discuss positive sexuality, the harms of pornography and how to protect their children. Pornography's addictive nature and how it affects relationships will also be explained. The Action Plan below will also be explained and you will be encouraged to participate so that Canadians can become engaged in creating a safer Canada.

V AN ACTION PLAN FOR CANADA

Our country needs to address the pornography problem. Our current obscenity laws need to be enforced. All internet and print pornography needs to be labeled as harmful in the same way that cigarettes have health warning labels. The accessibility of pornography needs to be denied to children by ensuring that some kind of proof of age



be part of the process. And, most effectively, Canadian internet service providers need to consider default filtering for all users, commonly referred to as opting-in.

1. OBSCENITY LAWS NEED ENFORCING

Canada has obscenity laws⁴⁸, but they have not been enforced to the degree in which they could be in relation to pornography. As we have said in this document, much of pornography is violent and extreme. Could we not expect that the laws we do have be used to protect the actors and the viewers?

2. LABELED HARMFUL

Just as tobacco requires a warning label because of its health hazard, so too should pornography be required to carry such a warning. Pornography is addictive and therefore harmful. This should be clearly noted on all internet and print pornography.

3. PROOF OF AGE

In the same way that individuals must prove their age prior to purchasing tobacco by showing ID, a similar system must be considered to access both print and internet pornography. Unless there is some kind of system prohibiting porn access to children, pornography is completely accessible by all.

⁴⁸ <http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/researchpublications/843-e.htm#currentlaw>



The United Kingdom is forging ahead with age verification using the British Board of Film Classification⁴⁹ as the pornography companies' regulator. They are providing the rest of the world with a model.

South Africa is also moving forward with meaningful age verification.⁵⁰

4. DEFAULT FILTERING

Canada needs to put in place default filters at the internet service provider level.

These filters would automatically block access to pornography unless an individual customer opts in. Beyond their homes, this can help to minimize exposure to children in other locations.

There is a precedent for this in the United Kingdom.

[Prime Minister David Cameron] called upon British Internet companies to take voluntary action to provide default filtering for all users. He approached this not as a limitation on free speech – those who want to access pornography can still get it. But instead of depending on parents to adopt and implement available filtering tools, he urged the Internet companies to provide these tools for them automatically, unless users opt out of receiving them. Today, the four major British ISPs – British Telecom, BSkyB, Talk Talk, and Virgin – are implementing default-filtering. British households are being contacted by their internet service provider to specify whether they want to activate the “family friendly filters.” For those who do not state a preference, the filters are automatically switched on by their service provider.⁵¹

⁴⁹ <https://www.bbfcc.co.uk/about-bbfc/age-verification>

⁵⁰ <https://businesstech.co.za/news/internet/317004/new-proposal-to-block-access-to-online-adult-content-in-south-africa/>

⁵¹ Allen, Ernie, pg. 49



If the United Kingdom can do this, so can Canada. For the sake of our children, we need to ask our governments to require this of our internet service providers.

5. DIRECT ACTION

Defend Dignity will be calling for the public's engagement to counteract pornography in our country by calling for direct actions in the following ways:

I. CHOOSE CHANGE

Each year Defend Dignity chooses 5 companies or organizations that need to change their policies and practises which allow for exposure to pornographic images. Through the Choose Change website, www.choosechangecanada.org, people can send a pre-written email and post on social media to the targeted companies. This public pressure is noticed by the companies and change happens. Successes so far include The Keg® restaurant chain and The Boston Pizza® restaurant chain all agreeing to filter their public Wi-Fi. With your help, the others we target may also change.

II. COSMO HARMS

Cosmopolitan magazine has pornographic content, is targeted to young girls and is often found at the check-out counter of popular stores. Defend Dignity has an initiative called www.cosmoharms.ca where you can send letters to Walmart Canada and Loblaw, asking the executives to move the location of these magazines in their stores.



III. #WakeUPInstagram

Luring for the purposes of sexual exploitation, direct messages with sexual content all take place through the social media app of Instagram. In 2019, Defend Dignity joined with Collective Shout (Australia) and the National Centre on Sexual Exploitation (United States) on a campaign asking Instagram to put safety measures in place on their site. You can find the campaign <https://endsexualexploitation.org/instagram/>

IV. LETTERS TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

Defend Dignity has letter templates, as well as online letters for the public to write to elected government officials, asking them: to incorporate age verification, provide public awareness on porn's harms and a request for in-depth study on the harms of pornography. You can find these at www.defenddignity.ca/get-involved/

VI CONCLUSION

It is time for us as a country to recognize and address the significant harms of pornography. The lives of the coming generation, those born in the digital age, are at stake. We must confront this directly for what it is, a public health crisis. The pornography epidemic requires a collaborative, multi-sector, well planned and executed response. As Defend Dignity works to end all commercial, sexual exploitation in Canada, we are challenging pornography directly and working collaboratively to find solutions.

Encouraging the development of a public health response to pornography is of utmost importance to Defend Dignity. Pornography is a form of sexual exploitation and



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fuels all other forms. We are also compelled by the fact that pornography kills love.

We believe that humanity was made to give and receive love. Porn is all about

immediate gratification and therefore does not lead to love and intimacy, but rather to

selfishness. We believe that people are meant to be treasured and valued, not

objectified. For all of these reasons, Defend Dignity will work to eradicate pornography

in Canada.



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