

# 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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**March 8, 2016**

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 37<sup>th</sup> 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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For more information, please contact the office of:

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## **Motion M-47 – Statements of Support**

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. 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.

Leah Parsons B.A. MEd (Counselling)  
Executive Director  
Rehtaeh Parsons Society

Beyond Borders ECPAT Canada supports this motion of M.P. Arnold Viersen presented to the House of Commons to instruct the Standing Committee on Health. It's time to talk about the sexual exploitation of our children and take steps to safeguard them. Canadian parents must not be held solely responsible to protect their children from harmful sexual imagery. Families deserve more than an outdated 1985 report. With the advent of the internet we need to understand what is happening now and take measures to protect the most vulnerable, our children.

Darlene Newton  
President  
Beyond Borders ECPAT Canada.

Half of all Canadian women over the age of 16 will experience at least one incident of physical or sexual violence. One of the most prevalent contributing factors is the availability and accessibility of violent and degrading sexually explicit material online. If we want to end sexual violence against women and girls, we must take action now and Motion M-47 is an important opportunity to start this conversation.

Megan Walker  
Executive Director  
London Abused Women's Centre

MP Viersen's motion is extremely important in that it opens up the very important conversation around the violence in online sexually explicit material and the impact it has on men, women and children. This issue is truly one of the top concerns for families all across our nation. Parliamentarians have a responsibility to protect our citizens through responsible legislation.

Joy Smith  
Former Member of Parliament  
Founder of the Joy Smith Foundation

Violent and degrading sexually explicit material is having a devastating impact on society's views of women and sexuality, and at a pace and degree never seen before. The last time Parliament looked at this was well before the internet even existed. Every Canadian who cares about human dignity, regardless of where they stand on the political spectrum, should not only support this motion but also ensure that this topic remains a priority for Parliament until meaningful steps are taken. We look forward to seeing unanimous support from Parliament and swift cooperation by the Health committee.

Mark Penninga  
Executive Director  
ARPA Canada

The impact of widespread distribution of violent and degrading material on relational development, domestic violence, mental and community health needs to be more clearly understood and appropriately addressed by those elected to represent our communities.

K. Brian McConaghy  
Founding Director  
Ratanak International.

Violent and degrading sexually explicit material is a public health crisis. It affects all dynamics of health - physical, psychological, emotional and relational - and is having profound and detrimental effects on child social and sexual development. Further, its' relationship to commercial sexual exploitation, rape culture and the proliferation of child pornography are things society is going to have to address. The kind of study proposed by Motion M-XYZ will be critical to understanding those harms and finding ways to address them.

Julia Beazley  
Director, Public Policy  
The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

[free-them] is in full support of MP Viersen's Motion M-47 which calls on the Standing Committee on Health to examine the public health effect as a result from the violent and degraded nature of [online] sexually explicit material. The "online world" effects and plays an intricate part in our daily lives, both publicly and privately, through all kinds of social media platforms and endless apps that demand our attention. When we think of how much the internet has evolved in the past five years alone, it is scary to think that the government has neglected to review and examine online sexually explicit material in over 30 years. Further becoming desensitized to and overlooking the progression of violence that is being produced in sexually explicit material and the ease of accessibility by our young people and children in today's Technological Era. The need for an updated study to be conducted is vitally important.

Shae Invidiata  
Founder  
[free-them]