



March 09, 2020

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

First, we commend Canada's participation in the development and launch of the *Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse* on March 5, 2020, providing steps for technology companies to protect children from sexual exploitation online.

Today, we write to you asking for your help to build on these efforts and protect women and youth, particularly those who are victims of child sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and sexual assault, from further exploitation online.

Pornhub, owned by Montréal-based MindGeek, is the largest website in the world producing, making available and distributing sexually explicit content, with 42 billion visits and 6.8 million videos uploaded per year. It has come to our attention that some of this content contains the real exploitation of women and minors. In several cases, Pornhub has either refused to remove such videos, or has failed to remove them in a reasonable timeframe.

An investigation late last year by the Sunday Times UK found “dozens” of illegal videos of child sexual exploitation on Pornhub within “minutes”. Some of the illegal content had been on the platform for more than three years. Following this investigation, PayPal cut off its services to Pornhub in November 2019.

Over the last few months, the media has highlighted additional examples of content featuring victims of child sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and sexual assault being published on Pornhub including:

- A 15-year-old girl who had been trafficked and missing for a year was found after 58 videos of her rape and sexual abuse were discovered online, many on Pornhub.
- Twenty-two females were lured into filming sex acts and the videos subsequently uploaded to Pornhub. The perpetrators have been charged with sex trafficking.
- A 14-year-old indigenous girl's sexual assault and torture were filmed and uploaded to Pornhub which hosted her videos for months despite repeated requests to remove the videos.
- A 14-year-old girl was filmed being raped by a 49-year old woman and videos of her rape were uploaded to Pornhub.
- A victim of domestic violence was sexually assaulted, and the videos of her abuse uploaded to Pornhub.

Each time these videos are viewed – and many have hundreds of thousands of views – the victims are revictimized. This is deeply harmful to those exploited in these videos.

The ability for Pornhub, and other online companies, to publish this content, and in some cases to profit off crimes committed against children, victims of sex trafficking and sexual assault, is fundamentally contrary to any efforts to increase gender equality in Canada and protect women and youth from sexual exploitation.

In addition, these videos are available online because Pornhub verifies the email address of the account creator and does not require verification of the age or consent of each person featured in subsequent videos that are uploaded.

The Government of Canada has a responsibility to ensure that people who appear in sexually explicit content that is uploaded and published online by companies operating in Canada are not children, nor victims of human trafficking or sexual assault. Further, the Government of Canada has a responsibility to investigate those who produce, make available, distribute and sell sexually explicit content featuring victims of child sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and sexual assault.

We, the undersigned Senators and Members of Parliament, call upon the Government of Canada to:

1. Review the federal legislative and regulatory framework to ensure Canada's laws fully prohibit the distribution of material featuring victims of child sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and sexual assault.
2. Ensure that MindGeek's activities are in compliance with Canadian law including, Bill C-22, an Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service, which came into force on December 8, 2011, and Bill C-13, the Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act, which came into force on March 10, 2015; and
3. Take whatever other steps are necessary at the federal level to ensure that companies that sell, produce, make available or publish sexually explicit content be required to verify the age and consent of each individual represented in such material.

We are committed to working with your government to protect women and youth, particularly those who are victims of child sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and sexual assault from further exploitation online and addressing this issue in a timely manner.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Senator Julie Miville-Dechêne
Independent Senator for Quebec

Senator Frances Lankin
Independent Senator – Ontario

Arnold Viersen, MP
Peace River – Westlock

Senator Kim Pate
Independent Senator for Ontario

Rosemarie Falk, MP
Battlefords – Lloydminster

Cathay Wagantall, MP
Yorkton—Melville

John McKay, MP
Scarborough—Guildwood

Dr. Colin Carrie, MP
Oshawa

Tom Kmiec, MP
Calgary Shepard

Cc: The Honourable David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
The Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
The Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
The Honourable Maryam Monsef, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development