

January 24, 2022

Attention: Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

Dear Senator Jaffer and Committee Members,

On behalf of the National Council of Women of Canada, I am writing in support of Bill S-210 -*An Act to restrict young persons' online access to sexually explicit material*¹ and to encourage the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in their deliberations to prioritize the wellbeing of the 8 million children and youth who call Canada home.

Prioritizing the Wellbeing of Canadian Children

In addressing the need to protect children from harms encountered on the internet, the committee will likely be presented with concerns over privacy and indeed how age verification measures applied on the internet can be enacted such that both the Charter of Rights and Freedoms along with Canada's commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are respected. We urge you when confronted with obstacles to maintain a child-focused mindset that honours the CRC and Canada's obligations including upholding the rights of children in the digital environment as per the CRC General Comment No. 25: Children's Rights in the Digital Environment² -and section VII on Violence Against Children that includes the call for age verification measures.

Bill S-210 clearly defines the issue as both a public safety and health issue. We add our voices to the need for robust measures to counter the exponentially growing presence of risks to the wellbeing of Canadian children online as outlined in the 2021 report from the Ethics Committee³ that highlights important recommendations including that age verification measures be implemented.

Our message is clear and succinct: put children first.

Respectfully,
Patricia Leson, President
National Council of Women of Canada

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Canada is the traditional territory of Indigenous and Metis People. We are grateful to join with others in peace and hope, advocating for an improved quality of life for women, children, families, and society.

C: Senator Julie Miville-Dechêne

Note: The original draft of this letter was prepared by Penny Rankin, NCWC Convenor for Children and Youth

¹ [S-210 \(44-1\) - LEGISinfo - Parliament of Canada](#)

² [OHCHR | GC children's rights in relation to the digital environment](#)

³ [Ethics Committee Report No. 3 - ETHI \(43-2\) - House of Commons of Canada \(ourcommons.ca\)](#)

