



CANADIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION  
*ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES COMMISSAIRES D'ÉCOLES CATHOLIQUES*

Catholic Education Centre, 570 West Hunt Club Road, Nepean, Ontario K2G 3R4  
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August 21, 2023

The Honourable Pascale St-Onge, M.P.  
Minister of Canadian Heritage  
[pascale.st-onge@parl.gc.ca](mailto:pascale.st-onge@parl.gc.ca)

The Honourable Ya'ara Saks, M.P.  
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions  
Associate Minister of Health  
[yaara.saks@parl.gc.ca](mailto:yaara.saks@parl.gc.ca)

House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Ministers:

**Re: Social Media Platforms**

The Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association (CCSTA) is a national organization that promotes excellence in Catholic education. CCSTA represents seven provincial and territorial Catholic school trustee associations across Canada. In turn, these associations represent over 90 Catholic school boards that oversee the education of more than 850,000 students in approximately 2,000 schools.

At our 2023 AGM, held this past June in Saskatoon, the membership unanimously passed a resolution urging CCSTA to petition the Government of Canada to mandate age verification laws and to regulate the algorithms technology companies use to amplify and recommend harmful online media to students under the age of 18.

While the use of electronic communication and social media creates new opportunities for extending and enhancing education, there are also widely reported associated risks to our youth. As the number of communications increases, there is an increased need for government regulation to be put in place to protect the health and well-being of our youth.

The following are some of the negative effects of social media:

- Social media challenges are being issued on popular platforms and are subsequently acted upon by students across Canada. Those actions can cause serious physical harm or psychological damage. Some of these challenges include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Slap the Teacher
  - Property vandalism

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We speak as one.

Animés par la Parole de Dieu et notre tradition, nous assurons la protection et la promotion du droit à une éducation catholique au Canada. Nous parlons d'une même voix.

- Prank calls
- Defacing private and public property
- Vandalism of washrooms
- Exposing students to racist and misogynistic posts
- Exposing students to the risk of cyberbullying
- Exposing students to potentially harmful and addictive behaviours, such as vaping and pornography

It is well documented that mental health concerns are on the rise and young people face unprecedented learning and life struggles. These struggles include anxiety, depression and eating disorders which may be amplified by the unfiltered, addictive properties of social media.

While many of these issues have been reported to the corporate entities that own the social media platforms, concerns remain largely ignored as it is currently the responsibility of the individual platforms to self-regulate.

CCSTA strongly recommends the development and enactment of federal laws that promote and enforce online safety that protects children from harm and abuse. These laws should include an age verification component and regulate the algorithms currently used by technology companies to amplify and promote potentially negative and harmful online messages to students under the age of 18.

We look forward to hearing back from you regarding this initiative. Please do not hesitate to contact our office at 613-224-4455 ext. 2521 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Teresita Chiarella  
President

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