



IN TORONTO: Peter Jaffe, left, and teacher federation officials Rhonda Kimberley-Young and Emily Noble.

A fight for kids' sake

A coalition of teachers and parents demands tighter checks on all media violence.

BY PATRICK MALONEY
Free Press Reporter

Politicians must help parents control the violence their kids watch, hear and

download, warns a London anti-violence activist also pushing for a ban on hockey fights.

Peter Jaffe, a psychologist and Thames Valley school

board trustee, was backed by a coalition of teachers and parents in demanding tighter checks on all media violence.

At a Queen's Park news conference, the group called for age-based restrictions on music sales, similar to existing systems to prevent minors from obtaining

inappropriate movies and video games.

They also called for controls that would prevent radio and television stations from airing violent content before 9 p.m.

"We have listened to the research, and cigarette packs now carry large and graphic

warnings about the dangers of smoking," said Jaffe, a professor at the University of Western Ontario. "Where are the warnings on the many forms of media violence readily accessible by children? Tiny ratings stickers just don't cut it anymore."

See VIOLENCE Page A7

VIOLENCE: Age-based restrictions urged for CDs

From Page A1

Jaffe said later "responsibility begins with the parents," but they "need all the help they can get" to deal with it.

"We're not simplifying this. We have to be conscious of the poisons that are in the media and how it impacts some people in profound ways."

Comparing the push to anti-smoking campaigns, Jaffe said decades of research have shown "a causal connection between exposure to media violence and violent attitudes and behaviours."

The teachers, trustees and parent groups said it's not just video images on TV and the Internet that are exposing children to violent behaviour.

"Music has escaped the need for classification, despite the fact that the music industry has gone the way of film, television and video games in producing explicitly violent, sexual material," said Ontario Sec-

ondary School Teachers' Federation president Rhonda Kimberley-Young.

Jaffe and the group urged three recommendations:

► Federal broadcasting laws should keep all "material intended for adult audiences" off TV and radio before 9 p.m.

► Provinces need age-based ratings on CDs and restrictions on sales, such as those for movies and video games.

► Protection for women and girls should be written into federal hate-crime legislation, which could then curb objectifying programs and websites.

Children, Jaffe noted, get about 42 hours of weekly media exposure. He called the news conference a "wake-up call" to parents.

"We all say we're concerned about violence, (yet) we still accept violence as entertainment," said Jaffe, who recently urged the Ontario Hockey League to ban fights.

Pro wrestling was among the TV programming cited yesterday.

Images of a female wrestler being struck with a chair were shown.

While Canadian broadcasters often voluntarily keep violent shows off the air until later hours, hard-and-fast regulations are needed, Jaffe said.

"Without us drawing a line in the sand, we were worried The Sopranos is going to be on at 7 o'clock."

The plan also refers to a "media literacy" curriculum being developed, to teach kids as early as kindergarten age to be more aware of messages in what they watch and hear.

"We want to teach kids to analyse things," said Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario president Emily Noble. "We're concerned that . . . all they watch on TV is (shows) like Jerry Springer. What we're saying is, 'Is that what we want?'"

Added Jaffe: "You can't start doing this once a kid is 18. The work in monitoring or talking to kids starts in kindergarten or earlier."

pmaloney@lfpres.com