



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

EVIDENCE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2021

Ms. Serena Fleites (As an Individual):

Yes, that's fine.

I grew up in a small town in the mountains, and I didn't have Wi-Fi or really even running electricity up there. I never had an iPod or a phone or access to the Internet before I moved to the city. The school there was really small, too. There was only one school in the entire town, pre-K to grade 8. That was the school I grew up at. Then, when I moved to Bakersfield, there were 3,500 kids at one school and it was only two grades. I went from having five kids in my class all day to having 30 kids in a class, eight different classes in a day. It was all super new to me.

I'd never had a crush or a boyfriend or a first kiss or anything like that before, so I was picked on quite a bit for the first couple of weeks that I was attending school. They would make fun of me for not being up to date with everything. Being from the mountains, I didn't know the slang and I didn't know what was popular. And so, when a guy finally did take notice of me and was interested in me—or I thought he was interested in me—we started my first relationship. After a while of being in a relationship with him, his friends would come up to us at school during the lunch break and ask us a bunch of questions and try to pressure me into doing different things like kissing him—when I'd never had my first kiss before—and just saying all sorts of things.

One night—this is during the last semester of my grade 7 year—the boy I was dating at the time asked me to send him a video of myself. I didn't really understand what he meant at first. He had sent me a video from Pornhub of a girl undressing herself and just basically showing herself off to the camera. He asked me to do that and I told him I wasn't really comfortable, so he continued to ask me every night after we got back from school. I had gotten my first iPod at this point and I'd gotten a messenger app on it called Kik to talk to people at school.

He would message me on that app every night after school, asking me to send the video, and I always told him no, I wasn't comfortable doing that, I didn't even know what to do. And he's like, "It's perfectly fine, you know. Everybody does it. Everybody our age is doing that. If we're really in a relationship, if you truly loved me, then you would send me something like that." I still, for a while, told him no. I wasn't really comfortable doing that. After a couple of weeks of it, he was like, "Fine then. You know what? This isn't even a real relationship. I don't know why I continue to bother you. If you're not even willing to send me something that I'm going to send you, then it will be over, whatever, unless you are going to send it and then I'll send you one, too."

And so I took a quick little video, like a minute long, and I sent it to him, and for the first couple of days afterwards I didn't notice any difference. But then his friend group started coming up to us during lunch and making little comments about my body and how I was a freak and about how they wish their girlfriends would do stuff like I do. And so, at that point, I was getting upset, because I had a feeling that he had shown it to them, when he had told me that he would delete it right afterwards.

After that, I started noticing even more kids at school would look at me or make little comments to me. That was about a week and a half, two weeks, after I had first sent it. That was when I found out that it had been sent around to most of the school. After that, summer break happened. I had broken up with him because I did find out he sent it to his friends and his friends sent it to their friends, who then sent it to their friends. And so, it went around the entire school and all the neighbouring schools.

During the summer break, before grade 8, we moved, so I thought things would be better. At that point, I didn't know that other people had seen it, or that it had been posted online. When I started at the new school, after about two weeks of being there, somebody sent me a link through Kik. Somebody who made an anonymous account sent me a link through Kik. It was the video I had sent to my ex-boyfriend. It had been posted on Pornhub with the caption "13-year-old brunette shows off for the camera".

After that, I started ditching school a lot. I started getting really depressed. I started getting into drug use. I begged my mom to transfer schools. I told her that this school was way ahead of what we had been learning up in the mountains, so I wasn't up to date. I asked her if I could just do home schooling instead, so I could get caught up. She was super busy, and she had five other kids to take care of on her own as a single parent. So obviously, she said no.

I just made it through grade 8. Before all of this, I was always a straight-A student. I was always on the honour roll or principal's list. I always got the achievement after every quarter, and at the end of the year. Toward the last quarter of grade 7, and all of grade 8, I barely passed my classes. My grades started rapidly slipping. It was mostly because I was no longer regularly attending school. I would ditch school a lot. Even on the days when I did go to school, I would hide in a bathroom stall for most of the day, or attempt to leave if I could.

After that, I messaged Pornhub to get the video taken down. I pretended to be my mother. I didn't want to tell my mom, because she was a single mother of six kids. She was raised Catholic. She had very strict views on stuff like this. I knew she would be angry. I knew it would cause problems for her. I didn't want to tell her.

I tried to deal with it on my own by typing in the "Report a problem" on the video. I flagged it. I said, "Hey, this is my daughter. She's only 14. This is child pornography. Please take this down." They took a week or two to respond. Once they finally responded, it was like, "Yes, okay, we'll take it down", and then proceeded to wait another two weeks before they finally did take it down.

Doing my research, I was told there was a system in place that when a video was labelled as child pornography on their site, it was flagged and tagged, and it could no longer be re-uploaded. But of course, that wasn't true, because a week after it was taken down, it was re-uploaded. All of the people my age—a couple of grades above me and even a couple of grades below me—had seen the video, even though when I transferred schools after grade 8, I transferred to a school all the way on the other side of town for high school. They had all seen the video as well. After that, I basically dropped out of public school.

Ever since, I've been.... The videos.... People find them and send them to me. They send them to me all the time, saying, "Oh my God, is this you?" People on the Internet, people I have never met in person, will find my accounts on social media and they will send it to me and say, "This is you, isn't it?" They then will try to ask me certain questions, or be really creepy toward me, or try to dox me or harass my family members. A lot of people in the grades above me, mostly guys, would try to harass me and blackmail me, saying that if I didn't do stuff with them, or if I didn't send more videos to them, they would send it to my family. They would send it to my grandma, to my mom, to all my sisters and my brother.

I just took myself off social media for a while. I stopped going to school. I got really depressed. I thought that once I stopped being in the public so much, once I stopped going to school, people would stop re-uploading it. But that didn't happen, because it had already been basically downloaded by people all across the world. It would always be uploaded, over and over and over again. No matter how many times I got it taken down, it would be right back up again.

That was the whole reason I ended up reaching out to Mike.