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Red Hood Project Calls for Industry Response to Rehtaeh Parsons Tragedy

In the wake of the Rehtaeh Parsons tragedy, the **Red Hood Project** calls for industry and government to act immediately to protect children from online exploitation.

The photographing, texting and posting on Facebook of the gang rape of a child are unspeakable violations of our standards of decency. The Red Hood Project calls for the urgent overhaul of consumer protection, product liability, and corporate social responsibility in social media and mobile technology to meet a standard of safety by design.

“This issue goes far beyond the criminal prosecution of teenagers,” says Sandy Garossino, co-founder of the Red Hood Project. “Social media and smartphones are proliferating exponentially, and industry hasn’t prioritized child safety. That’s got to change. Graphic images of Rehtaeh’s victimization were posted to Facebook, a \$66 billion company. Facebook has the capacity to develop world-leading technology and hire tens of thousands of employees to actively control its site and protect children. Instead, it relies on a model of volunteer reporting of offensive material already posted, which is too late for kids like Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd. Canadian law-makers must compel Facebook and other companies to act. How many more child suicides will it take?”

“Smartphones are emerging as a serious threat to children’s privacy and emotional health,” says Raffi, co-founder of the Red Hood Project. “Mobile providers need to get involved and be part of the solution for families. ‘Safety by design’ should be a priority.” The Centre for Child Honouring, founded by Raffi, is co-founder of the Red Hood Project.

In November 2012 the Red Hood Project issued an open letter to Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, imploring her to champion child protection online and to lead change in the social media industry safety standards. This letter was signed by Carol Todd, mother of Amanda, former prime minister Kim Campbell, Raffi, Garossino and many others. To date there has been no response from Sandberg or Facebook.

“Children and families are suffering agonizing losses far beyond what is seen in the media,” says Carol Todd. “Those kids and their parents need help today.”

Profitable social media companies need to be accountable for the risks their products create for children. It’s time this is recognized by law.

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www.redhoodproject.com Twitter: @RedHoodProject
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RedHoodProject?fref=ts>

media contact: Sandy Garossino: sgarossino@gmail.com Texts to: 778-231-5230