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Vision TV report on cell porn dissatisfying



Vision TV recently aired a controversial report on cell porn.

**PORTABLE PEEPSHOW:** Last week, Vision TV's 360 Vision current events show aired a report on Telus, the cell phone provider, and the controversy that erupted when they began offering a porn service as part of their cell package. The story is airing again tonight at 8:30pm (ET), and it's worth looking at for a few reasons, though it's hardly a satisfying take.

Porn download services aren't unprecedented, but Telus was the first Canadian company to offer it, a move that angered both employees and subscribers. One subscriber, a PR professional from Surrey B.C., only discovered that he could get porn on his phone when he read it in a news story, and was told that canceling his contract would cost several hundred dollars. The steep fee isn't news to anyone with a cell phone — long term contracts and cancellation fees are standard practice — though one can't help but wonder why Telus has been so tone deaf to the resulting protests, and neglected to put at least a few more controls on access to cell porn.

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The question becomes moot, however, when you realize that many cell phones come with web browsers — it's a feature that's been expanded with every successive generation of the technology. Access to the web means that anyone with a cell phone can leap into the churning river of porn that's coursed through the web since its inception. The PR professional points out that he's disabled the web browser on his cell phone in protest, which would be an admirable enough gesture of protest, even if cell phone web browsers weren't so frustrating to use, but you wonder if he's done the same with his home computer, which is a much faster, richer, easy to use conduit to the vast, sunless prairies of online porn that anyone with a computer knows is out there.

This is where vilifying Telus starts to seem like scapegoating, no matter what your position on access to digital porn might be, and while the logical extreme of banning all porn, everywhere, on every medium might seem like the solution, a reasonable person will have to admit that this would be contentious, expensive, a legal nightmare, and probably unlikely to work, given the long history of porn thriving in the shadows of nearly every culture.

Things get spicier when the Vision story features a former employee showing a video of an Idol-style talent show that happened during a Telus corporate retreat, and which featured judges and contestants making gratuitous sexual comments about each other. The show uses this an example of how the corporate culture of Telus has become degraded, though it's a bit of a stretch to connect this to the porn download issue, since this sort of verbal grab-ass happens at companies with no connection to porn, at conventions, retreats and Christmas parties, and usually in the presence of liquor. In a society where shame is considered unhealthy, it takes work to point out inappropriate behaviour, but taking a stand is unlikely to work when it begins by pretending to be shocked.

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