The Internet Should be Regulated

Adapted from --
http://www.rogerdarlington.co.uk/regulation.html

Reasons for:

1. The Internet is now open to everybody.

Originally, use of the Internet was confined to the American military. Later it was broadened to the American academic community (schools and universities); now the Internet is used in every country and by every age group. When only a limited group of professional people were using the Internet, there was no need for regulation (specific rules or laws). However, today a young child in the privacy of his or her bedroom can access the Internet at any time of the day or night. In these circumstances, there must be some procedure for tackling illegal content on the Internet and some mechanism controlling what is accessed on the Internet.

2. The Internet is no different from other electronic networks.

Stripped of all its mystery, the Internet is an electronic delivery system for messages and information. In that sense, it is not very different from other electronic communications networks such as radio, television and telecommunications (phones and cell phones). These other types of communication networks are regulated and therefore, the Internet should also be regulated. Broadcasting and telecommunications have different regulatory committees and similarly the Internet will need its own distinctive system of regulations.

3. There is harmful content on the Internet.

Children are able to access the inappropriate content on the Internet quite easily, even when they are "surfing" the web to find games or information for school or personal use. While these inappropriate web sites and newsgroups may be a tiny proportion of the total information on the Internet, this type of material does exist in volume. In many cases, the production of this material has involved child abuse; the users of such material are interested in, and may have indulged (participated) in child abuse. Groups who are concerned with the welfare of children have considerable evidence of criminals using the Internet to make
contact with, and arrange meetings with minors with the intent to abuse. Freedome of expression is no excuse to allow this type of activity to take place and be a threat to the safety of children.

4. **There is offensive content on the Internet.**

There is a huge amount of offensive content of all kinds on the Internet. Many children have come across web sites that upset or embarrass them. There are sites that broadcast extremist views, often of a racist nature. While almost all of this content is legal in a free society, many people, especially parents and teachers, believe that limitations should be put on access to this material. The most practical way to do this is by using filtering software; indeed, filters are in place in most schools today. But these filters are not often installed in private homes. Some people believe that filtering is a form of regulation or control, or even censorship. The essential point to emphasize is that rating and filtering techniques provide end users (such as parents and teachers) with personal choice as to the content to which they limit or control access.

5. **The Internet exposes users to viruses, spam, dangerous spyware and identity theft.**

Many people have been victims of identity theft; a person finds out personal information about another person and impersonates that person, even hacking into their bank and credit card accounts. Most people have received spam mail and some of these contain viruses that can damage or destroy a computer. Spyware allows personal information about Internet users to be shared with others. Sometimes the information is simply used to try to sell products, but often, spyware is used to gather personal information such as emails, passwords, bank account numbers and more. Regulation of the Internet would provide protection from these types of threats.