

Regulation of electronic billboards is among proposals being considered by Government as it looks to make changes to the Broadcasting Radio Re-diffusion Act.

The Government wants to amend the existing legislation and eventually repeal and replace it.

Speaking to students of the St. Andrew Technical High School on Friday (February 3), Executive Director of the Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica (BCJ), Cordel Green, said electronic billboards have come up for examination because they are seen as large programmable television sets.

He said if these billboards were put to their optimal use, persons would be able to see and hear what is being announced by tuning their car radio dials. Therefore, he argued, if an advertisement is not suitable for television or radio because it breaches the Children's Code for Programming, then it should not be allowed on billboards.

"Imagine somebody going to one of the television stations and saying we would want to put this ad on the TV and the station says no, because it breaches the Children's Code for Programming, or we can only show it after nine o'clock because it's not suitable for children, but you go into Half-Way-Tree or any town centre and the very same content is there, it doesn't make sense," he argued.

Mr. Green, in the meantime, expressed optimism that the changes will be brought to the Broadcasting Act in the new legislative year, which begins in April.

He said the changes will include a re-definition of broadcasting along with other sanctions. He said the definition of electronic media is changing and embracing new technologies and forms of communication that were not contemplated at the time the law was being drafted.

"When they were putting together the Broadcasting and Radio Re-diffusion Act, people were not even thinking about cable. At the time, we had one television station. There was nobody

receiving television on their mobile phones. There was no concept called mobile TV and IPTV (Internet Protocol Television)," he pointed out.

Mr. Green said different approaches will be used in regulation of the electronic media.

"Some of them will not be regulated because it is not practicable to regulate them. Cable is regulated differently than we regulate free-to-air television. Problematic content is found on the Internet. Problematic content is found in newspapers, found in books, found in magazines; but different approaches are used for different spaces and places," he noted.

The session at St. Andrew Technical was the first in a series by the BCJ under its media literacy project.