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**CANADIAN BROADCAST STANDARDS COUNCIL  
PRAIRIE REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**CKNG-FM re Announcer Comments**

(CBSC Decision 92/93-0139)

Decided July 06, 1993

D. Deitrich (Chair), S. Hall (Vice-Chair), Carol Armit, Rick Friesen,  
David Ward

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**THE FACTS**

On March 12, 1993, CKNG-FM aired a song performed by Madonna. The Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) received a complaint, dated March 21, 1993, concerning comments made by one of the station's announcers after the song was aired.

A listener wrote of her unsuccessful attempts, between March 12 and 21, to speak with anyone in authority at the station and clarify the situation by telephone. The listener stated that,

... the announcer emphatically commented; Madonna ... bad girl ... spank her! ... spank her!

Moreover, the listener felt that,

... this comment is completely irresponsible. It promotes a dangerous mind set towards women that is unfortunately already too apparent in our society.

The CBSC forwarded the complaint to CKNG-FM for response.

In its written response, dated March 23, the station indicated that it had tried on two occasions to contact the listener by telephone to explain the situation, "with no results". The station added,

It is not the intention of our radio station to incite or promote any violence towards any group or people. The particular musical artist in question has herself been quite controversial in this area. However I believe that [the announcer's] comment was based on her [Madonna's] own comments and song lyrics.

I spoken to all on-air people at power 92 and they agree that this type of material is better left OFF the air, at least in-so-for [sic] as their personal comments are concerned.

The listener was unsatisfied with the station's response and wrote to the CBSC to have the complaint referred to the CBSC's Prairie Regional Council. On July 6, 1993, the Prairie Regional Council considered the complaint.

### **CODE AT ISSUE**

The CBSC Secretariat determined that the complaint should be considered under clause 4 of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' *Sex-Role Portrayal Code for Television and Radio Programming*. The clause states that:

Television and radio programming shall refrain from the exploitation of women, men and children. Negative or degrading comments on the role and nature of women, men or children in society shall be avoided. Modes of dress, camera focus on areas of the body and similar modes of portrayal should not be degrading to either sex. The sexualization of children through dress or behaviour is not acceptable.

### **CBSC DECISION**

The Regional Council members listened to a tape (which included the latter part of Madonna's song and the announcer's comments) and reviewed the complaint letter, the station's response, and the Code.

The members felt that the announcer's words, "bad girl, bad girl, spank her" would likely, if heard in isolation, be considered negative or degrading with respect to women. They were, however, spoken immediately following the playing of a Madonna song. Members of the Regional Council considered that the announcer's tone and the combined context of the song aired and the artist's own controversial attitudes meant that the use of the words on this occasion did not amount to a Code violation. The members further noted that the words "bad girl" were used in the song itself. It was the Prairie Regional Council's unanimous decision, therefore, that the station had not contravened the *Sex-Role Portrayal Code for Television and Radio Programming*.

The Regional Council members added that the complaint could have been better handled if the station had contacted the listener immediately, rather than waiting for the CBSC to intervene.

Because the Prairie Regional Council decided that CKNG-FM had not contravened the code, the station has the option of airing this decision. The decision is also being released to the regional media.