
**CANADIAN BROADCAST STANDARDS COUNCIL
ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL**

CHCH-TV re "The Monster Squad"

(CBSC Decision 92/93-0182)

Decided October 26, 1993

Marianne Barrie (Chair), Al MacKay (Vice-Chair), Susan Fish, Paul Fockler,

Don Luzzi, Robert Stanbury

THE FACTS

The complainants, a married couple, objected to the airing of a movie entitled *The Monster Squad* on CHCH-TV at 8:00 p.m. on June 9, 1993. The one of the complainants who wrote the letter for the couple stated:

I was appalled tonight at the senseless, graphic, and hideous violence of this program! Although this program would be unacceptable at any time of day, I was particularly concerned that it was aired at 8:00 pm when many children are still awake!

The initial letter had been sent to the CRTC and referred to the CBSC by the Commission.

The Vice-President and General Manager of the station, having received the letter of complaint only after it had been forwarded to the CBSC,

replied on July 13. In his response, he noted that the movie had been "produced primarily for a teen and family audience" and that the *Movie and Video Guide* written by Leonard Maltin, the well-known film critic, which CHCH uses as a resource regarding movies, described the film as follows: "Affectionate homage to classic horror films and their monsters is ultimately too bland and unbelievable (even for a kiddie horror film)."

He explained: "This movie is generally regarded as a send-up of classic horror movies."

The complainants wrote the CBSC directly on July 31, enclosing their Complainant Waiver form., a document which declares that the complainants are not satisfied with the broadcaster's response, and in which the complainants cede authority to the CBSC in the matter and agree to accept the decision of the CBSC as final "with respect to adherence to the codes it administers."

In their letter, the complainants stated that, although according to CHCH over 300,000 people had seen the film on the two occasions it had been broadcast, "no doubt many of these, children, viewed a hideous movie that portrayed children as the gruesome killers of equally gruesome monsters, complete with body parts flying through the air."

The Ontario Regional Council panel, made up of five, rather than the customary six members, being three representatives of the public and two representatives of the private broadcasters, convened to consider the file on October 26, 1993. One (radio) broadcaster representative withdrew from consideration of the file since his company and CHCH are owned by the same parent company.

THE DECISION

The CBSC considered the complaint under Clauses 1 and 2 of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters *Voluntary Code regarding Violence in Television Programming* of January 1987, which was the Violence Code applicable to this matter. [The new *Violence Code*, introduced by the CAB on October 28, 1993, only comes into force on January 1, 1994, and was not considered in this matter.] The texts of the relevant clauses read as follows:

Clause 1: *Scheduling*

(a) Scheduling of programs is the responsibility of the individual licensee. Broadcasters should make every effort to ensure that programming of a violent nature intended for mature, adult audiences be broadcast only during late evening and overnight hours.

(b) Broadcasters are sensitive to concerns that mature material should not be scheduled in so-called "family viewing hours," when school-aged children are at home and are most likely to be part of the viewing audience.

Clause 2: *Cautionary Warnings*

Viewer Advisory: Where appropriate, broadcasters should provide a cautionary advisory before and during a program, indicating content material that might be considered objectionable and suggesting a suitable audience.

The Regional Council reviewed all the correspondence and screened a videotape of the film. Although the copy they viewed was a straight dub of the film and not an air-check copy, this did not, in their view, affect in any respect the decision which they rendered.

The Regional Council determined that the film was a fantasy film, which could not be mistaken for real life. They further determined that the programming was not intended for a mature, adult audience and that, consequently, no breach of the foregoing scheduling provisions could have occurred.

Since the programming was viewed as fantastic and unrealistic, it was further decided that there was not either a breach of Clause 2 of the *Violence Code*, which would, in appropriate circumstances, have required a Viewer Advisory.

This decision is a public document upon its release by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council and may be reported, announced or read by the station against which the complaint had originally been made; however, in the case of a favourable decision, the station is under no

obligation to announce the result.