
APPENDIX

CBSC Decision 04/05-1580 CHFD-TV re the documentary *Dirty Business: Sex, Thighs and Videotape*

The Complaint

The following complaint was sent to the CRTC on May 15, 2005 and forwarded to the CBSC in due course:

The channel call letters are CHFD-TV.

May 15, 2005 - On Channel 314 on the Starchoice Satellite Dish or Channel 4 and 6 on Cable - Thunder Bay Television Station was broadcasting an absolutely inappropriate program from 1pm - 2pm entitled *Sex, Thighs and Videotape*. I watched it for about ten minutes, stunned that such a program would be on television early afternoon on a channel broadcast in my city. It was extremely sexual, it "fuzzed out" some areas in women but included far more visual images that required no blurring. The content was adult and pornographic. Children watch tv in the day time and it is horrifying to think that one would casually turn on the tv and find this filth on the tv. Not to mention, I do not want to watch it myself. What are the rules in regard to innapropriate broadcasting? If I wanted those programs I would pay for them.

Broadcaster's Response

CHFD-TV's Director of Programming responded to the complainant on June 16:

On May 15, you wrote to the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council about a program you saw briefly on CHFD-TV being inappropriate. The show was a repeat (and final) telecast of a program entitled *Dirty Business*.

Those who regularly watch our station on Sundays will know that we have never aired children's programming here (hence the lack of young viewers) and the 1:00-2:00 pm time period is devoted to Canadian Documentaries, which we acquire from Canwest/Global. The topics are different every week and range from: Canadian heroes, eating habits, geographical features, legends, societal issues, etc. This particular show was about the sex-trade in Canada and was true to documentary format.

Specifically, it dealt with the current growth of the sex-trade 'on-line'. Aspects examined included what motivates women to make a career of this, boundaries they set for themselves, their upbringing as it relates to this 'career', the use of business consultants and marketing agents, negotiating contracts, and those who get into production and distribution. Three Canadian examples were profiled – a couple in Edmonton who began by trying to pay off student loans, two young men in Calgary who consider themselves as producers but are not able to make it in the business and a Winnipeg actress who has spent a great deal of money trying to built a career.

Definitely, the majority of the program consisted of interviews. Where visuals were used, as

you pointed out, a soft-focus covered naked breasts, but mostly clothing or lingerie was being worn. I don't know for sure which short portion of the show you saw, but the visuals were not overly sensationalized, over the course of the full 30 min. broadcast. The documentary raised some clear and thought provoking issues about the rise in this type of 'business' in Canada and, on balance, had merit.

Nevertheless, we are truly sorry that you found the program offensive. More importantly, although the show was not promoted in any way, we were remiss in airing the traditional viewer advisories during the actual broadcast. For this I have to take personal responsibility. I was away on a rather sudden medical leave and this was a detail I did not attend to, prior to leaving. This was not done intentionally, but the onus is on the station to provide viewers with such information so that they can make informed viewing decisions, and I'm the person who would be charged with doing this.

My sincere apologies, Ms. [B.]. I hope you can find this response acceptable.

Additional Correspondence

The complainant wrote back to the station on June 16:

Thank you for your response. However, I do not find it acceptable; I do not know what else I can do, however. So I will give you my opinion. It does not matter if you explain the whys or whats of the program that was on because, regardless, it was disgusting television. The same issue could be dealt with in a much more discreet way; the show was pornography. Calling it a documentary and thus, I imagine the goal to be, educational, is quite amusing. I know you did not produce the show but you, I assume, permitted it to air and even worse without warnings. (Which wouldn't have mattered to me). Unfortunately moral standards continue to decline in regard to television and CRTC standards; television stations such as yours obviously have little to no regard to young viewers or viewers such as myself who do not want to have that filth on their tv in the middle of the afternoon.

I do, however, take full responsibility for owning a tv and realize that that is my mistake. I can not blame anyone else for that. I do pray that the CRTC and stations such as yours become convicted [*sic*] about content and come to see that it benefits us all to have programming with moral integrity. Something for all of you to consider. At least save that kind of "crap" for midnight.

The complainant submitted her Ruling Request on July 6 with the following note:

I was not impressed by the justification for broadcasting such a program in the middle of the day. CHFD stated that children's programs are not run during that time period on Sundays. That is irrelevant. The entire point is that it was a disgusting, inappropriate show. Also, explaining the intent of the program series again was irrelevant. I understand all of what she said; the point is it is trash television. It was, in my opinion, way too sexually explicit as well as contained adult content that I, as an adult, choose not to watch. On local television channels I would hope there would be some safety in turning on the tv on a Sunday afternoon or any afternoon for that matter. This type of programming is expected on pay channels or channels such as Bravo!, which I do not like. And to simply forget to post the warning at the beginning of each segment! Even if they had done that, it would have still been just as disgusting. I do confess I only watched five to ten minutes of it simply because I couldn't believe it. I realize that I am responsible for what I watch on television and get to turn the channel. But sometimes, you don't even get a chance to protect your eyes, it is too late when

you are surfing through channels. I hope that one day we will go back to higher standards in broadcasting. Regardless of the intent of this horrid Canadian television show, the same point could have been put forth without the graphic images and language and content. What is on television only seems to be declining, the standards get lower and we all become numb to it.