



Canadian Radio-television and
Telecommunications Commission

Conseil de la radiodiffusion et des
télécommunications canadiennes

Office of the Secretary General
to the Commission

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Mr. Ronald Cohen
National Chair
Canadian Broadcast Standards Council
P.O. Box 3265, Station "D"
Ottawa, ON K1P 6H8

November 18, 1996

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Dear Mr. Cohen:

The Commission has now had an opportunity to review the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council's annual report for 1994-95 filed with the CRTC in June 1996. It is satisfied that the CBSC has met the reporting requirements outlined in Public Notice 1991-90.

In particular, the Commission notes that the Council has made considerable progress in the areas of public awareness and educational activities for the industry. The Commission considers the success of these activities to be critical in establishing the Council's credibility with its member stations and the public, and continues to attach considerable significance to them. For these reasons, the Commission is pleased to see the emphasis placed on them by the Council.

Further, the Commission is favourably impressed by the thoughtful and straight-forward determinations rendered last year by the Council. The language of the decisions and the Council's approach to concerns expressed by members of the public have reinforced the Council's educational activities and played an important role in establishing greater credibility with its membership and the public. Because of the quality of these determinations and the credibility they are garnering for the Council, the Commission is concerned that the necessary funding be available for the CBSC to provide the quality of service presently offered to its members and the public in a timely fashion. In this regard, the Commission considers that the timely publication of Council determinations as well as annual reports is important in establishing and maintaining credibility with its own membership and the public.

In the annual report's introductory remarks, you re-emphasized the Council's intention to extend its services to other sectors of the Canadian broadcasting system. This is consistent with discussions at the public hearings on television violence held during October 1995 and the Commission's conclusions outlined in its March 1996 public notice (1996-36) about the future role of the CBSC. Given the positive direction you have taken the Council under your chairmanship, and the leadership role you have exercised in the broadcasting industry in this capacity, the Commission looks forward to the expansion of the CBSC's membership as a means to ensure a level playing field and to enhance the Council's effectiveness. The Commission acknowledges that the membership of the Council is effectively controlled by the CAB and has addressed this matter, in a separate letter, to the CAB (copy enclosed).

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Given the important role the CBSC continues to play in the self-regulation of the broadcasting industry and your expressed desire to take on a greater role in the resolution of complaints against Council members, the Commission would like, as quickly as possible, to establish the framework necessary to allow the CBSC to handle more programming complaints. For this reason, the Commission has also written to the CAB asking it to submit a time-frame by which a revised and strengthened Code of Ethics will be submitted to the Commission. As one of the CBSC's stated objectives is to participate in the development of the codes it administers, the Commission urges you to do what you can to bring this matter to a conclusion.

While this matter has been addressed in the Commission's letter to the CAB, it does raise another separate issue, namely that of the CBSC's trial administration of the Code of Ethics developed by the Radio Television News Directors Association (RTNDA). The trial period for the CBSC's administration of the RTNDA Code expired on December 31, 1995. In light of discussions that have already taken place on this matter between Commission staff and the CBSC, the Commission expects the CBSC to submit, within four weeks of the date of this letter, a formal request to extend the trial administration of the code to coincide with the time frame that is to be submitted by the CAB for a revised Code of Ethics.

In conclusion, the Commission again commends the industry and public representatives who sit on the CBSC's regional and national councils for their personal commitment to the self-regulatory process. The contributions made by you and your colleagues are essential to the CBSC's success and the Commission encourages you to continue with this most worthwhile endeavour.

Yours sincerely,



Allan J. Darling

c.c. Mr. Michael McCabe