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**CANADIAN BROADCAST STANDARDS COUNCIL  
ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL**

DECISION CONCERNING THE CFMO-FM OTTAWA WEATHER REPORT OF  
JANUARY 13, 1992  
91/92-0086

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*July 2, 1992*

**FACTS OF THE CASE**

CFMO-FM (Ottawa) weather reports on January 13, 1992 predicted heavy snowfall for the next day.

The CBSC received a complaint dated January 15, 1992, regarding the station's weather reports. The complainant, in his letter, mentioned several dates when CFMO-FM had broadcast incorrect weather reports, and referred specifically to the weather reports broadcast on January 13. The complainant indicated that CFMO-FM's meteorologist had predicted heavy snowfall for the night of January 13, but that only 7 centimetres of snow actually fell in Ottawa. Therefore, according to the complainant, the station was "misleading" in stating that its weather forecasts were "accurate and reliable."

The CBSC Secretariat forwarded the complaint to the broadcaster for reply.

In its response to the complainant, CFMO-FM indicated that on January 14, while little snow fell in Ottawa, there was heavy rain and heavy snowfall in regions surrounding Ottawa. The broadcaster pointed out that was an imprecise science, weather forecasting can never be 100 per cent accurate or reliable" and that the staff meteorologist was highly qualified.

On February 3, 1992, the complainant wrote to the CBSC indicating his dissatisfaction with the broadcaster's reply. He asked that the matter be referred to the Ontario Regional Council for resolution. The Ontario Regional Council met on June 15, 1992 to consider the complaint.

**CODE AT ISSUE**

The CBSC Secretariat determined that the complaint could be considered under the CAB Code of Ethics, clause 6---News, which reads:

*\*it shall be the responsibility of member stations to ensure that news shall be represented with accuracy and without bias. The member station shall satisfy itself that the arrangements made for obtaining news ensure this result. It shall also ensure that news broadcasts are not editorial. News shall not be selected for the purpose of furthering or hindering either side of any controversial public issue, nor shall it be designed by the beliefs or opinions or desires of the station management, the editor or others engaged in its preparation or delivery. The fundamental purpose of news dissemination in a democracy is to enable people to know what is happening, and to understand events so that they may form their own conclusions.*

*Therefore, nothing in the foregoing shall be understood as preventing news broadcasters from analyzing and elucidating news so long as such analysis or comment is clearly labelled as such and kept distinct from regular news presentations. Member stations will, insofar as practical, endeavour to provide editorial opinion which shall be clearly labelled as such and kept entirely distinct from regular broadcasts of news or analysis and opinion.*

*It is recognized that the full, fair and proper presentation of news, opinion, comment and editorial is the prime and fundamental responsibility of the broadcast publisher \**

## **CBSC DECISION**

The Ontario Regional Council analyzed the content of the weather report and the specific issues raised by the complainant as they might relate to this code. The Council determined that the report was not editorial or biased, and that the \*arrangements made ... [ by the station] ... for obtaining news” were acceptable. Thus, it was the Council's conclusion that the broadcaster had not contravened the code.

As it was decided that the broadcaster had not contravened the Code of Ethics, the broadcaster has the option of airing the decision. The decision will also be released to the Ontario media.