
CANADIAN BROADCAST STANDARDS COUNCIL
APPENDIX: (CBSC Decision 02/03-0609, -641 and -753)
CKCK-TV re an advertisement for "The Wolf" radio station

I. The Complaints

CBSC File 02/03-0609

The following complaint was sent to the CBSC on February 4, 2003:

As requested during our telephone conversation earlier today, I am providing a written complaint regarding a television ad that is running here in the Regina, Saskatchewan market.

The commercial is for a local radio station The Wolf (104.9) (CFWF-FM). It is airing on CKCK-CTV in the Regina and possibly Saskatchewan marketplace.

I have seen the commercial numerous times last week and specifically last night (February 4th) between 9:30 pm and 10:00 pm.

I understand after speaking with [name] @ the Telecaster committee that this ad was approved by them with a A/P 12 recommendation which to my understanding means should be aired after midnight.

I find this commercial offensive on two levels. Firstly, my 13 year old son is often just heading to bed around 10:00 pm and this is surely not a commercial that I would want him to see.

Secondly, I find this ad offensive to women. This certainly breaches the code of sex role portrayals. I don't believe that this ad should be running during prime time television. I shouldn't have to sit in my living room with my husband and watch this air. If it is on the air at all, it should be aired certainly after midnight during WWF wrestling or something along those lines where less women would be exposed to it.

This is the first time that I have aired a complaint, but I was under the impression that our society had evolved more than this!

CBSC File 02/03-0641

The CBSC received the following complaint dated February 6, 2003:

Re: WOLF Radio Station Billboard in Regina, Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Action Committee, Status of Women representing a diversity of Saskatchewan's women's groups is writing this letter to draw your attention to an offensive Billboard that is displayed in Regina, at the intersection of Saskatchewan Drive and Albert Street. The billboard is a promotion for WOLF Radio Station 104.9. This station also uses another even more offensive advertisement that is aired on CTV in Regina from 7-9 pm, from 9 pm-midnight and the really obscene ones are after midnight. It shows the same young woman dancing and the ad gets progressively worse into the later hours of the night. The advertisement is being used to promote the radio station; it displays a young woman with her panties being pulled into her buttocks, and the caption reads, "now turn us on."

The imagery of this advertisement is very disturbing and offensive to women. Once again the image of a woman is used to draw attention to an advertising campaign. Not only is this an inappropriate, demeaning sexualization of women, but it promotes the belief that it is alright [*sic*] to portray women's bodies as "a marketing tool". This is exactly how Mr. [name] [*sic*] of WOLF 104.9 described the advertisement. It sends the wrong message to children, that women are nothing more than publicity tools. We see this as a violation of women's rights because it promotes a bias against women, and in particular young women. It is extremely disturbing because the media shapes public opinion and therefore has an obligation to be much more sensitive to degrading images about women.

We are calling on the Advertising Standards of Canada under clause 14 to ensure that the Billboard is pulled down immediately. The advertisement violates section (b) because it does use women for purposes of exploitation, under section (c) it demeans and denigrates women, and under section (d) it undermines the human dignity and encourages an indifferent attitude of women. We are also calling to the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council to take appropriate measures to ensure these TV commercials are stopped immediately.

We trust you will do the right thing and pull this Billboard and TV commercials right away.

CBSC File 02/03-0753

The following complaint was sent to the CBSC on February 11, 2003:

Re: WOLF Radio Station Billboard in Regina, Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Action Committee, Status of Women representing a diversity of Saskatchewan's women's groups is writing this letter to draw your attention to an offensive Billboard that is displayed in Regina, at the intersection of Saskatchewan Drive and Albert Street. The billboard is a promotion for WOLF Radio Station 104.9. This station also uses another even more offensive advertisement that is aired on CTV in Regina from 7-9 pm, from 9 pm-midnight and the really obscene ones are after midnight. It shows the same young woman dancing and the ad gets progressively worse into the later hours of the night. The advertisement is being used to promote the radio station; it displays a young woman with her panties being pulled into her buttocks, and the caption reads, "now turn us on."

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We trust you will do the right thing and pull this Billboard and TV commercials right away.

Sincerely,

Signed

II. Broadcaster Response

The broadcaster responded to the complainants in March and April with the following:

Thank you for your comments and concerns regarding the commercials for the Wolf 104.9 radio station that are being aired on CTV Regina.

With respect to the process that Canadian broadcasters use in terms of judging the content of commercial messages that are purchased on television stations, there is an organization called the Telecaster Committee that views commercials in terms of content and whether or not they are in breach of either the law or codes of ethics followed by the industry.

In this particular case, we forwarded the initial commercial that we received from the Wolf 104.9 to Telecaster and it was cleared for post midnight play only. The radio station then edited the commercials and re-submitted them to Telecaster. Telecaster issued clearance numbers for the versions for airplay at post 7pm, post 9pm, and post midnight. These clearance numbers indicate that the commercials are not in breach of the industry codes.

However, I do understand why you may have concerns about this campaign. I have spoken with Telecaster directly and would advise that if you wish to pursue this matter further, you should contact the Advertising Standards Council of Canada at www.adstandards.com and ask them to review the commercial. This issue has already been brought to the Council's attention and I expect a ruling from them shortly. It is also being investigated by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council.

Again, thank you for taking the time to voice your concerns regarding this issue. We appreciate the feedback and hope that a resolution will be reached as soon as possible.

III. Additional Correspondence

CBSC File 02/03-0609

The complainant sent the following message:

I guess I'm not exactly sure how this process works. By the time that either the television station or the radio station gets back to me with a response, the ad campaign will be completed. What's the use making a complaint if it has no effect on the ad campaign that is running?

Neither of these media outlets needs to be concerned about a public complaint if there are no repercussions to them. This ad is still running and I've seen it as early as 9:18 in the evening.

Please let me know the benefit of me filing a complaint.

After receiving the broadcaster's response, the complainant replied on February 24 and copied the CBSC:

Dear Mr. [D],

Thank you for your response, I am however very disappointed that you chose not to return my phone call of February 3rd or 4th. I'm sorry that I did not record the name of the receptionist there, but she indicated

that mine had not been the only complaint. I left a detailed message regarding my concern, but you did not choose to return my phone call until you received correspondence from CBSC. If you really appreciated the feedback then you would have responded to me earlier.

When I spoke with [name] at Telecaster she indicated that the ad had a A/P 12 recommendation. Am I now to understand that there are three different versions of the ad? One that runs post 7 pm, one post 9 pm and one post midnight? Can't imagine what the post midnight version might be!

I do question, however, the message that you as a station are sending to your viewing audience. Does this ad not go against all the anti-sexual stereotyping that we have been trying to teach our pre-teens and teens? I understand the need for advertising dollars, but I also understand that you as a station have the choice on whether to air a commercial or not. Do your stats indicate that during the times you are airing (post 7 pm & post 9 pm) that there are small numbers of young adults and women viewing your channel? I am very disappointed with your choice to air this commercial.

I am also disappointed with the process. It has now been over twenty days since I aired my complaint and I still see this commercial running in my living room on a nightly basis. By the time any resolution takes place the ad campaign will be completed and not affected in the slightest. In a situation like this, I would assume that you would postpone the campaign until a resolution has been reached.

As you indicated I should do, I have contacted the Advertising Standards Council of Canada and asked them to review the commercial. They indicated that because the complaint deals with program promotion, that it would best be handled by the CBSC. I will however contact them again and pursue this further.

You also indicated that you are expecting a ruling from the Council shortly. What exactly does that mean? What steps will you take based on their ruling? Should I expect to hear from you again?

I will be pursuing this further with the Council, as you indicated that they did approve these ads for as early as post 7 pm.

The broadcaster responded to that e-mail on February 25:

Good morning, Ms. [B],

I apologize for not responding to your enquiry earlier, but I was out of the country on vacation from January 31 until February 17th. I'm not sure why you were not informed about this when you called on the 3rd or 4th, but I will talk to reception about it.

There are three versions of the Wolf commercial that have received Telecaster approval for post 7PM, post 9PM and post midnight air play. For your information, the reason that the broadcast industry uses a third party to evaluate issues is to ensure a level of uniformity in interpretation across the country. Generally, it would be very difficult for dozens of broadcasters to act as individual censors without injecting their own personal likes and dislikes into each specific decision. With reference to my comments about a decision from the Advertising Standards Council, this situation has been brought to their attention, and they should have a response to the enquiry. I hope that the response will be timely. At the beginning of an ad campaign, we will hold off until clearance numbers are either issued or not issued. Once clearance numbers have been received, the campaign will air. This is the situation in this particular case.

I am a little surprised that the Advertising Standards Council would respond that this is a program promotion. It is, in fact, a commercial for a radio station and has nothing to do with any program promotion on our station.

Again, I apologize for not responding to your initial enquiry earlier, but I did respond as soon as I returned and was able to investigate the facts.

Thank you for your comments and concerns.

The complainant also sent a short note with her Ruling Request form directly to the CBSC on February 24:

I have received a reply from [name] regarding the above. I have not received a response from [name] of The Wolf (CFWF-FM). I spoke directly to [name] of the Wolf and left a message for [name] on February 4th. I am not satisfied with the response from Mr. [D]. Do I just return this email to you with the printed form on the bottom? There was no attachment to your email.

CBSC File 02/03-0753

The complainant sent a brief e-mail to the CBSC on March 8:

Thank you for your response to my letter re the Wolf 104.9 radio station's lewd commercial on CTV and the billboard on our city streets.

On CTV I have not seen the commercial of late. Mind you, I do not watch a great deal of TV; however, formerly it seemed when I passed that station, the commercial was on.

Thank you for bringing my and others' complaint to the attention of Wolf.

The complainant then sent her Ruling Request form dated March 10 and an e-mail on March 11:

I had sent the following message last Sat. because I thought that CTV had removed the lewd commercial for WOLF 104.9 radio station. To my dismay and disgust, last evening it was again shown. I have no idea how many times because I turned CTV off as soon as I saw that.

I will be filing the complaint that you had sent me in the mail so that the appropriate CBSC Panel consider my complaint and the broadcaster's response (viturally [sic] nil).

On one hand, we decry violence against women in our society and we want change to happen. On the other hand, we continue to show commercials such as these perpetuating the myth that women are worth sex and money and gratification and to be used for such. And we do know what segment of society continues to perpetuate this the most! I regret that such advertising continues to desensitize [sic] the human person, mind and psyche to the truth and beauty of the human person. I believe that it is a grave injustice - to women, to young girls, to our children and youth who are trying to discover who they really are, and to society as a whole.

Not only has WOLF gone down in my estimation, but CTV as well. I have long turned WOLF off. I will not be viewing CTV and will continue to encourage others to boycott this station until the commercial is permanently removed.