
APPENDIX
To
Showcase re an episode of Trailer Park Boys (CBSC Decision 02/03-909,
January 30, 2004)

I. The Complaint

The complainant sent in the following hand-written letter on March 14, 2003:

I was watching the Trailer Park Boys on channel 40 – Showcase last night – March 13th, 2003. There is a lot of cursing and bad language on this program but what I am very concerned about is that in one of the scenes, which occurred in a kitchen, one of the male actors said the word “fucken [sic] dick” in front of a young girl about (5) years old and in another scene where a wedding was going to occur and the police arrived, there was some terrible swearing going on while a little girl was walking down the street. I consider this child abuse. Please let me know.

Sincerely,

II. Broadcaster Response

Showcase’s Publicist responded to the complainant on April 4, 2003 with the following:

Dear Ms. [F]:

We have received a copy of your letter which was forwarded to us by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council. Showcase appreciates and considers all viewer feedback and we thank you for taking the time to express your concerns about our programming. We regret that you were offended by Showcase’s broadcast of *Trailer Park Boys* on Thursday, March 13 at 9:30 pm.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain Showcase’s programming policy. It is our programming mandate at Showcase to offer an alternative to other broadcasters’ offerings. One way that we have achieved this distinction is to broadcast high-quality international drama series and world-class films. The decision to air *Trailer Park Boys* is consistent with Showcase’s interest in and commitment to innovative programming.

Trailer Park Boys is a verité style mock-documentary. At the centre of Trailer Park Boys are Ricky and Julian, two men whose lives were shaped by their experiences growing up in a trailer park in Halifax. The characters are offbeat, yet true-to-life, speaking in their natural dialect – Halifax patois-free-flowing and at street level. This irreverent series is a tongue-in-cheek look at the lives of the underclass, normally left at the edges of dramatic narrative. It is a distinctively Canadian series which picks up on many international innovations in film and television (such as reality-based programming and Dogme 95 filmmaking).

The goal of the series is to present an over-the-top take on the world of the trailer park – essentially a tight knit community with a strong sense of family. Trailer Park Boys is based on Mike Clattenburg’s debut feature film of the same name. Clattenburg is one of Canada’s top up-and-coming directors. His work has been recognized with the Telefilm Award for Best New

Director and the Rex Tasker Award for Best Documentary Director. *Trailer Park Boys* was also twice nominated for a Gemini Award in the 'Best Ensemble Performance in a Comedy Program or Series' category.

We understand that the coarse language in this series may have caused you concern. Our view is that these scenes must be viewed within the context of the program as a whole. The language used in *Trailer Park Boys* is essential to the story line and help define the emotional relationships of the characters and their experiences.

Trailer Park Boys contains mature subject matter and is intended for adult audiences only. Showcase has taken steps to broadcast its movies and series responsibly. Before we decide to broadcast a program, our Programming Department screens it to ensure that it is suitable for broadcast. The determination of suitability includes ensuring that the broadcast would not contravene applicable broadcast laws and industry codes including, but not limited to, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) Code of Ethics, the CAB "Sex-Role Portrayal Code for Television and Radio Programming," and the "Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming."

In addition, Showcase also complies with the new program classification system developed by the Action Group on Violence on Television to give Canadian parents the most advanced control system in the world. This six-level rating system is used to classify any levels of violence language or sex/nudity in all drama, feature film and children's programming broadcast in Canada. The "18+" icon is shown during our broadcast of *Trailer Park Boys* to warn parents that this film contains themes or content elements which might not be suitable for viewers under the age of eighteen.

We are also cautious about the content of shows broadcast during hours when children may be watching. As required by the Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming, Showcase is sensitive to the scheduling of programs with violent and other adult-oriented content. Such programming may not be aired prior to 9 p.m. Because Showcase has both an Eastern and a Pacific feed, *Trailer Park Boys* does not air before 9 p.m. in any part of the country.

Finally, in order to assist our viewers in making their viewing choices, we run a viewer advisory before such programs. In this instance, a viewer advisory warning of scenes with violence, nudity, sexuality and coarse language aired before the broadcast of *Trailer Park Boys*. Due to an internal error on March 13, 2003, the advisory aired only once at the top of the show. However, the problem has been rectified and the audio/visual advisory now airs after each commercial break throughout the broadcast of *Trailer Park Boys*.

It is certainly not our intention to offend our viewers but to introduce them to the wealth of quality, unique drama from Canada and around the world. Not all shows will suit all tastes, but we have tried to construct the Showcase schedule to deliver something for everyone, and to permit viewers to make their choices on an informed basis.

Thank you for taking the time to voice your opinion. We do appreciate feedback and hope that this letter has addressed your concerns.

III. ADDITIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

The complainant returned her Ruling Request form on April 14th.