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## APPENDIX

### CBSC Decision 08/09-1516 BBC Canada re *The F-Word*

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#### The Complaint

The CBSC received the following complaint via its webform on April 10, 2009:

station: BBC Canada  
program: *Ramsay's Kitchen*  
date: Thursday April 9, 2009  
time: 8:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
concern: The theme of this programme, which is on every night of the week, is the short temper of the chef Ramsay, who, in his quest for his version of perfection, uses the "F" word with alarming frequency. This is most inappropriate for prime time viewing.

After receiving the CBSC's confirmation of receipt of that complaint, the complainant sent further information on April 29:

Thank you for your letter of April 24, 2009.

[The complainant notes that his e-mail address has changed.]

It is coincidental that in tuning in last evening to watch a programme starting at 9:00 pm, I tuned in to BBCCA [i.e. BBC Canada] a few minutes before 9:00 pm and, lo and behold, there was Gordon Ramsay using his "f" word language yet again.

I would perhaps reluctantly accept this kind of language if I was sitting alone, but when in female company I am embarrassed to hear such language uttered by another male in her presence.

I wait with anticipation for the response from BBCCA.

#### Broadcaster Response

BBC Canada responded to the complainant on May 8:

We have received a copy of your letter sent to us by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC), regarding *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* on BBC CANADA. It is certainly not our intention to offend our viewers and we would like to take this opportunity to address your specific concerns regarding the language featured on *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares*, broadcast Thursday, April 9 at 8:00 pm Eastern Time.

As you may know, the premise of *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* is that UK Michelin-star chef and cookbook author Gordon Ramsay works with struggling restaurants in an effort to turn their businesses around. Ramsay prescribes drastic measures and doesn't mince his words as he visits a different kitchen in each episode with the aim of transforming the floundering eatery within one week.

BBC CANADA is sensitive to the scheduling of programs with adult-oriented content. 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*, *Equitable Portrayal Code*, and *CAB Violence Code*. As such, BBC CANADA uses tools such as advisories and parental controls to help our audience make informed viewing choices. This episode of *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* aired advisories flagging the series' mature language. The following is an example of the audio and visual viewer advisory that ran prior to the broadcast of *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* on Thursday, April 9 and after each commercial break throughout the program:

*"The following program contains scenes with coarse language. Viewer discretion is advised."*

Furthermore, please be assured that BBC CANADA complies with the program classification system developed by the Action Group on Violence on Television to give Canadians 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. All episodes of *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* are tagged with an 18+ V-Chip, indicating the show contains content intended for adults over the age of eighteen. This classification allows viewers to use V-Chip technology to screen out programs with more mature subject matter, such as this series. The episode of *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* that aired on April 9 contained an 18+ V-Chip rating.

It is our hope that viewers take advantage of the above technology to assist in making viewing decisions for their families or themselves.

On behalf of BBC CANADA, we would like to thank you for writing in and expressing your comments and concerns. All feedback is important to us. It is not our intention to offend our viewers but strive to provide a variety of programming that appeal to a wide range of audiences. We hope that we have addressed your concerns and that you continue to enjoy BBC CANADA programming.

## **Additional Correspondence**

The complainant wrote back to the broadcaster on May 8:

Thank you for your letter of today's date.

We are quite cognizant of the pre-programme warnings about violence and language etc., but nevertheless consider the use of the "f" word as used by Gordon Ramsay is nothing short of filthy language which is not acceptable to me at any time of day. However, I recognize that this is an imported programme over which you have no control as to its content, but you do have control over the time of day. 8:00 pm is Prime Time and should be considered as family viewing time.

I can live with this level of foul language if I am on my own, but in female company I find it somewhat embarrassing. It is actually totally unnecessary and does not change the context of the dialogue one iota no more [sic] than it does in many of today's films coming out of Hollywood.

I have tuned in to BBCCA several times since April to view a 9:00 pm programme and his language is still as revolting.

I rest my case.

I have other issues with BBCCA but they are not relevant to the current problem.

The complainant then wrote to the CBSC on May 13:

I have received a reply from BBC Canada. The basic response was perhaps expected in as much as I was reminded that before and during each broadcast there is the standard warning about coarse language, etc.

I cannot dispute this and I should add that other channels are also now carrying *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares*, so I cannot single out BBCCA for this example of unacceptable language.

Perhaps Canwest should be the real target, since they, through their many affiliates in the cable business, broadcast many of the shows where language during prime time viewing is questionable.

It is unfortunate that language and other adult content has become the norm for the TV and cinema products and our youth are growing up with this. I doubt, therefore, that there is anything your organization can do to correct this.

It was unclear from that letter whether the complainant was actually requesting a ruling from the CBSC, so it e-mailed him to clarify on May 22. The complainant wrote back the same day:

Thank you for your e-mail earlier today.

Although the response from BBCCA was not the one I would have liked, they covered themselves more or less with the fact that they broadcast a disclaimer before the programme warning viewers of the content, i.e., in this case bad language. I have no come-back response to that which comes to mind.

I think the only complaint I would still invoke to BBCCA and all channels broadcasting material with foul language is time of day programming. Perhaps the one thing that CBSC could do is force these people to save their programmes where language is involved to a later time slot when younger members of the family are out of earshot and hopefully in bed.

The CBSC considered that reply to be a Ruling Request. The complainant wrote again with some additional points on May 25:

Giving this whole issue of foul language during prime time TV some further thought, I have noticed, now that I am more aware, that the disclaimers at the beginning and during

programmes have become so commonplace that almost every programme has a warning about violence, language or adult content.

Perhaps the simplest solutions are the best. In that regard, I would suggest that if Canadian broadcasters are going to purchase programming containing foul language, for example, then the simple solution would be to just "bleep" it out. Lip readers and those with fertile minds will undoubtedly know what has been said, but at least we wouldn't have heard it.

I rest my case.