

Sexual content is a legitimate part of TV mix

Re: Canadian TV promotes immoral sexuality, MARCH 24.

Letter-writer Rae Stanley criticized the sexual content of Canadian television and the means of responding to citizens' complaints. Her perspective is unduly narrow, and undoubtedly Big Brother-ish to some.

She's right that neither the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission nor the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council censors in Canada. And Canadians are the better for it. We have other solutions that are consistent with our cherished fundamental freedoms.

The Broadcasting Act provides that "the programming provided by the Canadian broadcasting system should ... be varied and comprehensive, providing a balance of information, enlightenment and entertainment for men, women and children of all ages, interests and tastes." In that mix, sexual content is a legitimate component. The intention of the legislation is "something for everyone." There is no way to please all of the people all of the time. That would be an unrealistic expectation, and an unfair one.

Are there limits to content? Of course. Canada's private broadcasters established codes to ensure that there would be pan-industry standards. Anyone can find them at www.cbsc.ca. Our code of ethics deals with sexual content.

But the broadcasters did not stop there. To help audiences, they provided additional tools. The Watershed's existence means no adult programming can air before 9 p.m., by which hour most homes have at least one parent to make TV decisions for those children who are still awake. There are also advisories, which facilitate informed viewing decisions — they were present on screen for the two Discovery Health Channel programs.

Ms. Stanley says the CRTC requires "people to register a detailed formal complaint in writing." Not quite. Both the CRTC, which forwards such complaints to us, and our council do request written complaints. How else would we know someone was concerned? But detailed? Not at all. We just need to know the program name, when and where it ran, plus a single sentence describing the complainant's concerns. And there's a complaint template on our website.

Canada's private broadcasters set up a user-friendly complaints and decision process. And it really works. We're very accessible, in English, French and 15 other languages. Ms. Stanley and *Citizen* readers should know that, as thousands upon thousands of other Canadians already do.

RONALD I. COHEN, Ottawa,
National chairman, Canadian
Broadcast Standards Council