

### C. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CANADIAN BROADCAST STANDARDS COUNCIL

Since the publication of the Ontario Royal Commission *Report*, violence in television programming has escalated in quantity and in visual explicitness. Paralleling this trend, individuals and associations who oppose television violence and racial and sexual stereotyping have mounted campaigns of protests and have brought their complaints to the attention of the media, politicians, the federal regulator and the broadcasters themselves.

In response to mounting pressure, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) suggested to the CRTC the establishment of a self-regulatory council for private conventional broadcasters. The CRTC accepted the proposal in principle in September 1988, and endorsed the objective, principles and responsibilities of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) in August 1991. The 1991-1992 Annual Report of the CBSC states that 97% of CAB members were part of the CBSC membership.

The CBSC administers three codes developed by the CAB: the Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming adopted in January 1987, the Code of Ethics and the Sex-Role Portrayal Code. The Sex-Role Portrayal Code has been approved by the CRTC and membership in the CBSC requires adherence to it. As a result, the CRTC is "*willing to suspend, upon application, the condition of licence requiring adherence to the CAB's sex-role portrayal guidelines in the case of licensees that have been members in good standing of the CBSC for at least six months.*"<sup>80</sup> Previously, private licensees were without exception required by condition of licence to adhere to the Sex-Role Portrayal Code. In contrast, the Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming has not been accepted by the CRTC and cannot be made a condition of licence.

While it endorsed the objective, principles and responsibilities of the CBSC, the CRTC cautioned in its August 1991 *Public Notice* that this endorsement was not an abrogation of its own responsibilities:

*... this initiative also reflects a new stage in the fulfilment of one of the CRTC's primary objectives: the streamlining of the regulatory process and increased reliance on a supervisory approach and self-regulation. Increased reliance on self-regulation, however, does not imply that the Commission is relinquishing its responsibilities. Any interested party may, at any time, choose to approach the Commission directly.*<sup>81</sup>

In its *Public Notice* of August 1991, the CRTC also noted that it was working with the CAB to update the industry's Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming in order "*to ensure that public concerns on this issue are adequately addressed*".<sup>82</sup>

In a report dealing with the comments, inquiries and complaints received by the CRTC, the Commission's concerns about the voluntary industry code were addressed:

*While the CRTC supports industry initiatives in this area, it is not satisfied with the standards developed by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) on behalf of private television stations, and has asked the CAB to give the highest priority to revising its code.*<sup>83</sup>