

KCR Policy: Controversial Programming

1.0 INTRODUCTION

KCR is committed to diversity in its programming content and encourages a multiplicity of viewpoints as a representation of those voices that are traditionally underrepresented in mainstream media. KCR therefore welcomes program proposals that cover issues of importance to our community yet are not covered by other local media. Some of these programs may be considered “controversial” to members of the listening audience.

1.1 Definitions

Controversial Program	A program in which the proposed topic or content is likely to arouse strong differences of opinion or contention by a significant number of listeners. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • religious programs • political programs • advocacy or activist programs
Public Concern	Involves moral, ethical and social issues including religion and politics.
Religious	Concerning an organized system of belief in deities or divinities.
Religious Program	A program which deals with a religious theme, including programs that examine or expound religious practices and beliefs or present a religious ceremony, service, or other similar event (from CRTC Public Notice 93-78).

1.2 Related Policies and Procedures

Controversial Programming Procedure.
Complaints, Grievances, and Appeals Policy and Procedure
CRTC Public Notice 93-78.

2.0 General Principles for Programming Balance

2.1 CRTC Requirement

“The Commission’s balance policy seeks to ensure that a reasonably consistent viewer or listener will be exposed to a spectrum of differing views on issues of public concern within a reasonable period of time... While a token expression of alternate points of view is not acceptable, the provision of equal time has never been required... Those who broadcast religious programming have an obligation to offer differing views on matters of general public concern and, at the same time, must expose the audience to different points of view on religion itself... A broadcaster need not provide balance in each program or series of programs, but rather in the overall programming offered by the undertaking, over a reasonable period of time.” From CRTC Public Notice 93-78.

2.2 Balance in KCR Programs

KCR has a duty to develop innovative programming that will deal with a wide variety of issues of public concern. Programming on matters of public concern is required to be balanced. The station and its programmers must ensure that information is presented in a way so as to allow the listening public to form its own opinions, namely by the presentation of several differing points of view. Because stations such as KCR deal with a wider range of controversial issues than do most commercial stations, it must make an extra effort to balance such programs. It is important for all programmers to keep this in mind when preparing their shows.

KCR recognizes the complexity and necessity of balanced programming. KCR's program acknowledge and discuss differing interpretations and opinions. KCR does not recognize any obligation to broadcast those interpretations and opinions which contravene its statement of programming principles or CRTC regulations.

Note: undertakings dedicated exclusively to the views of one particular religion, denomination, sect, political perspective, advocacy or activist group would, by their very nature, be predisposed toward one particular point of view. The licensing of such undertakings would be contrary to the CRTC requirement that programming be varied and comprehensive, and provide reasonable, balanced opportunity for the expression of differing views on matters of public concern.

2.3 Balance in the Community

KCR recognizes the existence of sub-communities within the listening audience and that some of these have limited visibility in mainstream media. KCR promotes understanding of the cultures and issues faced by such sub-communities. Thus, all shows are expected to remain open to input from other community members and to organizations and members of the relevant sub-community. Members of various sub-communities are encouraged to work in a way that does not compromise their beliefs and convictions while acknowledging a broad range of opinion on any given issue.

It is understood that there is an inherent bias in such programming, and that the balance comes from representing many perspectives within these communities. Because issues are dealt with from the inside (and therefore from a non-objective point of view), it would be very difficult to counter certain points of view without actually damaging these communities through the promotion of hatred or by enforcing existing stereotypes. However, it should be acknowledged that other points of view do exist - without necessarily exploring them.

The following examples are intended to illustrate how the principles of programming balance are applied – these examples can be extended to other similar programs.

Gay and Lesbian Issues. Gay-lesbian shows are not expected to provide a homophobic viewpoint to balance their views on homosexuality. This airtime will be used to discuss the relevant issues to promote the existence of gay culture and an understanding of it. Airtime will not be used to promote a gay lifestyle over a straight one.

Poverty Issues. A program about poor peoples' rights is not expected to criticize the poor for being poor, but rather, to look at the causes of poverty, and try to offer several possible solutions or remedies for those in disadvantaged situations.

Women's Programming. A women's show is not expected to air sexist points of view, but should cover a wide range of opinions on varying issues within the women's and feminist community.

3.0 PROGRAMMING REQUIREMENTS

Given that Kootenay Co-op Radio does not offer a representative sample of programs representing the many controversial programming possibilities (religious denominations, political points of view, etc.), to support its principles of programming balance, *each controversial program* is required to contribute to balanced programming in the following ways:

3.1 Broad Appeal

Programs should be inclusive in appeal.

To appeal to a wide audience, programmers should focus on providing information and refrain from proselytizing (attempting to convert listeners from one belief system or no belief system to that of the programmer's) and denigrating adherents of other belief systems. While being inclusive, programmers are

encouraged to remain authentic to their individual political leaning, theological tradition, or advocacy perspective.

3.2 Internal Balance

Programs on topics of public concern should provide balance within themselves.

Internal program balance can be accomplished by:

- providing various points of view within the programmer's belief system,
- discussing alternative belief systems in a respectful and well-researched manner,
- providing a survey or overview of alternative belief systems or inviting knowledgeable guests to do so,
- presenting a wide range of views and opinions on the issues, and acknowledging that other points of view do exist other than those being covered,
- saying that beliefs expressed by hosts are their personal beliefs and are not endorsed by KCR,
- informing the Programming Coordinator when planning programming about "contentious" issues in order to obtain guidance in planning effective presentation of the issue, and
- genuinely encouraging comment and participation *within their programs* by members of the community with different beliefs. There are various ways this can be accomplished:
 - a) regularly invite listeners to call or write with their comments;
 - b) provide "soap box" time - a regular spot for listener comments and points of view; and
 - c) provide an opportunity for complainants to express their opinions on-air if they wish. (Should complainants not wish to do so live on-air or in writing, the station is still responsible for making sure their points of view are heard verbally, passed on to the relevant programmers, and incorporated into programming, if relevant.)

3.3 Appropriate Content

All programs – including controversial programming - should be free of prejudice, solicitation, and behavioral recommendations.

1) Controversial programs must be non-prejudicial. Program content must not include derogatory references toward or judgments about other groups or the leaders or adherents of those groups. They may not denigrate any person or group on the basis of religious preference, ethnic heritage, nationality, sexual orientation, race or gender.

2) Controversial programs must be free of solicitations. Programs may not carry invitations to purchase books, tapes, or counseling, or other paraphernalia, or solicit financial contributions from listeners.

3) Controversial programs should refrain from passing judgment on listeners or others with regard to moral or ethical issues, and should refrain from providing instruction to listeners about how they should conduct their own behavior. Discussion about moral or ethical issues should be framed in an informational sense e.g. "In Judaism, adherents to the religion are expected to give charity to others through financial donations or labour in order to be considered pious. I (the host) believe this and give charity as much as possible. It is your (the listener's) choice whether to do this too." vs. "You (the listener) SHOULD give charity..." e.g. "The xyz political party believes that we should increase taxes to contribute to protecting the environment. I agree with this, and I intend to vote for the candidate for that party." vs. "You SHOULD vote for this candidate because..."

3.4 Programming Requirements

1) All KCR programs are required to have a specific person(s) take responsibility for the content and technical aspects of the program. These programmers are asked to sign Programmers' Conduct Agreements, and are expected to take responsibility for following station procedures and enforcing that their guests follow these procedures as well. Although the designated programmers for one program may all belong to the same group or organization (religious, political, advocacy, activist), they are required to take personal responsibility for everything that goes on-air during the program rather than attributing comments or opinions to a group or organization. This is a legal requirement, and it is particularly important in the context of controversial programming.

2) Controversial programming must be locally produced. In this way, the program contributes to KCR's compliance with the CRTC's Canadian content requirements. This also allows KCR to exercise sufficient control over controversial content

4.0 ROLE OF THE KCR SELECTION COMMITTEE

KCR's selection Committee decides whether a particular program proposal involves controversial programming and if so, whether it is acceptable to be on air. Below is a summary, but those interested should consult the Controversial Programming Procedure, which outlines in more detail the role of the selection committee and the selection process as it relates to controversial programs.

Submissions

If program proposals are made by groups or organizations that exist for the purpose of promoting a single religious or political doctrine or converting others to this particular doctrine, or providing a forum for discussion regarding this doctrine exclusively, it is particularly recommended that they pay close attention to the issue of balance described above. It is possible that individual programmers speaking for themselves and voicing personal opinions are more likely than groups to: (a) create a balanced program, and (b) create a comfortable forum for individual listeners to state opposition to the belief system espoused by the hosts. Groups or individuals submitting proposals for potentially controversial programs should consider this prior to submitting their proposal.

Criteria in Selection

The Selection Committee will consider granting airtime to those who are not adequately served by the mainstream media, in order to provide a voice for the voiceless in addressing issues of concern in a variety of sub-communities. The Selection Committee is also committed to selecting programs that represent a wide range of different or differing views within these sub-communities wherever possible.

The KCR selection committee reserves the right to reject program proposals for controversial programs if the committee feels it is (a) questionable, or (b) unlikely that the programmer will comply with the recommendations and requirements outlined in this policy.

The Selection Committee must be satisfied that a particular program in question will have broad enough content, or that there have been sufficient successful program proposals in a particular season to provide balance.

Outcome

Where a proposed program is deemed "controversial" by the Selection Committee and accepted for broadcast, the following procedure for establishing trust with programmers must be followed to ensure that such controversial programs are fair and balanced, thoughtfully presented, and well-prepared for air.

Disputes

In those situations where a potential programmer considers she has been unfairly treated by the Selection Committee, the issue may be raised with the Appeal Committee – see the *Complaints, Grievances, and Appeals Procedure* for more information.

The first version of this policy was made official on April 16, 2003.