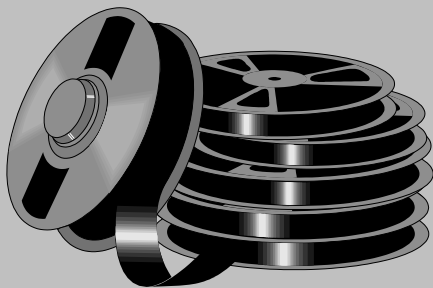


Ontario Film Review Board

Annual Report

1999/2000



November 4th, 2004

The Honourable Jim Watson
Minister of Consumer and Business Services
35th Floor
250 Yonge Street
Toronto ON M5B 2N5

Dear Minister Watson:

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Ontario Film Review Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000 on behalf of Robert Warren.

The report outlines the duties and responsibilities of the Ontario Film Review Board under the mandate of the *Theatres Act* and the operating results for the fiscal year.

Sincerely,

Janet Robinson
Chair
Ontario Film Review Board

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The Board and its Operations

Our Mission

The Ontario Film Review Board (OFRB) receives its mandate from the Ontario government through the *Theatres Act* and operates as an arms-length agency reporting to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

Subject to a few specific exceptions, if a film or video is to be distributed or screened in Ontario, it must first be classified by the Ontario Film Review Board. The Board also scrutinizes and approves all newspaper and poster film advertising.

The Board's objective is to classify films and videos and thereby provide the viewing public with sufficient information to make informed viewing choices for themselves and for their children.

Who We Are

The OFRB is a community Board, and its members represent a cross-section of the many diverse communities across Ontario. The Board's members vary in age, gender, vocation, cultural background, and sexual orientation.

On the recommendation of the Provincial Cabinet, members are appointed for two-year terms by the Lieutenant Governor, through Orders-in-Council, for a maximum of four years.

Members work an eight-hour day, usually three to four times per month, and are paid on a per diem basis.

Our History

The original three-member Civil Service panel, appointed by the Province in 1911, was given extensive powers of censorship. Scenes of an immoral nature, seduction, infidelity, or the depiction of a crime or a prize fight were just cause to withhold permission for screening a film.

By 1921, the first set of written standards was produced in booklet form. It included many of the earlier Board's exclusions, but

added cruelty to animals, arson, firearms, violence, crime, insanity, murder and suicide. There was also a ban on the waving of all foreign flags.

In the 1930s, building inspections were initiated and rigidly enforced. It became mandatory for theatre owners to use only fire-resistant building materials, and they were held accountable for building upkeep. Saturday and holiday matinees were introduced, where unsupervised children were allowed to attend, although a matron had to be present in the theatre.

The practice of actually classifying films also began in this decade. Each film stood or fell on its own merit, and approved movies fell into one of two classifications - Suitable For All or Suitable For Adult Audiences. This Board of Censors was the first in North America to introduce a classification system.

The biggest concern of the Board in the 1940s was propaganda films. Any footage of riots or strikes was immediately excised from newsreels, and no film involving Communist propaganda was ever approved. Other subjects considered disturbing to the Board included horror, kissing, dancing, and religious propaganda. With the outbreak of World War II, rules became even more restrictive, and no foreign films (except those from France) were screened.

In the post-war years, the government sanctioned outdoor movies, and in August of 1946, the first drive-in movie in Ontario opened in Stoney Creek. The number of rejected films dropped dramatically, and the Board acquired the reputation as one of the most liberal and enlightened in Canada.

Reforms in the 1980s introduced the current system of appointing private citizens to a rotating Board, as well as the classification categories of Family (F), Parental Guidance (PG), Adult Accompaniment (AA), and Restricted (R). The name was changed to the Ontario Film Review Board, the regulation of videotapes was introduced, and adult sex videos were sanctioned. The mandate of the Board was directed towards classification rather than censorship.

The current decade has seen more changes. Both the Chair and the Board members are appointed for specific terms of office. The

Canadian Home Video Rating System was initiated, as was the mandatory placement of stickers on all adult sex videos.

Throughout its 88-year history, the Board's policies have been shaped and influenced by external social forces. It continues to adapt to mirror the tastes and standards of the evolving society it serves.

Types of Panels

There are three types of screening panels and a vice-chair oversees each panel. Each type of panel serves a different purpose as follows:

Normal: It is the Board's practice to have this panel consist of three members. Although the members endeavour to agree on the classification, occasionally one may disagree strongly with the classification, and that member may request a cumulative panel.

Cumulative: Four other Board members screen the film or video. The results of both the Normal and Cumulative Panels are tallied, and the majority rules. Since this process is initiated by a member, there is no cost to the distributor.

Appeal: This panel is requested and paid for by a distributor who is dissatisfied with the Board's decision. It consists of five members who have not yet seen the film in question. This panel's decision as to classification is final. However, the distributor may appeal to the Divisional Court as to approval of the film.

By the time a film or video has gone through three panels, 12 different Board Members have viewed the product. Therefore, appeals through the Courts are rare.

How We Classify

The Board members take into account the general character and integrity of each film in its entirety and use the *Theatres Act* and sets of guidelines to determine the film's classification. These guidelines, which are continually reviewed and updated, allow the Board to be objective, yet flexible. In this way, the Board is not only able to maintain the integrity of community standards, but also to appreciate and accommodate the film's artistic merit, or social and documentary significance.

While viewing the film, each panel member makes extensive notes on all elements that contribute to the classification. These elements include coarse language, nudity, violence, sexual activity, and psychological impact. Following the screening, panel members use these detailed notes in their discussion and ultimate decision as to the classification of the film or video.

Each element is weighed on the basis of content and treatment and the cumulative effect of those factors on the audience. Members consider style, tone, duration, frequency, and the amount of visual and/or verbal detail. How the elements relate to the narrative also contributes to the Board's decision.

Besides the classification, the Board may choose to include information pieces, such as *Nudity*, *Coarse Language*, or *Brutal Violence*. These warnings, along with the classification, must appear on all advertising to help the viewer make informed choices.

Financial & Operational Information

Financial Information 1999/2000

Revenue:	Film and Video Classification Fees **	\$2,154,511
	Total Revenue	\$2,154,511
Expenditures***:	Per Diems.....	\$385,400
	Direct Operating Expenses	\$109,900
	Administrative & Overhead Expenses	\$337,200
	Total Expenditures ***	\$832,500

** For classification of films and videos, distributors pay \$4.20 per minute, foreign language films (except French) pay a flat fee of \$78.75 per item, and there is no fee for Canadian films and videos. There are also fees for classifying trailers, advertisements, and for classifying features by documentation.

*** Note: This figure only includes direct costs attributable to the OFRB. In addition, the Ministry incurs indirect costs in administering the Theatres Act. These include costs relate to activities such as: inspection, investigation, prosecution, legal counsel, policy development, general management and administration.

Financial and Operational Information

	1999/2000	1998/1999	1997/1998
Financial:			
Revenue.....	2,154,500		
Expenditures.....	832,500		
Operational:			
Titles Processed:			
Mainstream.....	1,193	926	834
Foreign	277	276	287
Adult Sex.....	2,344	2,450	1,932
Trailers.....	797	1,780	882
Total Titles:.....	4,611	5,432	3,935
Minutes Viewed:			
Mainstream.....	105,201	85,940	75,242
Foreign	31,402	30,931	32,572
Adult Sex.....	227,965	239,969	188,933
Trailers.....	2,033	3,291	2,207
Total Minutes:	366,601	360,131	298,954
Panels:			
Number of Panels.....	541	541	514
Average Panel Minutes	659	673	650
Number of:			
Non-approvals.....	144	139	95
Advertising Pieces.....	3758	2,850	1,627
Permits – Film Festivals.....	293	44	226
Permits – Individuals.....	122	171	80

Chair**Robert Warren**

Robert Warren, a graduate of the University of Windsor (BSc) and York University (MBA), worked for Ontario Hydro for almost 30 years in various areas of information technology. He currently works as a computer systems consultant specializing in computer applications and data bases for non-profit organizations. As a volunteer, he was active on the boards of, and provided computer assistance to, several community, arts, and religious organizations in Mississauga and Oakville. Robert is married with two children and lives in Mississauga. Appointed to the Board in April 1996, he assumed responsibilities as Chair on August 3, 1997.