

Gory 'entertainment' must stop, cities say

By Barbara Aggerholm
Record staff

Fifteen Ontario cities, including Waterloo, want federal obscenity laws to target violent entertainment such as slasher films, serial killer collector cards and gory video games.

Since spring, the 15 cities have passed resolutions supporting the efforts of the Coalition for the Safety of Our Daughters to fight products promoting and glorifying violence as entertainment.

The Guelph-based coalition wants Criminal Code obscenity laws broadened "to include the undue exploitation of crime, horror or cruelty and violence that is degrading and dehumanizing, even if it contains no sexual element," coalition co-founder Patricia Herdman said Thursday.

Cities supporting the idea include Waterloo, Guelph, Stratford, Burlington, St. Catharines and London.

If obscenity laws were expanded in this way, it would be illegal to produce and distribute violent video games, serial killer cards featuring real-life murderers and their crimes, and slasher movies featuring the death and mutilation of mostly female victims.

Herdman said she is encouraged by the cities' support and by a June 28 letter she received from Attorney General Marion Boyd in which Boyd said she sympathized with the group's "efforts to enhance the safe-

ty and security of girls.

"Therefore, officials from my ministry are currently reviewing the adequacy of the Criminal Code in this respect with our federal counterparts," Boyd's letter said. "It is my hope that there will be appropriate criminal legislation forthcoming from the federal government that will properly address this serious issue."

This week, public attention has been focused on violent video games, in particular one called Night Trap, which features hooded zombies stalking and killing scantily clad women.

Waterloo North Tory MPP Elizabeth Witmer, the Conservatives' critic for women's issues, is calling on the province to create a classification system that would warn parents of the video games' contents.

However, the coalition and some other activists say the only solution is to prohibit the extremely violent material.

"This doesn't mean that a movie that honestly explores violent issues" would be threatened, Herdman said.

But an amended Criminal Code would target a movie such as Splatter University in which co-eds are murdered, and a film called Meat is Meat in which a man cuts up women and makes sausages out of them, she said.

Slasher film fight heats up

By Catherine Thompson
Record staff

TORONTO — After nine months of inaction from the Ontario government, a group trying to get slasher films banned is stepping up its campaign.

The group, Coalition for the Safety of our Daughters, presented Premier Bob Rae on Monday with a large laminated copy of a column by the Record's Queen's Park columnist on slasher films that appeared Feb. 12 and issued a release complaining of government inaction.

"We had the article laminated so that you can't fold, file and forget it as you have with all of our other cor-

respondence," coalition co-founders Valerie Smith and Patricia Herdman said in an open letter to the premier.

The group has written to several ministers as well as to Rae in the past nine months, asking for action on slasher films, which they say are hate material against women. The films depict violence against women, sometimes quite graphically, but do not contain enough sexual matter to be affected by federal obscenity laws.

Hate laws ban hatred or violence against identifiable groups, but women aren't named as a group in the legislation, the coalition says.

"Your government knows that

there is a link between what we watch and how we behave. After all, isn't this why your government is concerned about beer commercials?" they said.

Rae was unavailable for comment, but an aide said the premier likely had not watched the videos sent to him by the group because of his busy schedule and because the issue is being dealt with by the Consumer Ministry.

A Consumer Ministry spokesman said Minister Marilyn Churley is against greater censorship than already exists, but is considering tighter controls on video classification.