British Columbia
Press Council

Encouraging the highest professionl and ethical standards in journalism since 1983

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Hand-off/ Jack Whittaker, left, congratulates Vern Slaney on his election as chair of the B.C. Press Council. Jack served maximum three years as chair.

Vern Slaney takes over as chair of Press Council

Vern Slaney, of Parksville, a retired business executive and a member of the B.C. Press Council for four years, will head up the 11-person board in 2011. He succeeds Jack Whittaker, of Osoyoos, who completed the maximum three one-year terms as chair. Vivian Tran, vice-chair, and Tim Shoults, treasurer, complete the 2011 executive.

Vern has served on both for-profit and not-for-profit boards and spent more than 30 years in the metal distribution business, eight as president of an international company. He is a business administration graduate of what is now Ryerson University in Toronto.

Vern is also a director of B.C. Automobile Association, serving on the Audit and Governance committees.

Vivan is a Knowledge Transfer Officer with the Canadian Labour Market Skills and Researcher Network at UBC. She has several degrees in international relations and speaks four languages. She joined the Press Council in 2008.

Tim is publisher of the Kamloops Daily News, a Glacier Media newspaper. He joined the Press Council in 2009 when he was publisher of the Squamish Chief and regional manager of Glacier's Sunshine Coast Sea-to-Sky group.

Online complaints

Complaints about online news stories are now subject to review by the Press Council, following approval by member newspapers at the 2010 annual general meeting.

This is the first complete revision and expansion of bylaws and the complaint procedure since the Press Council was founded in 1983. Until now, only print media was eligible for membership.

The Press Council's 12-point Code of Practice now extends to member newspaper online websites.

The revision also provides for independent online news sites to join the Press Council. The Kelowna website *www.castanet.net* has become the first independent to join.

(See Online complaints, p-2)

Meeting dates

March 18, 2011, teleconference.

June 17, 2011, Vancouver, board meeting and AGM.

Sept. 16, 2011, teleconference.

Dec. 2, 2011 Vancouver.

Kerri Fisher

Kevin Laird

New directors

The Press Council has two new directors --Kerri Fisher, a Prince George lawyer, and Kevin Laird, editorial director for Black Press, Greater Victoria. Kerri succeeds Lee Ongman and Kevin replaces Glenn Mitchell, both of whom have retired after the maximum eight years of service.

Kerri was called to the bar in 2002 and now practices plaintiff's personal injury litgation at Kerri Fisher Law corporation.

Kevin has been in the newspaper business since 1981 and has worked at community and daily newspapers in B.C. and Alberta. Prior to taking up his position in Victoria in 2007, he was editor of the Nanaimo News Bulletin. He has won a number of national provincial and regional awards.

Moving/
B.C. Press Council director Lucinda Chodan has been appointed editor-in-chief of the Edmonton Journal.

Online complaints

(Cont'd from p-1)

Under the complaints procedure, upon being notified of a complaint, the website publisher has the option of removing the item, affixing an indicator to the item to the effect that it is disputed, or taking no action pending processing by the Press Council. If the complaint is accepted for adjudication, it will be processed according to the usual complaint procedure.

The Press Council will not deal with matters out of control of the members such as letters to the editor, commentary, blogs or member content that has been republished by others.

Directors see the Press Council's role in the online world as evolving. They agreed further modification will likely be necessary as the digital world continues to expand. This is similar to the position being taken by Press Councils around the world, many of which have still to accommodate online sites.

A recent survey of the 60-plus Press Councils showed some councils are mandated to review all complaints --print, internet and broadcasting-- while others remain only in print. Many of the off-shore Press Councils have standing in law. Funding is equally varied with some being at least partially supported by government.

Complaint summaries, 2010

Twenty-four complaints were recorded during 2010. The Press Council has now recorded 930 complaints and held 57 hearings since being founded in 1983.

Complaint statistics	2007	2008	2009	2010
Carried forward, 2008	1	1	0	8
Complaints recorded	34	23	28	24
About				
Advertising	1	1	0	1
News stories	24	13	18	14
Opinion & comment	4	0	3	2
Letters to editor	5	6	5	4
Headlines	0	0	1	1
Photos & cartoons	0	2	1	2
Against				
Metro dailies	9	2	12	5
Regional dailies	2	2	6	5
Community papers	21	16	6	9
Non-members	4	3	4	5
Disposition				
By formal adjudication	0	1	0	0
Rejected, in appropriate	6	6	3	4
No follow-up	4	8	5	1
Mediation	4	2	5	3
Withdrawn, legal	0	0	0	0
Carried forward	1	0	3	0
Newspaper satisfied complainant	6	1	3	2
Beyond 45 day filing rule	3	1	1	2
Rejected, no breach of code	8	2	3	5
Rejected, third party	0	0	1	1
Rejected, non-member	0	0	3	4
Referred elsewhere	2	2	1	2

The Press Council handled 287 telphone calls during 2010 --many calls were about delivery issues; others requested member newspaper telephone numbers. Callers were either redirected or telephone numbers provided.

Board of Directors

Public members-
Vern Slaney, chair, Parksville; Vivian Tran, vice-chair, Vancouver; Lynne Kennedy, Vancouver, Jack Whittaker, Osoyoos; Dennis Pavlich, Vancouver; Kerri Fisher, Prince George.

Industry members-
Shelley Fralic, Vancouver Sun; Tim Shoults, treasurer, Kamloops Daily News; Kevin Laird, Black Press Greater Victoria; Pat Tracy, Burnaby Now/Royal City Record.

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