



British Columbia Press Council

Encouraging the highest professional and ethical standards in journalism since 1983

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Nanaimo, B.C.

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Press Council struggles with economic downturn

The B.C. Press Council survived the economic woes of 2009 by decreasing operating costs and adjusting membership dues.

The Press Council will operate within an \$89,000 budget in 2010 after reducing operating costs by \$36,000 and restructuring dues which had the net effect of decreasing revenue by 30 percent.

Chair Jack Whittaker said the number represents a bare-bones budget but directors knew they had to do their part with member newspapers struggling under economic numbers not known before.

Under the terms of membership established by founding members in 1983, daily newspapers are assessed on paid circulation. The B.C. & Yukon Community Newspapers Association, with 130-odd members, is assessed on a flat rate of \$140/paper.

The Canwest-owned Vancouver Sun, Province and Victoria Times Colonist have in the past accounted for about 70 percent of the annual budget but will now pay 30 percent less. The com-

munity papers' assessment has been increased from \$16,000 annually to \$22,000.

The Press Council met with Sun and Province Publisher Kevin Bent and with the executive of the BCYCNA to discuss the changes.

One of the largest cost-cutting measures taken by directors was to forego three of its four quarterly meetings in Vancouver. Instead, the three meetings will be held by teleconference, saving transportation, hotel and meeting costs. The annual meeting, held in June, will continue to be held in Vancouver so member newspapers may attend.

B.C. has not been not alone in its bid to survive. Press Councils in every province and in other countries

have had to reduce operating costs as they struggle to develop a new business model. Directors also conducted a bylaw review allowing for adjudications based on written submissions and for online publications to become members.

(See story below)



Jack Whittaker

GLACIER MEMBER

Shoults joins Press Council

The Glacier Media Group took a seat at the B.C. Press Council table in 2009 with the appointment of Squamish Chief publisher, Tim Shoults. Shoults is also regional manager of the Sunshine Coast/Sea-to-Sky area for the Glacier group.

Tim started his career at the Jasper Booster before becoming editor of the Chief and regional manager of the Whistler Question, the Sunshine Coast Reporter and the Bridge Rover-Lillooet News. He is also a member of the Glacier Editorial Excellence Committee and the steering committee of the Glacier web initiative.

He has been active in the arts, the Squamish Chamber of Commerce and Squamish Rotary Club. In 2007 he was voted Business Person of the Year by the chamber.



Tim Shoults

Meeting dates

March 9, 2010,
teleconference.

June 18, 2010,
Vancouver,

board meeting and
AGM.

Oct. 8, 2010,
teleconference.

Nov. 29, 2010,
teleconference

Membership may be opened to online media

A committee tasked with exploring future avenues for growth and development has recommended that online B.C. media outlets performing a similar function to existing print newspapers be allowed to join the Press Council.

The committee said in an era where *print* journalism transcends the printed page, this step is necessary to fulfill the Press Council's goals of promoting ethical practices within the B.C. newspaper community while serving as a forum for complaints against its members and to ensure the council's continued survival and growth.

Independent online members could be admitted to a special membership category from print, with dues to be determined through a consultative process with interested online media outlets. The committee said the existing Code of Practice could be applied to complaints about content published in an online publication with only slight wording change required to existing bylaws. A bylaw review has since completed these changes and the proposal to allow online publications to join the Press Council will be voted on by member newspapers at the Annual General Meeting June 18 in Vancouver.

The overwhelming majority of current members have an online presence which the Press Council does not currently incorporate into its complaints procedure. Not all online content is identical to the printed product on most of these websites, with anonymous or semi-anonymous commenting being one of the differences.

**Press
Council
Award
winner**

**Sandra
Thomas**



Sandra Thomas, of the Vancouver Courier, won the B.C. Press Council's 2009 Investigative Journalism award.

Presentation of the award was made as part of the annual B.C. & Yukon Community Newspaper's Ma Murray Awards Night. The award provides a \$1,000 cheque to the winner.

The Press Council also co-sponsored with the BCYCNA the High School Essay Scholarship program in which three winners share \$10,000 in prize money.

The 2009 winners were Stephanie Lai, of Richmond, first-place for \$5,000; Jeff Tanaka, of Surrey, second at \$3,500, and Rance Robazza, of Campbell River, third for \$1,500.

Students were asked to write a 500-word essay to their community paper, answering the question, "How can community newspapers better serve and engage their young readers?"

The Press Council has been a sponsor of both programs for a number of years but had to withdraw from 2010 competitions because of the economic downturn in the industry. It hopes to return as a sponsor when the economy improves.

Complaint summaries, 2009

Twenty-eight complaints were recorded during 2009. The Press Council has now recorded 906 complaints and held 57 hearings since being founded in 1983.

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

The Press Council handled 280 telephone calls during 2009 --many about delivery issues and requests for member newspaper telephone numbers. Callers with delivery issues were re-directed and member telephone numbers provided in all instances.

Board of Directors

Public members-

Jack Whittaker, chair, Osoyoos; Lee Ongman, vice-chair, Prince George; Vern Slaney, treasurer, Parksville; Vivian Tran, Vancouver, Lynne Kennedy, Vancouver, Dennis Pavlich, Vancouver.

Industry members-

Shelley Fralic, Vancouver Sun; Tim Shoults, Squamish Chief; Glenn Mitchell, Vernon Morning News; Pat Tracy, Burnaby Now/Royal City Record; Lucinda Chodan, Victoria Times Colonist.



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