

ALBERTA

PRESS COUNCIL

FRIDAY, JULY 3, 2009.

The Alberta Press Council has upheld a complaint against The Brooks & County Chronicle made by Rob Brown, of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Mr. Brown's complaint centered on the newspaper's coverage of the Brooks Women's Shelter operated by the Brooks & District Safe Shelter Society, and whether the newspaper failed to meet two categories of the Press Council's Code of Practice, Accuracy and Balance, in articles Dec. 4 and Dec. 21, 2008. The publisher of the Chronicle was also the chairperson of the Brooks & District Safe Shelter Society at the time the articles were published.

Mr. Brown complained that the Chronicle's coverage was both inaccurate and misleading. Citing the Alberta Press Council's Code of Practice he further stated that it is the duty of newspapers to correct promptly, and with due prominence, significant inaccuracies or misleading statements.

The Press Council agreed that the news articles were not accurate and were misleading in that they failed to report the closure of beds in the facility in Brooks, and gave the impression the facility was still providing that service. The article also stated that previous reports in other media sources, regarding bed closures, were erroneous, when in fact they were not.

The article also omitted to state that there were significant layoffs of staff from the Shelter at this time, giving the impression of no reduction in service delivery.

With respect to the issue of Balance and making all reasonable effort to pursue comment from any person or organization about whom the paper plans to publish potentially damaging statements, the Council did not feel it was relevant in this particular case.

The Brooks & County Chronicle is a member of the Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association, which belongs to the Alberta Press Council, and is therefore obliged to meet the Press Council's Code of Practice. When a complaint against a member newspaper is upheld, the paper in question is required to publish the decision.

The Alberta Press Council serves to protect the public's interest in, and access to, fair and accurate news reporting. As a non-judicial, non-governmental review board, the Press Council considers complaints from the public about the performance of its member newspapers.

For more information, contact Colleen Wilson, Executive-Secretary Treasurer of the Alberta Press Council at P O Box 2576, Medicine Hat, AB. T1A 8G8. Telephone: 1-800-580-4104 (Alberta); 1-403-580-4104 or abpress@telus.net. Website: <http://www.albertapresscouncil.ca>

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