

A L B E R T A

P R E S S C O U N C I L

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Letters Editor
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Re: National press council urged, Feb 13

In response to its own difficulty in dealing with complaints regarding hate expression, The Ontario Human Rights Commission is advocating a national media council with the power to adjudicate complaints of discrimination in the media.

This recommendation to the Federal Human Rights Commission is flawed and should be dropped.

We already have press councils in most provinces. Their role is to deal with complaints from the public regarding biased reporting, along with a range of other potential concerns such as breaches of privacy, inaccurate or misleading statements, questionable pictures, and intrusion into grief.

Since its origin in 1972, the Alberta Press Council has received 345 complaints, many of which were resolved informally, but some going to a full adjudication, with several instances of rulings going against the particular newspaper.

A national press council would add more complexity to what should be a simple and efficient process of dealing the public's concerns. A Canada-wide body would create additional costs, particularly if mandated by parliament, and would not be as sensitive to regional differences across the country that may be relevant to a particular complaint.

Canada's Human Rights Commissions would do well to seek removal of the issue of hate speech from their mandates, end their arbitrary and uneven handling of these cases, and leave adjudications regarding the balance between freedom of speech and hate expression to our press councils which were established to deal with this type of issue and are fulfilling this mandate..

Ed Kamps
Chair, Alberta Press Council