

ALBERTA

PRESS COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE
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Alberta Press Council Rules on Complaint Regarding Climate Change Column

The Alberta Press Council has presented its ruling in a case against the **Edmonton Journal**, following a complaint made under Clauses 1 (Accuracy) and 4 (Balance) of the Code of Practice by Dr. Geoffrey S. Strong. The complaint was not upheld.

The column in question presented a case against climate change based on previously reported events regarding the reliability of the evidence used by some climate scientists. The position put forward in the column was that the reported unreliability of evidence threw the whole concept of climate change into question, demonstrated that the science of climate change lacked credibility, and proved that climate scientists were deliberately misleading the public.

The complainant, a climate scientist, argued that the statements in the column were untrue, libelous and harmful to his profession, and that the column lacked balance. He argued that the column presented facts that were later demonstrated to be untrue and made generalizations that tarnished the whole discipline of climate science and of climate scientists. He also argued that because the column made no attempt to include statements from climate scientists to refute the columnist's statements, it lacked balance.

The newspaper argued that the columnist had the right to express his opinion and demonstrated that the information he presented in the column was researched and supported by recently reported stories regarding the reliability of climate science research. The newspaper's Editor-in-Chief stated that the position expressed in the column is not the position of the **Edmonton Journal** and columns supporting the concept of climate change appear frequently. The newspaper also revealed that a letter to the editor from the complainant was received and published shortly after the column ran.

The Alberta Press Council, while recognizing the extremity of the columnist's position, and his use of loaded language and sweeping generalizations, ruled that the complaint regarding accuracy be dismissed because the columnist believed his stated facts — as reported at that time — to be true. The APC also ruled that the issue of balance did not apply because the column expressed the opinion of the writer. The fact that the newspaper had published a letter from the complainant immediately after the column appeared but which had not been included with the complaint presented to the APC also influenced the ruling.