



## CANADIAN PRESS COUNCILS MEET

**Back row:** Ed Kamps (Chair, APC), William Gore (Public Affairs Director, Press Complaints Commission, United Kingdom), Colleen Wilson (Executive Secretary-Treasurer, APC), Lucinda Chodan (Director, B.C. PC), John Cochrane (Chair, Manitoba PC)

**Front row:** Marie-Eve Carignan (Communications Manager, and analyst, Conseil de presse du Québec), Raymond Corriveau (Chairman, Conseil de presse du Québec), Linda David (Responsible for the management of the complaints and analyst), Conseil de presse du Québec, Guy Amyot (Executive Secretary, Conseil de presse du Québec), Mel Sufrin (Executive Secretary, Ontario PC)

As part of the 30th anniversary of Conseil de presse du Québec, representatives from the various Press Councils across Canada met for their bi-annual conference in Montreal last October. The conference itself included a launch of the final report of the Conseil de presse du Québec Report on the state of media in Quebec, as well as a panel presentation on The Future of Press Councils featuring William Gore, public affairs director, Press Complaints Commission, U.K, and Ed Kamps, chair, APC.

**Highlights of the meeting of the press councils on inside pages:**



## Quebec

**Report on the state of media in Quebec.** The report, based on hearings in the 17 administrative regions of the province, analysed the situation for media consumers outside the major centres of Montreal and Quebec City. The results revealed dissatisfaction among the residents of those regions, particularly with respect to access to satellite television or high-speed internet.

**Legal issues.** The council recently paid a \$68,000 legal bill after a complaint by the Access to Information Commission about the council not saving all its documents from meetings. The council feels it would be helpful to have a law establishing the societal value of the council so it would not be subject to lawsuits, a status that several other Quebec organizations have. Attendees said some other press councils asked complainants to sign waivers stipulating they would not sue the press council.

## Ontario

**Reporting decisions.** In the past, member newspapers were required to report a fair account of the complaint and the complete text of the decision. However, based on discussion with member newspapers, particularly the Globe and Mail, it was decided to change those parameters. If the complaint is upheld, the newspaper must report fully on the complaint. However, if the complaint is dismissed, the newspaper may abridge the decision and send readers to its website for the full decision.

**Outreach.** The press council will go into smaller communities where there are journalism schools and hold hearings there. Journalism students will be given copies of the complaint and invite them to sit in the hearing. The council will deliberate in camera, then return with its decision. The journalism students can then debate whether their decision would match that of the council.

## Manitoba

The Manitoba council celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2009. It represents three daily newspapers and 47 weeklies, has a total annual budget of \$20,000 and meets three times per year.

**Multimedia.** The council received its first complaint about a video on the website of the Winnipeg Free Press. The council had decided in 2007 to handle complaints about videos. William Gore (PCC) said the British commission decided that the issues are the same in video or on the web as in print. However, if the material appears only on the website, if the complaint is upheld, the decision will appear only on the website.

**Best practices.** The council tries to have every decision done within a month (this compares with about five months average time in Quebec and six months in Ontario).

## Alberta

**Newsletter.** The council's first newsletter was distributed to attendees.

**Public forum.** For the last couple of years, the council has partnered with a newspaper to present a public forum. The most recent was co-presented with the Edmonton Journal and was titled Youth, Crime and the Media: Are We Getting the Full Story?

**Canadian Association of Journalists.** The Alberta council organized one of its meetings in 2008 to coincide with a national conference of the Canadian Association of Journalists in Alberta. The council found that many journalists attending the conference were unfamiliar with the work of the press council.

**Best practices.** The fall meeting of the council began with a debate with the topic Be It Resolved That Press Councils Should Be Abolished. The subject provoked a lively debate that was very useful for new members.

## British Columbia

The council presented a forum on the Future of News in Vancouver on Sept. 22, 2008, in conjunction with the Canadian Media Research Consortium and the University of British Columbia. Here is a summary of the results of the 2008 Report Card on Canadian News Media:

- Decline in interest in news. About 50 per cent of Canadian adults are very interested in news, but fewer of them are under 35 than there were in 2003. Young consumers are less likely to check for news at regular times.
- Perceptions of news. The study measured attitudes in five areas: accuracy; fairness/balance; bias; independence of news organizations; and independence of journalists. They found the perceptions of accuracy have declined 7 per cent in the last five years. One-third of news consumers think newspapers cover up their mistakes. Only one-third think news is fair and balanced.

The question period that followed included questions about concentration of media ownership, the quality of online journalism and whether paid journalists are more likely than web journalists and bloggers to report objectively and be accountable.



## PROMOTION OF PRESS COUNCILS

Ed Kamps (Alberta) raised the idea of a national association of press councils. He cited the following benefits of such an organization:

- Would help create a higher profile for press councils
- More power to address issues if we speak with one voice
- May be eligible to apply for grants as a national organization.
- Easier to facilitate partnerships with other groups
- Help facilitate sharing of information, best practices
- A national organization might be better able to protect budgets

William Gore (PCC) said the Alliance of Independent Press Councils of Europe is a loose affiliation that operates principally to share information. The alliance believes that individual press councils must operate independently. However, it also demonstrates that what the British organization is doing is in keeping with practices in other European countries.

## ALBERTA PRESS COUNCIL

### DIRECTORS

### BUDGET CUT

AS THE GLOBAL RECESSION TOOK HOLD LATE IN 2008 AND CONTINUES THIS YEAR, CONSUMER AND BUSINESS SPENDING HAS DECLINED, REDUCING REVENUE FOR MANY ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING NEWSPAPERS.

RECOGNIZING THE SQUEEZE THAT OUR MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS ARE EXPERIENCING, THE ALBERTA PRESS COUNCIL, THROUGH A SPECIAL MEETING, APPROVED A REVISED BUDGET FOR 2009. THE BUDGET DECREASE OF 23% MEANS A REDUCTION IN FEES TO THE MEMBER PAPERS.

#### PRESS MEMBERS

Nigel Hannaford,	Calgary Herald
Paul Cashman	Edmonton Journal
Dan MacEachern	Fort McMurray Today
Darrell Winwood	Grande Prairie Daily Herald-Tribune
Dawn Sugimoto	Lethbridge Herald
Alan Poirier	Medicine Hat News
Lee Giles	Red Deer Advocate
Clare Gauvreau	AWNA

#### PUBLIC MEMBERS

Tanis Fiss	Calgary
Muriel Ross Abdurahman	Edmonton
Steven Wright	Fort McMurray
Dr. Jerry Petryshyn	Grande Prairie
Dr. Ian MacLachlan	Lethbridge
David Forbes	Medicine Hat
Dr. Joan Scott	Red Deer
Mary Jane Harper	AWNA

#### Chair

Ed Kamps

#### Executive Secretary-Treasurer

Colleen Wilson

### Alberta Press Council

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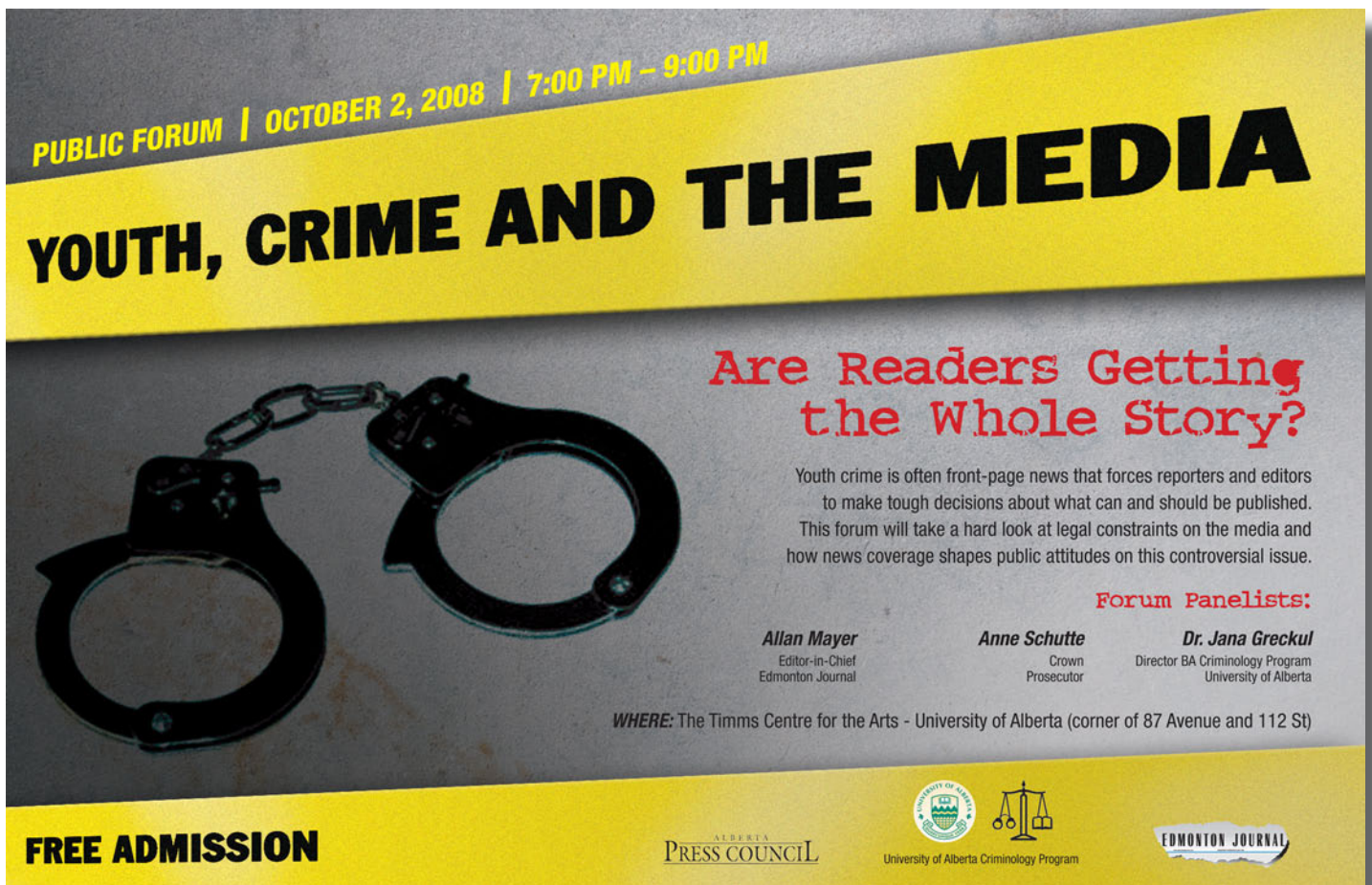
## YOUTH, CRIME AND THE MEDIA – ARE READERS GETTING THE WHOLE STORY?

The Alberta Press Council, in cooperation with the University of Alberta Criminology Program and the Edmonton Journal sponsored a successful public forum October 2nd, 2008.

Youth crime is often front-page news that forces reporters and editors to make tough decisions about what can and should be published. The forum included panelists Allan Mayer, Editor-in-Chief, Edmonton Journal; Dr. Jana Grekul, Assistant Professor, Director, BA Criminology

Program, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta and Anne Shutte, an Edmonton Crown Prosecutor. Just over to 200 people attended.

As Alberta Press Council chair, Ed Kamps stated: *“it was evident by the number and nature of questions and comments from the audience that the topic was of real concern in the community. The forum was a great opportunity to connect the public to a significant news issue, as well as to the Alberta Press Council”*.



**PUBLIC FORUM | OCTOBER 2, 2008 | 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**

# YOUTH, CRIME AND THE MEDIA

**Are Readers Getting the Whole Story?**

Youth crime is often front-page news that forces reporters and editors to make tough decisions about what can and should be published. This forum will take a hard look at legal constraints on the media and how news coverage shapes public attitudes on this controversial issue.

**Forum Panelists:**

<b>Allan Mayer</b> Editor-in-Chief Edmonton Journal	<b>Anne Shutte</b> Crown Prosecutor	<b>Dr. Jana Grekul</b> Director BA Criminology Program University of Alberta
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**WHERE:** The Timms Centre for the Arts - University of Alberta (corner of 87 Avenue and 112 St)

**FREE ADMISSION**

ALBERTA PRESS COUNCIL  
University of Alberta Criminology Program

EDMONTON JOURNAL

### ALBERTA PRESS COUNCIL AND ALBERTA WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS ASSOCIATION JOINT MEETING JUNE 4-6, 2009

This year APC is holding its spring meeting in conjunction with the meeting of the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association June 4-6, in Red Deer.

Having the meetings at the same time and location and sharing meals together means lots of chances to mingle and learn about each other.

*“This is a great opportunity to strengthen relationships between our two organizations”* said Ed Kamps, Chair, APC. *“We want to promote greater awareness of the Alberta Press Council, and how we can assist members of AWWNA. But we’re also there to listen and find out more about the world of the weekly newspapers and their organization”*.