

2017-62: Peterdy vs Toronto Sun

August 15, 2017

The National NewsMedia Council mediated and dismissed a complaint about provocative language in a Toronto Sun column.

Mike Peterdy filed a complaint about the use of the word “scumbags” in reference to three police officers charged with assault in an August 10 2017 Toronto Sun column, “Toronto's finest? Hardly,” by Michele Mandel.

The NNC upholds the wide latitude of editorial and opinion writers to state strong views that may not be shared by all members of the public. For that reason, the Council does not generally consider complaints about opinion articles or letters, but may do so in the case of errors of fact, or in cases where language becomes hateful or unnecessarily hurtful. In this case, there is no allegation of factual error.

As an opinion writer, the columnist has the latitude to use strong language of her choice. It is within the scope of an opinion writer to criticize. In this case, the term 'scumbags', although controversial and provocative, is a term used in Mandel's column. Moreover, the fact that there is a reference that indicates 'Mandel - pg.6' makes it clear that this is a term used in a column, not a straight news report.

The reader may disagree with the opinion or viewpoint presented, but the NNC is not in the business of arbitrating points of view. The NNC finds there has been no breach of journalistic standards and no grounds for a complaint.