

2018-76 Bayntun vs Maple Ridge News

December 14 2018 – *for immediate release*

The National NewsMedia Council has mediated and dismissed a complaint about signatures on opinion articles in the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows News.

The complainant, Thomas Bayntun, did not cite a specific editorial or provided an example of an editorial signed “Guest View”.

The NewsMedia Council deals with specific, unresolved complaints about the journalistic standards and ethics of news and opinion reporting published by its member newspapers and digital news organizations, and does not accept complaints about ‘trends’ in reporting.

However, in recognition of current, widespread concern about accountability in trusted news and opinion sources in general, the NNC reviewed editorials available on the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows News website. It found that those editorials are signed by the newspaper group (Black Press) or by another publication that is a member of the group. In some cases the editorials were signed with both the writer’s name and the name of the publication. These are acceptable conventions on editorials.

Widely accepted journalistic standards support the concept that editorials speak for the position of the publication or its editorial board. The job of an editorial is to put forward a matter of public interest that will provoke thought or debate, or urge action. Editorials are part of the news media’s role in encouraging civil discourse about issues affecting democracy.

Naturally, readers may disagree with editorials. That is the reason that news publications also carry letters to the editor and opinion columns, as a way to air different points of views. The appropriate response when one disagrees with an editorial or opinion column is to submit a letter to the editor or an op-ed addressing the issue.

Taken together, the conversations that news publications foster around current issues by producing editorials and carrying letters to the editor play an important role in shaping our democracy and civil society. For these reasons, the NNC found no breach of journalistic standards and dismissed the complaint.