



2018-74 Kelly vs Kamloops This Week

January 8, 2019 – *for immediate release*

The National NewsMedia Council has dismissed a complaint against Kamloops This Week.

The complainant, Brian Kelly, objected to an article, “When your date is a real doll”, in the November 21 2018 issue of Kamloops This Week.

He stated that the article did not belong in a family newspaper delivered to the entire community, was demeaning to women, and provided free advertising of superior value to that available to paid advertisers.

The complainant included two letters to the editor from others, also criticizing the article on much the same grounds by describing it as free advertising and stating that it was an “error in judgement” to place the article on the front page. He reported that in a call to the news organization’s management he was told he was not the only complainant. There was no indication any action would be taken on his complaint.

In its response to the NewsMedia Council, Kamloops This Week noted that it addressed the nature of the article by posting a warning at the top of the article, and by having a community audience in mind during a careful editing process that included removing two or three paragraphs and re-writing some sentences. At the same time, it argued that sex should not automatically be considered as taboo or offensive. It defended the photos in the article, which showed a clothed doll, and stated that the article was clinical in describing a cleaning process that was essential to addressing health and safety perspectives.

The complaint that the article was demeaning to women was addressed by the news media organization noting that one of the dolls is male, and by underlining that the article is about inanimate objects, not people.

Responding to the complaint about free advertising, the news media organization stated that the newsroom has little to do with the sales department, and that benefit to the subject of an article is incidental to the news value. It defended the criticism of writing about a business by citing past newsworthy stories on a pole dancing exercise facility, a skate sharpening business, and an old-fashioned milk delivery venture.

It also noted that a number of articles by and about the complainant and his business have been published, as have letters to the editor by the complainant related to broader business issues in the community. Council declined to comment on the specifics of those articles, but accepted them as evidence the news media organization indeed does publish business stories and that the complainant has had involvement in that practice.

The complainant cited the NewsMedia Council's mandate to promote ethics. Council would emphasize that the NNC's mandate is to journalism ethics, and that it does not arbitrate personal scruples around issues such as sex or taste. It also declined to comment on speculation about child dolls, as that issue falls under the Criminal Code.

It is clear that the complainant considers the article to be unsuited to publication in newspaper distributed community-wide. He conveyed his opinion to the news organization, and others stated similar positions in letters to the editor. These are appropriate remedies when the public disagrees with the editorial judgment of a news organization.

In dismissing this complaint, the NewsMedia Council found no breach of journalistic standards and no evidence of demeaning women. The unique nature of the subject matter made it newsworthy, and the news organization used best practice in posting a warning of mature content. The photos were not graphic, and the writing and editing was of a tone and style consistent with business feature reporting. We note that while the article may have had beneficial impact for the business owner, it could also have had the opposite effect, as happened to a [similar business in Toronto](#) that was blocked due to adverse public reaction to a news article.