

Position paper –wire service membership

Board request:

#### **4. Precedents for wire service membership and fees**

Response: To our knowledge, no Canadian wire service has become a member of a press council. For that reason, there is no precedent for establishing membership fees for a wire service.

There is, however, international precedence for wire service membership in press councils. The Australian Associated Press is a wire service and member of the Australian Press Council. The NNC has requested information from the Australian Press Council about their membership fee structure for wire services and is awaiting response.

In reviewing this issue, NNC staff considered the impact and the reach of the Canadian Press, Canada's national wire service. CP's multi-platform content appears across the country. Currently, questions and complaints about CP content are managed as complaints against the publication in which they appear. To date, there have been no complaints specific to CP content. The Ontario Press Council handled two such complaints in its later years, both of which were handled through the individual member paper.

However, there are potential problems with this approach. The wide membership and reach of a wire or syndicated service means an article that is the source of a complaint could be published – in full or abbreviated form – on platforms including broadcast websites across the country. It is not reasonable to know exactly where the article appears, nor is it likely possible to contact and work with each of those platforms for a correction.

Likewise, if a complaint warrants corrective action, it is not sufficient to effect a remedy in the member publication alone, leaving other published and posted reports unchanged or to be remedied on an ad hoc basis.

In this light, NNC staff consider wire or syndicated service membership in the NNC to be important for readers. It believes it is likewise important for the wire service's ability to be accountable, and for service members or customers to be assured of transparency in responsibility for complaints management.

The NNC has had preliminary discussions with CP on the issue of membership. Those talks are still in progress. Staff recommend the board endorse and support a successful completion of those and similar negotiations.

Fee proposals are also under discussion, and would be set with consideration to circulation and wire service membership overlap with the NNC.