



## **2019-82 Various vs Tri-City News**

*2 October 2019*

The National NewsMedia Council has dismissed three complaints about bias and inaccuracy in a September 18 news article, "Tri-City candidates boycott debate at Coquitlam church," published in Tri-City News.

The article reported that political candidates declined invitations to participate in a would-be debate hosted by a local church. It described how the candidates declined to participate in the forum after an activist in the community publicly pointed out the pastor's stance on LGBTQ issues. The article included interviews with several of individuals including the pastor, candidates, and the activist.

Complainants David Smith, Juergen Rossdeutscher, and Lynda Smith filed largely similar complaints with the National NewsMedia Council, arguing that the article was biased and that it painted the church, and by extension Christians, in a negative light. One complainant, Mr. Smith, alleged that the pastor of the church had been misquoted.

The news media organization stated that it had received numerous complaints about the article, most of which came from outside its coverage area. In response to allegations that the article misquoted or incompletely quoted the pastor, it stated that it reviewed the recording of the interview with the pastor and confirmed that the quotes were accurate and complete. The news media organization rejected allegations of bias and stated that it stands by its reporting.

In reviewing the complaints and article in question, the National NewsMedia Council noted that none of the complainants cited a specific inaccuracy or misquote. An ordinary reading of the article did not indicate negativity or bias as referenced by the complainants. The NewsMedia Council accepted the news media organization's statement that it carried out its due diligence by taking steps to ensure that the quotes were in fact accurate. For these reasons, the NewsMedia Council identified no evidence of a breach of journalistic practice and dismissed the three complaints of bias and inaccuracy.