

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

Background

As part of its mission to protect the public interest, the Real Estate Council of BC (the Council) responds to requests for information and gives statements to the media on topics relating to the regulation of real estate licensees in BC.

Purpose

This Media Relations Policy outlines processes for providing information to the news media, in order to provide journalists with the most accurate information possible while reflecting the Council's mandate to protect the public, and while respecting the legislative framework within which the Council's work is conducted. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Council:

- provides accurate and timely information in response to media requests, and
- conducts media relations in an open, professional, and transparent manner that is in accordance with the Council's mandate, the requirements of the *Real Estate Services Act*, and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Policy Statement

The Council recognizes the support our media stakeholders may offer in sharing important information that furthers our mandate to protect the public interest.

In dealing with media requests, the Council will:

- handle media requests promptly and professionally;
- be as open and transparent as possible with information provided to the media;
- to the extent possible, ensure messages and responses are clear and easy to understand;
- where possible, include references in responses to relevant sections of the legislation, the *Professional Standards Manual*, the *Brokerage Standards Manual*, or other background resource; and
- act in accordance with the requirements of the *Real Estate Services Act*, *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and our Disciplinary Publication Policy.

The Council will consider each media request on a case-by-case basis. In doing so we will be guided by the following considerations:

- We will consider the extent to which the media request is likely to contribute directly to informing consumers and industry stakeholders of information that is in the public interest.
- We will consider the internal and external resources and time required to gather and interpret the required information.

The Council reserves the right to decline to respond to media requests where these conflict with the requirements of the *Real Estate Services Act*, *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and/or Disciplinary Publication Policy, or where media requests do not reasonably address the considerations noted above. The Council does not monitor and cannot comment on real estate market conditions or market trends.

Where media coverage resulting from a request to the Council contains inaccuracies, the Council may comment in public, using factual information to correct misleading reporting.

Response Time

The Council responds to media requests as promptly as possible: a communications staff member will make efforts to respond to requests within 24 hours. When due to the complexity or scope of information requested this is not possible, we will inform the journalist of the additional time required to respond.

Depending on the situation, the Communications Officer may refer a media request to a particular staff member or Council Member, due to their knowledge, experience and expertise. Interviews are granted subject to the availability of the appropriate staff or Council member.

Inquiries Concerning Investigations and Disciplinary Matters

The Council's investigations are confidential. The Council may not confirm or deny whether there may be an investigation underway into the actions of any individual licensee or brokerage, or whether a complaint has been received concerning any licensee or brokerage, unless and until a date has been set for a Discipline Hearing.

When a matter is due to come before a Discipline Committee, the Council will not comment on the matter until a disciplinary decision has been rendered and the appeal period has expired.

Disciplinary hearings are public, and members of the media may attend. Members of the media must advise the Communications Officer in advance of their intention to attend a hearing.

Disciplinary decisions are public information and summaries of the decisions are available on the Council's website at www.recbc.ca once the appeal period has expired. All Council decisions from 2009 onwards are archived on the Canadian Legal Information Institute website (www.canlii.org).

The Council does not comment on specific cases beyond what is stated in the published discipline decisions. Other comments concerning disciplinary matters will be limited to general explanations, in order to promote a better understanding of the Council's disciplinary processes.

Media Requests

Interview requests and inquiries from the media should be directed to the Communications Officer:

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