



Policy:

Media – Guidelines for Crown Counsel

Policy Code:

MED 1

Effective Date:

March 1, 2018

Cross-references:

[INF 1](#)

Public confidence in the administration of justice depends on access to full and accurate information on court proceedings. By providing appropriate and timely information, the BC Prosecution Service can help ensure that citizens have a fair opportunity to assess whether the justice system is functioning effectively.

The BC Prosecution Service is the Criminal Justice Branch of the Ministry of Attorney General (the “Branch”) Section 2(f) of the [Crown Counsel Act](#) states that the Criminal Justice Branch has the responsibility “to provide liaison with the media and affected members of the public on all matters respecting approval and conduct of prosecutions of offences or related appeals.”

When Crown Counsel becomes aware that a case is likely to attract significant media attention, Crown Counsel should consult a Regional Crown Counsel, Director, or their respective deputy and the Communications Counsel as soon as possible in order to facilitate the appropriate and timely release of information.

Crown Counsel may respond directly to media enquiries on questions about the status of a prosecution or appeal. However, the Communications Counsel is available to assist Crown Counsel in dealing with media issues and acts as the spokesperson for the Branch in appropriate cases.

Crown Counsel may also provide general information to the media about the operation of the criminal justice process, such as the correct terminology for the various stages of that process, in order to enhance the public’s level of understanding.

However, where an enquiry concerns the handling of a prosecution, the evidence adduced, or other significant issues, Crown Counsel should consult with a Regional Crown Counsel, Director, or their respective deputy and the Communications Counsel so that an appropriate response may be prepared.

If there is a media enquiry concerning an appeal of an acquittal or sentence, Crown Counsel should indicate that decisions concerning whether to appeal are made following a complete review of the case. Crown Counsel should not outline their recommendation regarding appeal or make any public pronouncement regarding the likelihood of a Crown appeal being taken from an acquittal or sentence.

All requests to Crown Counsel for comment or enquiries relating to substantive issues involving Branch policies or law reform, including the implications of court decisions which have broad ramifications for the BC Prosecution Service, should be referred to the Communications Counsel who will prepare a response in consultation with the appropriate member of the Branch Management Committee.

The disclosure of information to members of the media should be in accordance with the policy *Information Requests from Third Parties* ([INF 1](#)).