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Direktoratet for Kultur, Uddannelse, Forskning og Kirke

World Association of Newspapers
7 Rue Geoffroy Saint Hilaire
75005 Paris
France

Regarding the new Greenlandic Media Liability Act

Dear Mr. O'Reilly and Mr. Brock,

In your letter dated 12 April 2007 you express your concern on behalf of the World Association of Newspapers and the World Editors Forum at proposals to enact a new Media Liability Act, which you find may open the appointment of the Press Council to politicisation.

It is correct that Greenland presently is subject to a special Danish Media Liability Act applicable for Greenland and that the proposed Greenlandic Media Liability Act contains several changes in comparison to that Act. The proposal includes the Press Council consisting of a president, two journalists, two editors, and two representatives of the public. In comparison the current Press Council consists of a president and a vice-president, both of who are lawyers or judges and the same number of representatives from the different branches of the media world.

I agree with you that the new Media Liability Act contains significant changes, the most important being that this will be a Greenlandic Media Liability Act as opposed to the current Danish Act. Enacting our own media legislation is a vital step on Greenland's ongoing path to greater independence. A central aspect in this connection is modelling the new Media Liability Act to suit the Greenlandic conditions and Greenlandic society in general.

This rationale is evident in the proposed composition of the Press Council where it no longer will be a requirement that the president has a legal background. In Greenland, few of the 57.000 inhabitants have a legal education, and it may be difficult to find a suitable president for the Press Council. The proposed Media Liability Act permits other qualifications to be considered during the appointment of the president such as knowledge of Greenland and Greenlandic media. However, this does not preclude the appointment of a president of the Press Council, who is a lawyer or judge.

The Greenlandic Press Council is – and will continue to be – an independent institution.

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In regards to the secretariat for the Press Council, the president of the Press Council fulfils this role under the current Media Liability Act. This modus operandi will be maintained. Whether this will be true when Greenland assumes responsibility of the judicial system cannot be said at this point in time.

I have confidence in the fact that this answer will alleviate your concerns regarding the new Greenlandic Media Liability Act.

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Yours sincerely,

Hans Enoksen
Premier