



Policies of the Provincial Court of British Columbia

Access Policies - Introduction

Effective Date:	Policy Code:
February 28, 2011	ACC-0
Scope of Application:	
All public and media access policies.	

The Principle of Openness

In *Edmonton Journal v. Alberta (Attorney General)*, [1989] 2 S.C.R. 1326, Madam Justice Wilson of the Supreme Court of Canada wrote the following regarding the purpose of having court proceedings open to the public and the media:

In summary, the public interest in open trials and in the ability of the press to provide complete reports of what takes place in the courtroom is rooted in the need (1) to maintain an effective evidentiary process; (2) to ensure a judiciary and juries that behave fairly and that are sensitive to the values espoused by the society; (3) to promote a shared sense that our courts operate with integrity and dispense justice; and (4) to provide an ongoing opportunity for the community to learn how the justice system operates and how the law being applied daily in the courts affects them.

Permitting and encouraging the public to attend Court proceedings, and allowing access to Court records, will make the law more accessible and understandable to the public and may enhance their confidence in the administration of justice.

The Court recognizes the important role that the media plays in informing the public about the day to day operation of the Court. The average person learns about the legal system mainly through the images, audio and print that the media use to convey reports about Court proceedings.

The presiding judge, however, has the ability to control Court proceedings to ensure a fair trial and to protect the integrity of the process.

Both the justice system and the public are best served when media coverage about specific matters before the Court is accurate and complete. Court officials and staff



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within the justice system have a responsibility to assist the public, including the media, to obtain access to information and records to which they are legally entitled and that will assist them to understand and accurately report on Court proceedings.