



Policy: Restricting communication with the Commission

Introduction

As a public interest regulator, the Commission has an obligation to communicate with the public in an open and transparent way. This includes listening to the public and treating them fairly and respectfully.

A small minority communicate with the Commission in a manner that is unreasonable. Handling communication with these persons can place great strain on resources and can be very stressful for staff.

It is important that the Commission is clear about its expectations for staff and the public when there is unreasonable behaviour. This policy addresses those expectations.

Identifying unreasonable behaviour

On rare occasions, a member of the public's communication with the Commission is unreasonable because it is aggressive, abusive, overly frequent or threatening. This often occurs after the Commission has responded to the person or has concluded its consideration of a matter.

If staff determine that a person is communicating with them in a manner that is unreasonable in this way, they should document the person's behaviour and discuss their concerns with their supervisor as soon as practicable.

Warning letters

The supervisor must take their recommendation about how to respond to unreasonable behaviour to their Director. If the Director agrees with the recommendation, the Director will issue a warning to the person:

- describing the unreasonable behaviour,
- advising the person that, if the conduct continues, we may restrict our communications with them, and
- enclosing a copy of this policy.

Restricting communication

If a person does not change their behaviour in response to a warning letter, the Director may restrict the Commission's communication with the person and their access to staff. Any restrictions the Director sets will be proportionate to the nature of the unreasonable behaviour.

If the Director restricts the Commission's communication with a person, the Director will write to the person, setting out:

- what action we are taking, including the restrictions we are imposing,
- the behaviour that led to our decision,
- what it means for the person's contacts with us, including how to communicate with us about new matters,

- how long the restrictions will remain in place, and
- that the person can contact the British Columbia Office of the Ombudsperson if they have any concerns about our decision.

Communications about new matters following restrictions on communication

We will review communications from people whose communications we have restricted. We will consider communications that relate to a new matter on their merits.

At that time, the Commission will reevaluate whether restrictions previously applied are appropriate in handling the new matter. If we determine that restrictions are appropriate in handling the new matter, we will write to the person to explain that decision and set out the restrictions we will be imposing.