

May 6, 2016

Dear Mr. Zoras,

We are replying to you directly and informally as a courtesy, which is separate from the official response we will issue to the complaint you filed with the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council. We'd like to thank you for your patience while we spoke with everyone involved, and outline for you the basic findings of our internal investigation. Your specific concern over our coverage of the lockdown at Dunbarton High School included a serious rebuke for broadcasting video clips from a Skype interview with a student who was still inside the building at the time. The reports that included portions of the Skype interview were broadcast on February 23rd, 2016 on Global Toronto's News at Noon and on our evening newscast at 5:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Global News prides itself on our high standards for journalistic integrity and ethics. We are strongly committed to accurate reporting on matters of public interest. I can assure you with full confidence that at no time did Global News jeopardize the safety of students or staff at Dunbarton high school under lockdown. We did not initiate contact with the student, we replied to her tweet. A decision was made to proceed with an interview only after we had determined from police sources that the danger had passed and received permission from the teacher in the same classroom as the student. Real world experience tells us that lockdown protocols often linger, sometimes for hours, after a perpetrator is apprehended or police operations conclude. When this happens, Global News protocol requires confirmation from police or other credible sources that a threat no longer exists before attempting to contact or respond to people under lockdown. We even take into consideration that many people do not know their own lockdown procedures, so they may be receptive to contact by the media, or communicate via social media while still under threat and lockdown. We make it clear to our journalists that it is always incumbent on Global News to act in a responsible, ethical manner even if people under lockdown attempt to communicate with us.

I hope this email answers your concerns and provides some insight into how we went about making our editorial decision to speak with the student over Skype. You raised some important questions that need to be asked in such situations. Even though we believe we followed our own stringent journalistic guidelines, we are going to take this opportunity to refresh with our staff the best practices around lockdown situations.

Sincerely,

Mackay Taggart
News Director, Global Toronto