

# From the Counsellor's Desk

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## The professional practice process: the nature of complaints and complainants

seminar, I also set a goal to detail the process because it has undergone significant changes in the past year. I also wanted to provide members with a basic understanding of why it can take not just months, but sometimes several years, to address complaints.

Now that the Conference is behind us, I have had the benefit of reviewing the feedback that was provided at the session; and believe this article offers a good opportunity to build on that input.

The members have asked for greater detail, mirroring the statistics that are available in the insurance program, and I can say that efforts are underway to develop a data collection model so that this can be provided. This will be taken one step further and, where possible, incorporated into the Standards Seminar.

Members have asked about the types of typical complaints, so that they can adopt policies and practices to prevent the possibility of similar complaints being directed at them. Without suggesting that there is a common theme, I would say that communication, or lack thereof, with clients and homeowners is a root cause of many problems. If your client (a lender/mortgage broker) does not explain that the homeowner will not be provided a copy of your report, this leaves you in a difficult position to deal with an upset homeowner when there is a problem.

Not returning phone calls and emails leads to more difficulties. Would you prefer to spend a few minutes managing the expectations of a homeowner/client up front or significantly more time dealing with

a complaint? I am not suggesting divulging confidential information, however, the time to explain the appraisal process and your research methodologies, or to listen when there is a suggestion that the home description is inaccurate (and to go back and correct it), can do much more for your reputation than ignoring a consumer.

I often say that practicing effective communication skills can save you time and aggravation in the long run. Taking time to attend sessions like the one offered at the Conference on Interest-Based Negotiation is one example of how you can develop new skills and adopt them in your business and personal life. The risk of doing nothing and ignoring a problem is that a consumer who is displeased with your service will typically tell an average of 55 people what a poor business you operate, and how difficult you are to deal with.

The professional practice process has changed, and will continue to evolve to meet the needs of the profession. These changes will be incorporated into the updated Standards Seminar. Regulations are frequently updated to reflect ongoing policy changes. The *Regulations* available on the AIC website contain the changes as they are adopted, and members are encouraged to review them each time they receive a complaint, so that they can work within the professional practice process to resolve it in an expedient manner.

As always, you can contact me at 1-866-726-5996 for Conflict Coaching, so that you can deal with difficult clients and prevent complaints and claims. ☺

**A**t the May 2006 Conference in PEI, I presented a session that detailed two daily aspects of my job and how the process is governed. That session was co-chaired by Brian Varner, AACI, P.App, former member of the Professional Liability Insurance Committee. The presentation, like many others at the Conference, is available on the AIC website for viewing at [http://www.aicanada.ca/e/resourcecenter\\_document\\_Conference\\_2006.cfm](http://www.aicanada.ca/e/resourcecenter_document_Conference_2006.cfm)

Brian and I had set out to provide some statistics on the type and nature of complaints, and how complainants that also file claims have used both processes. During the