

canadian
writers
group



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Canadian Writers Launch BadWritingContracts.ca to Educate Writers and Public About Unfair Transcontinental Media contract

(November 4, 2009) A coalition of more than a dozen Canadian writers' organizations today launched a new website, <http://www.BadWritingContracts.ca>, to raise awareness about the unfair and damaging freelance contract from Transcontinental Media. This follows a [September 30 announcement](#) by the coalition that called on Canadian writers to not write for Transcontinental publications.

[BadWritingContracts.ca](http://www.BadWritingContracts.ca) offers the latest news and information about the campaign against Transcontinental Media, one of the country's largest publishers of magazines and newspapers. The website provides:

- A clear dissection of the Transcontinental contract, outlining why it's a bad deal for writers.
- A list of Transcontinental publications to avoid, as well as access to a free, confidential consultation service for writers. Anyone considering pitching a Transcontinental publication can visit the website and contact an industry expert who will help suggest alternative markets for their story.
- A page that fact checks statements made by Transcontinental executives.
- A list of ways for writers and members of the public to get involved and show their support for a compromise solution to this dispute.
- A regularly-updated blog.

The website is being launched in conjunction with a Facebook group (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=187790340352>) and Twitter account (<http://www.twitter.com/badcontracts>) to help spread information and awareness about Transcontinental's contract, and the company's refusal to engage in negotiation with writers.

Background: A Refusal to Negotiate

Earlier this summer, Transcontinental Media began sending a new freelance contract – which it calls a “Master Author Agreement” – to the many writers who contribute to its stable of publications, including Canadian Living, More, Elle Canada, Homemakers, and Vancouver Magazine.

In June, the country's largest writing organizations, in cooperation with major literary agencies, approached Transcontinental in the hope of reaching a compromise. The coalition raised four primary concerns with the contract:

1. Transcontinental's new contract was muddying the copyright waters. The Master Author Agreement grants copyright of each work to the author but then undercuts this copyright by licensing the following extraordinary rights: “The ongoing non-exclusive right to do in respect of the Work any other act that is subject to copyright protection under the Canadian Copyright Act (including, without limitation, the right to produce and reproduce, translate, develop ancillary products, perform in public, adapt and communicate the

canadian
writers
group



Work, in any form or medium) as well as to authorize others to do so on behalf of or in association with the Publisher.”

2. The agreement is permanent. Once signed, it covers all future work for Transcontinental publications.
3. Transcontinental has no intention of compensating freelancers for the many additional uses of their work. In essence, the company wants to continue paying what it's been paying for decades for basic first publication rights but now get unlimited rights to writers' work.
4. The Master Agreement is one-sided. It makes no mention of payment terms, kill fees, provisions for libel suits, and other important issues that are part of any balanced contributor's agreement.

Since meeting with representatives from the coalition, the company has stated that it has no intention of altering the contract. It has also instructed its editors to not offer any assignments unless a writer has signed the controversial contract.

An Unprecedented Coalition

The coalition consists of 14 groups, which together represent thousands of Canadian writers:

- Anne McDermid & Associates
- Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec
- Canadian Authors Association
- Canadian Freelance Union
- Canadian Writers Group
- The Cooke Agency
- Federation of BC Writers
- Professional Writers Association of Canada
- Quebec Writers Federation
- Saskatchewan Writers Guild
- Toronto Writers' Centre
- Westwood Creative Artists
- Writers Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador
- The Writers' Union of Canada

For Additional Information

Derek Finkle
Canadian Writers Group
416-469-3333
Derek@canadianwritersgroup.com

Tanya Gulliver
President, Professional Writers Association of Canada
647-236-7589
tanyagulliver@gmail.com