



**PROFESSIONAL WRITERS
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA**
215 Spadina Ave. Suite 123
Toronto, ON M5T 2C7
T: (416) 504-1645

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PWAC CALLS, AGAIN, FOR RESPECT FOR COPYRIGHT IN CONTRACTS

The Professional Writers Association of Canada (PWAC) is advising all Canadian freelance writers to resist recent contract changes involving uncompensated rights demands and undue pressure to sign before publication.

“Writers across the country are being forced to choose between protecting their rights under the law and seeing payment and/or publication for work already completed” notes PWAC President, Carolyn Gibson. “Traditional working agreements are being changed on the fly. Never mind how bad these terms are; it’s completely unfair to expect a writer to agree to new terms after her work has already been accepted.”

Last December, PWAC became involved in a dispute between London, Ontario writers and the London Free Press, after Sun Media circulated a new contract to established Free Press freelancers. The resulting struggle for better terms for writers has yet to be resolved.

Recently, PWAC was advised of a similar contract being presented to established columnists and freelancers at The Vancouver Sun, a CanWest MediaWorks paper. While asking for extended rights to the written work, including a waiver of moral rights, the contract provides no extra compensation. Furthermore, it requires the writer to indemnify the paper against all damages and liabilities that may result from publication of the work.

“These terms are simply untenable for a working writer,” added Ms. Gibson. “The Vancouver Sun is sending a sad message to its industry partners. Obviously extended rights are valuable or they wouldn’t be demanding them, so what they are saying to writers is *we value the rights you have over your work, but not enough to pay for them.*”

PWAC, established in 1976, is the national organization representing 600 professional freelance writers and journalists in Canada.

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More information:

Carolyn Gibson, PWAC President
cagibson@sympatico.ca, (519) 494-1733

John Degen, Executive Director
jdegen@pwac.ca, (416) 504-1645