



THE WRITERS' UNION OF CANADA

WRITERS MATTER
2015-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR MISSION

The Writers' Union of Canada is a national organization of professionally published book authors. Because a lively and diverse literary culture is essential in defining Canada and its people as a nation, the Union supports its members and advocates on their behalf for the advancement of their common interests. In so doing we promote the rights, freedoms, and economic well-being of all writers.

WHO DO WE EXIST TO SERVE?

Professionally published book authors.

WHAT NEEDS DO WE EXIST TO MEET?

All needs related to the business and profession of writing and publishing books. These would include but are not limited to such concerns as protection of income, protection of copyright and licensing rights, fair compensation for works distributed electronically, public access to Canadian books in schools and libraries, income tax reform to benefit creators, the freedom to read and write, maintenance and development of the Union to ensure future succession, and ongoing efforts to promote and maintain a legislative environment that is conducive to the pursuit of writing and related literary work.

HOW DO WE DO BUSINESS?

Through advocacy, services, programs, research, networking, and fostering community.

WHY DO WE DO IT?

Because the publishing world is constantly changing, the needs of book authors evolve and grow over time, funding and other support for the arts is precarious when governments are faced with new economic or political pressures, and because a lively and diverse literary culture is essential in defining Canada and its people as a nation.

THE PROCESS

The Union's 2010-2013 strategic plan *Forward, Together* called for ongoing-long term planning including the introduction of a new strategic planning exercise at the end of 2013. With funding from the Ontario Arts Council's Compass Program and the guidance and collaboration of professional facilitator Catherine Smalley and the assistance of arts consultant Jennifer Murray, the Union began its new strategic planning exercise at the Union's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May 2014 with a facilitated session with the more than 100 members in attendance.

The session at the AGM was followed-up with an extensive survey of members. The 56 question survey was sent to the Union's 2,000 members. The Union received an astonishing 43% (855) response rate. The results from the session at the AGM and the membership

survey were used as the framework for the National Council's planning session in October 2014. The National Council reviewed, considered, and assessed the results of these consultations and, with Catherine Smalley's facilitation, developed the Union's priorities for the coming years. These priorities are:

- Enhance the Economic Well-Being of Writers
- Increase & Diversify Union Membership while Retaining Current Members
- Celebrate & Strengthen the Role of the Writer in Society
- Ensure the Union's Ongoing Administrative Excellence to Best Serve the Membership

OF NOTE:

The Union's 2010-2013 Strategic Plan identified that there are a multitude of issues that are of importance to the Union. It was agreed that some of these issues are best addressed by a broad spectrum of organizations and/or coalitions. It was agreed that rather than duplicating this work the Union would focus its efforts on those issues which it is best situated to address while providing support, and where possible representation, to those groups and organizations which best address issues of importance to Union members. This continues to be the case and the Union continues to support the work of and work in concert with the Public Lending Right Commission, Access Copyright, the Book and Periodical Council, Freedom to Read Week, National Reading Campaign, Book Summit, International Authors Forum, International Writers' Organizations, and other sector partners.

PRIORITY ONE: ENHANCE THE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF WRITERS

➤ **GOAL: Favourable Income Tax Legislation and Reform**

Strategies:

- Deliver detailed message to all parties. (ongoing)
- Develop recommendations for tax laws related to creators. (Early 2015)
- Interventions and communications with legislators, civil servants, and partners to discuss income tax reform. (Early 2015 and ongoing)
- Communicate progress and achievements to membership and public. (ongoing)

Measurable Outcomes

- Deliver detailed messaging on income tax legislation and reform to all parties.
- Meetings with legislators to discuss and implement changes to the regulatory structure around copyright.
- Have legislation introduced and passed in House of Commons.

➤ **GOAL: An increased presence of and commitment to Canadian-authored titles in schools and libraries**

Strategies

- Work with sector partners to meet, where possible, with federal and/or provincial library associations regarding the purchasing policies and sourcing for Canadian books. (Early 2015 and ongoing)
- Undertake a scan, with sector partners where possible, of the current availability of and practices for the acquisition of Canadian books in schools. (Early 2015)
- Work with sector partners to define policies that would encourage increased use of Canadian content in curricula at all levels of the education system. (Fall 2016)
- Facilitate with sector partners the development of overarching national strategies to increase awareness of Canadian books among educators and the need for more Canadian content in schools, colleges, and universities. (Fall 2017)
- Work with sector partners to try to develop a best practices document for library and school purchases of Canadian books. (Spring 2018)
- Undertake follow-up survey with Union members to see if there has been an increased use of their titles in schools and/or libraries. (Fall 2018)
- Promote provincial Writers-in-the-Schools programs and look into the possibility of a National Writers-in-the-Schools program. (2015)
- Communicate progress and achievements to membership and public. (ongoing)

Measurable Outcomes

- Establishment of best practices document with sector partners for library and school purchases.
- Commitment from school boards to include Canadian-authored titles on curricula and in classrooms.
- Survey members in 2018 to see if there have been improvements since winter 2015 survey.

➤ **GOAL: Favourable contract terms to ensure writers can benefit from their copyright**

Strategies:

- In consultation with the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP) and other sector partners work towards the development of a best practices document related to author's contracts. (Summer 2015 and ongoing)
- Annual Review of Model Trade Book Contract provisions. (Fall 2015, 2016, 2017)
- Develop online resource to accompany *Model Trade Book Contract*. (Fall 2015)
- Develop tool kit for members undertaking self-publication of their work which provides strategies, tips and traps. (Funding application 2015 for completion later that year)
- Continue to provide contract advice to members. (ongoing)
- Deploy the expertise of the Union's Executive Director in meetings, discussions, and articles related to copyright. (ongoing)
- Communicate progress and achievements to membership and public. (ongoing)

Measurable Outcomes

- Ongoing discussion with the ACP and sector partners regarding best practices related to author's contracts.
- Annual review of *Model Trade Book Contract*.
- Development of on-line resources.
- Development of tool kit for self-publication.
- Compile statistics regarding contract assistance provided through TWUC office.
- Increase in articles regarding copyright.

➤ **GOAL: Improve regulatory structure around copyright**

Strategies:

- Building and maintaining coalitions of support for changes to the regulatory structure around copyright. (ongoing)
- Continue to discuss, work, and strategize with sector partners. (ongoing)
- Ongoing communications and meetings with legislators, civil servants, and other groups to press for a more favourable regulatory structure. (ongoing)

- Communicate progress and achievements to membership and public. (ongoing)

Measurable Outcomes

- Meetings with legislators to discuss and implement changes to the regulatory structure around copyright.
- Secure a commitment for an analysis of current copyright regulations.

➤ **GOAL: Sustained and increased funding to Canada Council for the Arts, Provincial Arts Councils, and Public Lending Right Commission**

Strategies:

- Continue to support the work of the Canadian Arts Coalition. (ongoing)
- Undertake income survey to show the importance of Canada Council and Provincial Arts Council funding and Public Lending Right revenues in light of current economics for writers. (Early 2015)
- Remind legislators of the value and importance of these programs. (2015 and ongoing)
- Develop tool kit for members to raise these issues with their federal and provincial members of parliament. (Early 2015)
- Communicate progress and achievements to membership and public. (ongoing)

Measurable Outcomes:

- Deliver detailed messaging on sustained and increased funding for Canada Council, Provincial Arts Councils, and Public Lending Right Commission.
- Sustained and increased funding to the Canada Council for the Arts, Provincial Arts Councils, and Public Lending Right Commission.

➤ **GOAL: Maintain and increase opportunities for members to enhance their income through TWUC programs and services.**

Strategies:

- Administer and ask for increased funding for National Public Reading Program. (ongoing)
- Administer and ask for increased funding for Ontario Writers-in-the-Schools Program. (ongoing)
- Administer Manuscript Evaluation Service. (ongoing)
- Provide fees to writers for participating on panels and workshops. (ongoing)
- Provide fees to writers for their contributions to *Write* magazine. (ongoing)

- Provide fees to writers through the Ontario Arts Council Writers-in-the-Schools program. (2015)
- Provide fees to members of the Danuta Gleed Award jury.

Measurable Outcomes

- Sustained or increased revenues paid by TWUC to members each year. Each year, as part of the Union's financial reporting, information will be provided on the revenues that writers have earned via the Union. This information will be communicated to members.

PRIORITY TWO: INCREASE & DIVERSIFY WRITERS' UNION MEMBERSHIP WHILE MAINTAINING CURRENT MEMBERS

➤ **GOAL: Increase and diversify number of members**

Strategies:

- Develop communication strategies to better ensure the Union delivers its message and the benefits of membership within the literary community while also distinguishing itself from other organizations. (2015)
- Develop Promotional Kit for members' use which would include TWUC-developed recognition strategies (including a watermark for member websites, a logo for use in books, and announcements at all readings funded by the Union). (2015)
- Work with the Demographics Task Force to reach out to underrepresented communities. (ongoing)
- Work to ensure underrepresented communities are reflected in the Union's programming and leadership. (ongoing)
- Work with the Demographics Task Force to review and implement the Union's Equity Policy including strategies to ensure Union leaders and representatives keep this policy in mind as part of all decision-making processes. (ongoing)
- Develop proactive, positive opportunities to celebrate Canadian writers and the Union (e.g. International Festival of Authors event, 2016 Superconference, National Writers' Day). Explore funding opportunities to develop events like the IFOA event in other cities. (2016)
- Develop a communication strategy and kit to encourage members to recommend the Union to other writers. (2015)
- Investigate simplifying the application process with particular attention to underrepresented communities (e.g. those who do not write in English or French, those not published in Canada, younger writers). (ongoing)
- Engage legacy members for recruitment. (2015)

Measurable outcomes

- Increase the number of membership applications the Union receives each year.
- Survey members in 2018 and 2019 with an expectation to see an increase in younger members and those who identify themselves from underrepresented communities.

➤ **GOAL: Retain current members**

Strategies:

- Develop engagement strategies for current members (e.g. panels, juries, and other volunteer opportunities). (2015 and ongoing)
- Develop recognition strategies for current members (e.g. letter of thanks after a writer has been a member for a significant number of years). (2015 and ongoing)
- Ensure strong and positive communication pieces about the Union are sent to members and potential members. (ongoing)
- Develop engagement strategies for reaching members who do not engage with electronic communications (e.g. those who do not open email messages from the Union). (2015)

Measurable outcomes

- Review retention rate each year with an expectation of increased retention.

PRIORITY THREE: CELEBRATE AND STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF THE WRITER IN SOCIETY

➤ **GOAL: Celebrate Canadian Writers**

Strategies:

- Work with sector partners (including national and provincial organizations) to develop “Why Writers Matter” Campaign. (2016)
- Support national writer/writing/and book days across Canada. (2016 and ongoing)
- As above, develop proactive, positive opportunities to celebrate Canadian writers and the Union (e.g. IFOA event, Word on the Street). (ongoing)
- Support culture days and sesquicentennial events focused on writers (2016 and ongoing).
- Support Doris McCarthy Writer-in-Residence Program. (ongoing)
- Host Margaret Laurence Memorial Lecture. (ongoing)
- Engage legacy members to promote the Union, its activities, and writers. (2015 and ongoing)
- Public acknowledgement through website, etc. for awards and other achievements by TWUC members (Order of Canada, Governor General’s Awards, etc.). (ongoing)
- Reorganized website to highlight celebration of writers and writing and to better engage users.
- Investigate the possibility of adding “buy” button to TWUC member web pages to provide purchase opportunity through the Union’s website.

Measurable Outcomes

- Increased traffic on the Union’s website, Facebook and Twitter account.
- Establish panels across Canada to celebrate writers.
- Increase acknowledgements of Union members.

➤ **GOAL: Strengthen the role of the writer in society**

Strategies:

- Implement income enhancement strategies. (see above)
- Develop “Why Writers Matter” campaign. (see above)
- Support PEN Canada. (ongoing)
- Support Book and Periodical Council’s Freedom of Expression Committee. (ongoing)
- Support National Reading Campaign. (ongoing)
 - Increased presence in media (traditional and social) highlighting the importance

of writers. (ongoing)

- Provide regular member to member reports which provide links to articles and other media on issues of relevance to Union members. (2015)
- Continue to provide monthly updates from the Chair on issues of relevance to Union members. (ongoing)
- Continue to provide bi-annual report from Executive Director updating members on Union activities. (ongoing)
- Continue to provide email alerts to members on issues of relevance to writers. (ongoing)
- Continue to promote events, awards, and prizes which recognize Canadian writers through *Write*, email alerts, and social media. (ongoing)

Measurable outcomes

- Increase interest in articles by and about members and the Union in traditional and new media outlets.
- Increased Union profile which would be measured by an increased presence in traditional media, social media, and other online tools.

PRIORITY FOUR: ENSURE THE UNION'S ONGOING ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE TO BEST SERVE THE MEMBERSHIP

➤ **GOAL: Long-term administrative excellence**

Strategies:

- Develop National Council manual and policy document. (2015)
- Provide annual board orientation for National Council. (annual)
- Implement annual board evaluation survey. (2015)
- Develop Handbook for members. (2015)
- Monitor and review financial statements and develop guiding financial principles. (2015-16)
- Monitor and review governance structures. (ongoing)
- Conduct membership survey in 2017 following up on Strategic Plan's priorities and goals and measuring members' satisfaction to date. (2017)
- Introduce new strategic planning exercise to ensure on-going long-term planning. (2018)

Measurable Outcomes

- Financial stability.
- Increased satisfaction of Union members (measured through membership survey).
- Use the results of the board's evaluation survey to measure improvements and satisfaction.

THANKS

None of the Union's accomplishments would be possible without the support, effort, and dedication of the Union's members. The enthusiastic response from members to the Union's survey ensured that National Council could identify the priorities facing members in today's evolving world of publishing. We offer you our immense thanks and appreciation.

We are grateful to the Ontario Arts Council for funding through the Compass Program and to Catherine Smalley for sharing her guidance and expertise with the Union once again.

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