



**THE WRITERS'
UNION OF CANADA**

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For immediate release

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Canadian Writers Declare Their Digital Rights

Vancouver, May 25, 2012 – The Writers' Union of Canada, which represents nearly two thousand of the country's book authors, today issued "A Writer's Bill of Rights for the Digital Age 2.0." The Bill has been endorsed by other writers' organizations, including CANSCAIP (Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers), the League of Canadian Poets, the Professional Writers Association of Canada, the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild, and the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Central to this Bill of Rights is the principle that writers must be able to manage their digital rights and earn their fair share of the revenues generated by their work when it appears in digital form. "Over the past year, the issue of electronic rights has been front and centre with our members," said author and Writers' Union Chair Greg Hollingshead. "While much of the media attention on the digital evolution focuses on the tech companies themselves, it is important to remember that it all starts with the words of a writer. Our members, the professional book authors of Canada, wanted to express our views on how that content should be valued in a digital age."

The Bill calls on government, publishers, libraries, agents, and authors to work together to protect digital works and to ensure their lawful use, in sum, to do right electronically by writers. It asks government to ensure that copyright legislation protects writers' intellectual property in the electronic realm. It articulates contract terms for rights reversion and an equitable sharing of net proceeds from the sale of ebooks, and it calls on publishers to honour such terms. It asks that libraries acquire digital copies of works only from rightsholders or their licensing agencies.

"On average, writers earn 10% to 15% of the cover price of a book or ebook," Hollingshead observed. "The other 85% or 90% supports a crucial network of small and medium enterprises that look after publishing, advertising, printing, digitizing, design, distribution, and retailing. Our Bill of Rights recognizes the writer's work as the starting point for this entire industry – whether that work ends up in print or electronic form. In the novelty and sweep of digitization we must not forget this."

The first version of the Bill of Rights was released in 2011. This version, the result of extensive input from writers and consultation within the industry, is being released during The Writers' Union's annual OnWords Conference and Annual General Meeting, taking place in Vancouver from May 24 to 27.

"The digital landscape is constantly shifting," Hollingshead adds. "Our Bill of Rights will continue to evolve with the circumstances. The question we will always seek to answer is: What are our members' core demands and principles with respect to their rights in the digital age?"

Greg Hollingshead is available for interviews in Vancouver on Friday, May 25.

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About The Writers' Union of Canada

The Writers' Union of Canada, founded by writers for writers in 1973, is the national voice for Canadian book authors. Its mandate is to support the interests of its members and to defend the freedom of all Canadians

to read, write, and publish. The Writers' Union of Canada provides professional development and career resources for writers, administers reading programs, and provides updated industry information for its members. We also advocate for writers' rights, as well as for their economic well-being.

About Greg Hollingshead

Greg has published six books, not only in Canada but in the U.S., the U.K., Germany, and China. In 1995 his story collection **The Roaring Girl** won the Governor General's Award for Fiction. His 1998 novel **The Healer** was shortlisted for The Giller Prize and won the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize. His 2004 novel **Bedlam** was a Globe and Mail 100 Best Books of the Year, a New York Times Book Review Editor's Choice, and longlisted for the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. Greg is professor emeritus at the University of Alberta and director of writing programs at the Banff Centre. In 2007 he received the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Gold Medal for Excellence in the Arts. He is currently the Chair of the Writers' Union of Canada. He divides his time between Ontario's Algonquin Park and Edmonton.