

WINE WRITERS' CIRCLE OF CANADA

- CONSTITUTION -

WINE WRITERS'
CIRCLE OF CANADA



The Wine Writers' Circle of Canada is a professional association of full-time and part-time wine writers dedicated to the exchange of information on all matters relating to wine and other forms of beverage alcohol, and the communication of this information to the General Public through the Press and other media. Its mission covers a wide range of wine-related services including educational activities, consultation and adjudication. The WWCC also lays down a code of ethical and professional standards to which it requires all of its members to adhere.

Structure

There will be an executive consisting of President, Vice-President and Treasurer. These positions will be filled by members of the WWCC who are in good standing through biennial elections to be held by the last day of each year. All executive positions, including the Presidency, shall be for two years. A nomination form shall be circulated to all members in good standing who may nominate candidates for each position. The nominator shall contact the candidate to ensure that the individual is willing to run for the position. Nominations shall be returned to the President and/or elected Elections Officer and a ballot shall be sent out to all members in good standing. In the event that no candidate receives a majority vote, there shall be a run-off between the top two candidates.

Duties of the Executive

President

- The President's role shall be to set the agenda and chair the meetings.
- When speaking on behalf of the WWCC, the President shall express the views of the majority of the WWCC.
- The President is responsible for correspondence on behalf of the group.
- The President is responsible for maintaining the archives of the group, to be handed on to his/her successor.
- The telephone number for the WWCC will be the telephone number of the President during his/her term of office.

Vice-President

- In the absence of the President, the Vice-President shall take over said duties.

Treasurer

- The Treasurer will be responsible for all financial dealings of the WWCC, i.e. collection of dues, banking, issuing of cheques, preparation of annual financial statements for meetings, etc.
- The Treasurer has signing authority of the WWCC and if absent will ensure that arrangements are made to cover WWCC's financial needs.

Meetings/Tastings

A Secretary will be nominated by the Chair at each meeting on a rotating basis to take minutes, which will be given for circulation to the secretarial services.

For the convenience of the members, tastings will be preceded by a business meeting. No wine will be served before the business meeting is adjourned.

General meetings shall be run in accordance to Robert's Rules of Order. Bi-monthly Executive meetings may be less formal, as dictated by the subject matter of discussion.

The quorum for meetings shall be one-third of the in-town membership in good standing, with the Chair having a casting vote in case of a tie.

Statements to the press or public on behalf of the WWCC as they relate to WWCC activities or collective views, opinions or endorsements must reflect the views of the majority of the membership.

Any changes to WWCC constitution, structure and bylaws must be ratified by a two-thirds majority of the returned vote of the entire membership in good standing.

The WWCC shall endeavour to set up an agenda for the year in January.

Annual Dues

Annual dues are set at a maximum of \$150.00, to be paid before the last day of February of any given year. Out-of-town members and associates shall pay 50% of the annual dues.

Regular Membership

Wine writing involves wine journalism (the "piece") and wine criticism (or evaluation, the "review"), and both can take different forms of expression. A professional wine writer has a following through all or some of print, broadcast, and internet, with professional payment for services.

These qualifications shall apply to all regular members. Members will be audited every two years and shall be required to meet the same standards to retain their membership on a continuing basis.

Qualifications for Membership

Membership in the Wine Writers' Circle of Canada shall be open to those writers actively publishing or broadcasting on the subject of wine, including all beverage alcohol (wines, beers, and spirits). Eligibility shall be acknowledged for any professional who (for payment) writes, films, photographs, tapes, edits or performs on the subject of wine for a print publication, radio or television program, or internet website, and shall include staff and freelance writers, editors, photographers, filmmakers, broadcasters and authors. Membership in the WWCC is not open to any individual who accepts payment for services as a public relations professional, or as a writer for a wine producer, manufacturer, promoter, agent, distributor or seller. The WWCC deems these activities as creating a conflict of interest with the membership's duty to provide information and guidance to the public without bias or the appearance of bias.

Applications for membership shall be previewed by the Membership Committee prior to being forwarded to the general membership for a formal vote. Applicants rejected may re-apply after one (1) year.

Editorial Requirements

The term "wine writer" shall encompass any one or all activities in the categories listed below. Minimum activity shall be based on cumulative work in a single category or on any combination of several categories for professional payment.

Wine Writer: must write at least six (6) wine articles, essays or columns per year, which are published in newspapers, magazines or on internet websites.

Wine Broadcaster: must appear in at least six (6) programs about wine per year on a radio or television program.

Wine Photographer: must illustrate at least six (6) wine articles per year published in newspapers, magazines or on internet websites.

Wine Author: must produce at least one (1) wine book every two years with a minimum print run of two thousand (2,000) copies.

Wine Newsletter Editor/Publisher: must edit and/or publish at least four (4) issues per year with a minimum circulation of one thousand (1,000) copies.

All published or broadcast work must be done for payment with the exception of work done for registered charities. Books, websites and newsletters may be self-published, but should generate revenue. All such countable work must be unique (that is, First Rights only). The

Membership Committee may also request a publisher's statement regarding professional payment.

When assessing an applicant's qualifications, the Membership Committee reserves the right to consider the length, quality, frequency and distribution of the applicant's work. For example, works of very short length or works with a low distribution (less than 1,000 people) will usually not meet the WWCC's requirements because they do not establish the applicant's professional standing. On the other hand, one work of great length may be given more weight by the Membership Committee in assessing the applicant's qualifications.

Membership Requirements are subject to change without prior notice upon the recommendation of the Membership Committee and majority approval of the voting membership.

All members shall pay a set annual membership fee. Members who live more than 30 kilometres from a major urban centre, that both organizes and conducts meetings and tastings on behalf of the WWCC, shall pay one-half of the regular annual membership fee.

New applicants may pay one half the annual dues if accepted for membership after July 1 of any year. Annual dues billed by the end of December shall apply to the following year.

New applicants

New applicants shall be required to submit a completed application form together with nine (9) pieces of work from the previous two years. These may be an assortment of materials from the Editorial Requirements listed above. Materials may be provided in writing (hard copy), but must also be submitted electronically for distribution to the voting membership.

Probationary period

Upon acceptance, new members shall be granted non-voting status for their first year in the WWCC. All other rights and privileges of membership shall be granted. After one (1) full year of non-voting membership, if all minimum requirements continue to be met, new members shall be granted the right to vote and will be accorded all the rights and privileges of full membership.

Membership qualifications shall be audited every second year thereafter.

Existing members

Membership qualifications shall be audited every two years.

Existing members, who fail to meet the minimum Editorial Requirements after a biennial audit, shall have twelve (12) additional months to re-qualify. This twelve (12) month period shall be measured from the date that the member receives notice that he or she no longer meets the

WWCC's minimum requirements. During this period, the member will retain his or her membership but shall forfeit his or her voting rights.

Termination of Membership

Any member who fails to meet Editorial Requirements within twelve (12) months of an audit shall not qualify for further membership.

Any member who fails to live up to the Code of Ethics shall have their membership revoked upon the recommendation of the Executive.

Any member who is to be terminated shall be given one (1) opportunity to appeal to an Appeals Committee on the basis that the WWCC's Membership Standards have not been properly applied in his or her case. This appeal must be brought within thirty (30) days of receiving notice that his or her membership has been revoked. If the Appeals Committee rules that the member's appeal has merit, the Appeals Committee shall forward the member's case to a vote by the membership as a whole, with or without a recommendation.

Any member who fails to pay membership dues within sixty (60) days of invoicing, without acceptable reason, shall have their membership automatically revoked without the need for a recommendation by the Membership Committee or a vote by the members as a whole.

Terminated members may re-apply for membership after twelve (12) months.

Members have a professional responsibility to advise the Membership Committee of any changes of status or conflict of interest that might result in the lapsing of membership and to resign voluntarily in this situation.

Associate Membership

Associate Members are wine writers who are not paid for their work. These include, but are not limited to: social media wine blogging, casual review of wine and spirit related products, informal group seminars. In every circumstance except voting and holding office, they have equal status with Regular Members, provided they have the same qualifications for admission. They must adhere to the same rules and code of ethics as Regular Members.

The probation period for an Associate Membership is two years. An Associate Member cannot hold Executive office.

An Associate Member, having completed their two-year probationary period while demonstrating the required criteria as per WWCC constitution, may upgrade to a Full

Membership, with approval of the Executive Committee and without a formal vote from the membership. No additional fees are applied during the upgrade of an Associate Member.

Associate Members have a professional responsibility to advise the Membership Committee of any changes of status that might result in the lapsing of membership and to resign voluntarily in this situation.

Fees to Be Charged

Services afforded by Members of the Wine Writers' Circle of Canada are not to be provided for free.

Associate Members are encouraged to generate monetary compensation for their services wherever possible.

Members shall charge fees for their professional services (including leading tastings, writing articles, teaching courses, lecturing, judging competitions, conducting tours, consulting, etc).

Suggested minimums:

- Writing/broadcasting \$400.00 per day + expenses
- Lecturing (1/2 day) \$200.00 + expenses
- Tasting Panels/Judging \$50.00 per hour + expenses

CODE OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS

A wine writer has only personal credibility and reputation to fall back on

Professional journalists, whether they write about politics, finance, industry, marketing or wine, earn public respect when they adhere to a code of standards and ethics.

This code requires honesty, truthfulness, accuracy, due diligence with facts, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, protection of confidential sources, as well as independence from the influence of parties with a vested interest, openness, public accountability and full disclosure.

These principles apply to the information-gathering process, to the publication of stories resulting from that research and to wine recommendations and advice dispensed to the hospitality industry and to the public at large.

As a professional organization, the WWCC seeks to hold its members to a high ethical standard because the behaviour of one member reflects on our profession as a whole. Joining the

WWCC means that the journalist has voluntarily chosen to be bound by this ethical code as a matter of professional excellence.

Ethical dilemmas are not always clear or apparent; however, there are two critical guidelines to follow:

WWCC members must have no direct interest in a winery, distillery, brewery, wine agency or any business which promotes and/or sells wine.

WWCC members who have an indirect interest in any of these organizations must practice full public disclosure. (An indirect interest means that the WWCC has a family member with an interest in a winery, distillery, brewery, wine agency or any business which promotes and/or sells wine.)

Examples of conflict of interest include:

- you (or an immediate family member) own shares in a wine company that is the subject of an article;
- a winery pays you, the writer, for signed copy;
- you mention a particular restaurant in an article, without informing the reader that the restaurant is a client.

Examples where there is no conflict of interest:

- you run a wine competition which profits from the promotion of a specific region's wines. However, your promotional work focuses solely on promoting the competition, not the winning wines or their producers;
- a winery hires you to conduct a tasting of its products and you provide objective opinions, disclosing the fact you've been hired to do so by the relevant organization.

If there is any question of a conflict or potential conflict of interest, WWCC members are advised to seek guidance from the Executives Committee. As the behavior of individual WWCC members reflects on the entire group, anyone who is aware that a colleague is in conflict of interest, or who is concerned there may be a conflict, has a responsibility to report this information to the Executive.

In the normal course of business, the WWCC deems that there is no conflict of interest when members receive wine samples, attend special trade tastings with or without meals, visit wineries and accept invitations for travel to distant locales. These are common and accepted practices utilized by other professional associations and wine journalists of global stature. Samples are an integral part of the business of reporting on and reviewing wine; visits provide valuable opportunities for writers to meet winemakers or to witness growing and production conditions, while special invitations offer chances to taste flagship wines or older vintages in the context of the dinner table. However, it is incumbent on every WWCC member to maintain

journalistic integrity notwithstanding these opportunities. The WWCC encourages members to make full disclosure in their writings of any samples, meals and travel – full disclosure is the best way to promote the appearance of unbiased reporting.

Assignment editors who insist a wine writer maintain a higher standard, should be invited to pay for all research materials, samples and trips.

Standards of Etiquette

The WWCC is an association of professionals. Business manners are required with all professional interaction, both inside and out of the circle. This includes, but is not limited to trade tastings, dinners, trips, tours, and email or written communication related to WWCC business. WWCC members are expected to comport themselves in a dignified manner at all times, and to dress in a fashion appropriate to the formality of an event.

WWCC members should RSVP to invitations when requested, arrive at events on time, and follow up with thank you notes when appropriate. In the case of unanticipated lateness or non-attendance, members notify their hosts as soon as reasonably possible.

Unless a host explicitly indicates that an invitation is open to a spouse or other guest, it is inappropriate to bring anyone along, unless that person is in the trade and the request was made -- and agreed upon by the host -- in advance.

Members always demonstrate recognition that they attend wine tastings primarily to taste wines, not to gorge.

WWCC members who have personal dietary considerations should discuss special food requests with the hosts at the time they accept an invitation. It is inappropriate to make special requests of a working kitchen during an event. Requesting more food than provided or asking for special items is unacceptable.

WWCC members must not take anything home from an event unless it is explicitly offered by the host. This includes leftover food or wine.

Operational Aspects

Secretarial assistance shall be retained by the WWCC to provide support, help organize tastings and facilitate the smooth running of the organization. Responsibilities may include: telephoning and emailing members, setting up tastings, photocopying, contacting agents, booking tasting venues, etc. as directed by the WWCC.

As of 07/03/16