

The Crime Writers of Canada Award for Best Unpublished Crime Manuscript

Sponsored by ECW Press for a Prize of \$500

2026 Submission Rules

Introduction

The CWC Award for Best Unpublished Crime Manuscript, first presented in 2007, is part of CWC's mandate to recognize and promote the careers of promising new Canadian crime writers.

The competition is a two-step process. Contestants first submit the opening 5000 words of their manuscript plus a full synopsis of the book. The synopsis is a crucial part of the submission because it is the only way the judges can assess the book's plot development. From the initial submissions, a panel of three judges decides on a longlist of up to ten (10) authors.

In Step Two of the competition, the longlisted authors send in their completed manuscripts. The panel of three judges, plus a judge from ECW, then decide on a shortlist of up to five (5) finalists. This way ECW, the publisher/sponsor, will read all of the finalists' entries.

There is no commitment on ECW Press's part to publish any of the finalists. The finalists are not obligated to accept an offer from ECW.

Entries are purged of all author-identifying information before being sent for judging. Scorecards are used to determine the longlist, shortlist and the winner. All scorecards will be returned to the competition entrants **on or before June 30, 2026.**

Competition Rules

1. The author must be a Canadian citizen or have been granted Permanent Resident status in Canada.
 - a. Authors who are Canadian citizens do not have to be residing in Canada to be eligible.
 - b. Authors who are Permanent Residents of Canada may be of any nationality.
2. The author must not have had a novel, or novel-length work of fiction (50,000+ words) published commercially or self-published in any genre, including literary fiction, whether in print or electronically (e-book or published on the Internet). A novel with an ISBN or ASIN is considered to be published commercially.
3. The author must not have published a novel or novel-length work of fiction (50,000+ words) under their given name, pseudonym and/or written jointly with another author.
4. If the author is published in the areas of nonfiction, novellas, short stories, plays/screenplays or poetry, they **are eligible** to submit.
5. The manuscript must be a crime novel. It must contain a crime (not necessarily a murder) that is solved or thwarted by a protagonist or carried out by them. The crime must be integral to the plot.
6. The manuscript may be any genre of crime novel, including capers, cozies, detective stories, espionage, police procedurals, suspense, or thrillers.
7. The author must have a completed manuscript (50,000 to 110,000 words) **at the time of entry**.
8. All submissions must be made in PDF format.
9. The author must not have a contract from a publisher for their manuscript at the time of entry.

10. If the author accepts a contract for their manuscript during the course of the contest or they decide to self-publish, they must notify the Awards Manager. In the interest of fairness to other writers, their manuscript will be withdrawn from the competition.
11. The author may resubmit the same manuscript in subsequent years, provided it was not previously short-listed for the award **and** all other eligibility criteria listed here are met.
- 12. The submission deadline for the first 5000 words and synopsis is **October 31, 2025 11:59 PM PDT.****
- 13. Entry fees must be paid IN FULL by the deadline date or the submission will be disqualified.**
14. Longlisted authors will be notified no later than January 31, 2026. They must submit their complete manuscript immediately to proceed to Step Two of the competition.
15. To safeguard the anonymity of the entries, a longlisted author must not advertise that they have made the longlist or publish excerpts from their manuscript until the shortlist is announced on April 24, 2026.
16. Questions about whether a manuscript is eligible must be sent to the Awards Manager at awards@crimewriterscanada.com. The decision of Crime Writers of Canada as to whether a manuscript is eligible for the Unpublished Award is binding.

Entry Specifications

All entries must be emailed in PDF format to the Awards Manager at awards@crimewriterscanada.com.

1. First Step – All Entries

- One digital PDF document saved using **the title of the manuscript followed by the year of entry (2026)** and containing:
 - a. The opening 5000 words of the completed crime novel
 - b. A 500 word synopsis of the entire novel.

- Manuscript specifications:
 - a. 12 point Times New Roman or Courier with 1-inch margins
 - b. Header in the upper left hand corner on each page with the title of the manuscript. ***Do not include the author's name in the header.***
 - c. Number each page.

2. Second Step – Longlisted Entries

- Instructions for submission of longlisted manuscripts will be provided in the notification email.
- Manuscript specifications: see above.

Submission Procedure

1. Click the following link to enter your submission and to pay online [\[insert link\]](#).
2. All payments must be in Canadian funds.
3. Entry fees are presented in the table below. CWC Members in good standing receive a 20% discount. We regret that price adjustments cannot be made after submission.

2026 AWARD FEE SCHEDULE	BEST UNPUBLISHED CRIME MANUSCRIPT
MEMBER FEE	\$36
NON-MEMBER FEE	\$45

Important Dates

Submissions Deadline:	October 31st, 2025, 11:59 PST.
Shortlists announced:	April 24th, 2026
Winners announced:	May 29th, 2026
Scorecards returned:	June 30, 2026

Contact

For more information about the contest, please email the Awards Manager at awards@crimewriterscanada.com