

## Benefits for the Self-Employed and Other Good News

Happy New Year to all!

It seems odd to write that now but I only have my own writer's block to blame. Like you, I have been waking every morning to the latest news about Haiti's unfolding tragedy. By comparison, the small problems of grant writing, budgets that won't balance, tax returns, and gray skies above are indeed trivial. I've made my donation to help in the only small way that I can and now the question of what to say in these times does block what little creative flow I can dig up.

I went looking for some good news to balance the bad. Here's what I found.

The federal government has just passed legislation so that independent contractors may have access to social benefits. The Fairness for the Self-Employed Act extends EI maternity, parental and adoption benefits, in addition to sickness and compassionate care benefits, to self-employed workers in Canada. This legislation also extends Employment Insurance (EI) sickness and compassionate care benefits to self-employed residents of Quebec. This is a major boon to self-employed artists and arts workers across the country who may opt into the program between January 31 and April 1. They would also be responsible for making premium payments starting with the tax year in which they apply to the program. To access EI special benefits, self-employed individuals would need to have earned a minimum of \$6,000 in self-employed earnings over the preceding calendar year.

With a program start date of January 2010, claims could be made as early as January 1, 2011 as there is a minimum one year wait before a person may claim benefits.

An important caveat is that self-employed workers could opt out of the Employment Insurance program at the end of any taxation year as long as they have never received benefits. If they have, they would be required to pay premiums on their self-employment income for as long as they are self-employed. For life-long self-employed persons -- like artists -- this seems a major barrier that we might want to ask to be amended in the future.

Complete information about the new program is available from [http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/self\\_employed\\_workers.shtml](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/self_employed_workers.shtml)

TELUS is the first Canadian company to ever receive the honour to designated the top philanthropic corporation for 2010 by the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Nine TELUS Community Boards in Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, Rimouski and Atlantic Canada guide the company's local community support. The TELUS Community Boards are comprised of community leaders and TELUS team members who come together to make local funding decisions and seek out charitable partners - an approach to corporate philanthropy unique in Canada - ensuring the decision-making remains within the community. Since 2005, these boards have given

more than \$21 million to arts and culture, education and sports, and health and well-being in our environment.

The Actors' Fund of Canada recently set a new record for the amount of financial aid delivered to industry members in a single year, topping \$600,000 in 2008. The Fund has helped over 10,000 entertainment industry workers recover from illness, injury or other circumstances causing severe economic and personal hardship since it was founded in 1958.

And, last but not least, I want to express my pleasure that Nan Carson has accepted the position of Labour Relations Manager. Nan has been serving as interim manager since Sandy Crawley's departure. I know you'll be as happy as I am that there is such a capable and experienced person taking up the reins of a very important job here at PACT.

*(Have you checked out PACT's Conference page on Facebook yet? You don't have to be a member of Facebook to get the latest news on the Conference any time you want. Just search for 2010 PACT Conference and AGM on Facebook.)*