

ACT ON IT – LOCALLY

Connecting with local politicians and partners

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Reasons for connecting with others

Do partner with other organizations:

- As community outreach - to work on community needs, to assist with community projects;
- As part of an advocacy campaign - to find a champion, to amplify your message, to share the workload, to create a coalition of groups.
- Become visible and get new members.
- Go to community meetings, offer to speak to other groups

Most cities and towns have a community information service or the local library, which can direct you to potential partners. Also articles in the local community newspaper might also help. Members are an excellent source of information of projects, programmes or organizations that the club might wish to become involved with.

Some questions to consider before partnering

- Are the values of the organization compatible with CFUW?
- Is the partnership long-term or for a single event?
- Will the partnership be formal or more casual?

- Who in the Club reviews and manages the partnership?
- How are the members involved?
- Is there a written contract or is it verbal?
- Are there Terms of Reference for coalitions?
- How is the partnership terminated?
- How do the representatives/volunteers report to the Board?
- Will there be newsletter articles or reports to the members?

Levels of government and responsibilities

Municipalities

Three major forms of local governments:

- Towns, cities, villages and townships - Mayor or Reeve, Councillors or Aldermen
- Counties – Warden
- Regions – Regional Chair

This level of government, **closest to the people**, is **responsible for water, public transit, zoning or land use, libraries, museums, parks, recreation, waste collection, sewage, emergency services, police services. In some provinces, child care services management.**

Provincial

Elected members of the provincial legislatures are Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), except

- Ontario - Members of the Provincial Parliament (MPP)
- Québec - Members of the National Assembly (MNA)
- Newfoundland and Labrador - Members of the House of Assembly (MHA).

Provincial governments are responsible for areas such as education, health care, social services, municipalities, some natural resources, road regulations.

Federal

Elected members are Members of Parliament

Federal government is responsible such things as finance, especially items that transfer money to people and/or provinces, justice, especially the Criminal Code, defense, communications, citizenship, aboriginal affairs including education, among others

Band Councils

Similar responsibilities to municipalities but are connected to the federal government via the Indian Act, rather than the provincial governments.

School Boards

Each of the provinces has school boards (in New Brunswick, these are called District Education Councils) that provide community input and governance to local schools. These can include separate Boards for Catholics, as well as ones for English and French.

How to contact local politicians and decision-makers?

Before you contact any official, if you are doing this on behalf of CFUW, **please check out the CFUW Advocacy Guidelines.**

Municipalities

Contact information:

Check the website for your town, city, county or region for contact information for the elected officials, meeting times.

Writing:

When writing to Council - address it to Mayor (Reeve/Warden/Regional Chair) and Councillors. In order to go on Agenda, check with the City Clerk or Town Clerk. Also check the timing of meetings, so that the information is sent in appropriate time to reach the Council.

Attend meetings:

Check the website for meetings, (both Council and Committees), for agendas and minutes, and for any public consultations.

Deputations:

Deputations, or oral presentations, to Council concerning specific issues on the agenda, request to appear as a delegation – check with your City Clerk or Town Clerk

Petitions:

Again check with your local government and the Clerk; address to Council and request an action; have this copied on each page; have signatures and address; electronic ones must also include valid email address; suggestion to include a disclosure statement on every page of the petition

Other advice:

Google Search on deputations to city council will bring up a number of guides, including

- Federation of Canadian Municipalities - https://www.fcm.ca/Documents/tools/International/Your_Guide_to_Municipal_Institutions_in_Canada_EN.pdf
- Perth, Ontario also has some good guides which you will find in the drop down under Council http://www.perthcounty.ca/county_council

Provincial

Contact information:

Elected members of the provincial legislatures are:

- Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), except
- Ontario - Members of the Provincial Parliament (MPP)
- Québec - Members of the National Assembly (MNA)
- Newfoundland and Labrador - Members of the House of Assembly (MHA).

To find your member, Google the name of the province, plus the name of legislator, e.g. BC MLA. Some of the municipalities list all the elected representatives in their districts on their websites.

Writing:

When writing to your local provincial legislator (MLAs/MPPs/MNAs/MHAs), follow suggestions as found in “Writing Powerful Letters” as found either in the *CFUW Advocacy Handbook*, or in this booklet.

Meetings:

More information concerning interviews can be found in “Meeting with Elected Representatives” in the *CFUW Advocacy Handbook*, or in this booklet.

Visiting:

At the Legislatures, the Public Galleries are open usually on a first-come-first-serve basis. It is best to check with your provincial representative, in case reservations are required. With Committee meetings that you might be interested in, also check with your legislator’s office.

Consultations:

For the provinces, this can mean either oral or written briefs. Your provincial Council may send out speaking points or templates. If not, and you want to present, speak to your Regional Director or Regional Vice President concerning this.

Petitions:

The websites of the provincial Legislatures will have information concerning petitioning the Legislatures. Again do this in conjunction with your Regional Director and/or the Regional Vice President

Federal

Your Club may have a number of MPs depending on the geographic size of the Club. You also might be sharing MPs with another Club, depending on how the ridings overlap.

Find your MP by Postal Code:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>

Alphabetical list of all Members of Parliament (includes their constituency):

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/MembersOfParliament/MainMPsCompleteList.aspx?Language=E&TimePeriod=Current>

For maps of electoral districts, as of August 2015

<http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=cir/maps2&document=index&lang=e>

Writing:

When writing to your local MP, follow suggestions in “Writing Powerful Letters” as found either in the *CFUW Advocacy Handbook*, or in this document.

Meetings:

More information concerning interviews can be found in “Meeting with Elected Representatives” in the *CFUW Advocacy Handbook*, or elsewhere in this booklet.

Visiting:

Similar to provincial Legislatures, the Public Galleries of the House of Commons and Senate are open usually on a first-come-first-serve basis. Also check with your MP, in order to make reservations for the Members’ Galleries. With Committee meetings that you might be interested in, also check with your legislator’s office or the Parliamentary website, www.parl.gc.ca

Petitions:

The Parliamentary website will have information concerning petitioning the House of Commons and Senate. Your MP may suggest doing this if he/she is supportive of your cause. Again do this in conjunction with your Regional Director and/or the Regional Vice President, who will in turn inform the National Office.

Why and when to meet with politicians and decision-makers

In order to influence anyone, there are two things that are very important:

the message, the person and the organization must be **credible**;

a working **relationship** should be developed between the people involved, in this case the elected officials and the advocate.

Why meet with local politicians?

There are a number of goals for meeting with your various legislators. You want to:

- Get CFUW issues on the legislator's map;
- Make sure they know:
 - Who CFUW is;
 - What CFUW does for the community; and
 - That you and the local membership are paying attention to them.

Identify your ongoing contact person in your legislator's office who handles your issues. For MPs and provincial representatives, this will often be a senior assistant working in the constituency office.

It is important for your elected official to hear from you. Often they will take into consideration constituents' views on controversial issues. Remember that you, and CFUW, are a valuable resource, that

you represent the community, and are a good source of information about that community.

Even if they are on the opposite side of the issues you are concerned about, working to build a relationship can be helpful on the issues where there is some common ground.

When to meet with them?

Annually with federal and/or provincial elected representatives. Consider setting up an annual meeting to introduce your new executive, and present the newly adopted CFUW policies from the Annual General Meeting, plus any other pressing issues of concern

Short meeting about pressing issues with any level of government, consider asking for a short meeting (approximately 7 minute meeting) just before an important vote.

Locally attend Council and Committee meetings, especially if there is a discussion about something that concerns you.

Make connections with them - Invite your elected officials to one of your **social events**; invite them as a **speaker**. This is especially true for local politicians and school board officials who understand and know your own area. Invite them to a coffee party or interest group; involve them in a fundraiser. Getting to know them socially may help when you need to connect with them officially.

Meeting with elected officials

Before a meeting

Determine the objectives for your visit, your reason for visiting. Do not go just to introduce yourselves. Use a letter for that. You do not want to waste their time, or yours.

- An annual meeting, with the newly adopted resolutions, complete with handouts from National or the Provincial Councils for the staff and the elected official.
- To express concern about an issue

Determine what you want the politician to do:

- To learn about CFUW issues of concern, in particular the latest adopted resolutions
- To support legislation or a by-law, or to not support the same
- To put forward motions – in the legislatures, the House of Commons, the Councils
- To deposit petitions from constituents - electronic petitions are allowed. If this affects an area beyond your Club's region, check with your Regional Director or the National Office for guidance.

Do your research.

- If this is more than a friendly annual meeting, decide on your “ask”, understand its feasibility and the implications of your request and how it can benefit your community.
- Have your facts, and where possible have local stories. The National Office will have provided background information nation-wide. If not, call or email the National Office to ask advice - cfuwadvocacy@rogers.com; 1-888-220-9606.

Know about your representative.

- Take a bit of time before your meeting to familiarize yourself with their background and personal life.
- What committees do they sit on? What role do they play in their party (are they are Minister? Opposition Critic?)
- What is their party's position, especially if you are speaking to them on a particular topic? Have they sponsored any legislation recently?
- Try to learn their point-of-view on the topic.

Prepare notes and rehearse your presentation, if necessary. Always leave time for discussion.

Never go alone, but limit the delegation to no more than four where possible. The President will normally lead the delegation and, with the advice of her executive, will decide who will accompany her and who will say what and when they will say it.

Be prepared to meet with staff rather than the representative. Just as valuable.

At the meeting

Thank them for meeting with you. Tell them a little bit about your Club, particularly if the person is not familiar with CFUW and how it serves the community.

Don't just drink tea or talk about grandchildren. Leave that for a social event.

Introduce your CFUW Club and how it serves the community. Keep this very brief.

Present the issue you're concerned about. Be brief and to the point. Many visits of a few minutes with vital information on upcoming votes are better than one long one that is not relevant to their work.

Tell them what you want them to do, but do not attack them, try to work with them.

- Do have something that they might be able to do – you might have one big “ask”, but also have a doable one.
- If the issue you are speaking on is a national one, CFUW National Office briefs will give specific actions that legislators can take such as supporting a bill, signing on to a declaration, or committing to pursue an issue within their caucus.
- If it is local, you would have determined this beforehand.

Be prepared to be told it's not their jurisdiction, that they'll think about it, etc. Find a way to involve them in the issue.

Leave information with them to reference after the meeting – a one-page fact sheet is ideal.

Foolproof Steps to a Flawless Meeting

1. Thank them for meeting with you.
2. Introduce CFUW and how it serves the community.
3. Present the issue you're concerned about.
4. Tell them what you want them to do.
5. Give them political news from your area.
6. Leave your issue briefs.
7. Thank them again.
8. Exchange business cards.
9. Call CFUW National Office for support.
10. Follow up after the meeting

Exchange business cards, and stay in touch.

Thank them again.

Always be nice to the staff. They are the link. Exchange business cards with them.

After the meeting

Call and thank the assistant.

Send a letter to your representative thanking them for their time and reinforcing the key points made at the meeting.

Report back to your Executive and write a report of your meeting for the club newsletter. Send a note to your Regional Director.

Writing powerful letters

A letter is still a forceful form of advocacy. It is important that elected officials hear the views of their constituents on matters of public policy, government programming and service provision. You are that voice!

A good letter or email is succinct, states your position and sticks to the issue

Tips for writing

Know your topic:

- Requests for letters from Clubs to elected officials that come from National CFUW or your Provincial Council have been researched, and are based on CFUW policy.
- If it is a local issue, you will need to do the research, and know what you want to ask. As part of your research, do check out **CFUW Advocacy Guidelines** and the **CFUW Policy Book**. If there is no policy to cover what you are asking for, develop and adopt a local resolution as long as it does not contravene CFUW Mission.

Know who to write to:

- As with meetings, do research your issue and know who is responsible, who is making the decisions? Knowing which of your local representatives (whether federal, provincial, municipal, regional or county level) to contact about an issue is important.
- When writing your letter, do **use the proper titles**.
 - You will find information about how to address your letters federal and provincially under Styles of address on the Canadian Government site for Canadian Heritage, or Google Canada Styles of Address if the page has moved.
 - Those in cabinet should be addressed using The Honourable, a title that federal cabinet ministers keep.

- At the municipal level, a mayor should be addressed as His/Her Worship (full name), Mayor of..., and the salutation should be Dear Sir/Madam.

Sending the message:

- Email is particularly appropriate for time-sensitive situations – just before a vote or an important discussion in caucus. Do remember, email is not private. It can be easily forwarded to others or misdirected accidentally.
- Letters to MPs can be sent postage free to:
[NAME, MP name of riding]
House of Commons Ottawa,
ON K1A 0A6
- When you want a letter to go to the entire municipal Council, address it to Mayor (name) and Council, Dear Sir/Madam and Council Members.

Content:

- The information in your letter should be **current, well researched and accurate.**
- Identify yourself as a constituent in your letter.
- Make the letter **one page** if possible. State your concern and what action you want your representative to take.
- Identify how the issue is **linked to, or will impact, your community.**
- Where possible, **know the policies/position of the person** to whom you are writing, and if they represent you federally and provincially, investigate the position of the party they belong to. Has your elected representative or his/hers party taken a position on this issue before? You may want to commend them for their position, or you may want to urge them to change their position.
- **Ask a question** and ask for a response, particularly if it is not clear what position your representative has taken, or will take on the issue(s) you have raised.
- **Include your contact information**, including email address, in the letter.
- Always **proofread especially emails with predicative text.** You could be writing gibberish!
- Use CFUW resources! We have lots of sample letters on our Member Resources website www.cfuwadmin.org. For Log In information, check with your Club President or the National Office.

CFUW specific:

- Follow the [CFUW Guidelines for Advocacy](#) if the letter is coming from the Club.
- If our letter is from a CFUW Club, include a “boilerplate” explaining who the letter is from – the organization and more importantly, the local club.