

THINKING OUTSIDE THE CLUB

ACT ON IT - LOCALLY!

Advocacy at the Club level

During the year your Club might be alerted to a problem in your community.

What can you do as a Club?

First, you must clarify your concern – check your sources, establish which level of government is involved, who else is involved

Then, is there CFUW policy to support your Club's actions?

In order to find policy, check out www.cfuwontcouncil.ca/policy.html
Here there are links to

- w the specific Ontario Council resolutions,
- w the main CFUW Policy Book Online, as well as
- w the IFUW Resolutions page.

If there is none

For a local issue, a Club can pass its own resolution just as long as it does not conflict with CFUW's policies.

For a provincial or federal issue, consider writing a resolution as a first step in advocacy, ask questions, do research (do check the CFUW Advocacy Guidelines before you get started)

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What do you want to do about the issue?

Determine your target audience:

- w One of our most important audiences is **our own membership**. Information and knowledge travels. Make sure your members know and have information about the concerns and what your club is trying to do.
- w **Elected officials** are the traditional object of most forms of advocacy and lobbying by groups and individuals. These are the ones making the decisions.
- w However the **public** and **other community groups** with the same concerns can be the very important first step. Coalitions with like-minded groups are extremely effective.

Getting our message across

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

Credibility - the message, the person and the organization must be credible;
Relationship - this needs to be developed between the elected officials and the advocate

Determine strategies:

When you wish to give your support to a specific issue, there are various **strategies** that can be used to argue your Club's point of view.

1. Meeting with others in the community who are concerned:

- w **Join coalitions**. Attend meetings. Be visible and network. Speak to other CFUW Clubs. Ontario Council can help you with this.
- w **Attend public meetings**. Be visible! It's also an opportunity to network.
- w Organize **public education** opportunities such as program nights, public meetings, forums. Raising awareness is a valuable form of social action.

2. Writing articles, letters and briefs:

- w Speak to our own members. Write articles for your **Club's newsletter**.
- w Write **Letters to the Editor**: Be specific, be brief, and use CFUW guidelines.
- w Write and present **briefs** to local authorities. For more information on how to write these, see *Nuts and Bolts of Influencing Public Policy*, www.cfuw.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=39 and for examples see the Issues section of the Ontario Council website, www.cfuwontcouncil.ca,

and **the most basic and still most effective**

- w **Write letters and emails:**

WRITING EFFECTIVE LETTERS AND EMAILS

- § **A letter, especially a legible hand-written one, is a forceful form of advocacy.**
- § A good letter and email is succinct, states your position and sticks to the issue.
- § The **information** that is included in any form of advocacy should be **current, well-researched and accurate**.
- § Remember to **verify any information**, especially that found on the Internet, for accuracy and political orientation.
- § **Know who to write to** – is the concern at the municipal, regional or county level?; is it federal, provincial, municipal or an issue with ramifications at all levels?
 - **Where to find out?** Municipal life in Ontario is very complicated. Two links sponsored by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario might help:
 - § Your Local Government www.yourlocalgovernment.com
 - § Ontario Municipal Home Pages, which lists all the websites of the local governments in Ontario www.yourlocalgovernment.com/ylg/ontario.html , as well as
 - § the Government Pages, or Blue Pages, in the telephone book
- § Where possible, know the policies of the person to whom you are writing, or federally and provincially the policy of the party of the representative.

- § Send letter on letterhead, use a “boilerplate” description of the Club and of CFUW the first time you write to a person.
- § When writing your letter, **refer to your elected official as follows:**
- A Mayor should be addressed as His/Her Worship (full name), Mayor of (name), the salutation of the letter should be Dear Sir/Madam: or Dear Mr./Madam Mayor:
 - MPPs who are in Cabinet should be addressed using *The Honourable* and *M.P.P.* after their name. For example:
 - § The Honourable Deborah Matthews M.P.P.
Minister Responsible for Women’s Issues
 - § The salutation for the letter should be Dear Minister:
 - An M.P.P. not in Cabinet is addressed, for example, as Ms. Susan Rhodes M.P.P. The salutation would be Dear Ms. Rhodes,
 - For more information concerning styles of address, check out www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/pe/address3_e.cfm
- § When writing, always use a subject line. If discussing a bill or an agenda item, identify it clearly. Refer to it by number and name.
- § Keep the letter to one page if possible. Remember short paragraphs invite further reading.
- § State your concern; note the policy that justifies your CFUW involvement; use 2-3 well researched points from current, valid sources to support your position; restate your concern and what action you want. **Ask a question, then you might get an answer**
- § **Follow CFUW guidelines** (see page 8) if the letter is coming from the Club.
- § The President, or a designated member of the Executive, signs the letter.
- § Have contact information available in the letter, not just on the envelope.
- § **Email is particularly appropriate for time-sensitive situations** – just before a vote or an important discussion in caucus.
- § **Be careful of email.** It is not private. It can be easily **forwarded** to others or misdirected accidentally.
- § When you send an email to your elected official, always include your mailing address in your email.
- § **Never** send emails in haste; always proofread.

- § An effective email letter should follow guidelines similar to those for a letter, but should be briefer.
- § Send copies of your letter to the appropriate people, including other organizations.

Think of the letter as the culmination of your thought processes.
A good letter is succinct, states your position, and sticks to the issue.

3. Meeting with elected officials and policy makers:

HAVING A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

§ **Making the appointment**

It should not be too difficult to find time to meet with your political representatives. Local politicians should be available for appointments quite easily. As for MPs and MPPs, when the Legislature or the House is not in session, politicians are often in their ridings and available for meetings. Even when the Legislature or the House is in session, most politicians spend one day a week in their home riding constituency office – usually Fridays.

The easiest way to set up a meeting is to phone the city or region offices or the constituency office and ask to speak to the scheduler. It is important to tell them who you represent and what you would like to discuss at the meeting. If you have already sent an introductory letter, remind them of the date it was sent and refer to any reply you have received. Be flexible when scheduling a date. Confirm the date and time of the meeting in a letter or email including in it what you want to discuss and the people who will be there.

§ **Before the meeting**

Discuss the purpose of the planned visit with your Club Executive and get their approval.

Determine the objectives for your visit. You do not want to waste their time, or your own.

Collect information about your representatives, their committees (local, provincial and federal representatives belong to committees) or parliamentary work, their background and their party platform. Be aware, if possible, of any statements they have made or positions they have taken on any issues similar to the one(s) you want to address. It shows them you are aware of their efforts.

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

Never go alone, but try to limit the delegation to no more than four.

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.

§ During the meeting

If you are bringing information such as a brief or Resolutions with you, have copies for each member of your delegation, as well as your representative and any staff members present.

Thank them for meeting with you.

The meeting will have two primary components:

- the presentation of your position as representative of CFUW and your club; and
- the gathering of information from your elected representative.

From the Canadian Medical Association

“MPs/MPPs need to be kept well informed.

They talk to Ministers.

They talk to other MPs/MPPs in caucus.

They serve on committees.”

Get to the point quickly, explain your Club, CFUW, Ontario Council (if you are meeting with MPPs or local officials), and the reason that you are there, presenting your facts and ideas in a clear concise manner. If the reason is the newly passed resolutions, explain the process.

Don't be awed or intimidated; they are your elected official, but do listen to their point of view.

Your elected representative will be primarily interested in information that is relevant to concerns currently facing the legislature, the House or the City Council, highlight these issues.

Once you have outlined your Club's and CFUW's concerns, ask for their position and that of their party.

Feel free to make notes on their replies.

If you are asked a question you can't answer, offer to forward the information to their office (and then do it). If it concerns resolutions, offer to have the Club which

prepared the resolution send them more detail.

Ask what you can do to be helpful.

Respect your time limit [usually 30 minutes], and don't overstay your welcome.

Leave information behind [copy of relevant Brief(s), your Club brochure, CFUW and Ontario Council brochures].

§ **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 report to your Regional Director.

§ **Other connections**

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.

Other reasons why your Club might want to contact your local MPs and MPPs:

- To introduce them to new CFUW and Ontario Council policies and to inform them of a particular concern that might not be before the Legislature or Parliament.
- To provide information on a particular issue. MPPs and MPs are members of caucuses where issues are discussed with party leaders. Most elected representatives are also part of committees where bills are studied.
- To ask them to pose a question in the Legislature or House.
- To ask them to lobby their colleagues, and the responsible Minister.
- To request a response and a report on what action will be taken.

CFUW GUIDELINES FOR ADVOCACY

- ± When writing, or speaking, “on behalf of CFUW” and asking for some action, this **must be based on CFUW policy** as found in the *CFUW Policy Book* or *Ontario Council Resolutions*.

The words “on behalf of CFUW” can then be used.

When there is no policy, letters may be written asking for information only – “Our club is studying ...”

If a Club needs to react to a local situation when there is no policy, a vote shall be taken of its membership before committing the Club to any course of action. Any action must be consistent with CFUW purposes.

- ± **Local clubs write to their local elected officials and local MPs, MPPs**, but not to the Premier, the Prime Minister or Cabinet Minister (unless he/she is the local MPP or MP).

Dealing with your own MPs and MPPs is what creates the momentum and potentially adds to the pressure.

- ± **Letters must be sent out under the signature of the Club President, or designated member of the Executive, on Club letterhead.** The Club President or designated member of the executive committee should have the support and authorization of her executive.

The individual club member is encouraged to write to any politician on any issue about which she has a concern.

She may use information from CFUW sources, but she may not write “on behalf of CFUW”, or use CFUW letterhead.

ADVOCACY ACTION TIMETABLE FOR CLUBS

FALL

Ontario Council September Standing Committee meeting will have available:

- § template for the annual letters for an Ontario-specific resolution that might have been passed at the spring AGM, and
- § template for the annual letter for MPPs concerning the National resolutions for Ontario
- § handouts concerning advocacy

National packages will be sent out containing:

- § the Resolutions as adopted at the AGM, their Action Plans, and suggested letters for MPs
- § as well as information concerning proposing resolutions for the current year.

Please send these annual letters:

- § to your MP(s) and MPP(s), as well as
- § other interested community organizations.

Offer to meet with the elected officials:

- § to talk about the Resolutions and
- § other issues that you might have.

Start your year with your Issues Committee.

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Ontario Council and National CFUW will be asking for your support on Action Alerts including briefs, letters, and public consultations. If you feel that your Club can help, we thank you for your support.

Ontario Council will be presenting its own briefs and letters to the Government of Ontario. These will be published on the website (www.cfuwontcouncil.ca). The information from these can be used by Clubs for their own presentations.

WINTER

Ontario Council January Standing Committees meeting

Receive, distribute and discuss this year's proposed Resolutions, from both the National CFUW and Ontario Council.

SPRING

Ontario Council March Standing Committees meeting

Ontario Council AGM with speakers, workshops and the business meeting including the discussion of Ontario-specific resolutions

Ontario Resolutions as passed, along with the Action Plans, are available online after the AGM – www.cfuwontouncil.ca/resolutions.html

SUMMER

National AGM: speakers, workshops, resolutions.

Resolutions as passed online after AGM – www.cfuw.org