

## STARTING OR ENERGIZING AN ISSUES GROUP

Starting an Issues group can open the door to life-long learning, civic engagement and even a bit of fun. It all begins with an “issue”, a concern.

An Issues Group or Advocacy Committee is simply a group of members who meet to discuss issues of concern and develop a plan of action. The group may be an informal interest group or a structured committee with the chair as a member of the Board or Executive.

### GETTING STARTED

If your club is interested in starting a group to discuss and work on advocacy issues, speak to your Club President or Interest Group leader. Sign up members at your club’s first meeting in September or start with a few members that you know are interested in advocacy. It is okay to start small and there’s nothing wrong with staying small!

### KITCHEN TABLE TALKS

CFUW groups often meet around the kitchen table. It’s comfortable and informal. Meetings might be organized around a topic that everyone has been challenged to explore, or members can introduce issues of concern. There is no need for action at the beginning, just start with education and raising awareness of issues.

Begin with issues that are easy to discuss/study. For example:

- Check CFUW’s Facebook page or Facebook Group for ideas
- Refer to recently adopted Resolutions
- Pay attention to the media, radio, TV, print, or online.
- Use action items from CFUW newsletters to spark discussion;
- Learn about issues that are important to individual members;
- Key issues within your community or province

Like other interest groups, try to meet on a regular monthly basis. Some Club Issues Groups have gone on field trips, had guest speakers, organized film screenings, etc.

### TAKING ACTION

There may be times when you decide to move beyond studying and talking about issues to taking action. Actions include writing letters to or meeting with your local politicians, organizing a public event, or working on the adopted resolutions. Become familiar with the CFUW Guidelines for Advocacy and discuss your plans with your President.

Sign up to receive emails from CFUW National (i.e. the Club Action News) and your Provincial Council. You may be asked from time to time, to take actions such as writing letters to your MP and signing petitions. CFUW often creates template letters that can be adapted by Clubs or individuals. Any help that you can give will be appreciated.

Politicians are much more likely to listen to their constituents (i.e. you and your members), which is what makes CFUW's network across the country so valuable. As one of the few remaining national women's organizations with the capacity to advocate, our voice has become more important than ever.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

If your group decides to take on your club's advocacy work:

- Have a member of the advocacy group sit on your club's Executive. This ensures everyone is kept up-to-date on the issues you are working on, and what the Club is being asked to support.
- Use your club newsletter to keep Club members informed on the activities of your advocacy group.
- Take part in the CFUW business portion of your General Meetings and tell members about the issues your group is working on.
- If your group is becoming tired, go back to Kitchen Table Talks. Brainstorm to develop alternative plans, like an issues-based book club, discussion group, speakers, or field trips. Sometimes you just need a holiday. Saving the world can be exhausting!

## **HELPFUL RESOURCES**

1. Register your Issues Group contact on the [CFUW membership website](#).
  - National Office sometimes emails time sensitive template letters or an action alert package directly to the chair of Issues groups, or to the club president.
2. [Click here](#) to subscribe to CFUW's Club Action newsletters.
3. [CFUW Facebook Group](#) gives members across the country a chance to interact, share news articles, and action items like petitions.
4. The [Advocacy and Resolutions](#) section of the CFUW National Members' website opens the door to advocacy resources and information about campaigns the National Office is working on. The login is "viewonly". The password is "cfuw4321".