

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!

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.

NOTE ON SENDING LETTERS ON BEHALF OF CFUW:

Local CFUW Clubs **write to your local MPs, provincial and municipal politicians.**

Any letter sent **on behalf of CFUW**, must be **based on CFUW policy.**

If the letter is sent **on behalf of the local CFUW club**, the letter must be **based on CFUW policy**. These policies can be found online under Advocacy on our website. The letter must be sent out under the **signature of the club president**, or designated member of the executive, on **club letterhead**.

The **individual club member** is always encouraged to write to any politician on any issue about which she has a concern. She may use information from CFUW sources, but we ask that she **not write "on behalf of CFUW", nor use CFUW letterhead.**

Know who to write to:

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.

You can find your local politicians usually from your municipality's website – for all local, provincial and federal officials. If not, check the Elections Canada website and the elections website for your province.

When writing your letter, do use the proper titles:

You will find information about how to address your letters federal and provincially here 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, but not provincial cabinet ministers. Write to cabinet ministers who are your own representatives. If not, speak to the National Office, they can help.

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, M.P Riding name]
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, include your contact information, including email address, in the letter.

Make the letter one page if possible. State your concern and what action you want your representative to take. Follow **CFUW Advocacy Guidelines**, please.

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/her 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. You may need to edit letters from National or provincial Councils to reflect the position of your representative and his/her party.

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.

Always proofread especially emails with predicative text. You could be writing gibberish!

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 your Club's boilerplate, explaining who the letter is from.

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



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