



Club Advocacy Handbook

RESEARCH ♦ NETWORK ♦ ASK

July 2026

Contents

Introduction

Section 1: The Core Strategy Matrix

Phase 1: Research — Understand the Landscape

Phase 2: Network — Build Strategic Coalitions

Phase 3: Ask — Execute & Influence Policy

Section 2: The Canadian Jurisdictional Guide

1. Municipal Governments (The Front Line)

2. Provincial Government (Legislative Assembly of Ontario / Queen's Park)

3. Federal Government (Government of Canada)

Section 3: The Meeting Playbook

Pre-Meeting Preparation

At the Meeting

The Follow-Up Protocol

Section 4: The Correspondence Guide

Form of Address Protocol

Introduction

Every impactful movement begins with a clear framework. Whether addressing a local neighborhood concern or responding to a provincial or national directive from CFUW, use this complete continuum of action to transform community support into systemic change.

Core Compliance & Relationships

The Credibility Rule: To influence decision-makers, your message, your team, and your organization must be credible, and you must build working relationships with those involved.

The Mandate Check: Before contacting any official or executing a campaign on behalf of a CFUW Club, you must verify that there is an active CFUW National or Ontario Council policy supporting your cause. All actions must strictly adhere to the CFUW Guidelines for Advocacy.

SECTION 1: THE CORE STRATEGY MATRIX

Every campaign moves through the same three phases — from understanding an issue, to building support for it, to acting on it:

Phase 1: Research — Understand the Landscape

Strategic Focus & Core Objectives

- Deconstruct the problem: *Why, What, Who, When, Where, and How.*
- Define your motivation: *Why are you interested?*
- Study the history, current context, and what has already been done.
- Review current legislation/bylaws: *Is it being changed, amended, or repealed?*
- Assess international studies and comparisons, where relevant (even for municipal projects).

Tactical Actions, Questions & Deliverables

Gather Intelligence & Fact-Check

- Source reliable, up-to-date data and verify source validity.

- Utilize digital tools, local libraries (and library research staff), local newspapers, and the Library/research pages of the Ontario Legislature.
- Gather local stories and concrete local examples to bolster your arguments.

Map the Power

- Identify the specific decision-makers, their staff, their personal interests, and their current agenda layout.
- Decode the policy process: *How and when are decisions made? What other external pressures face the government or Council?*

Research as Advocacy

- If no policy exists, ask questions verbally and in writing to develop it (“Our club is studying...”). Draft and submit a formal local resolution that aligns with the CFUW Mission.

Phase 2: Network — Build Strategic Coalitions

Strategic Focus & Core Objectives

- Target your critical audiences, prioritizing internal club membership before expanding outward.
- Engage external stakeholders: *Who else sees this as a problem? What do they feel are the solutions?* Ask their opinions.

Tactical Actions, Questions & Deliverables

Mobilize Partnerships

- Write articles for club newsletters and leverage social media to secure internal alignment.
- Map out allies: *Who else is involved now, or could be involved?*
- Coordinate joint efforts with neighboring clubs, join existing coalitions, or support parallel community groups.
- Identify and secure a respected public champion to endorse your campaign.

Phase 3: Ask — Execute & Influence Policy

Strategic Focus & Core Objectives

- Frame data into an undeniable “Ask” tailored specifically to the target decision-makers.
- Transition public momentum into definitive policy shifts.

Tactical Actions, Questions & Deliverables

Deploy Your Tactics

- Formally connect with elected officials (always coordinate this with the knowledge of your Club President).
- Deploy multi-channel media tactics: write unique Op-Eds, specialized Letters to the Editor, and host public forums.
- Organize public demonstrations, host special events, or create targeted scholarships to maintain community visibility.

SECTION 2: THE CANADIAN JURISDICTIONAL GUIDE

Before building your “Ask,” you must target the correct level of government. Politicians respond best to local pressure from respected community groups.

1. Municipal Governments (The Front Line)

The level closest to the people. It provides most daily services with increasing responsibilities yet possesses the least control and fewest taxation tools.

- **Scope:** Emergency services, police, fire, transportation, recreation, schools, courts, sewer, water, libraries, hospitals, social services, childcare service management, historical societies, community centers, home care social assistance, social housing, zoning/land use, waste management, road management, and snow clearance.
- **Leadership Formats:**
 - *Towns, Cities, Villages, Townships:* Led by a Mayor or Reeve, alongside Councillors or Aldermen.
 - *Counties:* Led by a Warden.

- *Regions*: Led by a Regional Chair.
- *Band Councils*: Similar responsibilities to municipalities but connected to the Federal government via the *Indian Act* rather than provincial systems.
- *School Boards (Ontario)*: 31 English public secular, 4 French public secular (ACÉPO), 29 English Catholic, 8 French Catholic, 1 English Protestant Separate, and 7 public school authorities in children’s treatment centres.

- **Engagement Channels:**

- *Council Correspondence*: Address letters directly to the Head of Council (Mayor/Reeve/Warden/Regional Chair) and Councillors.
- *Monitoring*: Review municipal websites for Council/Committee meeting agendas, minutes, and public consultations.
- *Deputations*: Request to appear as a formal delegation or submit items for the official agenda by contacting your City or Town Clerk.
- *Petitions*: Consult your local Clerk to verify specific municipal petition rules.
- *Association Hub*: Coordinate via the Association of Municipalities in Ontario (AMO).

2. Provincial Government (Legislative Assembly of Ontario / Queen’s Park)

- **Scope**: Education, health care, social services, municipal oversight, road regulations, and select natural resources.
- **Engagement Channels**:
 - *Targeting*: Find your electoral district and MPP via postal code. Reference alphabetical rosters of current MPPs, Ministers, Parliamentary Assistants, and Shadow Cabinet members.
 - *Visits*: Public Galleries are open on a first-come, first-served basis. Coordinate via your MPP’s office to track relevant Committee meetings.
 - *Consultations*: To present at an official consultation on behalf of CFUW, you must consult your Regional Director or Ontario Council President first. Monitor official hearings via the Ontario Legislature Committees portal.

- *Petitions*: Review official guidelines. Note: the Ontario Legislature does not accept electronic petitions.

3. Federal Government (Government of Canada)

- **Scope**: Finance (specifically individual and provincial monetary transfers), justice and the Criminal Code, defense, communications, citizenship, and Indigenous affairs (including education).
- **Engagement Channels**:
 - *Targeting*: Locate your MP using alphabetical listings and postal code search engines.
 - *Visits*: Access House of Commons and Senate Public Galleries on a first-come, first-served basis. Contact your MP's office to secure Members' Gallery reservations or view live debates and committee schedules online.
 - *Petitions*: Parliament accepts official e-petitions. If your MP supports your cause, they may suggest launching one. Coordinate this directly with your Regional Director.

SECTION 3: THE MEETING PLAYBOOK

Cultivate social connections first. Invite elected officials to club social events, fundraisers, or as non-partisan speakers to build the relationships you will need later.

A. Pre-Meeting Preparation

1. **Set Clear Objectives**: Never schedule a meeting just to introduce yourselves — use a formal letter for introductions.
2. **Determine Meeting Length**: Request a short (7–10 minute) meeting to deliver specific concerns immediately prior to an important vote. Use longer meetings for broader community issues but remain respectful of the legislator's heavy workload and other constituents waiting.
3. **Deploy Backgrounders**: Utilize province-wide or national backgrounders provided by the Ontario Council or National Office.

4. **Structure the “Ask”:**

- Prepare a dual strategy: one short-term, easily achievable “Ask,” and one long-term “Ask” (which is often the true purpose of the meeting).
- Your “Ask” can include requesting support (or lack of support) for an upcoming item, extending an invitation, presenting a petition, or pitching ideas for Question Period.
- Clearly demonstrate how your proposal directly benefits the local community. Ensure your message is unified; mixed messages are ignored.

5. **Know Your Target:** Research your representative’s background, their designated party role (Minister, Opposition Critic, etc.), and the committees they sit on.

6. **Size Your Delegation:** Limit your group to a maximum of four people. The Club President will normally lead the delegation. Never go alone.

At the Meeting

- **Opening:** Thank them for their time. Give a very brief overview of your Club and its community service. Keep it concise.
- **Focus:** Avoid casual small talk (e.g., tea or grandchildren); protect your limited business time.
- **Delivery:** Present your issue directly. If they ask a question you cannot answer, state that you will research it and follow up.
- **Handling Resistance:** Be prepared for pushback, deflections regarding jurisdiction, or non-committal answers.
- **Reciprocity:** Ask how your club can assist them (“How can we help you?”).
- **The Leave-Behind:** Hand them a concise, one-page fact sheet as a reference. Exchange business cards with both the representative and their staff. Treat staff as your vital link.
- **Closing:** Explicitly thank them again before exiting.

The Follow-Up Protocol

- Call and thank the administrative assistant and/or policy adviser.
- Send a formal follow-up letter to the representative thanking them for their time and reiterating the core points of your meeting.
- File a report for your Executive, write a summary article for the club newsletter, and send an update note to your Regional Director.

SECTION 4: THE CORRESPONDENCE GUIDE

Individual letters written in your own words are highly effective forms of advocacy. A strong message is succinct, clearly states your position, and sticks to a single issue.

- **Author Credentials:**
 - *On Behalf of the Club:* Follow CFUW Guidelines for Advocacy. Local clubs should write directly to local MPs, MPPs, and municipal politicians.
 - *As an Individual:* Individual members are encouraged to write to any politician regarding personal concerns. They may utilize CFUW resource data, but they **cannot** write “on behalf of CFUW” or use official CFUW letterhead.
- **Adapting Templates:** Customize national and provincial template letters to reflect the specific past positions of your representative and their political party. Commend them if they have supported the issue before, or urge them to change their stance if they have not.
- **Formatting Guidelines:**
 - Keep the letter to one page wherever possible.
 - Explicitly identify yourself as a constituent and provide your complete contact information, including your email address.
 - State your concern clearly, explain how the issue impacts the local community, and specify the exact action you want them to take.
 - Conclude with a direct question and request a formal response.

- **Quality Control:** Thoroughly proofread all correspondence. Pay close attention to predictive text on emails to ensure absolute professional clarity.

Form of Address Protocol

Always employ proper official titles to maintain credibility:

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT	POSITION	SALUTATION FORM	OFFICIAL ADDRESS / GREETING
Federal	Cabinet Ministers	<i>The Honourable</i> (life-long title)	Dear Minister / Dear Mr./Ms. [Last Name]
Provincial	Cabinet Ministers	Address by name/office (do not use <i>The Honourable</i>)	Dear Minister / Dear Mr./Ms. [Last Name]
Municipal	Mayor	<i>His/Her Worship [Full Name], Mayor of [Municipality]</i>	Dear Sir/Madam