



How to Run an All-Candidates Meeting

A step-by-step guide for CFUW Ontario Council clubs

All-candidates meetings are one of the best things a CFUW club can offer during an election — a chance for your community to meet the people running for office, ask real questions, and make an informed choice. This guide walks you through everything you need, from your first planning meeting to your thank-you notes.

1 Why Host One?

A well-run all-candidates meeting does a lot of good at once:

- It gets people talking about the issues that matter to your community.
- It gives voters a real chance to meet candidates face-to-face.
- It puts your CFUW club front and centre as a trusted, neutral local convener.
- It strengthens democracy — one community event at a time.

2 Get Your Team and Budget Together

- **Check the calendar first:** look up other local debates so you're not competing for the same audience, venue, or date. Consider teaming up with a partner community organization.
- **Build your team:** look for members who are good at publicity, active in the community, and genuinely interested in the issues.
- **Set a budget:** think through venue rental, printing, signage, and refreshments before you commit to anything.

3 Pick Your Date and Venue

- **Choose two possible dates** — ideally a weekday evening or a Saturday afternoon — a few weeks before election day, so you have a backup if a candidate can't make the first one.
- **Find an accessible venue** that's big enough for the crowd you expect and, ideally, has a stage.
- **Book early.** Don't wait until the date is locked in to start on the venue.

TIP School board facilities can take 6 to 8 weeks to confirm a booking — get your request in as soon as you settle on a date.

4 Plan the Event Details

- **Keep it tight:** 2 hours is plenty. You can add an optional 30-minute meet-and-greet afterward if you like.
- **Reach out to every candidate personally** — a phone call works best — then follow up in writing with the format and ground rules.
- **Keep campaign materials out of the main room:** no banners, posters, or attack literature. Pamphlets can go on a designated table near the entrance.
- **Decide on your format:** a classic moderated Q&A, a themed discussion (women's issues, the environment, the economy), or a more relaxed meet-and-greet.

5 Recruit Your Key Volunteers

- **Moderator:** someone calm, fair, and comfortable speaking in public. This person sets the tone for the whole night.
- **Two timekeepers:** give them a stopwatch, a bell, and cards showing "1 minute" and "30 seconds" so candidates know when to wrap up.
- **Greeters and question collectors:** they welcome people, hand out agendas, and gather written questions from the floor.

- **A couple of steady volunteers** who can calmly step in and help if anyone gets disruptive.

TIP A great moderator makes or breaks the night — pick someone the community already sees as fair and even-handed.

6 Gather Your Equipment

A simple checklist to work through before the doors open:

- ☐ Podium mic, a mic for each candidate, and one or two floor mics for audience questions
- ☐ Podium, stage table and chairs, tablecloths, name cards, notepads, pens, and water
- ☐ CFUW banner, a club info table, and a labelled table for candidate literature
- ☐ Timer cards, feedback forms, and a stack of pre-screened question cards

7 Follow This Event-Day Timeline

Time	Segment	What Happens
Before you start	Setup & sound check	Test the mics everywhere in the room, then get the lobby and stage ready.
0:00 – 0:05	Welcome	Your Club President opens with an Indigenous land acknowledgment, welcomes everyone, and says a few words about CFUW.
0:05 – 0:10	Ground rules	The moderator explains the format, confirms they're neutral, and reviews the time limits.
0:10 – 0:20	Opening statements	One minute per candidate.
0:20 – 1:50	Question & answer	Prepared and audience questions — one minute per answer, with a 30-second rebuttal.
1:50 – 2:00	Closing	The moderator hands things back to CFUW; your President thanks everyone and points people to the feedback form.

Time	Segment	What Happens
After (optional)	Meet & greet	30 relaxed minutes for candidates and attendees to chat informally.

8 Wrap Up Afterwards

- Send thank-you notes to the candidates, your moderator, and your volunteers.
- A small thank-you gift for outside participants is a nice touch.
- Read through the feedback forms — they'll help you run an even better event next time.