

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

1. **Credibility:** the message, the person, and the organization must be credible
2. **Relationships:** it's important to develop a working relationship between the elected officials and the advocate.

WHEN TO MEET?

Make a connection

- Invite your elected officials to one of your **social events, or as a speaker**.

This is especially important for local politicians and school board officials, who understand and know your community. 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.

Short meetings

- To discuss pressing issues, with any level of government
Consider asking for a short meeting (approximately 7-minute meeting) just before an important vote.

Longer meetings

- To discuss community concerns, but always remember that much of the work of a legislator, especially federal and provincial, is last-stage help for very serious issues. Be aware of timing and the needs of the people waiting to see the representative.

Attend local Municipal Council and Committee meetings, especially if there is a discussion about something that concerns you.

THE MEETING:

Before the meeting:

- ◆ Determine the objectives for your visit, your reason for visiting. Do not go just to introduce yourselves – use a letter for that. You don't want to waste their time, or yours.
 - An annual meeting, with the newly adopted resolutions, complete with handouts from National or the Provincial Councils for the staff and the elected official.
 - To express concern about an issue
- ◆ Do your research.
 - Know the facts and, where possible, be prepared with local stories. If you are meeting to discuss a province-wide or national concern, either Ontario Council or the National Office will have provided background information to use.
 - If this is more than a friendly annual meeting, decide on your "ask", understand the feasibility and implications of your request, and how it can benefit your community.
- ◆ Determine what you want the politician to do:
 - Always have a short-term or easily achievable 'ask', as well as a long-term request that will take time to achieve. The latter may be the real reason for your trip.
 - To learn about CFUW issues of concern, in particular the latest adopted resolutions

- To vote in favour of or against, a proposed legislation or a by-law
- To put forward motions – in the legislatures, the House of Commons, the Councils
- To deposit petitions from constituents – electronic petitions are allowed. If this affects an area beyond your Club’s region, check with your Regional Director or the National Office for guidance.
- ◆ Learn about your representative.
 - Take time to familiarize yourself with their background before your meeting.
 - What committees do they sit on?
 - What is their role in their party (are they a Minister? Opposition Critic?)
 - What is their party’s position, especially if you are speaking to them on a particular topic?
 - Have they sponsored any legislation recently?
 - Try to learn their point-of-view on the topic.
- ◆ Prepare notes and rehearse your presentation, if necessary. Always leave time for discussion.
- ◆ Never go alone, but limit the delegation to no more than four, where possible. The Club President normally leads the delegation and, with the advice of her executive or Issues Committee Chair, decides who will accompany her, who will say what, and when they will say it.
- ◆ Be prepared to meet with staff rather than the representative. Just as valuable.

At the meeting:

- ◆ Thank them for meeting with you. Tell them a little bit about your Club, particularly if the person is not familiar with CFUW and how it serves the community. Keep this brief.
- ◆ Don’t just drink tea or talk about grandchildren. Leave that for a social event.
- ◆ Present the issue you’re concerned about. Be brief and to the point. Many visits of a few minutes with vital information on upcoming votes are better than one long one that is not relevant to their work.
- ◆ Tell them what you want them to do, but do not attack them, try to work with them. Do have something that they might be able to do – you might have one big “ask”, but also have a doable one. You will have talking points from National or Ontario Council or their issues.
- ◆ Be prepared to be told it’s not their jurisdiction, that they’ll think about it, etc. Find a way to involve them in the issue.
- ◆ Ask questions, or offer them assistance – ‘how can we help you”
- ◆ Leave information with them to reference after the meeting – a one-page fact sheet is ideal. Exchange business cards, and stay in touch.
- ◆ Thank them again.
- ◆ The staff are the link. Exchange business cards with them, thank them.

After the meeting:

- ◆ Call and thank the assistant and/or policy adviser.
- ◆ Send a letter to your representative thanking them for their time and reinforcing the key points made at the meeting.
- ◆ If for CFUW, report back to your Executive and write a report of your meeting for the club newsletter. Send a note to your Regional Director.