

# Connecting with local politicians

## LEVELS OF GOVERNMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Municipalities

Involvement at the local community level has been central to CFUW and its clubs since its first days in 1905 in Toronto, when the club fought for supervised playgrounds, to 1919 when clubs and the Library Committee conducted a survey of library facilities across the country, to 2010, when local clubs fought power plants and advocated for anti-idling bylaws.

**Why local? Communities are at the root of change.** Federal and provincial politicians know this, which is why they respond best to local pressure, particularly from respected groups in the community. For municipalities and regions, local involvement is essential, both to determine policies, and to garner support for discussions with other levels of government.

**The local municipal level is the forgotten government.** This is the level of government **closest to the people**, providing most of our services. It has the least control, the fewest taxation tools, yet has increasing responsibilities. For example, municipalities are involved with emergency services, police, fire, transportation, recreation, schools, courts, sewer, water, libraries, hospitals, social services, child care service management, historical societies, community centers, home care social assistance, social housing, zoning and land use, waste management, road management, snow clearance.... Many of these responsibilities are shared with the provinces and territories, but the local government is the front line.

Three major forms of local governments:

- Towns, cities, villages and townships - Mayor or Reeve, Councillors or Aldermen
- Counties – Warden
- Regions – Regional Chair

### Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Elected members of the Ontario legislature, better known as Queen's Park, are Members of the Provincial Parliament (MPP).

**Provincial governments** are responsible for areas such as education, health care, social services, municipalities, some natural resources, road regulations.

### Government of Canada

Elected members are Members of Parliament; appointed members are Senators.

**Federal government** is responsible for such things as finance, especially items that transfer money to people and/or provinces, justice, especially the Criminal Code, defense, communications, citizenship, aboriginal affairs, including education, among others

### Band Councils

Similar responsibilities to municipalities but are connected to the federal government via the Indian Act, rather than to provincial governments.

### School Boards

Ontario: There are 34 English public secular boards and 4 French boards (ACÉPO), 29 English Catholic boards, 8 French Catholic boards, 1 English Protestant board, and 7 public school authorities that operate in children's treatment centres.

## HOW TO CONTACT POLITICIANS AND DECISION MAKERS?

If you are contacting any official on behalf of CFUW, please review the CFUW Advocacy Guidelines first.

### Municipalities

**Contact information:** Check the website for your town, city, county or region for contact information for the elected officials, meeting times.

**Writing:** When writing to Council – address it to Mayor (Reeve/Warden/Regional Chair) and Councillors. In order to go on Agenda, check with the City Clerk or Town Clerk. Also check the timing of meetings, so that the information is sent in appropriate time to reach the Council.

**Attend meetings:** Check the website for meetings, (both Council and Committees), for agendas and minutes, and for any public consultations.

**Deputations:** Deputations, or oral presentations, to Council concerning specific issues on the agenda, request to appear as a delegation – check with your City Clerk or Town Clerk

**Petitions:** Again, check with your local government and the Clerk; address petition to Council and request an action (copied at the top of each page); have signatures and address; electronic petitions must also include valid email addresses; suggest to include a disclosure statement on every page of the petition

**Other advice:** Google Search on deputations to city council will bring up a number of guides, including

- Federation of Canadian Municipalities - [https://www.fcm.ca/Documents/tools/International/Your\\_Guide\\_to\\_Municipal\\_Institutions\\_in\\_Canada\\_EN.pdf](https://www.fcm.ca/Documents/tools/International/Your_Guide_to_Municipal_Institutions_in_Canada_EN.pdf) (verified 10/17)
- Perth, Ontario also has some good information on its County Council page [http://www.perthcounty.ca/county\\_council](http://www.perthcounty.ca/county_council) (verified 10/17)
- Greater Sudbury: *A Citizen's Guide to Making a Public Presentation to Council, Committees of Council and Advisory Panels* <https://www.greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/mayor-and-council/councilcommittee-meetings/community-delegations/> (verified 10/17)

### Legislative Assembly of Ontario

**Contact information:** Ontario - Members of the Provincial Parliament (MPP)

To find your Electoral District for Ontario:

<https://eregistration.elections.on.ca/en/voter-info/find-electoral-district>

To find your MPP <http://ontla.on.ca/lao/en/members/>

**Writing:** When writing to your MPPs, follow suggestions in “Writing Powerful Letters” found on <http://cfuwontcouncil.org/advocacy/advocacy-tools>

**Meetings:** More information concerning interviews and how to manage the meeting can be found in “Meeting with Elected Representatives” on <http://cfuwontcouncil.org/advocacy/advocacy-tools>.

**Visiting the Legislature:** At the Legislature, the Public Galleries are usually open on a first-come-first-serve basis. It is best to check with your MPP about times, etc. Also check with your MPP’s office about Committee meetings that you might be interested in.

**Consultations:** If you want to present at a consultation on behalf of CFUW, please speak to your Regional Director or Ontario Council President concerning this. Also see <http://ontla.on.ca/lao/en/getting-involved/>

**Petitions:** Please see <http://ontla.on.ca/lao/en/getting-involved/petitions/> Again if doing this for CFUW, please do so in conjunction with your Regional Director and/or Ontario Council President.

### **Government of Canada**

Your Club may have a number of MPs depending on the geographic area size of the Club. You also might be sharing MPs with another Club, depending on how the ridings overlap.

Find your MP by Postal Code:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC> (verified 10/17)

Alphabetical list of all Members of Parliament (includes their constituency):

<http://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members> (verified 10/17)

**Writing:** When writing to your MPPs, follow suggestions as found in “Writing Powerful Letters” found in Advocacy Tools on [www.cfuwontcouncil.org](http://www.cfuwontcouncil.org)

**Meetings:** More information concerning interviews and how to manage the meeting can be found in “Meeting with Elected Representatives” found in Advocacy Tools on [www.cfuwontcouncil.org](http://www.cfuwontcouncil.org).

**Visiting:** Similar to Queen’s Park, the Public Galleries of the House of Commons and Senate are open usually on a first-come-first-serve basis. Also check with your MP, in order to make reservations for the Members’ Galleries. With Committee meetings that you might be interested in, also check with your legislator’s office or the Parliamentary website, <https://visit.parl.ca/index-e.html>

### **Petitions:**

Parliament now allows e-petitions <https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Home/Index> Your MP may suggest doing this if he/she is supportive of your cause. Again do this in conjunction with your Regional Director and/or Ontario Council President.