

Personal letters and emails remain a forceful form of advocacy. Those written in your own words are powerful and effective. For politicians, they are a guide to local public opinion, a way to have a conversation.

You have a story to tell. Tell it. Storytelling is a very effective tool for conveying your concerns.

Your letter should be current, accurate, clear, personal, yet succinct.

It states your position and sticks to the issue.

Have a concrete realistic request.

Reasons to write a letter

- Letters take effort.
- Letters are personal.
- Letters are effective.
- Letters can finish a conversation.
- Letters are a meaningful way to say “thank you”.
- Letters document your concerns.
- Silence implies consent.

Know who to write to

- Know who is making the decisions? Know which of your local representatives (whether federal, provincial, municipal, regional or county level) to contact about an issue.
- Provincial and federal representatives have two offices – local constituencies and one at the legislature/parliament. Policy is handled at the legislature.
- If you’re writing about a personal problem, write to their local office.
- If you’re writing about legislation, or something to do with the government, write to the House of Commons or to Queen’s Park.

- **Your MP or MPP is your representative**, the person who represents **you** (whether you voted for them or not), and who should be sensitive to your views.
- MPs or MPPs show little regard for letters that come from outside the riding, so don’t send a letter to a representative outside your riding unless it’s a minister or an opposition critic – and then never as a club.
- Please contact Ontario Council or CFUW if you are interested in developing communications beyond your own MPP or MP.
- Clubs are free to write to cabinet ministers who are their own representatives.
- Remember the staff. They are the ones who will be reading your letters.
- Use proper titles: Cabinet ministers - The Honourable (federal cabinet ministers keep this); Municipal level – mayor: His/Her Worship (full name), Mayor of..., and the salutation should be Dear Sir/Madam.

Be accurate

- CFUW National and Ontario Council issues usually come with backgrounders and/or template letters which you can adapt for your own use.

- You don't need to be an expert, but you must be accurate.
- Fact check, using credible sources.
- Avoid emotional arguments.
- For local issues, if there is no policy, you may develop and adopt a local resolution as long as it does not contravene CFUW Mission. Be clear.
- Clearly state your purpose.
- Briefly introduce your concerns.
- Cite Bill number, if appropriate.
- Make a concrete request.

Be concise

- Keep your letter brief. Make the letter one page if possible.
- Limit it to a single issue.
- Write simply, using plain language.

Be personal

- Use your own words.
- Include personal experiences.
- Give examples of community impact
- Request a personal response.

Be political

- If you're writing on behalf of your club, base the letter on CFUW policy, use club stationery.
- If there is no policy, ask a question. If the issue is local, do a club resolution and vote.
- Explain how your request benefits the community or public as a whole.
- Include a written brief, or other.

informational materials

- Request commitment to a specific action.
- Ask for your representative's position and how they intend to vote on relevant legislation.

Emails work too

- Emails and posted letters are handled the same way by Parliamentary staff.
- MPs ranked emails above face-to-face, mail, or phone communication as their preferred way to hear from constituents.
- Follow letter-writing guidelines.
- Keep it brief and focused, using the correct style of address for the representative.
- Include your address and postal code in your signature line.

Launch a letter-writing campaign

- Join forces with friends, colleagues and relevant organizations to contact a representative on the issue.
- An issue gets more attention if your representative receives multiple letters.
- Share your letter with your network, encouraging them to personalize it.

Follow up!

- Keep a copy of your letter to refer to when you receive a response.
- Send reminders of your requests and their commitments.
- Write to thank them for their response.

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