



Assembly of Rural and Remote Ontario Women



Why?

- Rural and remote women in Ontario (and Canada) are grossly underserved by, well, everything
 - Access to healthcare/health promotion, social services, transportation, extra time, economic freedom/standard of living, **social interactions, education opportunities, and fellowship** are all lower for rural and remote women
 - With the exception of local women's church groups, there are very few, if any, women's organisations that can provide the connectedness, continuing informal education, purposefulness and sense of community
- Even if rural and remote women are close to centres which can offer some of the above, our weather often hinders access



Why Now?

- Digital access in rural and remote areas of Ontario is improving
- The pandemic has 'forced' increased use of digital platforms for communication (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Meet) so more women are at ease with these formats
- Even relatively local travel is expensive, never mind longer distance travel (increasing prices for fossil fuels, accommodation, etc.)
- The pandemic has increased isolation
- Women have borne the brunt of the pandemic's effects
- Climate change makes weather/travel unpredictable
- There is a move for 'retired' people out of large centres



The Concept

- An E-club (using the Zoom meeting platform) to join rural and remote women together, women who have common interests and continuing education goals
- Inclusive membership of women, irrespective of age, national or ethnic origin, race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability or degreed education



Goals

- Support lifelong education (and re-education) for members through electronic educational presentation and seminar opportunities, especially concentrating on information and actions needed for an equitable, sustainable future
- Support and advocate for equal and equitable rights for women and girls irrespective of location, including and especially the right and access to education at all levels for all women and girls
- Support and develop advocacy initiatives related to building a better life for rural and remote Ontario women (but is not an activist group)



Values

- Promotes honest, respectful and authentic discourse amongst members (and other women)
- Uses consensus based decision making for issues of importance
- Honours and celebrates diversity and inclusion
- Recognises that life-long education (and often re-education) is key to understanding and thus effectively supporting ourselves and others
- Understands the differences between equality, equity and justice for women and girls
- Fights for justice and rights



Membership

- Women self identifying as being from rural or remote Ontario and those for whom participation in a local women's club with similar goals and values is difficult (for whatever reason)
 - must have a minimum of 10 members to start
- Minimal dues to start - \$26.25
 - To cover costs of electronic platform (likely \$20 per member per year),
 - To cover the costs of membership/affiliation with other like-minded groups – to start, CFUW Ontario Council (\$6.25).
- Membership will be free of charge until July 1st (covering 3 meetings and speakers – February, April, June)

Note that more than 10 members will reduce the cost of the electronic platform on a per person basis, however, it is suggested that dues remain \$26.25 and any extra monies over the electronic platform expenses be put into development of a website and speaker 'thank yous' (token gift cards)



Membership

- **Members of this e-club can also be members of any other club including another CFUW Ontario Council Club**
 - This club will work collaboratively with CFUW Ontario Council and will enjoy all the benefits of membership in CFUW Ontario Council, which include free access to its Speakers Series, workshops, advocacy, Fall Gatherings and newsletter
- Please note: **THIS IS NOT A CFUW INITIATIVE AND IS NOT A CFUW CLUB**

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Format

- To commence, bimonthly (every 2 months) evening meetings of one hour+ duration through the electronic platform Zoom, with an educational focus, facilitated by speaker or electronic material (videos, etc.)
 - Note: There will be a short business meeting following each bimonthly meeting
- Little executive oversight to start – treasurer and secretary only; development of a more formal executive will evolve over time (and will likely be in place by year two)
- Non-profit (follows ONCA rules) but is not incorporated
- Non-partisan (that is, no political party affiliation or support)

Note: I am willing to find speakers for the first three meetings. From July 2022, a yearly speakers' roster with an overseer will need to be developed.



Other

- First 'meeting' will be held in late February, 2022
- On-line interest groups may evolve (for example book clubs), as may more advocacy, fundraising, etc. as membership grows
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Benefits

- Interaction and camaraderie with other remote and rural Ontario women who share different challenges, issues, experiences and worldly benefits than women in Ontario cities and suburbs
- Different educational offerings with no barriers to speakers' locations
- Different social interactions but support and connectedness from other likeminded women
- No travel, travel time or travel expenses to meetings therefore accessible to remote and rural Ontario women
- Evening meetings to allow engagement of women who work outside the home
- A more environmentally friendly gathering
- All members are on an equal footing (no hierarchy) therefore low opportunity for political or personal posturing
- Low dues structure, comparatively
- Lower commitment overall (in time and energy)
- Supports equal and equitable rights for women and girls



To Join

- As mentioned, there is no financial commitment until July 2022
- Send email address(es) to sandras@fifthelement.ca in order to receive invitations to the first three meetings and solicitation to join
 - Put **ARROW** in the subject line of the email
- Need internet access OR phone access (but phone access provides audio only)

Note: this is not a speakers' series and number of viewers will be limited to less than 100 to begin; any speaker questions will be accepted in 'chat' format only