



FEDERATION
OF CANADIAN
MUNICIPALITIES

FÉDÉRATION
CANADIENNE DES
MUNICIPALITÉS

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT:
I'M A REGIONAL CHAMPION:
NOW WHAT?



www.fcm.ca

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has been the national voice of municipal government since 1901. With close to 2,000 members, FCM represents the interests of municipalities on policy and program matters that fall within federal jurisdiction. Members include Canada's largest cities, small urban and rural communities, and 21 provincial and territorial municipal associations.

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Introduction

So, you've volunteered to become a Regional Champion for electing more Canadian women to local council.

You're probably asking yourself, "Now what?"

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has developed this guide to offer general advice and suggestions on where to go from here.

Obviously, the long-term goal is to elect more women to your local council. But there are many steps to take before you get there.

The Regional Champions concept is based upon the well-known "Ask Five Friends" technique, used in fundraising and political activism. The goal is to develop local action committees prepared to encourage, support and mentor women interested in entering local politics—and help them get elected. A secondary goal is building a national network of Regional Champions to collaborate and share ideas across the country.

Once each municipality has a core group of five to ten volunteers, they will begin organizing activities, including campaign schools, public meetings, recruiting potential candidates to run in municipal elections, and using local news media to promote women's participation in municipal government.

FCM staff will develop supporting materials, including an election toolkit for distribution to candidates, with tips and strategies on how to conduct a municipal election campaign. FCM staff will also help the Champions coordinate their efforts locally and nationally, and provide website space and technical support for the campaign.

Your Role as Regional Champion

Your role as a Regional Champion will be three-fold:

1. to recruit volunteers from your community, who will meet regularly and work toward recruiting and electing women candidates for local council;
2. to recruit other Champions in nearby communities, who will also recruit local volunteers; and
3. to participate in a nationwide network of Regional Champions, who communicate and collaborate to recruit, organize and provide support to women interested in running for municipal office. The long-range goal is to have a Champion in every community in Canada.

Organizing Begins at Home

Let's focus first on getting organized and reaching out to the community.

Step 1: Invite Your Friends

It's easiest to reach out to people you know. Start with one or two people you think would be interested in working to recruit and elect women to council. Tell them what you are doing, and extend an invitation to get together informally. You may want to ask people you know through work, church or social groups. You could also contact members of established community groups, resident associations, business improvement associations, social organizations, and professional or labour organizations. Skills, resources, enthusiasm and compatibility should all be kept in mind when recruiting.

Since one of the goals of Regional Champions is to recruit Champions in adjacent communities, try to include people who live outside your immediate community, and ask them to become the Champion in their own community.

You may want to prepare for this first meeting by assembling information about the campaign, FCM and your local council. For example, how many women currently serve on council, and what are their names? When is the next municipal election? When are council meetings held?

Step 2: Get Together

At the first meeting, introduce the campaign and explain your role in it. Lead the conversation as necessary toward obtaining commitments to participate and encourage agreement on next steps. These next steps should include 1) recruiting more participants; 2) gathering needed information about council and elections; and 3) setting a time and place for the next meeting.

Basic housekeeping, like finding places to meet, setting and keeping dates, advising participants of what will happen, and keeping people up to date on what they missed, are all time-consuming but important chores in keeping the group active and members involved. These chores can be divided among the group.

Assess the information you have about local council. Do you know how many women there are on local council, and their names? Do you know when the next municipal election is? If more information is needed, make that a goal for the next meeting. Assign this task, or encourage participants to do some research and bring the results to the next meeting.

If your council has women members, invite some or all of them to an upcoming meeting. Advise the councillors of the purpose of the group and the meeting. Establish an agenda in advance, and distribute it to all participants ahead of time.

Step 3: Set Goals and Organize Around Them

Once you have assembled a core group, it's time to establish some short- and long-term goals.

Consider drafting a basic framework document for the group. Something as simple as a statement of purpose and three broad goals will do, so that everyone can agree on what the group is trying to accomplish. See FCM's policy statement on Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Government for ideas.

In provinces/territories holding municipal elections in 2012, organizing efforts to recruit volunteers, identify candidates, and begin campaigns should begin immediately.

If the next election is 2013, short- and mid-term goals can focus on developing the local network and holding campaign schools. If the next election is further away, focus on developing the local network and making the community aware of the campaign and the issue through news media, meetings and events.

Since one of the goals of the campaign is to develop networks in every community in the country, make one of the goals the recruitment of five people to serve as local Champions in other communities. These people will in turn recruit five others in increasingly smaller areas, until every municipality in the country has a Champion and a core group of volunteers.

Step 4: Go Public

While local groups will set their own priorities, in general, the focus should be on informing the community of FCM's campaign and the reasons for it, as well as how this is driving local action to encourage women to run for council.

Connect local activities with FCM's campaign to increase women's participation in municipal government. Discuss specific barriers that may be keeping women from running in your community, and how to remove them. Publicize the local campaign to recruit women for the next municipal election, and promote the idea that government is an appropriate field for women and girls.

A local group's activities will include:

- recruiting members to the group;
- organizing meetings to develop the group's focus, plan activities, divide responsibilities;
- planning and holding public events;
- identifying spokespersons: people who are prepared to speak to reporters and represent the group publicly; for example, to local council;
- reaching out to the community, particularly young people, to educate them and enlist their participation;
- publicizing the campaign using local news media to promote activities and goals;

- electing women—in the year preceding local elections, the focus should shift to identifying and encouraging women to run, and forming the nexus of a campaign team for those who need help; and
- gathering research on local programs and policies to be used to train potential candidates.
- Once your group is organized, hold a public event and inform your local news media (see below). This will require calling reporters or sending out a media advisory, depending on the size of the community and the media outlet.
- Share your successes and experiences with other Regional Champions. FCM will set up a special web page for you to celebrate successes and share insights with other Champions.

Reaching Out

There is limited value in talking among ourselves. Driving change means taking your message into the community and delivering it persuasively. Once you're organized, it's time to reach out:

- Allies—Consider forming alliances with other local groups, from business groups such as the Chamber of Commerce to church groups and labour unions. Alliances also demonstrate that there is broad support for the campaign's goal of electing more women to council. Dissent, when it comes, will also benefit the campaign by publicizing the issue and stimulating discussion in the community. Look for common-cause issues with other groups, and join forces where appropriate and practical.
- Reach out to elected women in provincial and federal governments. Be visible at other activities in the community. Consider developing a visual identifier (sign, banner, badge, etc.) for use at community events.
- Develop a standard presentation that group spokespersons can make to other organizations, schools, newspaper editorial boards, etc.

Need More Info?

Included here and on the FCM website are sample communications products that you can adapt to your particular needs. You'll find:

- Sample news release
- Sample resolution

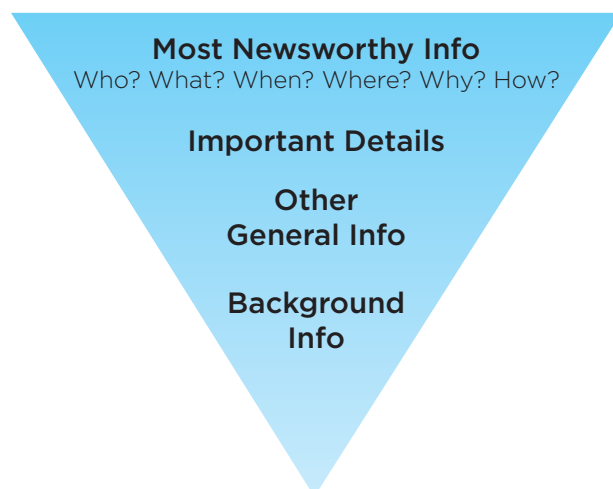
Making the News Media Your Ally

News is what news media report. Reporters gather facts, then organize them in order of priority—their priority. We need to know how they view events, and what they are looking for.

In traditional news writing, the most important or most immediate facts go at the top—that’s the lead. Traditionally, the lead communicates who, what, when, where, why and how. The story structure is often called an “inverted pyramid,” because the most substantial, interesting, and important information is at the top, followed by supporting material in order of decreasing importance. Contemporary journalism often leads with “colour”—interesting details, human interest, quotes or even opinion.

Other key elements: a news story should have multiple sources, contrasting or conflicting opinions, quotes. However a story is organized, the process involves judgement in the selection of facts, the order they go in, and the words used to tell the story.

The Inverted Pyramid



What is News Judgement Based On?

Timing: News is “what’s new.” People receive a steady stream of “news” and information, so there is constant demand for news as well as intense competition among news stories for coverage. News gets old fast: a story with only average interest needs to be told quickly. If it happens today, it’s news. If it happened last week, it’s not news, *unless there are new developments*.

Significance: The number of people affected is important. A plane crash that kills hundreds of people is more significant than one with only a few casualties.

Proximity: The closer the story is to home, the more newsworthy it is. A local disaster may affect you directly. A disaster on the other side of the country is of less interest (unless someone you know is affected).

Prominence: Famous people and places get more coverage. If you break your arm it won’t make the news, but if the Queen breaks her arm it’s big news.

Human Interest: Human interest stories often disregard the other rules of newsworthiness. They don’t date as quickly, they don’t have to affect a large number of people, and it may not matter where the story takes place.

Beyond the Basics

A 24-hour news cycle, more sophisticated consumers, greater segmentation of the market for news, increased competition—all of this means more room for features, analysis, in-depth reporting. But the news budget is shrinking, so the competition for coverage is greater.

Remember:

- It's not news because we think it's important.
- It's not news because we issue a news release or hold a news conference.
- It's not news if the reporter doesn't know about the story, understand the story, or can't get what he or she needs to write the story.
- It's not news if it's not covered.

To report a story, a journalist needs:

- Background and context
- An effective spokesperson to interview
- Quotable quotes/"sound bites"/ pictures for TV
- Facts and interpretation
- A coherent story that incorporates all these elements

You need to know what you want to communicate (your key messages), and how you will communicate it.

All communication with reporters must be clear and accurate. If you want them to cover an event, you have to tell them where it is, when it takes place, and sometimes how to get there.

Always provide a contact name and telephone number or email address where the contact can be reached at the time of the event. A successful event will be covered and get you on the radar of local media.

Reporters and their editors look for "news value." You can help them find the news value in the campaign by providing a "hook": some local issue or current event related to your story that makes it more concrete. For example, you could comment on a council vote on parking-lot lighting. This moves the story from an abstract issue to something that affects people.

Remember that editors are looking for information with a direct connection to their readers, listeners or viewers. Instead of rhetoric demanding change, show the news media tangible and anecdotal examples of what's wrong with the current situation, or an example of how a woman changed council's approach to something. Keep the discussion centred on things people can see and understand. Explain why the issue is important to the community and the people in it.

Newspapers set the news agenda, but once you've made the paper, you can spread out and approach the open-line shows, weekly newspapers and local television.

Radio provides great coverage during the daytime and commuter hours, in both urban and rural areas. Talk radio and radio interviews require the ability to hold your own in discussions that can become heated.

Remember that “TV is pictures”: television stories require visuals. Consider holding an event at a location that illustrates your story. The better the visual, the more likely the story is to run.

Social Media

What is Social Media?

Social media is a term most often applied to online sites that allow people to create and share information, and often to establish selective connections with others. Use of social media is growing rapidly, and has begun to change how people discover, read and share news, information and content, while putting powerful publishing and communications technology into the hands of individuals. It is changing the game when it comes to publicizing issues and organizing people to take action, and should be included in any advocate’s toolkit.

Benefits

- **Reach:** Anyone has access if they have an Internet connection.
- **Accessibility:** Social media technologies are available to anyone with access to the Internet, at little or no cost, with no additional knowledge or training required.
- **Speed:** Social media operates at the same speed as the Internet, constantly changing, adapting and evolving.
- **Interaction:** Social media provides direct feedback and immediate results that traditional media do not, and allows collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and information.

Social Media Tools

Details and how-to guides for all of the following tools can be found on the Regional Champions’ Facebook page at <http://tinyurl.com/fcmwmg>.

Facebook (www.facebook.com)

Facebook is an open-to-the-public social networking website and platform. Users of the site can create a profile, add friends, send and receive messages, create and RSVP for events, update their “status”, create and join groups, write “notes” (blog posts), upload and tag videos/photos, write on a friend’s page, and become “fans” of organizations, politicians or companies.

To see Facebook in action as a campaign tool, visit the Regional Champions’ Facebook page (Campaign for More Women in Municipal Government) at <http://tinyurl.com/fcmwmg>, and sign up to become a fan.

Blogs

A blog (a contraction of “weblog”) is a type of website with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material, such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. Blog can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog. Many blogs are a combination of text, images, videos and links, where readers can leave comments spawning discussions and debates on the posted content.

Software has been designed to simplify the creation and maintenance of blogs. Popular versions include Blogger, TypePad and WordPress.

Quick Tips for Successful Blogging

- Write in a conversational tone. If your post is boring, it will not hold anyone’s attention.
- Incorporate links into your post, especially links to news stories and other blogs.
- Keep your posts current. Breaking news is usually better received than things that are no longer current.
- Like a newspaper article, use an attention-gathering title and try to hook the user.
- Align post topics to the general theme of the blog.
- Encourage user interaction through comments, and participate in the discussion.
- Provide a brief biography to establish credibility.

- Use other social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, to promote your blog post and link to the Regional Champions’ Facebook page at <http://tinyurl.com/fcmwmg>.

Twitter (www.twitter.com)

Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read other users’ updates, which are known as tweets. Twitter is a new take on blogging, and in some ways more closely resembles text-messaging with a 140-character limit. It is a mix of news services, commentators, politicians, corporations, and individuals. Users of the site send updates to their profiles while following the updates of others. “Tweets” can be directed at individuals, keywords can be applied, and trends followed.

Twitter Glossary

- @: At reply. A public tweet directed at a fellow Twitterer, such as @BarackObama, that shows up in their Twitter stream.
- DM: Direct Message. A private message that appears in a Twitter inbox. You can only direct-message people who follow you.
- RT: Retweet. A tweet that you like so much that you are resending to your followers. Usually includes credit to original tweeter, such as RT @BarackObama, followed by the tweet.
- Whale Icon: The iconic blue whale that pops up when Twitter is offline. It appeared frequently in Twitter’s first year and a half.

- #: Hashtag. Used to designate a topic such as #SanDiegoFire so that people can easily search for tweets on a topic.
- Nudge: A feature that lets you send a note to a Twitterer encouraging them to tweet more frequently. You can only nudge people who are tweeting from a mobile phone.

YouTube (www.youtube.com)

YouTube is a video-sharing website on which users can upload and share videos, which are a great way to convey a message or share and promote information about a particular subject or campaign.

One of the key features of YouTube is the ability of users to view its videos on web pages outside the site. Each YouTube video is accompanied by computer code that can be used to embed it in a page outside the YouTube website. This is often used to embed YouTube videos in social networking pages and blogs. Some mobile phones can access YouTube videos, depending on the provider and the subscriber's plan.

Web videos do not require a lot of production and can be shot with inexpensive cameras, even the webcams built into most laptops. As more and more people gain access to broadband Internet, online video viewing and sharing continue to grow rapidly.

The ultimate goal of any video (or other web campaign) is to "go viral". This means that it has reached a tipping point where it is propelled across the web by means of emails and other web-based, person-to-person interactions.

To create a successful web video:

- Keep it short: 30 seconds to three minutes is ideal. Anything much more than five minutes will almost certainly be ignored.
- Grab viewers' attention quickly and hold it.
- Try not to make it seem like a commercial. Make sure the title and description are compelling. Use statistics or other interesting information to grab people's attention.
- Generate some initial traffic for the video; promote it on Facebook and Twitter.

Meetup (www.meetup.com)

While social media has revolutionized means of communication, interaction across great distances, and people mobilization, it can never replace the need for people to meet face to face. Meetup is a web-based service that helps people organize groups and bring them together in meetings and events. The site makes it easy for anyone to organize a local group or find one of the thousands already meeting face to face. More than 2,000 Meetup groups get together in local communities each day.

Flickr (www.flickr.com)

Flickr is an image- and video-hosting website and online community platform. In addition to being a popular website for users to share personal photographs, the service is widely used by bloggers and groups as a photo repository.

Appendix

Sample News Release

This is a sample of a news release your group might distribute.

Anytown Council Endorses Campaign for More Women in Local Government

[Town]—[Month day, year]—Anytown council last night responded to a presentation by the Anytown Campaign for Women in Local Government by unanimously endorsing a campaign to bring more women into local government.

Mayor John Smith said, “As we have heard tonight, women make up 50% of the Canadian population, but just 14.6% of mayors and 23.7% of councillors. Clearly it’s time for a change and councillors agreed unanimously to look at ways to change how we operate to make it possible for more women to participate. Ultimately, the participation of women leads to more inclusive policies—better policies.”

Councillors voted to form a committee to look into ways to encourage more women to participate in local government and run for council. The committee will report back at the next council meeting.

For more information:
Jane Doe
Anytown Campaign for Women in
Local Government
Tel: (555) 555-5555

Sample Resolution

WHEREAS, women make up 50% of the Canadian population but just 14.6% of mayors and 23.7% of councillors;

WHEREAS, our community needs the resources, knowledge and skills that women have to offer, and decisions made with their participation are more likely to reflect the needs of the entire community;

WHEREAS, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has launched a national campaign to increase women’s participation in municipal government to 30% by 2026;

WHEREAS, members of our community have formed a group known as the Anytown Campaign for Women in Local Government to advance the goals of this campaign;

WHEREAS, members of this group have petitioned council to endorse the campaign and take steps to encourage women’s participation in municipal government;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Municipality of Anytown endorses the goals of the FCM campaign and the efforts of the Anytown Campaign for Women in Local Government;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Municipality of Anytown communicate the adoption of this resolution to news media and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.