

The CFUW- GWI Relationship
A Very Brief Overview and update April 20, 2017

Welcome to this special meeting, which we've set up in order to inform ourselves about the current issues facing us as CFUW members. I'm Charlotte Rigby, president of CFUW-Ottawa. I'd like to start by thanking our organizing committee:

Mary Broderick
 Christine Rollo
 Joan Bell – Scott

And all of you who've joined us: I believe that we have CFUW members from:

Ottawa,
 Nepean,
 Kanata,
 ?Belleville & district?
 ?Cornwall & district? ?
 ?Kingston?
 ?Perth & district?
 ?Peterborough?
 ?Renfrew & District?

Thank you for coming. I hope that everyone has a copy of today's agenda. You will note that on the reverse we have our club's Proxy form, and the text of the 3 motions that will be presented for a vote at the CFUW AGM in Richmond on June 24.

These 3 motions are what we are here to discuss this afternoon.

You will recall that the motion to withdraw from GWI was first presented last year, and was not passed because it didn't obtain the 2/3rd approval that is needed to change an article or Bylaw.

The exact motion is being repeated this year. Our club is also repeating what we did last year:

- We are holding this special information and discussion meeting.
- We will vote on these motions at our club AGM on May 9, to instruct our voting delegate how to vote at the national AGM on June 24.
- We urge all our members to vote. This is an important issue. If you're an Ottawa member and won't be at our AGM, please decide how you want to vote, and ask someone you trust to act as a Proxy for you.. See the back of the agenda for the Proxy form and the text of the motions to be voted on.
- Fill out a Proxy form together and your Proxy will bring the signed form to the AGM or give it to Christine Rollo, who is the event convenor, or to me, so that we have an accurate total of eligible votes
- Members coming to the AGM will be given a voters card when they sign in. Your Proxy will also be given a coloured Proxy voting card which she will raise for your vote.
- When the vote is called, members will be asked to raise their voting cards.

Now this afternoon: I thought that I would start off and bring us up to date by summarizing recent events. Much of what I say will be repetitious for those who were here last year – but please bear with us.

As a self-sustaining, independent, women's organization, CFUW's main source of revenue is membership dues. A few years ago we had more than 10,000 members nationally; today we have about 8,300. As membership has been decreasing over the past few years, so has revenue. I have no financial expertise - but it is not hard to do the math!

CFUW's financial health has become a source of concern.

You can improve a financial situation by increasing revenue (i.e. raise member dues) decreasing expenses – or both!

We've been told that many CFUW clubs and members cannot afford/ or will not pay a rise in member dues, and if dues are increased they will leave CFUW.

So the CFUW Board has considered options to decrease expenses: (*figures below are from the 2016 AGM Finance Booklet pp. 18-19*)

1. Lay off staff in the National Office. CFUW's current 4 ½ person years support the National Board, manage the CFUW Charitable Trust Scholarship Program, provide advocacy support and advice, support CFUW's international relationships including GWI – and more. The 2016-2017 CFUW budget assigns \$244,000 for salaries and benefits. Our staff are paid less than comparable positions in other non-profit organizations.

Just a note here – when Robin Jackson, the CFUW Executive Director, gave her report on National Office performance at the AGM in 2015 – she received a standing ovation! Our national office staff really are high performers.

2. Cancel or revise the format of CFUW National AGMs. The 2016-2017 budget allots \$130,387 for AGM expenses. There are a number of options that can be considered to re-format national meetings.

3. The situation is complicated by the fact that CFUW's international partner, GWI has announced that it needs to increase its fees; and so we have a third option:

To withdraw from Graduate Women International (GWI), resulting in saving the money to pay their dues. This option, already preferred by many for a variety of reasons, has become a flashpoint. As we know, at the 2016 AGM, a motion to withdraw from GWI was presented, but did not receive the 2/3rd approval required to amend the constitution.

The exact same motion will be presented at our 2017 AGM this year.

Last November, citing concerns about GWI's expenses and management, CFUW's Board announced that we would not pay any dues until GWI had met a list of conditions. This sparked a chorus of protest from members who felt that we have a moral and legal obligation to pay our GWI dues as agreed. CFUW has now paid its dues to GWI for the current year – but payments do not include the increases.

The Task Force Report on CFUW's Way Forward

After the motion for CFUW to withdraw from GWI was defeated at last year's AGM, the Board appointed a Task Force whose *Report on CFUW's Way Forward* was released in December and opened for discussion.

But then things changed dramatically!

On December 20, GWI President Geeta Desai announced:

1. that the GWI Board had decided to do away with the approved increase in dues (the actual decision was to delay the increase; we later learned that CFUW was not the only member of GWI to face difficulty in meeting it);
2. that GWI was on an austerity budget, had reduced staff from four to two positions, and was counting on volunteers will pick up their workload; and,
3. that GWI will develop a membership-based strategic plan for the next three years.

Then our own CFUW Board underwent significant changes: on December 21 National CFUW President Karen Dunnett, resigned, and so did Brenda Robertson, Vice President Advocacy.

The next day Grace Hollett, an active CFUW member who is highly regarded by all who have worked with her, took on the role of CFUW President.

On January 9, CFUW paid about 50% of this year's dues to GWI. The remainder was forwarded on March 29. So CFUW dues for 2016-2017 have been paid – but do not include the increase that was approved last August.

Notice has been given that at CFUW National AGM June 24 in Richmond BC the 3 motions to amend the Articles and Bylaws will be presented:

1. Regional Directors
2. Withdraw from GWI
3. Raise fees.

These are complicated issues, and they affect our membership and our relationships with each other,

That's my very brief summary of the issues. I've asked 3 of our members (who are all past presidents of our club) who've been involved in many discussions over the past few months to share some of their insights and wisdom on the issue. And then we'll invite questions and comments.