



**Strengthening Access to Justice
for all Women and Girls:
CFUW CSW70 Delegate Report**

UNCSW70 (2026)



March 9–19, 2026

United Nations Headquarters, New York

Priority theme: Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers

Review theme: Women's full and effective participation and decision making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (agreed conclusions of the sixty-fifth session)

CSW70 side and parallel sessions explored access to justice, particularly in the realms of access to the legal system, education, health care, and media.

UNCSW70 (2026)

In line with CFUW's ECOSOC Consultative Status, we submitted [a written statement](#) to the UN ahead of CSW70, focusing on the consequences of failing to ensure access to justice for all women and girls. CFUW also participated in the Department of Women and Gender Equality's request for input on the Agreed Conclusions and submitted suggestions in line with the statement we submitted. We were pleased to see that the Agreed Conclusions generally reflected our priorities, including explicit references to Indigenous women and broader barriers. We regret that there was no mention of how persistent barriers to justice, including inadequate or discriminatory responses to violence against women or girls, can contribute to an erosion of trust in justice institutions, further discouraging reporting and access to remedies, particularly for women and girls facing intersecting forms of discrimination.

The CFUW delegation travelling to New York included President Linda Sestock, VP International Grace Hollett, Mariam Ishak, Dr. Linda Coles, Olivia Woods, Barbara DuMoulin, Dr. Sunjeet Brar, Dr. Susan Murray, and Kayleigh Tooke. Several GWI members joined the delegation.



CFUW Delegation Preparation

CFUW's preparation for UNCSW70 began well in advance of March 2026. CFUW delegates were briefed on what to expect at CSW through virtual sessions with CFUW and the CSW Planning committee. There were three CFUW CSW70 Delegate sessions in which delegates received instructions, resources, and access to previous attendees to ask questions. CFUW also prepared a CSW70 Backgrounder that can be viewed [here](#). Delegates also received CFUW postcards that they could share with delegates from other countries and organizations at CSW (see below).



cfuw fcfd



CFUW (formerly Canadian Federation of University Women) is a national, self-funded organization founded in 1919 to promote women and girls' education. With 90 Clubs and over 6,700 members across Canada, we work nationally and within our communities to achieve equality and social justice by awarding scholarships, engaging in advocacy, and providing opportunities for lifelong learning.

Community Involvement

- Over \$1 million in scholarships awarded annually
- Support for local causes
- Companionship, interest groups, & learning opportunities

National Priorities

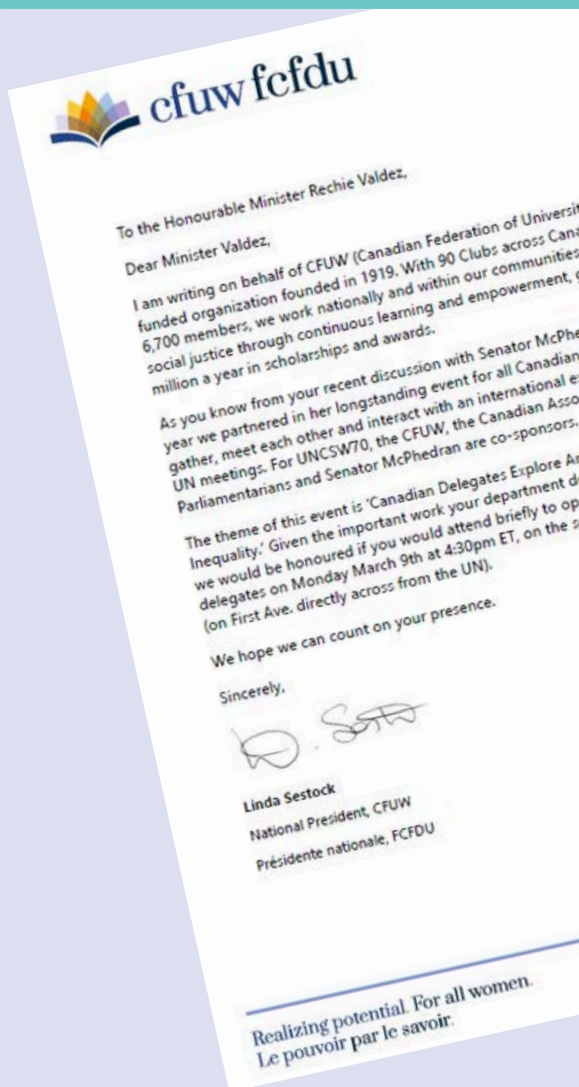
- Education
- Equity & Social Justice
- Safe & Healthy Communities



International Involvement

- Members of Graduate Women International & the International Alliance of Women
- UN Commission on the Status of Women
- Annual International Service Project

CFUW Collaboration at UNCSW70



gnwp Gender Network of Women Parliamentarians **cfuw fcfdu**

CANADIAN DELEGATES EXPLORE ANTIDOTES TO THE VIRUS OF INEQUALITY

PANELISTS

HON. RECHIE VALDEZ
Canada | Minister of Women & Gender Equality & Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism)

NAIKI G. OLIVAS GASPAR
Mexico | GNWP

JELENA PIA-COMELLA
Andorra | USAJ
Expert Member, CEDAW

VICKY SMALLMAN
National Director of Human Rights, Canadian Labour Congress

MODERATORS

HON. MARILOU MCPHEDRAN
Canadian Senator for Manitoba

LINDA SESTOCK
National President, Canadian Federation of University Women

MARCH 9TH, 2026 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM
CSW70 PARALLEL EVENT
CHURCH CENTER FOR THE UNITED NATIONS - 2ND FLOOR - 777 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA, NY, NY, USA
9 MARS 2026 À 16 H 30 À 18 H
ÉVÉNEMENT PARALLÈLE DE CSW70
CHURCH CENTER FOR THE UNITED NATIONS - 2ÈME ÉTAGE - 777 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA, NY, NY, É.-U.A.

REGISTRATION:
STEP 1: REGISTER FOR NGO CSW70 - [NGOCSW.ORG/NGOCSW70/](https://ngocsw.org/ngocsw70/)
STEP 2: SEARCH FOR THE EVENT TITLE, SIGN UP, AND ATTEND

INSCRIPTION:
ÉTAPE 1: S'INSCRIRE À NGO CSW70 - [HTTPS://NGOCSW.ORG/CSW70/](https://ngocsw.org/csw70/)
ÉTAPE 2: RECHERCHEZ LE TITRE DE L'ÉVÉNEMENT, INSCRIVEZ-VOUS ET ASSISTEZ À L'ÉVÉNEMENT

After attending 2-3 sessions, most delegates attended the first CSW70 session co-hosted by CFUW: Antidotes to the Virus of Inequality. The event was co-sponsored by the Senate of Canada, CFUW, and the Canadian Association of Feminist Parliamentarians. The theme of this event was 'Canadian Delegates Explore Antidotes to the Virus of Inequality.' Some of the identified antidotes include working together collaboratively to have a stronger voice with our government, being educated, and speaking up and advocating on behalf of others.

Canadian Delegates Explore Antidotes to the Virus of Inequality



CFUW National President, Linda Sestock, delivering opening statements



Vicky Smallman, Jelena Pia-Comella, Naiki G. Olivas Gaspa, Linda Sestock, Hon. Senator Marilou McPhedran, Hon. Minister Rechie Valdez (left to right)



CFUW delegates, Barbara DuMoulin, Dr. Linda Coles, Grace Hollett, and the president of IAW, Alison Brown (left to right)



CFUW Collaboration at UNCSW70

CAMEUS, the North American regional affiliation of GWI members from CFUW, Women Graduates-USA, and FEMU of Mexico, focuses primarily on the issues migrant women and children face across our three countries due to social, political, and climate changes.

During UNCSW70, the 3-Year Review and Renewal of the CAMEUS Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony was held between CFUW, FEMU, and WG-USA. CFUW representatives were Linda Sestock, President and Grace Hollett, VP IR. The FEMU representatives were Dr. Garcia Luz Alejandre, the General Secretary of FEMU, and Dr. Andrea Samaniego Sanchez, the Vice President of International Affairs. The representatives from WG-USA were Susan Nenstiel, President and Dr. Fay Weber, Collaboration Representative.





3-Year Review and Renewal of the CAMEUS Memorandum of Understanding



Grace Hollett (CFUW VP IR) and Linda Sestock (CFUW National President) signing the Memorandum of Understanding (left to right).



The CAMEUS signed Memorandum of Understanding.



3-Year Review and Renewal of the CAMEUS Memorandum of Understanding



CFUW Collaboration at UNCSW70



A UNCSW70 NGO
CSW/NY Parallel Event



Strengthening Justice: Women and Girls in Health, Law, and Media

Featuring



**Carmela M. Roybal,
Ph.D., MBGPH, MA**

Global leader in women's and Indigenous health, advancing gender-responsive, Indigenous-led research & policy. As a global health strategist she champions health as a human right, driving transformative systems that advance justice, equity, dignity, & wellbeing worldwide



Stella Roth, MPH

Senior Data Manager of Justice and Opportunity at United Way NYC, presenting on violence prevention and the legal system through a gendered lens



Dr. Susan Murray

Advisor, coach, and professor championing equity for women and girls through leadership development, entrepreneurship, and governance globally.

Friday March 13 08:30-10:00 ET | CCUN 10TH Floor

In collaboration with Women Graduates USA, CFUW hosted an in person UNCSW70 parallel event on Friday March 13. This event featured a panel discussion on the intersection of women and health, law, and media.

You can view the panel [here](#) and find the panellist's PowerPoint presentations listed in the description of the video.

Strengthening Justice: Women and Girls in Health, Law, and Media



Dr. Linda Coles, Grace Hollett, Stella Roth, Dr. Susan Murray and Carmela M. Roybal, Ph.D., MBGPH, MA (left to right).



Panel attendees

CFUW Collaboration at UNCSW70

CAMEUS
Organizations:
FEMU, CFUW, WG-USA

**"JUSTICE FOR WOMEN AMID
NORTH AMERICA'S IMMIGRATION
POLICY SHIFT"**

COMMISSION on the STATUS OF WOMEN
Virtual Parallel Event

March 18, 2026
2:30 pm ET.

Virtual | Zoom Registration link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/IAS_yzZHR16rPKGtH_6law



J.D. Kathleen Bush-Joseph
"Overview of migration policies for women and children"



Dr. Elisa Ortega Velázquez
"Administrative violence against migrant girls in North America"



Dr. Wendy Cukier
"Understanding and Managing the Backlash: Maintaining Canadian Commitments to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion"



Dr. Nirshila Chand
"Impact of 'One Big Beautiful Bill' and Policy Changes on Women's Health"

The CAMEUS virtual CSW70 session, Justice for Women Amid North America's Immigration Policy Shift, explored the impact of recent immigration policy changes across North America, with a particular focus on their effects on women and children. Shifts in border controls, visa regulations, asylum procedures, and deportation policies have significantly affected access to migration, legal protections, and opportunities for migrants, exacerbating challenges for vulnerable groups.

Our parallel session took place on March 18, 2026. Speakers addressed key issues arising from these policy changes. You can view the panel [here](#)



Lead up to UNCSW70

In the lead-up to CSW70, many civil society organizations reported they were unable to travel to the USA, particularly amid the increased presence of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Whether out of fear or in protest, there was stronger resistance to attending CSW70 in person.

During the [CFUW Post CSW70 Drop-In](#), Linda Sestock, National President of CFUW, emphasized the value of in-person attendance, particularly for those who felt safe to do so, noting that the presence of Civil Society Organizations at CSW was vital.

Along with other feminist and equality-seeking organizations in the Canadian Beijing +30 Network, CFUW welcomes the outcomes of CSW70, which signalled strong support for multilateralism and for the integrity of negotiated global agreements on gender equality.

Regretably, negotiations for this year's Agreed Conclusions took place before the meetings in New York, thereby denying NGOs and civil society organizations attending the opportunity to collaborate meaningfully on the outcome document.

CSW Agreed Conclusions

Each CSW produces an Agreed Conclusions document, which is negotiated and agreed upon by the 45 current Member States of CSW. For CSW70, negotiations took place before the New York meetings, limiting meaningful collaboration by NGOs and civil society organizations.

Furthermore, for the first time ever, the document was not adopted by consensus, but by a recorded vote. This was triggered by moves from the USA to introduce amendments that sought to replace inclusive terminology with a binary definition of gender and challenge language on diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), and reproductive health rights. The U.S. motions were defeated, and the final document was adopted with 37 votes in favor, 1 vote against (cast by the USA), and 6 abstentions.

The Agreed Conclusions provide concrete recommendations and guidelines for governments, intergovernmental bodies, and civil society stakeholders to implement women's rights at international, national, and local levels.

CFUW Delegation Share their Experience

The CFUW delegation to CSW70 shared the highlights of their CSW70 experience with the membership through an informal Zoom Drop-In on April 29th. Listen to the recording to hear directly from individual delegates from across Canada about what resonated with them. The Drop-In was planned and moderated by the VP International Relations, Grace Hollett, who collaborated with CFUW President Linda Sestock in organizing CFUW's delegation to CSW70.



[Click Here to watch](#)

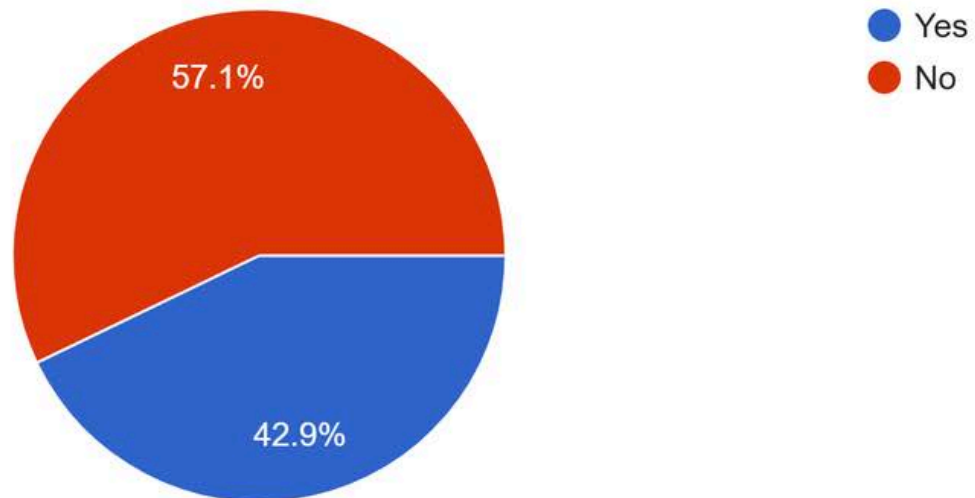


DELEGATES' REPORTS

Responses and data from our post-CSW survey:

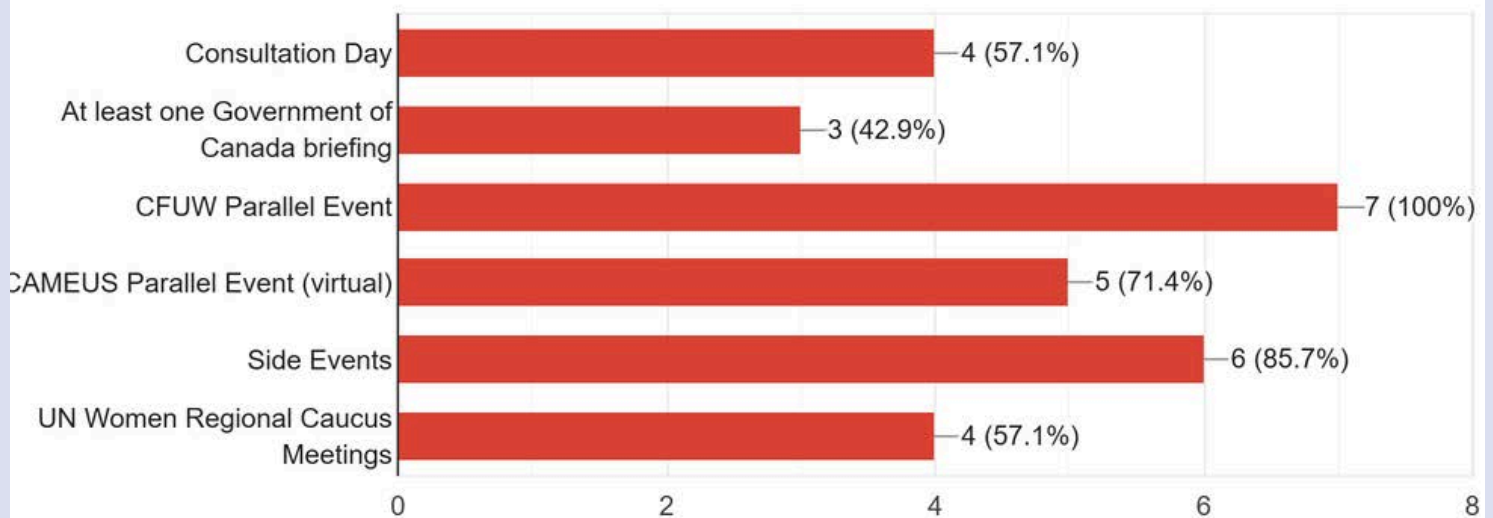
Was this your first time attending UNCSW?

7 responses



Please indicate attendance at the following (check all that apply)

7 responses



What important data did you learn? (selection of responses)

- Around the globe, women hold only 64% of the legal rights enjoyed by men. It may take us 286 years to eliminate and close legal protection gaps for women and girls.
- In nearly 70% of surveyed countries, women face greater barriers to justice than men, barriers often rooted in their everyday realities: cost, distance, and mistrust in justice institutions.
- In 54% of countries, rape is still not defined on the basis of consent.
- In 75% of countries, a girl can still be forced to marry
- And in 44% of countries, the law does not mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value.
- In Canada, women still only earn 87c/\$1 vs male counterparts
- 3% of women have access to education in Kabul
- 80% of displaced people are women



What important data did you learn? (selection of responses)



- GBV increases after natural disasters
- The number of women in politics grew significantly from 2000 to 2015, with no movement until 2025, when the number started to drop in elected female politicians and female nominees
- Less than 6% of acts of sexual violence in Canada are reported, and of that 6%, 5% of those reports go to court and of that 5%, 10% of the court cases end in someone getting charged.
- 80% of sexual violence organizations in Canada have a waitlist.
- Sexual violence costs Canada 14.8 million dollars a year
- At the Together We Can End Child Marriage Event, they shared that in Nigeria, the Child Rights Act dropped child marriage from 44% to 26%
- 26% of people in the news are women, 37% of speaking roles in top films are held by women, and 16% of the top 250 films are directed by women.
- Every 1°C rise in global temperature is associated with a 4.7 percent increase in intimate partner violence.

What new concepts did you learn? (selection of responses)

- Male accountability for gender equality
- "hash or hashing," which is digital fingerprinting to protect victims, identify the perpetrators, and punish them.
- Reproductive health and using artificial intelligence to control/manipulate women's bodies for childbearing. All these new technologies, which are meant to help people dealing with infertility, are being used against them to control their reproductive health and access to it.
- Gender response AI
- Intersectionality in digital policy
- How surgical tools and operating room equipment are created with the average male surgeon in mind. Female surgeons are still being left out of the equation.
- Gender bias in medical research
- Reproductive health equity



What new concepts did you learn? (selection of responses)

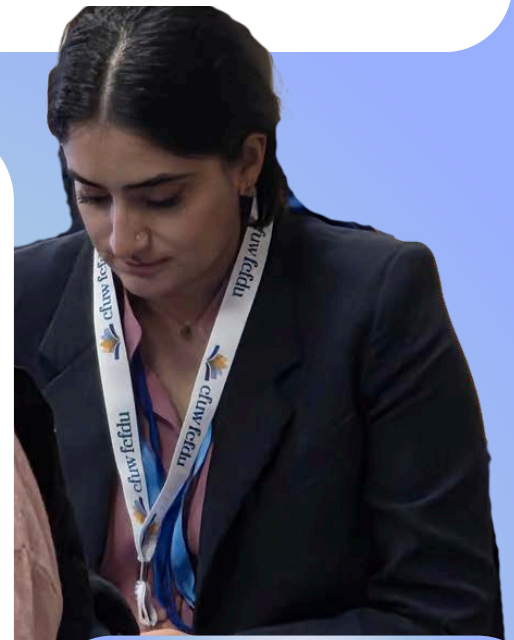


- Gender apartheid
- 4th and 5th Industrial Revolution
- Digital Divide
- He for She
- 'Actively targeted' instead of 'vulnerable' when discussing populations at increased risk.
- Why gender transformative recovery matters?
- Countering backlash and safeguarding women's rights
- Human Rights Defenders
- Administrative violence
- Disaster risk reduction

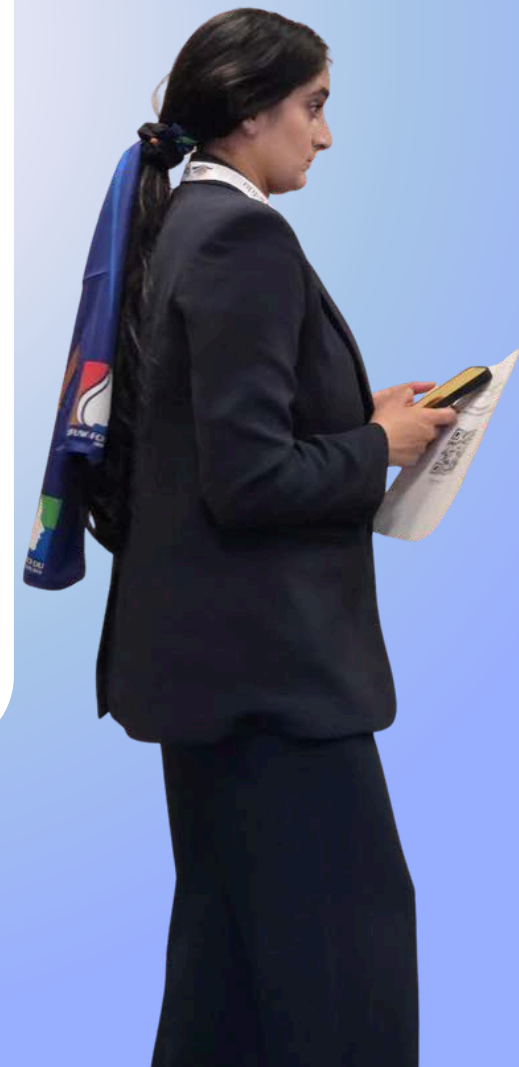
Featured Reflection from CFUW Delegate, Sunjeet Brar, on AI

Before studying artificial intelligence in depth, I viewed it primarily as a symbol of innovation and an advanced tool capable of improving efficiency and transforming lives. However, through my learning while at the UN, I have come to understand that AI is not inherently neutral. Instead, it often reflects and reinforces the inequalities already present in our societies and particularly those affecting women.

One of the most significant insights I gained is that AI systems are built on historical data. This data carries the imprint of long standing gender biases in areas such as employment, leadership, and representation. As a result, AI can unintentionally replicate and even amplify these inequalities, presenting biased outcomes as objective or fair. In doing so, it risks embedding discrimination more deeply into the systems that shape our future.



Sunjeet Brar



Featured Reflection from CFUW Delegate, Sunjeet Brar, on AI



Sunjeet Brar, Linda Sestock, and Olivia Woods (left to right)

What I found most alarming, however, is the rise of deepfakes. These highly realistic, AI generated images, videos, and audio recordings are increasingly being used to target and exploit women. Non consensual explicit deepfakes represent a new and deeply troubling form of digital violence. Although the content itself is fabricated, the harm is real and damaging reputations, threatening personal safety, and causing profound psychological distress.

In Canada, efforts have been made to respond to these challenges through proposed legislation such as Bill C-27, which includes the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act. While this represents an important step toward regulating high-risk AI systems, it also highlights a broader global issue: technological advancement is moving faster than our ability to govern it effectively. From a global perspective, and in alignment with the mission of UN Women, this raises urgent questions about accountability, human rights, and gender equality in the digital age. There is a clear need for stronger international cooperation, gender-responsive AI policies, and the meaningful inclusion of women in the design and governance of these technologies. This experience has reshaped my understanding of artificial intelligence. It is not merely a tool of innovation, but a powerful force that can either reinforce inequality or help dismantle it. The responsibility is ours to ensure that AI advances human rights, protects dignity, and promotes true equality. Because the future of technology must be inclusive, ethical, and just for all.




cfuw fcfd

Realizing potential. For all women.
Le pouvoir par le savoir.

815 St. Laurent Blvd, Suite 230
Ottawa, Ontario
K1K 3A7

The City of Ottawa is located on the unceded and traditional
territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation.

613-234-8252 

www.cfuw.org 

advocacy@cfuw-fcfd.ca 

[@cfuwfcfd](https://twitter.com/cfuwfcfd) 

[@cfuwfcfd](https://www.instagram.com/cfuwfcfd) 

[@cfuw.fcfd](https://www.facebook.com/cfuw.fcfd) 