



An Open Letter to Friends for GWI (FFGWI)

Dear Friends: Nope – we haven't gone away!

Following the AGM in Quebec, it was obvious many CFUW members knew very little about GWI. FFGWI focuses on educating CFUW members across Canada about GWI and its 60+ NFAs and independent members (from some 40 additional countries), and GWI's efforts to better the lives of women and girls worldwide. Way back in 1919, a group of women gathered in London and formed the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) now the Graduate Women's International (GWI). Canadian representatives to that conference actually attended as part of the American delegation. In 1919, Canada was still very much a British colony, although following its horrendous experiences in World War I, it was on its way to being a nation in its own right. But it wasn't there yet. Interestingly, in the mid-1880s, Upper Canada passed legislation which allowed women to attend university and, most importantly, earn degrees. Earning degrees was significant as institutions such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Columbia did not grant women degrees until well into the 20th century. Canada walked out of that 1919 conference as the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW).

Over the course of decades, GWI has worked for the education of women and girls. In many countries and regions of the world, not just in times past but today, women and girls don't just struggle to receive an education; they actually put themselves at risk to do so. At the Triennial in Turkey, the IFUW Board made the argument that IFUW could either fade away (which it was in the process of doing) or take steps to become a stronger, relevant women's International NGO. The delegates voted to become relevant. To meet that mandate several things have taken place in the last two and a half years. IFUW changed its name to GWI, applied for and changed its status in Switzerland, allowing it charitable status which enables GWI to receive money from legacies and grants. GWI has revamped its office and hired several dynamic professional women now working to bring GWI into the 21st century. GWI has created a series of programmes that empower women and girls through education and leadership development. Each CFUW member pays under \$20 per year to support all this work. This amount is built into each club's dues and does not require a raise in dues to fund GWI.

Change is difficult. CFUW is having certain challenges with the changes that have come from GWI. Noses are out of joint. There are some who think CFUW could easily do what GWI does. Unfortunately CFUW can't. Canada and CFUW are just too small and too isolated. We need GWI. Many of us still want to be part of an international organization, helping women worldwide to gain education and their rights.

Please see attached: "Ten Reasons to Support GWI"



TEN REASONS FOR CFUW CLUBS TO SUPPORT GWI

1. **CFUW is a local, provincial/regional and national NGO. To be effective internationally, CFUW needs to associate with an international NGO.** With some sixty (60) NFAs (national federations and associations), and individual members in some 40 additional countries, GWI is an international NGO and is recognized by other INGOs as a partner player. Our CFUW membership gives access to this broad international network and to this leading INGO, which focuses on higher education and STEM as the key catalyst to women's equality throughout the world.
2. **We are responsible to our Canadian founders to protect and strengthen our almost 100 year association with GWI (IFUW).** CFUW was founded by being one of the three original member countries who founded IFUW at the end of the First World War. The women of each founding nation shared the vision of education, equality and peace that has moved this unique INGO into the 21st century. Our founders had a vision and it is important we continue the work they set out to do.
3. Working cooperatively and transparently, **CFUW and GWI help each other** to search for sponsorships and build capacity among all NFAs including CFUW.
4. For the price of lunch out with friends or a medium priced bottle of wine (\$20-25) annually, many **CFUW members take great pleasure in knowing** through GWI **they help and give hope to women and girls around the world.**
5. **Our GWI dues ensure that there is a professional and responsive office to help plan and support the international initiatives** that are the hallmark of this vibrant organization.
6. **Our link with GWI extends our awareness in what is happening in the global community of women**, many of whom live in circumstances far removed from our own. **Awareness leads to action. CFUW members can and do help.**
7. **GWI provides a proven link for CFUW members and other NFAs wanting to advance women's equality throughout the world.** Many women are being told to lie low, to turn inward. As global violence escalates there is great urgency. These women need our collective actions to be their voices to the outside world while they continue their struggles with remarkable courage and determination. "It is the community of action that counts as no isolated action can." (Margaret McWilliams, first CFUW President)
8. **GWI opens up a network of women and learning opportunities for CFUW members and their families traveling** in many parts of the world, better connecting us all.
9. **GWI will be forced to dissolve without CFUW support.** Thousands of fellow GWI members needing our understanding and support to help advance their causes will be left once more on their own.
10. **Withdrawing from the rest of the world is not an option** for educated women. Now more than any other time in the last 25 years, we should be looking beyond our comfortable country.