

Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba

Creating Change Through Resolutions

Semi-Annual Meeting November 19, 2011

Background

By working together, our voices get louder! Federates and members of the Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba (PCWM) can write resolutions that contain recommendations on how our government could improve things. Usually, PCWM focuses on topics of impact on the lives of women, families and children, but a wide variety of issues can be of direct or indirect concern, and therefore the focus of resolutions.

Resolutions can take a few months to write, whether the issue being addressed comes from the PCWM Resolutions Committee or from a federate or individual concern. The process for developing and writing resolutions is described in more detail below.

Completed resolutions are presented to PCWM federates and members for their feedback at semi-annual and annual meetings. Resolutions that get passed at the semi-annual or annual meetings become PCWM policy, which means that PCWM can speak on that issue on behalf of federates and members, either in the form of interviews, briefs or supporting letters to government or media. In this way, PCWM can become a type of “megaphone” for its federates and members.

For example, if one federate’s resolution to support midwifery services in rural areas is passed at a semi-annual or annual, it becomes PCWM policy to support rural midwifery services. Anytime the issue of rural midwifery services comes up, PCWM can speak in support of the issue, knowing that the majority of its federates and members are in agreement.

Steps in the Resolution-Writing Process

There are certain steps for writing good resolutions. These steps can be carried out by federates or individuals, although individuals need to get the support of organizations to make their resolutions strong enough.

1. Identify an issue of concern.
 - What is wrong?
 - What could be improved through government action?

2. Research and discuss the issue with a few people.
 - Is it a provincial, national, or municipal matter? Which level or department in government can do something about this issue? (National issues should go to National Council of Women of Canada; civic matters go to Council of Women of Winnipeg)
 - Does PCWM or NCWM have existing policies on the issue? You may only need to do an update or re-iteration. Check the websites to see what's already there:
 - <http://pcwmanitoba.ca/publications>
 - <http://www.ncwc.ca/policyResolution.html>
 - Are there different views on the issue? Think about what opposing views might be, and check out what they say. The best way to strengthen an argument is to understand other views, including the opposition.
3. Draft a brief summary of your initial research and draft some 'resolved' clauses (maximum 1 page of point form notes is fine). Examples are provided below. The "resolved" clauses summarize what you believe the solution is. At this point, they don't need to be perfect and they don't need to be long. Three solid points are better than ten rambling ones. The "resolved" clauses need to describe your vision for what government should be doing to improve things.
4. Notify the PCWM Resolutions Chair of the proposed resolution. Margerit Roger can be reached at mroger@mymts.net. She will run the proposed resolution by the Resolutions Committee. The Resolutions Committee consists of experienced resolution-writers, and they can help guide the resolution-writing process to make sure that the resolution is as strong and clear as possible.
5. Get feedback from the Resolutions Committee. You will find out the best way to proceed with developing the resolution fully. It may need to be re-directed to another level (national or civic). You may be able to build on existing policies. There may be people who can help support the resolution. The committee will also suggest ways of expanding, editing and better supporting your argument, as well as help you to get the resolution into the right format. You don't have to do it alone, but this stage does take some time to go back and forth.
6. Make changes, add research (if necessary) and complete the collaborative crafting of the fuller resolution. The final resolution will be about 1.5 - 2 pages long, including the background section. If you need help with this stage, the Resolutions Committee can sometimes take a more active role in the research and writing.
7. Submit the final resolution, complete with research, 'whereas' and 'resolved' clauses to the Resolutions Chair.

8. Final editing and fine-tuning by the Resolutions Committee.
9. Distribution of edited resolutions to federates at least two months before Semi-Annual or Annual Meetings.

Timelines for Provincial Resolutions in 2012

- Work on draft resolutions between now and February 1
- February 1: Submit drafted resolutions to the Resolutions Chair
- February 1 – 28: Revisions done in collaboration with the Resolution Committee
- March 1: Edited resolutions mailed out to federates
- May: Annual Meeting

For example: A resolution was tabled at the 2011 Annual Meeting, and returned to Resolutions Committee for further work.

- Research and presentations were done between summer and fall 2011
- November 19: Education and information-gathering at semi-annual meeting
- November 21: Review of feedback and research
- December and January 2012: Revision of resolution with committee
- March: mail-out along with other resolutions

Structure of Resolutions

“Whereas” Clauses

“Whereas” clauses summarize the key points in the research and set up the logical argument, and refer to previous policy where applicable

- What is the problem?
- Why is this a problem?
- What has already been said on the subject?

Example

—Whereas the development of women’s history is an important strand in Manitoba’s cultural record that has not until recently been given much attention;

—Whereas the Provincial Archives are a prime source of research materials for the recording of women’s history;

—Whereas there are currently insufficient resources committed to the acquisition, cataloguing and archiving of women’s history, particularly that of Manitoba women’s organizations, at Manitoba Archives;

“Resolved” Clauses

“Resolved” clauses tell PCWM what the federate would like IT to do and tell government what PCWM would like it to do

- What are the possible solutions?
- What do you want, and why do you want it?
- Who is responsible? Who can make changes?

Example

—*Resolved that the Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba adopt as policy that the archiving of women’s history, including that of Manitoba women’s organizations, should be given higher priority; (and be it further)*

—*Resolved that the Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba ask the Government of Manitoba to increase the human and physical resources allocated to the acquisition, cataloguing and archiving of women’s history, including that of Manitoba women’s organizations.*

Background

- Shows you did your homework
- Gives stats, numbers and critical documents where relevant
- May identify experts in the field that Government can contact
- May give a bibliography (not just websites and newspaper articles, but peer-reviewed journals and research documents)

Example

—Opening paragraph

—5-6 paragraphs of background, each outlining a particular, important aspect of issue

—3-4 paragraphs about the proposed solutions and/or actions

—1-2 paragraphs indicating consequences of the improvement

—Closing paragraph

Next Steps

After the resolutions are passed at a Semi-Annual or Annual Meeting, they are documented online (PCWM or NCWC websites) and then combined into a brief along with commendations and reiterations, a kind of “beefs and bouquets” section of the brief that gives government feedback on what’s been done and what’s still left to do on issues previously presented to government. To present the brief, a meeting is requested with Premier, Caucus and Cabinet. Various people knowledgeable on the resolutions make very brief presentations. After the meeting, progress on the issues is tracked by people who worked on resolutions. Other kinds of activism, like follow-up letters might also be sent to keep issues in the government’s field of vision.

Interested in working on resolutions?

Margerit Roger

mroger@mymts.net