Analysis and Interpretation of Ontario Council Clubs Interest Group Data

Twenty-four (24) of Ontario Council's 48 Clubs participated in a request from CFUW National (for all Clubs across the country) in October of 2025 to provide a list of their Club's Interest Groups. This information was collected subjectively, that is, National did not require Clubs to use a particular format while inputting their information, making analysis more than challenging. Through the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to compare, contrast and collate results, however, the information has been analyzed and the results used as the basis for this report.

To view the report in its entirety including the raw information Clubs in Ontario provided and from which the data is reported on click **here**.

Executive Summary/Overview

The data from the Interest Group information reveals a vibrant network of individual Clubs that balance traditional social activities with modern wellness trends and serious civic engagement.

Quantitative Data Analysis from Twenty-Four Clubs across Ontario

Core Pillars of the CFUW Experience
Four "universal" activities form the backbone of nearly every Club in the province:

- **Intellectual Engagement (100%):** Book Clubs are the defining feature of the organization. Clubs often host multiple streams (Fiction, Non-Fiction, Classics, and Mystery) to cater to diverse literary tastes.
- **Social & Culinary Connection (92%):** Shared meals—ranging from "Lunch Bunches" to "Gourmet Dining" and "Wine Tasters"—are the primary vehicle for social networking and friendship building.
- **Active Living (75%):** Walking and hiking groups are a staple, reflecting a membership committed to physical health and the exploration of local trails and urban spaces.
- **Bridge (75%):** Bridge provides both consistent social structure and cognitive engagement.

Civic Impact and Advocacy
Exactly 50% (12 of 24) of the analyzed Clubs maintain formalized Advocacy or "Issues" Interest Groups (although we acknowledge that many Ontario Clubs have Advocacy/Social Justice Committees and may not have included them in the information they inputted, not identifying it as an Interest Group but rather as an integral part of the Clubs' backbone). These are not merely discussion circles but action-oriented committees focusing on:

- **Environmental Action:** Climate change and local conservation
- **Social Justice:** Women's rights, long-term care standards, and international support, such as the Afghan Women initiative.

Strategic Diversification and Modernization
Clubs are evolving to meet the needs of a modern, multi-generational membership:

- **Technology Literacy:** Dedicated "Tech Clubs" or "Tech Talks" help members navigate the digital world.

- **Emerging Sports:** A notable shift toward sports like Pickleball and specialized wellness like Mindfulness and Chair Yoga.
- **Niche Interests:** Specialized groups such as "Dog Walking," "Genealogy," and "Memoir Writing" allow for deep connection over specific hobbies.

Operational Observations

- **Scale and Specialization:** Larger Clubs offer extreme specialization, while smaller Clubs often foster community by focusing on 5–10 high-participation staples.
- **Regional Variation:** Northern and rural Clubs show higher participation in outdoor-specific groups like skiing, snowshoeing, and paddling.

Qualitative Information Added to Interest Groups List analysis

Notes taken by three of five breakout groups from the January 26th, 2026 National Monday Membership Moments (Zoom meeting) which was dedicated to Interest Groups were incorporated into the AI analysis of the information provided in October 2025.

Primary Value: The Human Experience

The qualitative notes clarify that the value of an interest group isn't just the activity itself, but the **quality of the social environment**.

- **Safe "Small Group" Setting:** For new members, Interest Groups are a vital "onboarding" tool. They provide a smaller, more focused setting that is less intimidating than general meetings.
- **Structured Mentorship:** The value is often in the transfer of knowledge. For example, in one Club's Genealogy group, the primary value is "one-on-one mentoring" for beginners by experienced members.
- **Emotional Support:** Interest Groups provide a "social safety net" for members who may be lonely or struggling with mobility, with some Clubs organizing rides to ensure aging members can still participate.

Secondary Value: Strategic and Operational Health

Beyond social connection, Interest Groups serve as a diagnostic tool for the health and sustainability of the larger Club.

- **Recruitment and "Niche" Attraction:** Interest Groups like a "Tuesday Murder Club" or specialized Art History groups attract people who might "only join the Club to be in an Interest Group," providing a specific reason for dues-paying membership.
- **Innovation Lab for Technology:** Interest Groups are where Clubs "embrace technology". Zoom is used not just for meetings, but as a way to "streamline research" and include members who can no longer drive at night.
- **Succession Planning:** Interest Group health is tied to "strong conveners". Observing who takes on leadership in an Interest Group helps the larger Club identify future executive board members.