

Annual CRP Program

Background

Over the last 19 years, CALU's Candidate Recognition Program (CRP) has become an important component of the organization's political involvement programming. The Federal Accountability Act has revised the rules governing the financial of campaigns and political contributions. The CRP was developed by CALU as a straightforward and effective way, during Federal Election campaigns, for members to enhance the organization's profile in the representation of their interests and, if necessary, for a member to fulfill his or her membership obligation to CALU in the area of political involvement.

The effort to ensure the value-added role of CALU members and that of the products and services they offer Canadians is recognized by key decision-makers is on-going. As such, the CALU Board of Directors has approved the extension of the CRP program from its status as a periodic election-based program, to that of an on-going annual program. Specific government relations experiences over the past year have reinforced the significance and the impact of this contribution program to enhancing CALU's profile and its effectiveness in delivering key messages on behalf of its membership, and that of the wider Advocis community.

Given that the CRP existed within the context of CALU's overall political involvement programming, the Board may now want to consider re-naming the CRP effort under the title "CALU Parliamentary Circle" which suggests a commitment to relationships and communications with key parliamentarians and officials principally at the federal level, and which addresses the fact that the program is no longer focused on election or candidate financing.

Where relationships exist, the goal is to enhance the strength and depth of the understanding. Other politicians will have little or no knowledge of the valuable role played by CALU members. In these cases, the goal will be to initiate a relationship based on understanding and support.

By focusing of selected candidates, CALU enhances its profile with key policy makers and targets the effectiveness of the program on those people most likely to assume positions of leadership in areas of particular importance and relevance to CALU's mandate.

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Important Points about Political Financing

The individual contributor now has unprecedented influence and importance in the support and financing of political campaigns. In recent years, there have been substantial changes to the political financing provisions of the Canada Elections Act, which governs campaign donations and the financing of political parties and candidates in Canada. On April 11, 2006, the Government of Canada introduced the Federal Accountability Act which received Royal Assent on December 12, 2006.

The law is intended to ensure “transparency” and regulates the financial relations and operations of political parties and candidates, in view of the perception that more needs to be done to rebuild public confidence in the integrity of the democratic process, and to ensure that influence cannot be bought through political donations. Donations from corporations, unions, and organizations were thought to be of particular concern, since they allow for a contribution of funds from unknown original sources. The new rules are intended to “level the playing field” among individual contributors and encourage political parties to engage the electorate more directly.

Specifically, the Government of Canada has toughened the laws around the financing of political parties and candidates to reduce the opportunity to exert influence through large donations. To that end, the Federal Accountability Act:

- imposes a complete ban on contributions by corporations, unions, and organizations;
- lowers from \$5,000 to \$1,000* the annual limit on contributions an individual can make to a particular registered party;
- lowers from \$5,000 to \$1,000* the annual limit on contributions an individual can make to the local entities of a particular registered party (candidates, nomination contestants, and district associations);
- lowers to \$1,000* the contribution that a candidate, a nomination contestant, or a party leadership contestant can make to his or her own campaign; and
- makes it an offence to give or willfully receive a cash donation of more than \$20.

* According to Elections Canada, The Act provides for maximum contribution limits of \$1,000, subject to an inflation adjustment on April 1 of each year. On January 1, 2009, these limits are \$1,100.

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Tax Credits

Income tax credits for monetary contributions are available as follows:

75% of the first \$400; plus
50% of the next \$350; and
33.3% of the an amount over \$750

Operation of the Annual CRP

Under the annualized CRP, each MP selected to participate in the program would be paired with a CALU member who acts as the organization's liaison officer, communicating with the candidate, his or her organization, and coordinating the receipting of contributions collected and forwarded on behalf of members across Canada.

Selection Criteria - Annualized CRP

This memo recommends that a number of factors be taken into consideration in the selection of Candidates – as outlined in detail in the separate attachment ‘Organization Annual CRP - Key Factors’. These factors include:

Selection is limited to candidates from the Liberal and Conservative parties.

The number of candidates selected is limited to ensure impact.

The list of recommended candidates should only include individuals who are likely to not only win their ridings, but also serve in key positions of importance to CALU, either as a member of the government, or in opposition.

All candidates should be philosophically inclined to support CALU positions.

The selected candidates should reflect the geographic distribution of members.

Goals and Objectives – CRP

CALU would set the following objectives:

All Active Members are asked to participate.

Each Active Member would be encouraged to contribute at least \$250.

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Participation would be noted on member records as fulfilling political involvement obligation.

Given their importance to raising profile and awareness, out-of-province contributions (Members contributing to the campaigns of candidates located outside of their home province) would be encouraged.

Annual CRP Communication and Process

Selection of Candidates would be communicated to the membership in May of each year. Members would be asked to select one or more of the candidates to support and to forward their contributions via CALU for presentation.

Candidate Liaison

Each candidate would be paired with a CALU Member who would be responsible for contact with the candidate and his or her campaign/finance officials. This member would present the contributions as forwarded by the Conference, communicate as appropriate on behalf of CALU and ensure appropriate receipting of contributions. Existing relationships with the candidate and his or her organization would be important considerations to the identification and selection of these volunteers.

Captains

To encourage participation, a network of Captains is responsible for contact with a determined number of Active members. At a determined point following the release of the annual campaign materials to CALU members, CALU would issue the participation list to the Captains, noting the names and contact information for the members assigned each Captain, and requesting personal follow-up to ensure full participation on a timely basis.

Presentation of Contributions

Contributions would be forwarded to the CALU volunteer designated to serve as the organizational contact with the MP for presentation at a date to be determined for maximum impact.