



Brendan Wycks' Feedback/Commentary On
June 7, 2012 CAFII Communications Strategy Document

(Comments Based Mainly On Slide 10: Summary Of Strategic Direction (April Board Meeting and Subsequent Communications Committee Meeting of June 4, 2012):

- Based on where CAFII is today – its strategic focus; scope; available resources; and the lack of a clear consensus and majority appetite for moving to a more proactive approach to media and public communications – my view is that the right decision was made to focus the Association's communications efforts on regulators predominantly. And to maintain a "reactive but prepared" approach to media and public communications.
- Maximizing CAFII's effectiveness and its ability to achieve results with its primary audience – Governments and Regulators (Slide 9) – will be largely dependent upon relationship-building, through face-to-face meetings and similar forms of interpersonal interaction over time.

Given that the Executive Director is the official spokesperson for CAFII and will be the Association's "continuity" over time, it's imperative that CAFII empower the Executive Director to be the front-and-centre relationship-builder with insurance and financial services regulators across the country, and invest in his/her capacity to travel to meet with regulators, as appropriate.

As per what's proposed in Slide 9, an initial cross-Canada tour for the Executive Director – either alone or accompanied by one or two volunteer leaders – armed with prepared Key Messages would be an effective and efficient way to kick-start and advance the necessary relationship-building.

While there will obviously be other events and opportunities for interaction with regulators that will contribute to relationship-building, such a cross-Canada tour – possibly broken up into two or three segments – should be repeated periodically, possibly annually but at least once every 18 months.

To limit the Executive Director's role and curtail his/her relationship-building and face-to-face interaction with regulators will only lead to blurred accountabilities and a lack of effectiveness, and is a recipe for failure.

- Even though “reactive but prepared” is the optimal approach for CAFII to take with respect to media communications at this time, that does not mean that the Association should shun and steer clear of future opportunities where the potential return outweighs the required investment of time, money and human resources; and the risk of any communications fallout is low or non-existent, eg. media opportunities where CAFII will be in complete control of “the pen” and there is low/no risk of negative repercussions. One such opportunity that will come up again in the future is Mediaplanet insurance supplements.
- If and when things evolve and CAFII becomes more confident, and a strong consensus favouring a proactive approach to media and public communications emerges, moving to a so-called “Selective” proactive approach will not work and is doomed to fail. An organization cannot be open, proactive and transparent with just certain media outlets, or just at certain times. Attempting that approach would only backfire before too much time has elapsed.

CAFII can only become a “go to” resource for the media and public if it is willing to be proactive, open, and transparent to all comers at all times.

- CAFII was well-advised by Richard Evans to consider using independent consumer/industry research as the basis for proactive media and public communications. I was the media spokesperson for MRIA’s very successful VoxPop media and public relations program that did exactly that.

Such objective consumer/industry research would need to be conducted with some regularity, and CAFII would need to budget for that.

- (Slide 4): It is definitely the case that CAFII does not currently control the communications agenda related to creditor insurance. The agenda has been hijacked by the media – specifically programs such as CBC’s Marketplace – to which CAFII, to date, has not responded.

In my view, the only way that CAFII can change that and gradually gain control of the communications agenda around creditor insurance is through a recurring, research-based media and public communications program.