



# PAAC E-News

Public Affairs: Your Online Newsletter

January • 2007

- President's Message: Senate report is sex-blind, but it's a start
- Guest writer: A New Year's message from CBC's Stuart McLean
- Issues & Analysis: Crazy people
- The Book Man: Conservative victory sparks flurry of new books
- The Web Editor: Show them the money

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[President's message](#)

## Senate report is sex-blind, but it's a start



*by Elaine Flis*  
*PAAC President*

The start of a new year is traditionally a time when people make positive resolutions: To be better, kinder, more effective in some way. I'm hoping that as 2007 gets underway, governments will implement similar resolutions, and I can see a way for Ottawa to get started by dealing with an issue that came to attention in 2006 - but about which action has yet to be taken. Last May, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology released its final report on the state of mental health care in Canada, and the report was a shocker. It detailed failings in mental health care that leave a reader wondering just how far our care for the mentally ill has really come since the 1950s.

This month the PAAC E-news offers readers an analysis article detailing what the report revealed, what it recommends and why, for those who may have missed what news coverage there was of it. The report is a startling window on mental health care in Canada, but it is by no means perfect or definitive. Missing from it is any mention of the special mental health burden upon Canadian women.

That's a surprising omission, because the Canadian government has committed itself, in

its development of policies and programs, to Gender Based Analysis, for the same reasons it pays attention to the special inequities that can harm people based on race or ethnicity. It's an approach that is called for in the field of mental health, because although the Senate report's look at mental health in Canada is sex-blind, in reality women bear the greater burden on both sides of the divide between those who require care and those who provide it.

The majority of patients are women, especially for afflictions such as depression, eating disorders and anxiety, for reasons best explained by people with the letters M.D. after their names. The majority of those working on the front lines of caring for the mentally ill are also women, and it is they who are most subject to the stress of having to provide more care with fewer resources. In addition, most unpaid care providers - those forced to take up the task of caring for family members in the absence of alternatives - are women. To further skew the picture, women pushed to substance abuse are often pregnant or have children, creating another layer of suffering. That a Senate committee which took so much effort to review the mental health landscape could overlook these things speaks to a fact I've written about here before - that there aren't enough women at the higher levels of our political structure to offer the kind of input that would occur to women before it occurs to men.

That said, the report, authored by Senators Michael Kirby and Wilbert Keon, is a powerful indictment of our society's treatment of the mentally ill. It should have garnered more attention than it did, and produced more action in Ottawa than it has up to now. But it's not too late. The government's New Year's resolutions need not be limited to outfoxing their political enemies. The current minority government may be a Conservative one, but Canadians have long held liberal values in such matters, and providing care to those who need it is one of those areas where we can all agree.

Just ahead of our article on the Senate report, we have a guest New Year's message from author and commentator Stuart McLean, from his CBC program *The Vinyl Cafe*, used here with permission, to start the year in an upbeat mood. Political leaders who want to continue 2007 in the spirit of McLean's comments - to be better, kinder, and more effective - could hardly find a better place to start than with the Kirby and Keon Senate report. Read both articles, then follow the hot link to the report itself, and I think you'll agree.

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### **New management for PAAC**

The Public Affairs Association of Canada is in the process of switching to a new management company. The transition takes place over the month of January, when The Innovolve Group takes over our management services from G.P. Murray Research Ltd. A parting of the ways doesn't imply any loss of respect, and I want to thank Graham Murray and Ed Arundell for their years of quality, professional management services to the organization. In particular, Graham has long been the first PAAC person people met going into our increasingly frequent member events. I hope all members will join me in

wishing him and Ed all the best in their new business endeavours, as G.P. Murray Research in 2007 becomes a division of Global Public Affairs.

Our new management team, The Innovolve Group is a bilingual strategic marketing firm that builds sustainable organizations and markets through events, communications, design and research. In servicing the dynamic PAAC membership, Innovolve will draw on insights gained from a combined 15 years of experience in association management and event planning.

The company's principals, **Anthony Watanabe** and **Rose Swagemakers**, have built the five-year old organization on a triple bottom line foundation of fiscal responsibility, environmental stewardship and social justice that influences not only the type of work that they do but also how they do it.



**Rose**

**Anthony**

Rose, who is PAAC's new part-time Executive Director said, "We are absolutely delighted to have been chosen by PAAC to maintain and improve upon the level of service that PAAC members have come to expect and deserve. We look forward to connecting with the membership soon to hear how we, in consultation with your elected Board of Directors, can bring you increased membership value and benefits."

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Please join me in welcoming The Innovolve Group as our new management firm. As always, I invite all members to email me at [eflis@enterprisecanada.com](mailto:eflis@enterprisecanada.com) with input and suggestions for the organization as we get started in a new, exciting year full of change.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elaine Eflis".

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## The nation that does its best

*(This transcript is based on remarks by author, journalist and CBC Radio host Stuart McLean on CBC Radio's The Vinyl Cafe November 18th and 19th, 2006, in advance of the ascension of Stephane Dion as leader of the federal Liberals. It is used here by permission, because it's as good a New Year's message as you could want in these troubled but exciting times - Ed.)*



### [Guest commentary by Stuart McLean](#)

There is enough happening on the political front this winter to keep all of us occupied and out of trouble until we are let out of school. In Britain, New Labour will choose a new leader. In America the political landscape is going to be re-imagined from the top down. And here in Canada the Canadian Liberal party will be coming together in Montreal to choose the man, or woman, they want to put forward as their candidate to be the next prime minister of Canada - or as the Tories would tell you, leader of the Opposition.

With this going on, I would like to say a few words in praise of politicians. I would like to suggest that here, in Canada at least, we have, over the years, been well served by those who put themselves forward for public service. And I would like to say that I have great respect for the men and women of all the parties who have done so.

It is more fashionable to be cynical of the whole process, but when I look at the evidence I find myself hard pressed to be anything but impressed. We have - the 30 odd million of us who live here in this cold land - come up with some creative and caring solutions to the hard problems of living together. It's not easy.

This business of living together is not easy for men and women, and moms and dads, and fathers and daughters, and when you start throwing in the neighbours and the folks across town, especially when you consider the hard hand we have been dealt; the two of clubs of several founding nations, and the three spades of geography. We speak many languages and we live far apart. We are, in the words of Cole Harris, an island archipelago spread over 4,000 east west miles.

And yet...and yet...we have managed to agree in a thoughtful and caring way about how we come together to look after those among us who can't look after themselves. How we

care for those who are ill and aged, and those who can't work for whatever reason, and those who have problems with alcohol, or harm others rather than themselves. We have talked and talked and talked, and agreed on some things and disagreed on others and the things we have agreed on to a large extent work. And that is no mean feat. And it is the men and women who have gone to Ottawa and debated these things and worked on the endless committees for hours and hours that we have to thank. And ourselves, for in their best work they reflect the best of us.

I had the great good fortune of growing up in the 1960s, and my love of this country, of our collective and our collective way of doing things, was shaped by some of the great political figures of that era. Liberals like Lester Pearson, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in the Suez , and the internationalist Mitchell Sharp, and the nationalist Walter Gordon. There was the gentle and defining red tory nationalism of George Grant, the burning passion of John Diefenbaker, the social activism of Tommy Douglas.

It is with all these men in my mind that I will be watching the Liberal leadership in Montreal in two weeks - with the knowledge that today's candidates are propelled by many motives, but primary among them, the urge to make this world a better place. To add to the achievements of the others who came before them, and not diminish them.

And so, a tip of the hat to them for having the courage to climb into the arena. And don't think for a moment it doesn't take great courage to risk ridicule and missteps; we are not kind when our politicians stumble. It is a blood sport, and I am sure it's sometimes fun to play, but it is worth remembering that these are serious men and women trying to do serious things, and we are lucky to have them. They have served us well these many years.

There is much to be done. Many wrongs still to be righted. Many roads to clear. But it is hard not to think when you consider where we started and where we are today that we are at least facing the right direction. On the right track. That we are at least doing our best.

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### [Issues & Analysis](#)

## Crazy people

After three years studying the state of mental health care in Canada, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology released its final report in the spring of 2006, calling for a Mental Health Transition Fund to support a Mental Health Commission that would completely revamp care and support services for the mentally ill in Canada. Yet the report received surprisingly little attention. Perhaps that was because the issue was eclipsed by domestic political intrigue, foreign disasters and war. Or perhaps it was something else. Still, the phonebook-sized report, thick with tales of human suffering, has the power to evoke tears of rage in anyone with a soul.

We may have traveled far from the days when the insane were kept in dungeons, but the Senate report, *Out Of The Shadows At Last: Transforming Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada*, gives us no reason for complacency. Rather than describing a functioning network of services to care for and treat the legion of human zombies who suffer from mental problems ranging from debilitating depression to full-on psychoses, it paints a picture of a haphazard bureaucratic patchwork appended to a health care system geared to physical ailments, and unsuited to do much more for the mentally ill than silence, subdue and sideline them.

### **Crimes, sins and demons**

The authors of the report are Senators Michael Kirby and Wilbert Keon, who heard from more than 2,000 people in the course of their years-long trek through the land of the damned. The experience clearly affected them. "In no other field, except perhaps leprosy, has there been as much confusion, misdirection and discrimination against the patient, as in mental illness," they quote from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in their report. "Down through the ages, they have been estranged by society and cast out to wander in the wilderness. Mental illness, even today, is all too often considered a crime to be punished, a sin to be expiated, a possessing demon to be exorcised, a disgrace to be hushed up, a personality weakness to be deplored or a welfare problem to be handled as cheaply as possible."

Senators Kirby and Keon have fashioned a powerful plea for government to do something, not only about the care offered people in mental distress, but about the way in which these patients are treated by society at large. The senators' plea is based on the glum observation that the mentally ill are treated just as high-handedly as everyone else is by our many institutions and bureaucracies. Yet the common business practice of treating customers as intrusions ("press 1 for departure information, 2 for arrivals, 3 for business class, and 666 to wait on Perpetual Hold to speak to a service representative"), or of hospitals treating people like busted Chevys ("please have a seat in the waiting room and the nurse will walk by very soon without looking at you"), stands out as the thing it really is when hospitals hand the same treatment to people who are at the sputtering end of their emotional fuse. Listen to this anecdote from the report: "I have had occasion to sit in the Regina General Hospital emergency room with friends from my group. We have gone home in despair. Unfortunately we are not a high priority, and I do not know why. Maybe if we had blood coming out of the side of our heads we would become a priority... a friend has said, 'I cannot keep on living; I need help.' I take (him to emergency) and we are told to sit down."

Patients suffering from mental illness log more hospital days than those with cancer and heart disease combined, yet the services available to them are nowhere near so cohesive. For physical ailments there is an interconnected flow of services, from the family doctor to the specialist, thence to the oncologist or radiologist as required, or on to other services. True, there are often waiting lists, which is a problem governments recognize and feel the need to tackle. But at least the services are in place. For mental distress there is this sort of thing: "When one finally gets in to talk to someone, it's usually the psychiatrist in training," the senators heard from a woman. "He asks many questions,

then he gets in touch with the doctor on call, then the psychiatrist on call comes to see you and you are asked the same questions all over again. For a person with extreme anxiety this is ... enough to put you over the edge. At which time you are treated as a violent patient."

Luckily for that patient, we've gone beyond the dark days of Dickensian lunatic asylums, isn't it? Or is it? "Being on a psychiatric ward was one of the most traumatic experiences of my life," another woman told the Committee. "The things that happen on a psychiatric ward taken in any other context would be seen as devastating. People being locked in tiny rooms they cannot leave, tied to a bed and injected with chemicals against their will are clearly traumatic experiences. Being told that it is all right because they are in a hospital is really a departure from reality."

### **Pills and needles, needles and pills**

All right, then, agreed that treatment for someone not in her right mind can be traumatic - but at least these days there is humane, caring treatment, is there not? "The only resources we have in any abundance," another respondent told the Committee, "are expensive psychiatrists, occupational therapists, and nurses and social workers who are reduced to delivering pills and needles, effectively keeping discharged patients in chemical straightjackets for the comfort of the mainstream community. If a client is depressed and upset because his life is so narrowly constricted, his medication is increased. If he is fearful of a landlord or unable to sleep in an overcrowded room, his medication is increased. If poverty leaves him hungry and restless, his medication is increased, and if he has enough remaining life inside his body to be angry, the dosages will ensure that that anger is forgotten."

Of course, people in distress can always call a help line. "In calling the local addiction service I got an answering machine repeatedly," a man told the Committee. "I had no phone number to leave. After that I became utterly homeless, was in jail and attempted suicide. What if someone was able to answer that phone?" True, these are personal anecdotes, heavily freighted with the outrage of those relating their experiences. Yet the report nevertheless reveals a system-wide approach to care for the mentally ill that is focused primarily on the convenience of the caregivers. The Kirby/Keon report does not accuse health care workers of being mean or callous, but makes it clear that the resource framework for them to do a better job is simply not in place.

Outside the health care services sector, the reasons behind some people's experiences are more difficult to fathom. The Senators heard this story: "I was off on disability, finally getting back to work and was going to get an RRSP loan. I went to the bank, a bank I had dealt with for years, and they said they would be happy to give me a loan. I told them I would like to get some insurance on the loan, because I was just returning to work and was not sure how long I would be there. They asked me to fill out a form, and of course one of the questions was, 'Have you ever had a mental illness?' And once you tick 'yes' in that box, you will be denied insurance at Canadian banks."

People who believe their rights have been violated are at liberty to hire a lawyer, but such

patients can rarely afford one, therefore banks who show customers the door if they admit to mental illness have reason to feel safe from legal consequence. Governments, too, create policies that work against the mentally ill. For example, the Ontario Disability Support Program was criticized in the Senate report for discriminating against people with mental illness who want to work, because when such people earn more than \$160 per month their ODSB benefits are clawed back. That keeps them in poverty.

### **Educators, activists and officials**

People understand very well how they can expect to be treated if they are seen to have 'gone crazy.' The Senate report says although one in five Canadians are affected by mental health problems in their lifetime, only about a third of them seek professional help. It's partly because of the bureaucratic run-around, and partly due to the stigma. Thanks to concerted efforts by educators, activists and elected officials, Canadian society today attaches far less stigma to patients with AIDS or those addicted to drugs than was once the case. But those with mental illness might as well have a scarlet letter on their foreheads, which is why senators Kirby and Keon saw much more than the need to tinker with the treatment of the mentally ill. They want to completely reconstruct the health care and social safety nets for mental illness, and get rid of the stigma of it as well. Their report recommends the creation of a Mental Health Commission which would oversee the building of the improved network of services, and also launch a national anti-stigma campaign. The senators have outlined a huge task, with huge implications for Canadian society.

With such implications, why has their report received comparatively little mainstream journalistic or political attention? The report features a great many victim's anecdotes, but the point, when the report finally gets there, is a detailed plan to raise \$478-million per year for mental health programs through new taxes on alcoholic drinks. Critics looking for reasons to be political or cynical might see the whole thing as an exercise in reasoning backwards from its chosen conclusion, which would be the need for the Liberal government that launched the initiative to justify more than \$5-billion in planned new alcohol taxes. It's certainly not hard to imagine some journalists reading that and dismissing the report as just the preamble to another new sin tax from a government no longer in power. The report's description of \$5-billion as "a nickel a drink" might have reinforced that impression, because manufactured paucity is very commonly used to preempt criticism of unpopular new taxes. Nor is it likely that the minority Conservatives are anxious to poke the public with a new tax on fun as they prepare to seek a majority - especially when it would be in response to an initiative launched by Liberals. These factors may help explain both the low level of news coverage and the lack of political enthusiasm for the report.

Yet the revelations of Kirby and Keon are too big and too ugly to ignore. Our society is one of competition, where people live in a vast machine that sorts them into winners and losers. The old saying that 'you win a few and you lose a few' doesn't cover reality. Some people lose consistently. The defeated, including those who develop mental problems, take solace in drink or drugs, which cost money whether obtained legally or not, which in turn can lead to poverty born of the desperation that makes people spend their money on



chemical happiness in the absence of any hope for the real thing. *That's* how mental desperation leads to addiction and poverty. Whether that line of reasoning makes it a good idea to ratchet up the price of alcohol, thus accelerating the decent into poverty of those addicted to it, is a discussion for another day. Sin taxes aside, what *Out Of The Shadows* drags into the light is human suffering caused by hidden disorders such as clinical depression, as well as by major mental disorders such as schizophrenia, any of which can strike anyone for reasons rooted in genetics or bad karma rather than social disadvantage.

Kirby and Keon have shown us that the classic horror-fiction image of the walking dead moving among the living is not fiction at all. They're really here; bodies that walk and breathe but are not really alive; they just go through the motions because they have no choice. Some pass unnoticed by the crowd, existing behind masks because the stigma of mental illness is too great to bear. Some cannot help but show through, and we back away from them in fear. They are, after all, crazy people. When they show up frantic and suicidal in a hospital ER, they are told to go wait their turn with the broken arms and the bellyaches and the stuffy noses. Elsewhere, they are shooed away from banks and employment offices, frozen out of neighbourhoods, given a wide berth on the street, and ridiculed when they protest. Canadian society is ashamed to treat people so shabbily for their race, religion or choice of sex play, but considers it acceptable to do it to the mentally ill. How crazy is that?

-D.S.

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[The Book Man](#)

## Conservative victory sparks flurry of new books



*Book Reviews by Stewart Kiff*

*Right Side Up: The Fall of Paul Martin and the Rise of Stephen Harper's New Conservatism,*  
by Paul Wells

*The Long Road Back: The Conservative Journey, 1993-2006,*

by Hugh Segal

*Full Circle: Death and Resurrection in Canadian Conservative Politics,*  
by Bob Plamondon

No doubt the biggest Canadian political story of 2006 was the stunning electoral success of Canada's new Conservative Party in the recent federal election. The rise of the often-maligned Stephen Harper and the party he has led from its contentious beginnings to electoral victory is a captivating story. Undoubtedly, Canada's book publishers thought so and consequently we have seen a number of high quality books dealing with the election and its fallout. In particular, three major books merit attention.

The best of the lot is *Right Side Up: The Fall of Paul Martin and the Rise of Stephen Harper's New Conservatism*, by *Maclean's* Magazine columnist Paul Wells. In it, he ably demonstrates why he merits his status as one of the leading scribes in Canadian political writing. His stories are accessible and his prose is light, though at times the collegial tone feels a bit forced. Overall he has written a book that is a very easy read both for the dilettante and the professional. Yet, his book packs real weight. *Right Side Up* is full of information you will find nowhere else about Paul Martin's fall and Stephen Harper's ascension.

Wells begins his book immediately after the narrow win of the Liberals in the 2004 federal election against the new Conservative Party led by Stephen Harper. Though the Liberals maintained power, they lost seats - yet Martin treated the election as a victory and did virtually nothing to change or improve his team or their message for the next election. That was because from his perspective, Martin and his team had been building for this moment since his 1990 leadership loss to Jean Chrétien. Why should anything change? It was this inertia that set Martin and the Liberals up for their mediocre 2006 election results and Martin's subsequent resignation from politics.

Those who remember the Federal election of 2004 will remember that the election was in fact a very near thing for the Liberals in spite of their eventual victory. Three weeks before the election, Harper's new Conservative Party was ahead in the polls but seemingly ran out of script. This loss of momentum allowed the Liberals to run a very effective scare campaign that gave them a surge in the last weeks of the campaign, largely by convincing soft NDP voters to vote Liberal because the thought of a Stephen Harper victory was worse than the thought of continued Liberal government.

Wells contrasts Martin's blithe smugness following his victory with the story of Stephen Harper. Harper could have easily accepted the modest gains of 2004 as a success. After all, Harper had increased his party's seats, unified the country's Conservatives, and led in the polls up until the final weeks.

Instead, Harper treated the campaign like a terrible loss. He organized a series of ruthless strategy sessions in which everything about the campaign, including his own

performance, was fair game for criticism. There, with the help of his inner circle of political *übernerds* like Tom Flannigan and Patrick Muttart, Harper and team deconstructed their election effort. From this analysis they prepared the working plan that would become the blueprint for victory in the 2006 election.

The results from these two approaches were that the Conservative 2006 campaign has become celebrated for its effectiveness and consistency, while the Martin campaign has been exposed for its disorganization and lack of imagination.

Elsewhere in the book Wells adds some interesting what-if scenarios - which only go to show how fragile and luck-driven political success can be. He documents the point in the campaign where all the Conservative television ads - including many nasty and negative ads that were never aired but where nonetheless prepared - were sent by accident to the *Sun* newspapers. Through good fortune, the *Sun* reporters were not able to properly open their DVD, saving the Conservatives from a terrible gaffe that may have been fatal to their election hopes. Through good fate, and little else, the Conservatives were able to retrieve their ads, and continue on to electoral success.

Those of you enjoyed the *Maclean's* post mortem on the last election will be interested to know that this book grew out of the writing that Wells contributed to that piece. *Right Side Up* is a great piece of political writing and in-depth reportage that is seldom seen. I think it's the best Canadian political book of 2006, and I can't recommend it enough.

Next to Wells' fine writing, Segal's and Plamondon's books are neither as accessible nor as interesting. Nonetheless, they are recommended reading, but I would read Well's book first and then choose the other books depending on your subject matter and political persuasion.

Segal's *The Long Road Back* is more for those readers who still yearn for the now defunct Progressive Conservative Party, and is more of a personal memoir. Plamondon's *Full Circle* is a much stronger historical work, and will be of more interest to those interested in the Alliance/Reform movements.

Segal's book is very much a book about the Conservative world, as opposed to any particular event, and Hugh Segal delivers real value from his privileged perspective on the Canadian political scene. As one of the leading Conservative intellectuals in Canada, Segal's political life was once intertwined with Ontario's Big Blue Machine, where he served then Premier Bill Davis. He is a lead spokesman for the "Red Tory" point of view. To this day Segal remains an active player in Ottawa, where he currently sits in the Senate as a Conservative member.

As knowledgeable as Hugh Segal is, his writing at times feels like a luncheon speech at the Empire Club. Hugh Segal the writer is not unlike Hugh Segal the talking head. He is erudite, nuanced and entertaining but somehow distant and inaccessible.

*The Long Road Back* is organized as a straightforward chronological narrative that begins with the terrible defeat of the Federal Progressive Conservative Party in 1993. It

leads the reader through the years in the wilderness after that stunning defeat up through the leadership of Jean Charest, the return of Joe Clark, the brief reign of Peter MacKay and finally to the merger and beyond. Of most interest here is reading about how an ideological centrist like Hugh Segal feels under the leadership of the more right-wing Stephen Harper.

Plamondon's book covers much the same territory in terms of subject and chronology, but it does so from the perspective of a former member of the Reform/Alliance. Plamondon, while an active Conservative, focuses on the historical events of this period much more than his own political memories. This book is based on the recollections stemming from more than 50 interviews with key players at the time.

Yet, you get the sense he is too close by far to his sources. While Wells has some real scoops, and Segal is just interesting all by himself, Plamondon's moments are much fewer and farther between. Consequently, the book can get boring. It reads in some places like simple description, with little or no interpretation and spice.

That is not to say there are not some surprising turns. Plamondon's is strong in his criticism of Preston Manning and his selfish decision to tear apart the Canadian Conservative movement by founding the Reform Party in the late '80s.

Ultimately, Manning is portrayed in a very unfavorable light. He is the lead player in the tragedy of the Canadian Conservative movement's great divide. Manning's great organizational and leadership skills ultimately result in a perverse but very predictable outcome: Two inadequate Conservative parties, and Liberal Party of Canada domination of the Canadian Government from 1993 through to 2006. Plamondon lays the responsibility for this clearly on Manning's doorstep.

The "Full Circle" that Plamondon talks about is the division of the Conservative movement between the Reform and Progressive Conservatives in the late '80s, and the eventual reconciliation between these two camps just prior to the 2004 election leading to electoral victory in 2006. This is a very academic work, but if you can get through the slow parts, there is a lot here that will prove illuminating as the Conservatives prepare for the anticipated election in 2007.

*PAAC member Stewart Kiff is the President of Solstice Public Affairs. He welcomes your feedback and suggestions, and can be reached at [stewart@solsticecanada.ca](mailto:stewart@solsticecanada.ca).*

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[The Web Editor](#)

## Show them the money

*by David Silburt  
PAAC Web Editor*

The provincial legislators of Ontario, and Premier Dalton McGuinty in particular, took heavy criticism in December for approving a 25 per cent pay raise for themselves just in time for Christmas. The criticism was strident, partisan and calumnious. This month, in the spirit of a New Year's resolution to be nicer, your editorial department would like to counter this criticism with a few words in defense of Ontario MPPs and their pay raise.

Let's look at this thing in perspective. Most people know, and MPPs have now verified through their actions, that people go into politics seeking good pay and benefits. That means we have to pay them the going rate. As the pro footballer character played by Cuba Gooding Jr. in the movie *Jerry Maguire* put it so aptly, we've got to show them the money. But it's not as if they just up and *demand*ed it. The idea of raising the salaries of Ontario MPPs came from no less an authority than Ontario Integrity Commissioner Coulter Osborne, not from the MPPs themselves. Mr. Osborne floated a rationale that Mr. McGuinty could embrace, which is simply this: If people can get 40 per cent more representing the same ridings federally, why would they want to work at the provincial level? Mr. Osborne suggested they'd do it only to prepare for a move to the bigs later on - making Ontario politics a "farm team" for the federal league.

True, some people might do it to serve the public, such as NDP House Leader Peter Kormos. He loudly rejected the pay raise as an offense against ordinary citizens, who generally have to convince their own employers they are worth a raise before they receive it. But Mr. Kormos's attitude is the exception, and he has the bruises on his backside from being thrown out of the legislature to prove it. Other than aberrations like him, we're talking pay and benefits here, and if we want topnotch people - such as the politicians who serve us in Ottawa, for example - then we must offer similar pay rates. Show them the money or we won't get good honest hard-working people with integrity, says the Commissioner whose job exists precisely to put a stop to lapses in that integrity, and who must therefore know what he is talking about. The Premier is simply reflecting Mr. Osborne's analysis when he tells us this is no time to go all parsimonious on him. Can we really expect someone to do a decent job making life better in Ontario for a beggarly \$88,000? There are pipefitters who make more than that. Can we begrudge Mr. McGuinty his extra \$39,000 to get his annual pay up near 200 grand, knowing he could pull down more than twice that practicing law?

Indeed, Mr. McGuinty could probably get a job every bit as good as the one recently vacated by former Hydro One President Tom Parkinson, who quit his \$1.6-million a year job and left in a huff with a \$3-million severance package after being insulted and picked on for charging his \$45,000 travel expenses, his \$15,000 office moving expenses, his \$11,000 trip to sunny Australia and other incidentals that certain pinch-pursed critics would begrudge him. Even now, with howls of criticism ensuring that the next Hydro One boss will have to settle for less, it's certain the new CEO will still make much, much more *for running one company* than the modest \$198,620 per year McGuinty will get for running a whole province! It's an outrage! If there was any justice Dalton McGuinty would take Parkinson's old Hydro One job himself for the bargain price of around \$1-million, we'd lose him as Premier and it would serve us right. But he won't do that. Why? Because Dalton McGuinty is a MAN OF THE PEOPLE, that's why, and you read it here first.

Let us follow his leadership, and accept the new salaries for Ontario MPPs. Your provincial politicians and Premier have miles to go before they sleep, dealing with challenges as diverse as stopping tax increases, balancing the budget, reducing highway 407 tolls, funding necessary health care services, capping Hydro rates, hiring new police officers and nurses, helping victims of crime, building affordable housing and saving the Oak Ridges Moraine. Your editorial department feels very strongly that substantial progress will begin in all these areas now that our MPPs have caused us to pay them what they deserve. The reason these things haven't been fixed yet is because we were paying too cheap. The truth of Premier McGuinty's position could not be more clear: You really can't get good people if all you pay is chump change.

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## Have your say

We welcome member input, whether it's a letter to the editor, a story suggestion or a proposal for a guest column. Feel free to email your input or suggestions to us. All submissions for publication on this site are subject to approval by the Editorial Board.

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