



PAAC E-News

Public Affairs: Your Online Newsletter

September • 2007

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The environment figures high on the public's list of important issues - finally.

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For every moment of triumph many souls must be trampled. Here's to them!

[President's message](#)

All the clean air we can get



*by Elaine Flis
PAAC President*

In an unplanned moment of candour that got him much-earned derisive laughter, former

auto salesman Lee Iaccoca once blurted out, "We've got to pause and ask ourselves: How much clean air do we need?" Today, nobody in public office would fail to know the answer to that question. We see it in poll after poll, whether it's Angus Reid, Environics or anyone else: Environment is at top of the public mind. Finally. Because it is increasingly the number one issue for the public, it is increasingly the number one issue for government - with an election on the way provincially, and one continuing to loom federally, governments must confront environmental issues as the public judges them. Finally.

This is an important moment in the development of government strategies at all levels; a time when politicians of every stripe must have their political priorities in tune with the overwhelmingly important public demand that they find creative ways to safeguard the environment, correct harmful policies, nurture better attitudes - and do it all without wrecking people's livelihoods. It's a very tall order, made more difficult by the fact that these decisions have been delayed far too long.

As you'll read in this month's E-news, the changing public mood shows an encouraging acceptance of conservation and environmentally responsible attitudes, and you will also read that forward-thinking businesses are responding to that, finally. Governments are doing so as well. Yet while things like bans on wasteful incandescent lights are a good omen, they're not enough. You still see environmental hypocrisy. You still can see people carrying boxes of compact fluorescent lights out of their local Home Depot or Wal-Mart and loading them into their Cadillac Escalade, and not seeing the irony of it.

There is much to do, and governments are on the hook to do it. Governments at all levels need to adopt a thorough, comprehensive, integrated approach to tackling environmental threats to our very existence. Since so many environmental issues fall under provincial jurisdiction, a provincial election is the ideal time to advocate these ideas and encourage politicians and community leaders to take the environmentally responsible approach in their policies. Far too much is at stake for government not to seriously tackle the overwhelming need to safeguard our long-abused environment - and whether pollution causes climate change or just makes us sick directly is no longer the issue.

The issue is: In the final analysis, our environment is all we have. It's the source of our food, air, water and life. So it's good that the public is pushing governments of all stripes to stop bickering and start fixing the big things, along with the light bulbs and the plastic grocery bags. Finally.

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Now, I'm happy to welcome our newest members:

- Josh Colle, Greater Toronto Airport Authority, Toronto
- Elizabeth Young, British Consulate General, Toronto
- Chad Rogers, Navigator, Toronto
- Nancy Stewart, Credas Group, Toronto

Comment? Input? Idea? Contact me: eflis@crfa.ca



[Campaign teaser](#)

Greg Lyle reads the bones



Three wise men - Justin Graham (left) Greg Lyle (middle) and Joe MacDonald gave us a read on the election campaign the day it started.

Shortly after the crack of dawn on September 10, the Albany Club filled up with PAAC members and guests who came to listen to **Greg Lyle** and **Justin Graham** of Innovative Research Group (IRG), plus PAAC's own **Joe MacDonald**, also now with IRG, interpret the results of IRG's freshest polling numbers on the very day the Ontario election campaign got its formal launch. We'll look at what they predicted in more detail and compare it with what happened afterwards, on the cusp of the election itself in our October E-news. Meantime, here's the gist of what they said.

Lyle's numbers, fresh from the previous Wednesday, were based on survey results using an online panel they started for Maclean's Magazine in the last federal election. It was accurate then, and he thinks it's accurate now. Its verdict: The Liberals would have 55

seats by those numbers - perilously close to 54-seat minority territory. That's at the start of it. A lot can change. Said Lyle: "This gives us a sense of how the horses are lined up at the gate, but they still have to run around the track."

One factor that can change things is media coverage. The media think they can steer elections, and they sure seem to bust themselves at the seams to accomplish that. But Lyle's magic digits prove it can actually be done - he clocked the newspaper coverage in the last contest carefully, and when media talked up Liberal issues, three days later Liberal support spiked. When they talked up Conservative issues, three days later the Conservative support spiked. Now, with the Liberals starting out with a five-point lead on John Tory's Tories, partisan news outlets must smell blood in the water. "It's not just how they talk about the parties," said Lyle. "It's what the media are talking about."

Justin Graham pointed out that voters are generally positive, in terms of the direction the province is going, but they're not passionately for or against anybody. "For a government elected on a platform of change, this is not a good result," he added.

The top-of-mind issue for voters in general is health care, with integrity, keeping promises and honesty grouped together as second most important. Among Conservative supporters, character rates highest, with all that goes with it, including honesty and keeping promises. Faith-based schools, upon which Mr. Tory appears to be hanging his hat, sits down at four per cent. Among Liberal supporters, health is also the top issue, with the need to vote against Conservatives sitting down at five per cent. Among NDP supporters, health is also top issue, but environment is second, and social issues rate a nine per cent rating - the NDP is the only party whose supporters rank social issues above three per cent.

Perhaps most tellingly, health care also is top issue among the undecided voters. Yet despite the importance of health care in so many voter segments, voters are very fragmented across many other issues, said Graham: "This will be a challenge; trying to get a message out that gathers people."

Joe MacDonald agreed. "It's tough to pull out the voters when things are mushy." With a five-point lead, the Liberals have maneuvering room at the start, but all parties have two formidable tasks ahead: A) to convince voters to support them and B) bring them out to actually vote. "For undecided voters the task is bigger," said Joe. "You have to both convince them and get them out." This is a reason to expect negative ads.

The NDP, said MacDonald, are strong with those who hold social issues important. "When these issues are the story, you can expect NDP support to go up." As for Conservatives, he said, "cutting taxes, crime and the economy are theirs." Liberals are strongest with the public when the talk swings around to education.

Yet Lyle pointed out, "Dalton McGuinty owns flip flops. He also owns broken promises." Also on the negative side, when asked which leader truly cares about people most voters laugh out loud - but Howard Hampton has the most to sell here. The NDP is also blessed by the fact that the Green Party was excluded from the television debate, leaving

Hampton and the NDP in command of the far-left environmental regions.

IRG also asked people about their main reason for not voting for a particular party. Among those who won't vote Tory, faith-based schools was mentioned by a third of them. Among those who won't vote Liberal, the perception that the flurry of funding announcements was about "buying votes" figured prominently. Makes you think, doesn't it? In each case these initiatives were calculated to win support.

All of which is interesting, but Lyle cautioned that the proverbial fat lady has not come close to singing. Three out of five voters need to hear more, and most of them don't keep on listening throughout a campaign. When there's an election on, "People start to listen, then stop listening when they've made up their minds."

From there it takes big news to move them. Which can happen. "The campaign is not over till it's over," Lyle said. "A big headline in the last stage of the campaign can and does move people."

Bottom line from Greg Lyle: "This election is clearly the Liberals to lose." They lead in party brand recognition, and their position on health care and education works for them. There is no great public desire to "trow da bums out." Still, "Three bad news days and things would be different," Lyle said. "The media could drive this campaign."

[The MMP referendum](#)

Mixed member mushmouth

On October 10th, Ontarians will also vote on the most important electoral change in the last century: the issue of electoral reform through Mixed Member Proportional representation. The scary part is this: As reported in the National Post, most voters haven't got Clue One what it 's all about. News outlets are doing their minimal duty, with most of them explaining it at least once. Yet much of the little information the public gets at all, is convoluted mushmouth.

Due to a lack of widely distributed and clear explanations, it's beginning to look like people will vote on this momentous issue in ignorance. PAAC members and their organizations may wish to educate readers of their web sites before it's too late, so as a member service here is your pre-written explanatory template, in straightforward layman's language stripped of all nuance. For step one, simply copy and paste paragraph A) below, into your web site:

A) The rules of MMP

Under current rules, less popular parties such as the Greens, which have the support of a small percentage of voters, get no seats at Queen's Park. If the province adopts MMP,

people get two votes - one for a candidate and one for a political party. The candidate with the most votes wins the riding, as they do now. But there will be new seats in government to be filled by appointment, with parties selecting who fills them from lists they compile themselves. The number of seats they can fill this way is based on their percentage of support from that second vote. Fringe parties will therefore be able to fill some of these seats, and represent their supporters. All parties will be able to do this based on their own popular support, so those seats will be divvied up in a manner that reflects the real support of each party.

There, that's your first paragraph. Now, add to it either paragraph B) below or paragraph C) depending on whether you like MMP or hate it:

B) Mixed Member Proportional is good. It enhances democracy by ensuring that some seats at Queen's Park are available to smaller parties, such as for example the Green Party, which gathers less popular support than the Liberals, Conservatives and NDP. This will ensure that people who support those less-popular parties are not deprived of representation. By allowing all parties access to those seats in whatever proportion the public supports them, the system is fair to all. In places like New Zealand that use this system, more women and minorities arrive in government, and that's good for diversity.

C) Mixed Member Proportional is bad. It degrades democracy, because fringe parties should not fill seats if they cannot win them with direct candidate support. Further, since all parties will fill some seats by appointment, this invites abuse - major parties will add the names of threatened incumbents to their lists of appointable candidates. If those people lose, their party will put them in government anyway. As for women and minorities, there are good candidates from these groups who can win popular support, and don't need to be offered seats without having to win a competitive campaign.

There, that's it - just copy and paste, and you've got a workable piece of election education for your side of the issue. Better yet, feel free to use both versions, and let the reader decide which to support. There is no shame in either advocating for your side or giving both sides. The only shame in this whole thing is on the heads of those who have the power to educate the public and don't do it, letting them make what may well be the most important vote of their lives, in ignorance.

[Event report](#)

All roads lead to Kyoto

On September 5th, the bust of Sir John A. Macdonald watched from his corner of the Albany Club in Toronto as PAAC members and guests enjoyed an elegant luncheon by the light of those tall windows with the stained glass arches in them. They were fortifying themselves for our panel discussion, Climate Change: Differing Views on Reaching Kyoto. Our panelists included **Peter Love**, Chief Energy Conservation Officer heading

the Conservation Bureau of the Ontario Power Authority, and a former project coordinator with Pollution Probe; **Vicky Sharpe**, President and CEO of Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC), which is a federal government initiative to encourage such technology; and **Dr. John Stone**, Adjunct Professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Carleton University. Our moderator was journalist **Toby Heaps**, editor and co-founder of *Corporate Knights*, a magazine for responsible business.



Toby Heaps of *Corporate Knights* magazine moderated the Sept. 5 panel discussion.

Joining the gathering as a very distinguished guest was John Godfrey, MP for Don Valley West and current Chair of the federal Caucus Committee on Environmental Sustainability; also a member of the House Committee on Bill C-30, and an associate member of the House Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainability.



Distinguished guests - Above, (L-R) in the light of those tall windows, that's Dr. John Stone, John Godfrey, Vicky Sharpe, PAAC President Elaine Flis, Sir John A. MacDonald (background), Toby Heaps and Peter Love. Below, Elaine Flis steps up next to what may well be the last surviving Red Ensign to introduce the proceedings while panelists study their notes.



Differing views there may be among the panelists and the public, but only on how to get to Kyoto. As we've reported here before, the time is long gone when human-induced climate change itself can be argued in public, thanks to the art and science of public affairs. Some will take the pragmatic road and some will take the visionary road, but those present weren't there to discuss whether to go, only how to get there. Still, at least one speaker felt the need to reinforce the accepted wisdom, and that man was Dr. John Stone.



Dr. John Stone gave us a climate change recap.

Dr. Stone used his time at the podium to talk about the undeniable and unassailable science of global warming. He outlined the greenhouse gas cycle, and said it's an issue of basic physics. Dr. Stone has served on various groups of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). "The warming of our climate system is undeniable," was his message. "When IPCC was established 20 years ago, climate change was still uncertain. The IPCC had the stage to itself. This is no longer the case."

He's right - they did have the stage to themselves, and the job done by the IPCC in those two decades must impress. "It's hard to get nations to agree on anything," he said, yet the IPCC did exactly that, getting many nations to agree on the fact of climate change, on the idea it's caused by human beings, and on the wisdom of trading carbon credits to combat it. In the years the IPCC had the stage to itself it also solidified public acceptance of these things, and although those who don't agree still occasionally try to mount the stage, the public has by now made up its collective mind - which is why Stone's recap of climate change science, while complete and concise, was not contentious. "The Kyoto Protocol is an opportunity to experiment and show political will," he said. Conservation is part of that, he added. "The lowest-hanging fruit is conservation."



Vicky Sharpe (left) talks with Dr. Stone (right) before the session.

Vicky Sharp is on the High Road to Kyoto, which is the visionary path. She stressed the link between climate change activism and the benefits of cleaner air and cleaner water. She talked about client companies of SDTC, and their progressive ideas for innovative energy sources. For example, one company is showing how they can grow mustard seed, extract its high-fat oil, and create a fuel supplement which is clean and renewable. Another can produce fuel cells so small and efficient they will soon appear in such prosaic items as flashlights. Each of these initiatives, she suggested, combined with many more like them from other innovators, can help us get to Kyoto.

Government? "I see government as an enabler," she said, because only government can supply the initiatives, incentives and programs that encourage and nurture these seeds of ideas so that they'll grow into something substantial. "Government can act as a risk-taker to make these things possible," she said. Yet she added, "I see a disconnect between what our country is doing and what we could do." She'd like to see government show greater leadership in the push toward sustainability. "We are not yet scratching the surface in getting our infrastructure to deal with climate change."

To remind us of that she pointed to the dominance of the auto sector - and although she didn't mention it specifically, her reference evoked thoughts of the 2006 film, *Who Killed The Electric Car?* and its evidence that GM's successful electric car program in California during the 1990s was bulldozed because the cars didn't burn the stuff some people get rich selling. She didn't say it in those words, of course. Then again, given that alternative energy sources must supplant fossil fuels if they're to do any good, she didn't have to.



Peter Love and Elaine Flis enjoy a discussion over the luncheon.

While Sharpe is traveling the high, visionary road to Kyoto - which promises to be the bumpier one - Peter Love's job is to move society along the Low Road, which is the most pragmatic one. The Ontario Power Authority was created to ensure reliable electricity supplies, and conservation is an important component of that. Love's job is nothing less than establishing a culture of conservation in one of the richest societies on the planet. "My challenge is that electricity is invisible," he said. "So is conservation. It's hard to motivate people to do something about what they cannot see."

It is, in fact, a very big public affairs challenge. Love must quarterback a major and unprecedented conservation push intended to make a serious dent in Ontario's rising thirst for electricity. Provincial peak demand for electricity often tops 25,000 megawatts, and one day last summer it topped 27,000. Projections show that by 2025 - not so very far away anymore - it will hit 36,000 megawatts on peak days if it keeps rising at the current rate. "We want to get that down to 29,000," he said - still higher than now, but an ambitious conservation goal all the same. "It's an opportunity to get our system right."

As for the higher level fight against global warming caused by humans burning fossil fuels, he admitted that's another challenge. "While Asian nations build coal plants, we're closing them down," he said. Which is a fact better stated the other way around - that while we close them down, others build them with enthusiasm. This makes the gesture of shutting down our own coal plants a different thing than it might otherwise be, from an environmental standpoint - but Love didn't get into that. OPA is in business to ensure reliable electricity into the future, which is why their 20-year, 4,000-page plan of action will cost \$60-billion in very public dollars, ten billion of that spent on conservation. "We're calling for a culture of conservation. We want everyone in Ontario to think about it; to realize it's not just up to their neighbour."

To that end, Love calls upon all cities to appoint a municipal conservation officer, and he'd like to see all companies do the same. Somehow, to meet that goal of slicing some 6,300 megawatts out of Ontario's electrical picture, conservation has to become not merely understood, but popular. He says it's starting to happen - this past August, peak demand was 700 megawatts lower than expected. Does this mean people are getting the conservation message? Some say yes. Some say maybe.

On our panel, Dr. Stone's words were those of the academic, repeating accepted wisdom and saying the consequences of debating it would be dire. Peter Love's words were those of the pragmatist, saying reliable energy can be found on the Low Road to Kyoto: "Conservation is certainly a no-regret strategy." Vicky Sharpe's were those of the visionary setting out upon the more formidable High Road, declaring, "We have to completely revise our society." Yet all roads lead to Kyoto.

One thing is very clear: We're going. Thanks to the power of public affairs, people believe. Every once in a while, a speaker steps up to remind us that the science is undeniable, and that makes anyone who denies it a Climate Change Denier. This is a huge help to the cause of conservation, and the main reason to believe that this August's lower peak electricity demand was not happenstance.

In his presentation, Peter Love made the analogy of a family car trip, with the children in the back seat asking, are we there yet? His answer: no, not yet. "But we know where we're going. We have a road map." And, he added helpfully, "The kids are strapped in." Exactly.

-D.S.

[Bank sets example](#)

How green is thy mortgage

Did you notice the young man and woman at the front table, left-hand side of the room, in the Barney-purple T-shirts instead of suits? They were Militsa Fiuza and John-Paul Belanger of Citizen's Bank of Canada, the traveling spokes-folks for their bank's new environmental initiative: the Green Mortgage.



Guests John-Paul Belanger and Militsa Fiuza of Citizens Bank came to lunch with us and learn environmental things with us. They'll return the favour too, for anyone who wants to plug the new Green Mortgage to company staffers. Read on.

The Green Mortgage is an example of the kind of thinking our panelists were there to advocate - a way to sell green business at the street level, and help establish that culture of conservation Peter Love was talking about. Citizens Bank of Canada launched the idea this past April, in partnership with the Conservation Council of Ontario (CCO) and Green\$aver ("saving the planet one home at a time"), and the idea is to link home energy efficiency commitments to the most basic aspect of buying a home: the financing. "We embrace the opportunity to help Ontarians conserve energy and reduce their environmental impact," Citizens Bank CEO Jason Farris said in their press release, and the interesting thing is they were first to do this in Canada. It will be surprising if it doesn't get copied here very soon.

The deal: When green-minded home buyers get financing from Citizens Bank, they get a competitive rate, plus an environmental goodie package featuring compact fluorescent lights, eco-friendly products, helpful literature on environmental topics, and various coupons for renewable power, car-sharing, even coupons for trees. The featured item is a rebate against a home energy audit which will recommend - and thereby encourage - all available energy-saving measures that could help reduce their new home's carbon footprint.



Its easier being green - mortgage customers
get a blue box full of environmental encouragement.
(Photo courtesy of Citizens Bank of Canada)

As described by Fiuza and Belanger, Citizens Bank of Canada was quick off the mark to become what Toby Heaps might call Corporate Knights, linking green environmental and ethical policies to business dealings, and mirroring the emerging phenomenon referred to as 'eco-mortgages' in the United States. Militsa and John-Paul are happy to promote the cause. "Our job is to come in if you want us, bring along a pizza lunch, and talk about the Green Mortgage," said Fiuza.

Get used to this kind of approach. Green business is likely to be the coming thing in Canada, and our distinguished panel at the luncheon could hardly have suggested a better example than the youthful and healthy-looking green team eating lunch about six feet away from them. Want to have them in to talk green mortgages with your staff? Call Militsa Fiuza at 416-568-0353 - and if that sounds like a free plug, it is. Your editorial department thinks green too.

[The Web Editor](#)

Army of Darwin

by David Silburt

PAAC Web Editor

*For every moment of triumph, for every instance of beauty,
many souls must be trampled.*

**-Hunter S.
Thompson**

Election campaign time is an excellent time to pay tribute to those who make all progress, evolution and human achievement possible. After all, an election is evolution and human progress in microcosm: a time when many compete where few will succeed. This column is to honour the many.

Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, writing in the mid-1800s, independently advanced theories of evolution by natural selection. This is no longer a theory but a well-accepted principle in biology. Yet while educated people accept biological evolution by natural selection, we don't properly acknowledge social evolution by human selection. We should.

Indeed, Wallace's and Darwin's theories were inspired by human activity. They both read Thomas Malthus, who in 1797 in his book, *Essay on the Principle of Population*, wrote how the constant growth of human population could overwhelm any programs to help feed the poor, due to limited resources. Darwin and Wallace both realized that plants and animals live under resource constraints and other pressures which must limit their own population growth, and this line of thinking led to their work on evolution by natural selection. When you think about it, it makes a great deal of sense, yet nobody thought of it until then.

Certainly, there must be many bugs that cannot outrun the predator, in order for the predator to survive and for the bug race to become stronger. Yet selection also rules the lives of humans as it does those of other animals. When people seek to form pair matches, for example, a form of selection very definitely takes place: The most attractive individuals have the greatest choice of romantic partners, and for every one who is chosen many others must lose. Similarly, in the workaday world, every company wants a thousand applicants for that prime job opportunity, so that the company can have the best staff and so that it can hold its corporate head high. Every sphere of human activity, including politics, is about winners and losers, and you need the latter to make the former important; to make the Main Chance something worth striving toward. And just as there are animals whose only contribution is to die that others may thrive, so there are people whose contribution to human progress is to make meaningful the victories they will never taste.

Here's to them! Let us toast those individuals who, in the course of their lifetimes, along with thousands of their fellows, have helped begin hundreds of romances leading to stable relationships, launch thousands of rewarding careers, and ensured that success in everything competitive is the special thing it must be in order for people to want it. Comes October 10th, they will help launch some new political careers.

We are accustomed to honouring winners. We will do so again on election night in Ontario, but first let us pause to honour those who make all success possible, be they political candidates, job applicants or any other human or animal who, in the course of history, served by losing. Where would the world be without them? Neck deep in bugs, geeks and the politically unsaleable, that's where. So raise your glass high to the Army of Darwin, that vast swarm of everyone and everything whose souls must be trampled to make the world go 'round. Honour winners tomorrow; spare a kind thought for losers today. The world could not do without doing without them.

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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