



# PAAC E-News

Public Affairs: Your Online Newsletter

June • 2005

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[President's message](#)

### Summer in the city will be dirty and Gritty



*by Chris Benedetti*  
*PAAC President*

May was a big month for PAAC events, featuring two luncheon appearances by major guest speakers, which are reported and analyzed below. Perhaps the most anticipated was Darrell Bricker's visit, because by the time it came the whole nation thought we were on the verge of a late spring election, and all of us at the luncheon believed the long-simmering contest would finally begin. Instead, the government won the critical non-confidence vote. But is it really true that we averted a summer election campaign? I don't think so. I think we averted an election,

but the campaign is on.

From now to the day the writ drops, Canadians will be inundated with naked politics as the parties wage their campaigns with everything but lawn signs. The Paul Martin government is the first Liberal government in a long time to be at risk of losing a hold on power the Liberals have enjoyed for so long they seem to consider it their birthright. Their enemies know they are wounded. So does the Prime Minister.

Paul Martin is without doubt on the unclean end of the biggest corruption scandal in this nation since Sir John A. MacDonald was caught taking kickbacks on the Pacific Railway project. In those days it was possible for Liberal MPs to become disgusted with this sort of corruption and withdraw their loyalty to the party in favour of loyalty to the public. There is no sign of that happening with Martin's Liberals, at least not yet. No, so far we've seen independent MPs support the Liberals, one MP defect from the Conservatives, and no Liberals see any need to move in the other direction. And we can see that Paul Martin feels a need to delay, delay, delay the public vote in the hope that public anger will naturally abate, and that a relentless campaign by friendly media, aided by spin-doctoring and public spending, can change the public mood.

Right now, that public mood is not necessarily something to cheer him - although recently released polls might have him smiling. The Liberals won their critical by-election in Labrador, but reports indicate the turnout was large, which is not usually the case in a by-election. Fifty-four per cent turnout means high public interest, which only happens when people care about the outcome and want to help fight the battle. In addition, media reports suggest that the larger influx of voters who would usually not bother to show up, came out to support the Conservative candidate. So although the Liberals won, they did so with a lesser share of the vote pool than before. That's a shot across the bows for Paul Martin.

The spring election is off, but politics remain hot. Quebec Separatists see opportunity for advancement of their cause. Conservatives see a window of opportunity against an adversary which, in the days when it virtually owned Quebec and most of Ontario, was essentially invulnerable. The NDP has the chance to matter as never before, and is keen to take advantage of all political opportunities.

And Canadian voters, judging by those in Labrador, are not really feeling jaded and uninterested in politics at all. I think Canadians across the country feel the same way as those in Labrador. All major parties doubtless realize this, so they will be campaigning heartily, in precisely the ways Darrell Bricker outlines below, in his discussion of the spring election that didn't quite get around to happening.

Paul Martin's need to delay is obvious. The more interested people are, the more engaged they are, and for the Liberals that is bound to mean enraged. Yet Canadians are basically forgiving; we don't have the temperament to stay boiling mad indefinitely. Martin is counting on that. But the Conservatives and the Bloc will want to keep the fires burning under the Prime Minister.

That's why it's going to be a long, hot political summer.

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And now it is my special pleasure to welcome our newest members to the Public Affairs Association of Canada:

- Danielle Labossiere, Entertainment Software Association of Canada;
- Cameron Summers, Public Policy Group.

Once again, thank you all for your continued interest in and support of our organization. And once again, feel free to contact me with your ideas, suggestions and input, at [cbenedetti@sussex-strategy.com](mailto:cbenedetti@sussex-strategy.com).



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[Event Report One](#)

## The man who re-branded Dalton McGuinty

Small world. James B. Warren, Executive Director of Communications, Office of the Premier, Government of Ontario, came to speak at a PAAC luncheon at the luxurious Metropolitan Hotel in Toronto on May 16, the day before the federal Liberals used Belinda Stronach to yank the rug out from under their enemies, thereby delaying their own public trial on charges of dishonesty. Warren's previous assignment: Director of Communications for Magna International, where Stronach was built. His current project, as stated in his Curriculum Vitae: To oversee the complete re-branding of the Government of Ontario and launch a vertical advertising strategic plan to promote this new brand. The main beneficiary of his expertise: Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty, formerly accused of being dishonest with his election promises, now re-branded as a man who takes on big challenges for the public good.



**Jim Warren, Executive Director of Communications for Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty**

Indeed, the bad rep McGuinty earned through Dalton McGuinty Budget One (DMB1) was nicely on the way to being rehabilitated by the time Warren spoke, thanks to Dalton McGuinty Budget Two (DMB2), a kinder, gentler budget with - read the man's lips - no new taxes. Warren's job is to spread the word, and he came to our Chateaubriand luncheon to work the case. His topic title: *Communicating Budget 2005*



**Above:** Warren (left) with his colleagues from the Ministry of Finance, Peter Wilkinson and Diane Flanagan. **Below:** Linda Lisi handled the

slide presentation while Warren spoke.



Warren's full-court communications press is about pledges made and then kept through the many benefits of DMB2. "When this government was elected we pledged to work hard, fix schools, make real progress," said Warren. Now there are 146,000 new jobs and the deficit has been beaten back by half - and let's never forget it was the TORIES who handed this government a deficit. Warren's message: Due to McGuinty working like Hercules to clean out the Augean stables left by the Minions of Mike, there is a balanced budget poking above the horizon for fiscal '08-'09, or maybe even fiscal '07 if the gods smile upon us. So let there be no more carping about promises, taxes, etc.

### **The inside poop**

DMB2 delivers on health care and education initiatives without new taxes, Warren said. Which amounts to McGuinty delivering what he promised. And Warren promised the "inside poop" on the leader of the Provincial Opposition, then delivered it when he flashed this quotation on screen: 'I welcome these investments and I think there may be some which we will take exception to, but the principle of what is being done here is right.' The author of the quote? Mr. John Tory the Tory, reacting to DMB2.

After the chuckles died down, Warren drew us a thumbnail sketch of Dalton McGuinty and his roots as a hardworking man. The Premier is one of a family of 10 children, all of whom achieved higher education not because they were born with silver spoons in their mouths but

because in those days higher education was affordable, which is why McGuinty understands and works toward accessible higher education for everyone, Warren said. The Bob Rae report is his guide. Not that DMB2 includes everything Rae suggested. "Rae wanted everything done in three years," Warren said. "We'll do it in five." But although the McGuinty government cannot do everything exactly as Rae envisioned it, they're on the same wavelength.

Indeed, what was once the Bob Rae Report has now become what the budget refers to as, *Reaching Higher: The McGuinty Government Plan for Post-Secondary Education*, comprising much of what the Rae Report wanted, and embracing its goals and concerns in these times of high tuitions and a changing economy that demands more education of its workers. Warren spoke about the reasons behind the need for higher education: Where once five Ontarians held jobs for each retiree living on pension support, now it's down to three for one, and the only way to support that is through better education, so those who work can hold higher paying jobs.

#### **A four-letter word**

Of course, that equation only works through higher taxation of those higher paid workers, which is how some of that wealth is to be re-directed to the government for the eventual benefit of those retirees. But Warren didn't say that out loud, because in the next few years of the Provincial administration, tax will continue to be a four-letter word, and Warren's task is to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative and never mess with Mr. In-Between. To that end he spoke of better health care and education, not taxes.

Better health care, for example, through the use of Family Health Teams, or FHTs. This is to be the future of health care in Ontario: Instead of the relatively inefficient approach of people going to doctors, patients will be cared for by an FHT consisting of doctors and other health care providers. Warren drew the analogy of a dental office where the hygienist cleans your teeth and takes x-rays and only then does the dentist put in an appearance. Similarly, with an FHT a patient might first see a Nurse Practitioner, with the doctor batting cleanup. Ergo, less work for the doctor, fewer doctors cover more patients, and health care is made more efficient.

Warren also talked up McGuinty's claim of a \$23-billion gap between what the federal government collects from Ontario and what the province gets back. The idea is based on simple math: \$85 billion is collected from Ontario by the feds; \$62 billion in federal largesse comes back. In the put-and-take interpretation of transfer payments, that's a ripoff, although Warren was careful not to call it one. He was also careful to say it's not something of recent invention. "It has been a campaign going on for years with different Premiers and different Prime Ministers." But now McGuinty is point man on the issue, "and he is trying to present the case in a very fact-based, non-partisan way."

The effort seems to be working. In the media, those 23-Billion-Dollar-Gap references are catching on nicely, even though the Prime Minister himself has not admitted this gap exists. That is likely to change. If Jack Layton can twist Paul Martin's arm for concessions, anybody can. The morning of the very day Warren made his presentation to PAAC, McGuinty met with Stephen Harper, who came before the Premier to assure him all the best stuff in the Martin-

cum-Layton budget will be preserved if he is elected Prime Minister.

Well, it's nice to be popular. Whereas after DMB1 they had to double the palace guard at Queen's Park to keep out furious taxpayers - Warren admitted with an utter stoneface that it did some things which were "controversial" - DMB2 is creating no such reaction from the press, who are usually the nattering nabobs of negativism. DMB2 had no leaks and no bad press.

### **Mind the gap**

So now, in his newly re-branded role, McGuinty is seen to be working hard on The 23 Billion Dollar Gap Issue. His argument: Transfer payments were originally based on an East-West flow of trade within Canada, protected by tariffs, whereby Ontario enjoyed all this tariff-protected business within Canada and then pumped wealth back into Canada to be redistributed among the have-nots. That was then. Today there is a North-South flow of trade, with Ontario bringing in more business from U.S. trading partners than other provinces do, while Ottawa still sucks that wealth out and distributes it in ways that are no longer fair. McGuinty wants a new formula to recognize how wealth enters Canada, and narrow the gap to be more equitable to the economic engine that is Ontario. Not eliminate it; he's not greedy. Just narrow it.

Jim Warren's campaign to re-brand this Ontario government is a big challenge, but it could not have come at a more opportune time. Both the federal Liberals and Conservatives need Ontario, so Premier McGuinty is well positioned to gain promises, concessions, even real commitments. This will continue as long as the federal politicians are fighting an undeclared election campaign in which Ontario is a key battleground.

After that, the importance of keeping any promises made to Ontario will depend on who has the power, and how much they feel a need to be loved by the Ontario electorate. Dalton McGuinty, of all people, will understand.

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### [Event Report Two](#)

## The second coming of the 2004 election

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer  
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world...*  
**-William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming"**

That Yeats verse also pretty much sums up the state of Canadian politics the day Darrell

Bricker came to our May 18 PAAC event. It was only a day after Belinda Stronach made her stunning defection to the Liberals, and people were still talking about an election being forced the following day, because the power of that Liberal chess move had yet to sink in. It was the eve of the Big Vote - 24 mere hours before the wolf pack was scheduled to drag down Paul Martin's government. Everybody knew about Stronach and the bump in the polls that some people were starting to call 'the Belinda Bounce,' but the smell of election blood was in the water. The title of Bricker's presentation was still, *Deja Vu All Over Again: Election 2005*.



**Above:** Darrell Bricker (right) with PAAC President Chris Benedetti at the start of the luncheon. **Below:** Bricker makes his point, with *Deja Vu* all over him. That's Etobicoke-Lakeshore Conservative candidate John Capobianco in the foreground.





Bricker, President and COO of Ipsos Reid, came armed with his freshest polling numbers, collected just before Belinda bounced across the floor of the Commons, while the Conservatives and the Bloc still had enough votes to have it their way. But by the time he reached the podium Bricker stressed this caveat: With the Grits picking up an extra gun, this could be about The Election That Never Was. And he was right.

Yet it's no wonder election fever persisted. Lunch table talk was all about the death of principles in Canadian politics: The Prime Minister of Canada lets the NDP dictate budget changes in order to cling to power; Stephen Harper votes for a Liberal budget he's against, just before he tries to bring down the Layton modification of it, while snuggling up to Dalton McGuinty to say, "We'd give you all that great stuff, too;" Belinda Stronach, knowing she'll get thumped in Aurora if there's an election, jumps to the Liberals to become an instant Cabinet Minister, thus planting a dagger in the back of former leadership rival Harper and making collateral damage out of her personal thingie with Peter McKay. "They all look so cheap," said one diner. "It was an interesting moment when the National Press Corps burst out laughing," said another, referring to the reaction of reporters when Paul Martin told them Stronach's defection had nothing to do with the vote timing.

With things falling apart and the centre unable to hold, Bricker knew election talk could become academic, but he went ahead and gave us a snapshot of what his polling numbers showed would happen if an election was forced on schedule. And his analysis boiled down to this: Last year's election would simply be fought anew.

### **Nobody has a lead**

Last year, Bricker and other pollsters were not wrong. They just stopped polling before that

final Liberal surge from those attack ads that panicked Ontario voters away from Stephen Harper. This time, the numbers were once again too close to call, said Bricker. There was an NDP spike in popularity, "But they haven't really taken off," he reported. And, as was the case last year, "The Bloc is hammering the Liberals in Quebec." Gesturing over his shoulder at the numbers displayed on his slide screen, he said, "This is a Conservative minority." But he stressed once again that a snapshot is but one frame of a movie. Last time out, the Grit numbers dipped at the start of the campaign and early into it, then came back up by the end of the campaign. This time, the day Bricker spoke the Conservatives were slightly ahead, but there was no clear lead for anyone. "Any polls showing anyone with a big lead now are ridiculous."

The profile of party supporters remains the same. Conservatives still get their support mainly from the rural areas, the middle and working class, and men. The Liberals continue to appeal to the urban, university educated 18-34s, corruption or no corruption. The NDP continues to have special appeal among women. The Greens are on the map too, at least in popularity if not in seat counts. They appeal, said Bricker, to the sort of voters who in the U.S. vote for Ralph Nader.



Darrell Bricker listens (above) before he talks (below).



In terms of the quality of the leader's image with the public: Steve Harper is stable, while Jack Layton and Gilles Duceppe each have a slight positive momentum. The Prime Minister's image has a strong negative momentum, and that has been the case ever since Gomery hit the headlines. "He has always been walking into a stiff wind."

Who would make the best PM? The polls said 42 per cent like Martin; 34 per cent like Harper. But who would clean up corruption? Only 26 percent said Martin; 41 per cent said Harper. Reconcile that if you can; Bricker just calls them as he sees them.

Who is best for the economy? Martin, said 47 per cent. Harper, said 34 per cent. Who is best on foreign policy? Martin, said 53 per cent. Harper, said 27 per cent. Social programs? Martin was ahead at 44 per cent to Harper's 35. Ah, but whom can you trust? A low 35 per cent said Martin; a stronger 40 per cent said Harper.

### **Jean Martin and Paul Chrétien**

Bricker said that in the public mind, there isn't a dime's worth of difference between Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin in terms of the AdScam scandal and the issue of corruption. Public reaction to Martin's tale that he knew nothing of what was going on is precisely the same as the reaction of the national press to his assertion that the timing of Stronach's defection was coincidence of the purest ray serene. That is, the public gives this the horselaugh as mightily as Bricker heard the assembled reporters laugh at Martin: "I've never heard them howl like that," he said. "If the election is to be fought on the issue of corruption, Stephen Harper is looking good. That's why the PM must try to fight it on the budget."

As it turned out, the Liberals, after ignoring an earlier non-confidence vote that went against them, won the latest non-confidence vote, and therefore won time for electioneering. Yet with even more rancid revelations likely to come from the Gomery Commission before it's finished, the Liberals are not free of their main worry. "Their campaign slogan could be 'Vote for the crooks - it's important,'" Bricker joked. Meaning Liberals will campaign by saying the barbarians are at the gate, the Conservatives don't share our values, and that they're right-wing crazies who would destroy the country. That was the Liberal strategy in '04, and sure enough, the PM is still talking about 'the two Canadas,' Harper's version being the Canada that's like the Evil Galactic Empire. "But it's not the same anymore," said Bricker, "because

people are figuring out what the advertising scandal is really about." Indeed, in 2004 AdScam was about a lot of vague allegations of contracts dealt improperly. Now we've got stories like the tale of a plain envelope stuffed with \$5,000 in cash left on a restaurant table to be scooped furtively by a shifty-eyed fella when the coast is clear. "That's the Sopranos via Summer Stock," Bricker quipped.

On the day Bricker spoke, the Liberals were in worse shape than they started out in before last year's election. They had lost the initiative, lost any positive momentum and no longer had the power to determine when the election will be. They were still competitive in Ontario, but facing annihilation in Quebec. Their main clusters of support remain in urban Canada and Eastern Canada. "If they stay above 40 per cent support in Ontario they have a chance," said Bricker. "Below that they haven't got a hope in Hell." And although an election is now delayed, the game will still be played. Liberals will continue to pour gasoline on the fires of Harperphobia, seeking to panic voters away from him like before, for all the same reasons. But Martin remains a liability as leader, as long as the campaign focuses on corruption.

### **Ontario or bust**

Bricker said the Conservative and the Bloc campaign slogans could both be: "Forget all the other stuff. At least we won't steal your money." In mid-May the Conservatives were in better shape than last time. They were set to sweep the West, and do well in Ontario outside the 416 area. But with no backing at all in Quebec, "they *have* to win in Ontario." Voters have not warmed to Harper, but he remains well positioned on the issue of trust, even better than a year ago. It's a good place for him to start, Bricker said, because people are angry about Liberal corruption. Yet the Tories show a distinct inability to run a disciplined campaign, without members saying stupid things that help the enemy. They are also saddled with a public perception that Harper has been trying to force an election just to take power, not out of patriotism.

The Bloc, reported Bricker, feels quite rightly that they're unstoppable in Quebec now, so Duceppe is the guy who wants an election the most. Yet polling shows voter support for the BQ is not necessarily support for separatism. It's more a trow-da-bums-out backlash against the Liberals. Which will be academic when the Bloc chases the last Grit out of Quebec.

The NDP slogan, said Bricker, could be: "See, we told you we matter." This is likely to continue right through to whenever the election is finally called. Rassling Paul Martin into a half-Nelson (or a full Layton) to make him change the budget was smart politics for them. Yet Bricker warned that if NDP supporters abandon the idea of strategic voting and instead simply vote their hearts, they could wind up helping the Conservatives through vote splits.

The bottom line is just like in 2004: The key to who wins an election now or later is Ontario, where the margin will be six to eight points. Stephen Harper will work Ontario with enthusiasm, but will be at a disadvantage. "Harper is not a warm and cuddly guy," said Bricker. "He has a sharp edge." The best political animals enjoy crowds and work them warmly, like Jean Chretien and Brian Mulroney could. Harper cringes at the sight of them, and is lousy at hiding it. He'll have to work on that.

Since Bricker spoke, the Liberals enjoyed some good news that bucked up their spirits. They won the by-election in Labrador, and renegade MP Carolyn Parrish made noises about coming back into the fold. Best of all, the forensic accountants testifying before Gomery came up with no damning evidence. So on May 25 the *Toronto Star* waved a triumphant headline: LIBERALS FINALLY CATCH BREAKS. The money-cops did not find the evidence. If the glove does not fit, you must acquit.

### **What rough beast**

Still, much of Bricker's May 18 analysis will likely remain valid into the final election call. The court of public opinion, after all, does not turn on reasonable doubt or plausible deniability; it turns on Knowing Damn Well. Paul Martin is by no means in the clear. But until the election finally breaks out of its cage, he is free to use the machinery of government to increase his popularity, and he can shop for more turncoats to guard against further non-confidence votes.

So, did we really avoid a summer election campaign? Nope. As Chris Benedetti pointed out in the top article, we avoided the election but not the campaign. Politics will rule the summer news. The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere the ceremony of innocence is drowned. The best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity...and what rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouches towards the Gomery Commission to be born?

-D.S.

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### [Tools & Techniques](#)

## Proactive media relations: The advance guard of public affairs

*by Rick Hall*

Virtually all sizable public affairs departments have a media relations function; few, however, practice what might be termed *proactive* media relations. Most seek to gain positive media exposure only when a concerted public affairs campaign, or push for a specific policy initiative, is underway. Or they issue press releases and engage in media relations when journalists *call them* after seeing the news.

And yet so much can be gained for an association, and the image of its membership and the industry or profession it represents, by conducting ongoing, proactive media relations - creatively developing story ideas on a constant, ongoing basis - and calling up the media to pitch the story and find it a home.

And this type of media relations can be quickly and effectively achieved.

The media today is a ferociously competitive industry - reporter against reporter to "break the

story," print against broadcast, media operations run like the business they are. For journalists, this means the time they used to have for story idea development has been slashed. Making sense of an ever-growing mountain of information, to find the underlying story while working within tight deadlines, is a daily challenge.

How can the public affairs practitioner take advantage of this situation? Quite simply, pitch a story - and have it "packaged" and ready to go - and you stand a much better chance of finding a home for it.

Develop the habit of practicing ongoing story development and media pitching, and you'll likely be amazed at all the good news stories about your association or membership that you can pitch - all while building a positive image for the industry you represent and all-important rapport with key journalists, relationships that will stand you in good stead when in full campaign.

How to establish an ongoing proactive media relations initiative, and have it succeed? Here's a list of suggested "Do's":

### **1. Be Positive**

Be a "spin doctor" worthy of the term, and find the positive in any story or situation you hear of involving your association, membership or industry. To be of interest to the media, any story has to have a "dark side" - it is conflict, the tension of opposing forces/ideas/interests that will get the media's attention, and that you will need to use as a "news hook" for your own purposes to be sure of success. Just be sure the positive aspect, the element that reflects well on the interests you represent, is watertight and that you are able to communicate it clearly and forcefully so it will come through in the earned media.

### **2. Be Proactive**

Constantly ask what is new/novel/a first/best/biggest in your association or with individual members. Package this information, line up interviewees/experts for possible interviews, know the "so what" (see below), research the media and journalist likely interested in the story - and the media it is most in the interests of your association to attract - and pick up the phone and make the pitch.

### **3. Know the "So What"**

Without intending to sound crass on the matter, the key "pitchability" factor about a story is the "So What" aspect: Why should a journalist, reader, viewer, editor or anyone care about the issue at hand? Does the proposed story tell them something they did not already know, or does it offer information or knowledge applicable to a broad range of instances? It is a truism that folks are always interested most in that which affects them directly, or offers insight into a situation they may be facing. Accordingly, the closer the "So What" comes to a human interest aspect, the broader the media appeal of the story will be. This is of importance if you want to reach out beyond the trade press or beat reporter assigned to cover the industry you

represent, and want to develop a positive profile in the general mainstream media.

#### **4. Tie in with broader concerns, trends or issues**

Related to the above, few folks are interested in the vested interest concerns of what might be perceived as a "fat cat" organization or profession - unless they're one of the felines themselves. Yet virtually every issue an organization or industry may be facing can be tied or compared to a broader issue or trend, therefore making your story of interest to a wider audience - and media. Find this element of commonality, make it your central focus, and build your profile - and case - with the broader community.

#### **5. Be honest, but be smart too**

As stated above, for a story to have interest to the media, it must involve a tale of unresolved tension or conflict. Play on this issue to ensure your media placement. Make it explicit and state it to your media contact to entice them to cover the story. Explain the complexities in simple terms, respect the opposition (and maybe even acknowledge the validity of a point or two the other side makes) but know your own aces down cold and be assertive (in a pleasant manner always) in stating them - why your position is in the public interest, how it relates to or sheds light on broader trends, the due diligence your organization has done to know the position it has taken is in the best interests of all concerned - whatever is most relevant.

#### **6. Have your messaging ready**

This is an often-made remark, but needs emphasis because it is so often the weak link in the earned media process. Developing the strongest possible, and approved, messaging for an interview or story is hard work. Get it done, use it to tell the journalist what you're going to tell them, tell them, tell them what you've told them - and the strong messaging you've developed to reflect well on the interests you represent can't help but make it to press.

#### **7. Always be available**

Another oft-made point, but worth repeating here: Be a journalist's good friend. Help them get their stories into print, their byline noticed and the friendship will pay dividends. And don't just be of assistance when you want them to print a story favourable to your interests; establish yourself as a reliable resource on the industry you represent, and make known you welcome their calls, to assist in any way possible. Tell them who your counterparts are at competing organizations, give them the "heads up" on issues or events they will want to know about, and you'll likely receive a warmer reception when you call with a story you need them to cover.

#### **8. If you can't think what to pitch - ask the journalist**

As the journalist's good friend, call them up or meet with them to engage them in conversation to find out the topics they may be interested in covering. Working together, you may be able to make stories happen. Most publications, for instance, have special editions several times a year. Does your association have proprietary research you can share with the journalist that can act as the catalyst for an article? Does the association have in-house working or

symposium papers that can do double duty? The point is to again act as a resource, to create positive earned media for the interests you represent.

### **9. Don't practice only story-oriented media relations, to enjoy positive relations with the media**

Editorial roundtables conducted with "Tier 1" business and financial media for the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario led to the idea of conducting a series of financial seminars for senior editorial staff at the Financial Post and Report on Business at the Globe and Mail. The result was an hour of "face" - and "getting to know you" time every week for a month for Institute representatives with key journalists at the two national papers. A further outcome was an increased number of calls from these journalists to the Institute on stories already in train, enabling the Institute to promote its members' interests at an early stage of the editorial process. Early summer charity baseball games, pitching journalists against Association representatives, can fill a similar function.

### **10. Good Friends, with a Lethal Sting in the Tail.**

While ongoing, proactive media relations, which create an upbeat, positive image of the interests an association represents, can be quickly and effectively achieved, like all achievements worth celebrating, it does not come without risk. And that risk primarily results from failing to know your aces, understanding how deft messaging can protect against the "dark side" tension of a story that secured the journalist's interest, and inability to communicate your interests clearly and forcefully enough that they will survive the most ruthless editorial process. Journalists can only work with, and are compelled to use, the material you provide them. Package and present it effectively, and there will be no unpleasant surprises when you read the resulting article.

Practicing media relations in this way, developing stories from within, providing media with good information they can use, communicating your aces clearly and in complete confidence, is a sure fire way to achieve the highest level of positive media coverage for your organization.

Richard (Rick) Hall is a PAAC member, principal of [Rick Hall PR](#) and a certified spin-doctor, with a Ph.D. in communications from McGill University.

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*[The Web Editor's corner](#)*

THE TERMINATRIX

by



David Silburt  
PAAC Web Editor

INT. BEDROOM - MED. SHOT - MORNING

Sunlight streams in a window, illuminating two people asleep side by side in a large bed. They are an old fashioned couple, the he-and-she kind. Her face is turned away from the camera on the far side; all we see of her is a cascade of blonde hair. His face is toward us, a strong, lean face with a furrowed brow. He is PETER MCKAY, sleeping the sleep of a troubled soldier.

INT. BEDROOM - CLOSE SHOT OF MCKAY

An alarm clock sounds in the room. McKay's eyelids flutter at the sound, then open. He reaches off-camera to silence the alarm, then rolls over with a sigh.

PULL BACK TO - MED. SHOT

The couple are covered by those L-shaped sheets found only in movies - the kind that cover him to the waist and her to the shoulders. He rolls to face his beloved.

PETER:

You awake, hon?

C.U. - MCKAY AS HE REACHES OFF CAMERA TO NUDGE HER

PETER:

You awake?

The woman rolls toward him, clutching the bedclothes modestly to her and we see the smiling face of BELINDA STRONACH.

BELINDA:

Uh-huh. And I have a  
surprise for you...

She reaches across her own face to clutch the  
flesh at her jaw line, her hand digging  
in...there is a wet tearing sound...she pulls  
and off comes...a rubber mask or...or...wet  
bloody flesh...

C.U. MCKAY AS HIS EYES WIDEN IN HORROR

SHOCK CUT TO - STRONACH AS SHE RIPS OFF ONE  
FACE REVEALING ANOTHER UNDERNEATH... THE  
GRINNING FACE OF PAUL MARTIN...

CUT TO - INT. BEDROOM - MED. SHOT

Peter sits bolt upright, his voice a ragged  
roaring bellow, every cord in his neck  
straining as he comes awake from the worst  
nightmare he's ever had...

...

Yes, there's no doubt about it: Belinda Stronach horrified many people when she suddenly unmasked into something we never suspected she was, right before our eyes, and terminated the Conservative push for a spring election. She had convinced a lot of people she was dedicated to Conservative principles, not merely to a career in politics. This very department, having been thoroughly gulled by her TV image, said she would have been a better choice as leader than Stephen Harper. But she took a lot of other people in, too. Our hearts should go out to Peter McKay especially. He took the high road in his public statements, but among her former colleagues there was obvious anger.

Yet some of the language used in anger after her defection was justly criticized. There was name-calling, including a term particularly offensive to women. While this department admits to being less than expert politically, the use of language is comfortable home turf. And the time has come to insist on appropriate language.

Feminists were right when they pointed out that nobody called Scott Brison a whore when he changed parties. Nobody calls any man a whore when he does what Stronach did, so using that term only on Belinda was unequal treatment because she's a woman. It won't do.

Many politicians these days behave in precisely the same way, and it's important to use the most accurate words when they do, regardless of their sex or lack thereof. When politicians habitually lie, they should be labeled liars without fear, favour, or sexism. Ditto when they are caught with their hand in the public cookie jar right up to the shoulder blade: Then they are

proven thieves, be they man, woman, straight, gay, or racially distinctive.

Calling someone a thief, liar, whore or a cheat is harsh language, but under such circumstances the terms are not gratuitous insults, and they are not curse-words. They are clear English descriptives with a concise meaning, even if that meaning itself is unappealing. So using those words is not like calling someone a scumbag, sleazeball, barrel-sucker or Satan's spawn. Whore, liar, cheat, and thief are bad things, but they are real things, and it does no good for the public discourse to turn away from what is real.

Therefore it is the belief and advice of this department that in the interests of clear communication of important facts, there should be an immediate end to unequal treatment, and all politicians should be described in the public prints as what they have shown themselves to be. The only exception is when it's so obvious that belaboring the point is unnecessary. And if reality is too hard to take, might as well go back to the movie...

•••

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - EXTREME C.U. ON PETER MCKAY

Peter, breathing heavily, eyes wide, rubs a hand across his face and glances to his right.

PULL BACK TO - MED. SHOT

The bed beside him is empty. He speaks to nobody but himself.

PETER:

Now that's what I call a  
nightmare.

He rises and heads toward the adjoining bathroom. We hear the sound of running water. The bathroom door is ajar, and he pushes it open, leaning on the doorjamb.

PETER:

Morning, hon.

INT. BATHROOM - CLOSE SHOT - A PAIR OF FEET  
STANDING BEFORE THE SINK. THEY ARE CLEARLY  
THOSE OF A WOMAN.

PETER: (voice off  
scene)

Honey, I just had a hell of  
a nightmare.

INT. BATHROOM - CLOSE SHOT - THE CAMERA PANS  
UP FROM THE FEET TO LOWER LEGS, THEN THE LOWER  
HEM OF A BATHROBE. THERE IS THE SOUND OF  
SOMEONE BRUSHING THEIR TEETH AS THE CAMERA  
PANS UP TO SHOULDERS HUNCHED UNDER THE PINK  
TERRYCLOTH ROBE. A SPLAT AS WATER IS SPIT INTO  
THE SINK.

V.O. PETER:

Hon?

INT. BATHROOM - CLOSE SHOT - THOSE HUNCHED  
SHOULDERS - A HEAD BOBS UP, FULL OF BLONDE  
HAIR. IT TURNS SLOWLY TO REVEAL...THE FACE OF  
PAUL MARTIN...HIS MOUTH SPLITS INTO A WICKED  
SMILE...HIS TEETH ARE RAZOR BLADES SPOTTED  
WITH TOOTHPASTE FOAM...

MCKAY'S VOICE SAILS UP INTO A FALSETTO SCREAM  
AS WE-

FADE TO BLACK

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[Editor's note](#)

## Speaking of clear language...

A reader, who declined to have a signed letter posted here, wrote to complain that Stephen Harper was called a "right-wing crazy" in last month's posting. In fact, that line was written in assumed voice - using the term as Harper's media detractors would, if they were interested in being honest and blunt about what they were trying to persuade their own readers to think of him. The intent was to point out where politicking tries to pass for journalism. My writing should have been clearer on this.

-D.S.

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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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