

 **PAAC E-News**

Public Affairs: Your Online Newsletter

November • 2007

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The President's Message: The high price of avoiding confrontation

Canadians don't want an election - but the price of avoidance leads to bad public policy.

Photo feature: Off the record but on camera

Our late-October election post mortem was off the printed record, but we have pictures.

The Book Man: The ass-kicker strikes again

Stew Kiff reviews Warren Kinsella's new book, in which he tells more about how to put political boot to butt.

The Web Editor: The Spider-Man theory of preventive criminology

Randy Newman once sang, 'Don't want no short people around here.' Now scientists join in.

[President's message](#)

The high price of avoiding confrontation



by Elaine Flis
PAAC President

Canadian's don't want an election, we are told. And maybe they don't. Yet if the alternative is to hamstring the process of creating good public policy in favour of hanging on to a wobbly status quo, perhaps it's time for the folks in Ottawa to think another way.

Today in Ottawa, the Harper government does not feel obliged to mind its minority place, because it senses weakness in the Opposition - a reluctance on the part of Liberals to do anything that would precipitate an election. To take advantage of that, the government made a series of chess moves by folding things into its Throne Speech commitments that a minority government would not normally feel confident to push, and then declaring that any substantive opposition to them when they appear in subsequent legislation would be a confidence vote, which could bring down the government. That positions them to take a Go Ahead Make My Day approach to the Opposition.

I don't like it. For one thing, it makes for a lack of proper attention to formulating good public policy. For another, it misreads the intention behind the public reluctance to face another election. And for yet another, it short-circuits what a minority government is supposed to be about - the thing that Canadians want it to be about - which is compromise.

Canadians may be reluctant to wrap their minds around another election campaign, but that's because they prefer to see the minority government compromise, as befits a minority. Their reluctance does not mean they want see the government act as if it has a majority mandate. It doesn't. The public didn't give them that, and if the public prefers to avoid an election it's because they want to see compromise, not bullying.

It's understandable that Liberals want to be mindful of public wishes and not precipitate an election capriciously. But how capricious is it to stand up for principles? Even more to the point, if the public is offended by seeing a minority act as a majority, how will they feel about seeing the Opposition facilitate that?

In order for the compromise the public seems to prefer to actually take place, both sides have to want to do it. The government clearly prefers not to compromise. That is unlikely to change, which is why I can't mistake the situation in Ottawa for true stability. And if the public continues to see both of the main parties in Ottawa act to ensure this phony majority-style government persists, I fear it will mean every politician, Liberal and Conservative alike, will suffer an even greater diminishment in the public perception, in the long run.

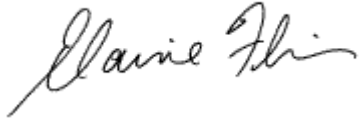
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Now, I'm delighted to welcome our newest members:

- Kristen Lawson Miller Thomson LP
- Monika Bujalska Ryerson University, Toronto
- Jennifer Grass, Council of Ontario Universities, Toronto
- Peter Davis, SAIT Polytechnic, Calgary, AB
- Aine Curran, Curran Events Media, Mississauga

- Lindsay Williams, Nycomed Canada, Oakville
- Neil Sweeney, Labatt Breweries, Toronto
- Satinder Sahota, Night Owl Group, Toronto
- Diana Doucett

Please feel free to contact me with your ideas for the organization at: eflis@crfa.ca



[Photo feature](#)

Off the record, but on camera

On Friday, October 26, PAAC members and only PAAC members were invited to attend an off-the-record post-mortem panel discussion about the recent Ontario election. It was an early morning breakfast session at the Albany Club in Toronto, a place where times for Conservatives in Ontario have often been somewhat more upbeat than they are in the aftermath of this last election.

Leading up to the event we knew that Liberal campaign director and President of Pollara **Don Guy** would be there to tell what he knows - some of it, anyway - about the winning campaign. We also knew **Rob Milling**, director of the NDP campaign, would be there to tell us their end of things. Then, close to the event itself, we snagged **Brian Patterson**, a longtime PC strategist who has worked on many campaigns, some more successful than others, to talk about the Conservative effort. As is often the case for these events, photography was permitted but reporting in detail was not. Herewith a photo feature of the event. To get the full benefit, of course, you had to be there.



Our three guests - Above, (L-R) Don Guy listens, Rob Milling sips and Brian Patterson talks just before the presentation. Below, it seems Patterson might be talking about how he knew when things began slipping away in the PC campaign. But all three men, whether gratified with success, philosophical in moral victory, or contemplative in defeat, were, as the sign on the table tells us, reserved



The new member and the PAAC stalwart - Above, new member Pauline Beange talks with Joe MacDonald at our off-the-record event. She's a political science student at the University of Toronto, and was very interested in what Joe had to say. Which worked out fine for both of them because Joe is often happy to share his wisdom. Below, Pauline finds her way into the obligatory Food Shot. Why does the photographer

do that? Can't say; it was off the record.



Some talked, some listened - Above, Events Chair Howard Brown comments off the record to Don Guy, who listens carefully. Can't tell

you what they were talking about. Below, Brian Patterson, at left, expounds on an election topic as Don Guy listens some more. Was Patterson talking about how his opposition seemed to have an almost unearthly knowledge of how to defeat them? Can't tell you about that either, but anything is possible. (Sorry about those unwanted flash effects.)



The strategist and the candidate - Above, (L-R) Don Guy, Sheena Weir and frequent federal Conservative candidate John Capobianco talk after the presentation. Below, Guy makes a point while John considers it. Sheena, in the middle, seems to be reserving judgment while appreciating

the source, judging from her eye contact and stance. But since it's all off the record we can't know for sure.



The presidents and the Book Man - Above, former PAAC President Joe MacDonald, seated at right (hardly his usual position) says something amusing as another former PAAC President, Norm Cheesman, also seated, appreciates it while our resident book reviewer, Stew Kiff, standing, registers his amusement. Below, as Joe continues to explain in detail, Stew listens closely while Norm doesn't seem to buy it. But we can only guess what

they were really saying.



Before and after - Above, before the presentation, at the head table (L-R) Rob Milling sips, Brian Patterson talks, Elaine Flis checks her notes, Howard Brown takes in some food, and Don Guy listens. That Don Guy fella sure listens a great deal, which may be why he always knows so much. Below, after the presentation, the full panel pauses for the group shot at the front of the room at the exclusive Albany Club. From left to right, there's our Events Chair Howard Brown, Rob Milling, Brian Patterson, Don Guy and PAAC President Elaine Flis.



Everyone who came to our off-the-record, members-only election post-mortem left knowing more inside information about the election contest than they did when they arrived. But if you didn't come to the event you missed good stuff, because this was all off-the-record. These photos are all we can offer online.

-D.S.

[The Book Man](#)

The ass-kicker strikes again



Book Review by Stewart Kiff

The War Room: Political Strategies for Business, NGOs, and Anyone who Wants to Win,
by Warren Kinsella

If you are like me and think that, in spite of his irritating flaws, Warren Kinsella is one of the most engaging writers about practical politics in Canada today, you are probably already rushing out to buy a copy of *The War Room*, the latest installment in Kinsella's "Kicking Ass" themed books for Canadian political junkies.

The term "War Room" was coined by a team of U.S. strategists; specifically James Carville, who worked on Bill Clinton's first presidential campaign in the early 1990s. It

describes a political command centre where a candidate's strategists and media consultants work to counter attacks by opponents and gather research to manage their offensive in 'real time' fashion.

In this latest book, Kinsella revisits the territory of his 2001 book, *Kicking Ass in Canadian Politics*. And what great territory it is - an over-the-top, direct, take-no-prisoners approach to winning in politics. It should be a hit. As Kinsella notes at the start of this book, the big problem *Kicking Ass* ran into was that it was released on September 11, 2001. The events of that day eclipsed what would otherwise have been a much more high-profile and successful release. Despite that, *Kicking Ass* lived up to its name in the opinion of Canadian political junkies. Now, with his new book, Kinsella is still kicking, reaching out to a much broader audience, not just political junkies but also people in NGOs and business.

But it's not for the Emily Posts among us. *The War Room* is vulgar, nasty, sometimes petty, always direct, most often quite astute and never for the faint of heart. In other words, it's classic Kinsella. Whether it's the original *Kicking Ass*, or *Fury's Hour*, his 2005 look at the punk rock phenomenon, or this new broader-based political kick, Kinsella's style is to pretty much put his head down and run right, straight at the thing. To me, that is a recipe for a great read and I recommend this, especially for political professionals. There is even an element of gleeful exhibitionism in how willing Kinsella is to share details which he knows so well. So much the better for the reader.

Kinsella has been in the thick of a number of key political fights, most recently as a key strategist in Dalton McGuinty's successful bid for re-election. Consequently, his personal experience is worth writing about and worth reading. For political practitioners, *Chapter Three: Get your message out for free!* is certainly worth the read. In it, he walks us through not just the basics, but advanced techniques in how to effectively put out your message through earned media coverage. Sure, you can find this sort of content in higher profile, glitzier American writers. But Kinsella writes in a Canadian context, from a Canadian perspective, and with a style that resonates with the Canadian mind set.

The book flows from Kinsella's own extensive experience at implementing political strategy in the heat of combat. At one point he describes an event during the Ontario provincial election campaign of 2003, when it took his War Room team roughly 45 minutes to conceive, write and finalize a relevant press release and get it into the hands of reporters. (Apparently, the War Room was running behind that day, because they were well past their targeted 30 minute target. Still - 45 minutes flat!)

If *The War Room* suffers at all, it's from trying to be too many different things at the same time. It strives to be a practical how-to manual as well as a personal memoir, and that can get a book bogged down - as this one did in its chapter on the Gomery inquiry, an event for which Kinsella did not set up a War Room and therefore an event for which I could find no relevance in this book, except perhaps for the purpose of evening scores with Prime Minister Paul Martin's people and Commissioner Gomery himself.

There was another disappointment, too. Kinsella writes one of the most successful blogs

in Canadian politics, and because of his prominence as a blogger, I expected great things from his chapter on modern Internet techniques. They didn't quite materialize. Kinsella does talk about the new media, the Internet, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, podcasting, citizen media; all these Internet-based techniques. But for someone who has used blogging so successfully and with such fire, he is surprisingly without insight or introspection on the subject.

At the end of the day, Kinsella comes across somehow like that younger brother who is simultaneously irritating, brilliant and disturbingly articulate. His unwillingness to let past grudges go seems out of place for someone who has been so successful. But it's there, and anybody who has ever disagreed with Kinsella is bound to get a good shellacking somewhere in the book.

Still, I can't name another Canadian political practitioner of these times who has shared so much good advice in print and in such an entertaining way. And I can't help but think that this country's political asses haven't felt the last of his boot.

Recommended.

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.

[The Web Editor](#)

The Spider-Man theory of preventive criminology

by David Silburt
PAAC Web Editor

They got grubby little fingers and dirty little minds
They're gonna get you every time
Well, I don't want no short people...'round here
- **'Short People' by Randy Newman**

In their zest to protect children, Canadian news media last month broke a decades-long prohibition and finally came out in favour of preventive criminology. Or at least that's what they seemed to have done late in October. All we know for certain is that major newspapers gave uncritical play to a story concerning research by Dr. James Cantor, a psychologist at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, who has discovered that child molesters are shorter than average men.

Dr. Cantor and his team observed that, among 1,200 men who were "assessed" (*huh?*) for pedophilia or other sexual disorders between 1995 and 2006 at the Kurt Freund laboratory in Toronto, whilst the average Canadian man is 178 centimeters tall, the average male person who scored positively on their test was 176 centimeters in height, or a little taller than five-foot-seven. What those other sexual disorders might be or why they belong in the same bag with pedophilia was not pursued in media reports, probably because of space limitations in the papers. But pedophilia is the important kink, and the implications of the study are obvious. Clearly, for the protection of children, the researchers and the media are implying that short men must demonstrate innocence.

Your web editor is *less than* 176 centimeters tall and works at a children's treatment centre, so this seems pretty important. It seems to me that, rather than be a whiner, it makes sense to stand in defense of children. Certainly, like all my fellow employees, I accepted the need for a police background check before being hired in a place that treats children with disabilities. This is one shortie who has nothing to hide. So, if it's necessary to take that "assessment" test, wear that mini blood-pressure gadget while the masked people in the white lab coats put slides of children on a screen to see if I go bingo on the meter, then so be it...

...And while we're at it, in deference to the news media's new attitude, Canada might as well take the full legal plunge in all situations where some people share a common physical description with certain members of the criminal element. Who can argue against it now? Now that the guardians of the public good have cast aside their previous opposition to the idea, the time has come to deal aggressively with all situations in which a person's appearance has a positive correlation with villainy.

Those of us whose physical attributes are similar to those of some bad guys must refuse to run interference for them; that seems to be the message implied, if not stated, by that study - does it not? Why undertake such a study if it's for no practical purpose? Why publicize it if the authors don't believe its results are significant? Why would major news organizations report it without even the merest tinge of criticism unless they agree that its findings contain the seeds of action? As a male of short stature, this department calls upon his fellows to join in the battle. After all, with great power comes great responsibility - all news editors and medical researchers must know this because Spider-Man has been saying it for years.

I know I can pass the test. But how about *you*? Or *you*, there? And how about *you*? Good short men everywhere must set a fine, public-spirited example for others whose mere appearance generates legitimate media suspicion for other reasons. This department will now watch with interest as journalists and medical researchers stand up on their hind legs in public venues to make all the necessary recommendations - for all crimes.

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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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