



PAAC E-News

Public Affairs: Your Online Newsletter

October • 2005

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[President's message](#)

The main event of the year is almost here



*by Chris Benedetti
PAAC President*

We are now on the final downward slope of the roller coaster ride toward October 27, the date of our Sixth Annual Conference, *The Art and Science of Public Affairs*. As detailed below, our annual Conference is a well-received and well-respected event. For 2005 I can assure you we've prepared our most impressive event yet, beginning the evening of October 26, right after our Annual General Meeting, at our Presidents' Reception, where His Honour The Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, will present the awards to Past Presidents of the Public Affairs Association of Canada

Conference '05 will again take place at the centrally-located Sutton Place in Toronto, giving us a familiar and comfortable venue for our sessions, and capable chefs for our luncheon. Big issues will be the menu too: The keynote speaker is scheduled to be Michael Kergin, former Canadian Ambassador to the United States, now the Special Advisor on Border Issues to Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty. Our relationship with our huge and influential southern neighbour has been up and down in recent years as never

before, what with differences in foreign and war policies alternating with joint support for other nations enduring foreign disasters, and recently Canadian help for the U.S. as hurricane disaster struck the Americans - while every now and then a Canadian politician nevertheless criticizes them harshly (Parrish the thought). Mr. Kergin's address promises to be lively, interesting and very, very timely.

That's just the start of things. Please download and examine our Conference flyer PDF document, if you have not done so already. In the morning after Kergin's address, you'll need to choose between our session on *Asymmetrical Federalism*, or the morning session on *The Nanny State*, or the session on *The Importance of Blogs*. After that, you'll need to decide on attending *How Do Government Agendas Get Shaped?*, or the session on avoiding media relations pitfalls, or our session on a future of sustainable energy. The afternoon sessions will offer choice of the session on building trust, one on the grey areas of ethics - surely an especially timely topic - or a case in point in advocacy: Our session on the Council of Ontario Universities and the McGuinty budget. Final afternoon sessions will offer a choice of nuts-and-bolts practical discussions, covering performance evaluation, coalition building and the use of strategic polling. In each case attendees must choose carefully which session to attend; there is no guarantee that our one roving writer will attend the session you want, to write up in our later newsletter coverage.

Everyone will come together to hear our featured luncheon speaker. If you've read the flyer you'll already know our Award of Distinction recipient in 2005 is Elyse Allan, President and CEO of GE Canada. She started her GE career in the U.S., and how works to position GE Canada in international markets. At the luncheon you'll find out why she won this year's Award of Distinction, and what she has to say about Canada from an international perspective.

Our final Conference plenary session will look at journalists who moved to politics, a topic that should offer both interesting information and lighter moments. It will be a fitting and upbeat closer for the Conference.

From opening session to the final one, this year's Conference offers value, instruction and networking possibilities better than any we've put on to date. And of course, I'll look forward to meeting and greeting people at the Presidents' Reception too.

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Now, it is my pleasure to welcome our newest members to the Public Affairs Association of Canada:

- John Alho, University of Manitoba
- Randy Steffan, Purdue Pharma

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As always, I invite member input and ideas. Feel free to contact me at

cbenedetti@sussex-strategy.com.

See you all at the Conference.



[Don't miss the Conference](#)

PAAC Conference is the largest and best of its kind

The PAAC Annual Conference, *The Art and Science of Public Affairs*, has grown, since its inception, into the largest conference of its kind in the country. A look at the list of past attendees shows the broad appeal of this conference. Corporations, not-for profit organizations, professional and trade associations as well as governments continue to send staff to this conference.

Why? Because this is the only public affairs conference in the country that packs in so much in one day. Speakers and panelists representing the broad range of public affairs activity, bring their ideas and expertise to *The Art & Science of Public Affairs*. Ethics, working with the media, strategic polling, the use of grassroots have all been presented, discussed and debated.

The personal interaction and the opportunity to meet and mingle with professionals from junior to senior levels is another attractive aspect of this conference. Attendees include senior executives who want to keep abreast of best practices as well as new practitioners eager to learn from the best in the country!

And who tells us the conference is a success? You do. Our post conference surveys show time and again that *The Art & Science of Public Affairs* presents what you need to know, what you want to know in a way that works for you.

Registrants last year were asked to check boxes representing a five-point scale from 'excellent' to 'poor' in order to rate the overall effectiveness of the presentations, and the overall organization of the Conference itself. Their verdict: For the presentations, 92 per cent rated overall effectiveness as either 'good' or 'excellent.' For the Conference, 88 per cent rated it in one of the two top categories.

Two other key points in last year's questionnaire were answered with a yes or no: Did the conference meet your expectations? Ninety-two percent said yes. Would you attend

again next year? Ninety-five per cent said they would.

So join us once again this year, Thursday October 27 at the Sutton Place Hotel in Toronto for the 2005 edition of *The Art & Science of Public Affairs*.

[New feature: The View From Here](#)

Making your case in the not-for-profit sector



*by Clare O'Connor
Director Public Affairs
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia*

As governments grapple with increasing and competing demands on available revenues, not-for-profit organizations dedicated to health issues must be seen to be a valuable resource, if we are to make a contribution to public policy in order to provide improved health outcomes for Canadians. To accomplish this, a focused public affairs effort is crucial.

Recently, I was asked to contribute to the inaugural column of "A View from Here" and expand upon public affairs in Atlantic Canada. I welcome the opportunity to share a little insight into my corner of the world and, more importantly, to provide you with the context upon which that insight is based.

At the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia, public affairs has a central role, emphasized by the CEO and the Board of Directors. The emphasis stems from the need to ensure strong communication with our supporters and the fact that that the organization fills a vital role in creating informed policy and practice. The Foundation funds comprehensive research and works with thousands of volunteers, including frontline health care professionals, to contribute to the health care debate with solid information.

We learned the impact of policy on behaviour and improved health outcomes with tobacco control. We know that smoke-free legislation, for example, contributes to decreased smoking rates. Similarly, we know building communities with infrastructure supportive of physical activity contributes to healthier outcomes for Canadians.

Therefore, if the goal is to encourage better health, we clearly need to be full, committed and knowledgeable participants in the public policy process. This is not an easy task, but it is an essential one.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia is one of a few not-for-profit organizations with designated public affairs staff - three now, soon to be four - and we've expanded to include communications. Over the past three years, we have worked with government to help improve existing policy and legislation, and to create new initiatives. We have built and strengthened relationships at all levels of government through our commitment to provide good information to inform the decision-making process. Two specific areas where we have directly contributed to policy and practice include stroke and physical activity.

Stroke:

Nova Scotians are at high risk for heart disease and stroke. Foundation staff and volunteers developed a template for improved stroke services in Nova Scotia, based on the Ontario model. The Nova Scotia Integrated Stroke Strategy was completed in 2002 and our public affairs efforts focused on presenting it to government and ensuring that it would become the basis for informing and transforming stroke care policy and practice in the province.

We were successful. The Government of Nova Scotia officially adopted the integrated stroke strategy in 2004, allocated funding to support its implementation, and mentioned the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia specifically in two budget speeches - an important benefit because it demonstrated to donors and supporters that their investment in our public affairs *works*. In addition, the experience has strengthened our relationship with government itself.

Physical Activity and Regional Planning:

Physical activity is fundamental to health, and therefore a priority for the Foundation. In 2004, we worked closely with Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) as it prepared its 25-year regional plan. Our goal was to ensure that urban growth policies supported and enabled physical activity – both recreationally and as part of people's daily routine. We assembled research regarding the costs, both in human and financial terms, of physical inactivity. We sought to demonstrate that costs associated with poor health must be considered when making decisions regarding municipal development patterns.

Again, we were successful. In December 2004, the Regional Planning Committee recommended to HRM Council that it move forward with the main elements of the plan we supported, as a foundation for the 25-year regional plan. HRM Council then endorsed the proposed regional plan for public consultations, noting that the results of the report commissioned by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia were a factor in the decision. We are now members of the committee created to recommend specific policies to support the plan, and therefore to guide municipal growth, over the next 25 years.

We also won recognition in the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly and the House of Commons for our efforts in highlighting the value of physical infrastructure as a key

mechanism to support increased physical activity. Once again, as was the case with our stroke care initiatives, these efforts strengthened our relationship with government.

With dedicated public affairs, applied methodically, it was possible to influence public policy and practice by becoming a valuable resource for informed decision making. In the process we solidified our relationship with the decision-makers, enhancing our ability to continue the process in future.

I'm a firm believer that significant opportunities for voluntary sector contributions to public policy and practice, based on research and other high quality evidence, lie in building the relationships between sectors. Everyone has a stake and therefore a role to play in building and supporting public policy. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia believes in its role as a policy resource, and it has been fortunate enough to be able to make an investment in this role.

That's the view from here.

For feedback and comments, Clare O'Connor can be reached at coconnor@heartandstroke.ns.ca. Members from across Canada wishing to contribute to our "The View From Here" feature are welcome to contact us with their ideas. All submissions are subject to approval by the Editorial Board.

[In perspective](#)

Sex and lies but no videotape

You've read all the salacious details by now. The special treatment given by Toronto's former CFO to a software supplier who once helped her make The Beast With Two Backs. The politician whose main contribution to Justice Bellamy's inquiry was to lie faster than a horse can trot. And of course, the salesman whose job it was to walk the hallways of city government scattering favors like the Johnny Appleseed of graft.

Madame Justice Denise Bellamy, in her final report on Toronto's MFP computer leasing inquiry, found plenty of sex and lies but no videotape of it - just a lot of evidence that was almost as good. And it's tempting to consider that the MFP scandal is a case in point about why codes of conduct, such as the upcoming PAAC Statement of Ethical Principles, are needed. Tempting it would be, but probably wrong.

Stinking behaviour

The inquiry revealed what some ethically challenged people did, but how could they have been stopped? Included in Justice Bellamy's report are 244 recommendations intended to make sure the kind of stinking behaviour her inquiry uncovered can be short-circuited in the future. Among other things, she suggested an ethical code for lobbyists at City Hall,

a public registry for the various items of loot presented by interested parties to city councillors, an extension of the city's code of conduct to cast a wider net over conflicts of interest, and the establishment of an Integrity Commissioner. All are laudable suggestions. Mayor David Miller, clearly incensed at what the inquiry revealed, said he's open to the whole 244-item list.

Miller seems credible in his commitment to Make Sure This Never Happens Again. But how credible is the idea that bribery, special treatment, back-door dealing, favours for former bedmates and Deep Throat-style meetings in underground parking lots happened because nobody knew a code of ethics? That they happened because nobody had an Integrity Commissioner to tell them these things are wrong?

Not very. Some kinds of misbehaviour cannot be curtailed by an ethical code, simply because the people doing it know full well that it's wrong but they do it anyway because they think they can get away with it. That's how it comes to be that people arrive at meetings in the bowels of a parking garage to exchange a plain brown envelope full of \$1,000 bills for illicit services rendered, and then lie to a judge about it later on. The MFP affair is similar to the federal Liberal corruption scandal, which detailed ghost payments of tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars paid to advertising firms for no good reason at all. These payments could not have been for ad campaigns intended to heal Canadian political rifts, as the apologists claimed, because said work was never done. It was money effectively stolen from the public and handed from political friend to political friend. In both the federal and municipal examples, nobody needed advice from an Integrity Commissioner or a written code of ethics to tell them they were doing wrong. They knew that already, which was why they ran and hid as they did their dirties.

Liberal irony

When the federal government imposed tougher regulations on GR practitioners and lobbyists, many people in the business thought some of these rules were too onerous. Yet despite the irony of this government imposing rules of conduct on others, developments like those detailed in Justice Bellamy's report will likely cause the public to embrace such harsh rules, and even harsher ones that may arrive in the future.

The lesson in all this? As Yogi Berra might have said if the former baseball great had occasion to view our situation, if people don't want to be honest, you can't stop them. The MFP scandal, soon to be the subject of a criminal investigation, is not an example of the need for codes of ethics and commissioners of honesty. It's an example of their limitations.

-D.S.

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Newman's masterpiece: Tasty, but not a filling literary meal



by Stewart Kiff

The Secret Mulroney Tapes: Unguarded Confessions of a Prime Minister

by Peter C. Newman

Random House Canada - 462 pages

Peter C. Newman's new book, *The Secret Mulroney Tapes*, is without doubt the Canadian political book of 2005. Upon its release this book had no shortage of attention, and opinions were as varied as they were numerous. Canadians seem drawn to it the way people feel compelled to look at a traffic accident. With its much-hyped promise of extensive, though unimaginative, profanity it is being sold as an unvarnished glimpse at a man who held sway over our nation for almost a decade.

The media saturation revolving around *The Secret Mulroney Tapes* means that it will be more read about than read, but those who do take the time to peruse its pages will probably come away unsatisfied. There is precious little in this book to dispel any of the existing prejudices about the former Prime Minister. Though at times Mulroney comes across as more thoughtful and compassionate than previously thought, overall his narcissism is blinding - especially to himself.

For political professionals, this book is the equivalent of a \$1.99 discount pack of sugary donuts at the grocery store - an impulsive purchase catering to your base desires that ultimately leaves you unsatisfied and slightly ashamed for indulging yourself. But only after you have consumed the entire pack.

It is unlikely that anyone will come away from this book without realizing it is crap - but boy, is it *good* crap. And to be frank, when was the last time Canadians were treated to such headline sensationalism about a book on Canadian politics? I'll take this book any day ahead of another earnest tome from Jeffrey Simpson or that quickly forgotten memoir from Derek Burney. Frankly, Canadian political writing tends to be boring. There is no shortage of colourful characters and outright jerks on the political landscape in Canada, but by the time anything reaches print it has been sanitized and repackaged into a virtual literary anesthetic. If people are going to take any interest in the political life and times of our nation we need a more frank and bald account of its players acting badly, shared with

us in print. By these standards Peter C. Newman delivered in spades.

Peter C. Newman is a proficient, clean writer, and except for his all too frequent bursts of self-promotion, the book sticks to the facts and presents them as they are in simple prose. But the real selling point of this book is Newman's spectacular original research compiled from years of taped interviews with Mulroney and his close associates. Only a small segment of these conversations made it into the book. The full interviews, some 7,400 pages of transcripts, will someday be available through the University of Toronto's Thomas Fischer Rare Books Library.

With so much source material, the book had to be selective. Yet its abridged and highly edited nature is the source of its shortcomings. Instead of providing the reader with context and detail, the book offers a quick précis of a situation, followed by a succession of sometimes titillating quotes referring to it. It is this absence of context and detail that so quickly exposes the book's lack of depth. Considering the events that took place under Prime Minister Mulroney's leadership and the intense feelings they created, many of which still exist today, this shortcoming is astonishing.

It is shocking that this book has been in the works for decades, and in spite of the energy and time Mulroney and Newman put into conducting these interviews, that the book is so feeble. There is little here that is new, except for the explicitness and vigour of the profanity.

The back-story to the creation of the book is turning into an interesting side story. These interviews were agreed to on the understanding that Newman write a full, detailed biography of Mulroney. Newman and Mulroney had been friends since the early sixties and Mulroney had even been one of the best men at one of Newman's weddings. Given that relationship, it is reasonable for Mulroney to have felt confident that he would get a favourable shake from his pal Newman. That prospect was no doubt Mulroney's hope to change the opinion of an 'ungrateful' public.

They did have an explicit agreement that Mulroney would have approval over final drafts of the biography as originally planned. This did not happen. Instead, when it appeared a couple of years ago that Newman was not going to write a favourable biography, Mulroney backed out of the project. Newman, who did not want to let all this research go to waste without getting a book out of it, proceeded to write this volume without Mulroney's knowledge. Production was sped up when it was learned that Mulroney had become seriously ill this summer. And that may be why it seems somewhat rushed and incomplete.

RECOMMENDED

Stewart Kiff is the Toronto Vice-President of Equinox Public Affairs. He welcomes your feedback and suggestions, and can be reached at stewart@equinoxinc.ca.

[The Web Editor](#)

Et tu, Peter?

by David Silburt
PAAC Web Editor

"All good books ... are truer than if they had really happened."

**-Ernest Hemingway
on the truth in fiction**

Toronto City Scandallers weren't the only political folks who came to grief this past month. Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney is walking around with Peter C. Newman's new book sticking out of his back, and according to reliable reports he is not happy about it. He once said a lot of very blunt things to Peter C. in many frank interviews, and he certainly understood Newman was collecting source material for a book - but not *THAT* book. Not *The Secret Mulroney Tapes*. Those who know Mulroney say the 66-year-old former PM could hardly have been hurt worse if someone had buried a Bowie knife between his shoulder blades.

In a rebuttal to all the criticism against him, Newman published a column in the Sept. 18 Toronto *Star*, in which he said he and Mulroney were never friends, merely engaged in a "professional political/journalistic relationship" based on an agreement that Newman would write a book about Mulroney's time in office. Yet somewhere in those long years and hundreds of interviews, Mulroney apparently acquired the idea - the totally wrong idea, insists Newman - that they were friends. Which is why to Mulroney, Marcus Brutus has nothing on Peter Newman.

Mulroney's understanding seems to have been that one fine day Newman would use all his inside knowledge to tell the public, through an authoritative book, of the many achievements of the Mulroney administration and the many virtues of Mulroney himself. But Newman never got around to writing that book, for reasons having to do with unforeseen changes in their political/journalistic relationship. Now, as Mulroney gets older and his health falters and he makes ready to publish his memoirs, Newman decided to disgorge selected items from all those raw quotes he had stored up over the years, and let the public take the measure of Mulroney from that.

The art of the slotted spoon

The core of this is not that Peter C. Newman wrote a book full of both the good and the bad and then his fellow journalists sifted out only the bad for public discussion, like somebody using a slotted spoon to remove the clumps from the cat's litter box. That's what journalists do, and anyone in that trade who acts surprised at it is being disingenuous.

Nor should Newman's timing be a surprise to anyone. In his *Star* piece, Newman said the timing isn't his doing: "Publishing schedules are decided years in advance," he wrote. But in earlier published reports, which remain unrecanted, he was quoted saying he wanted to beat publication of Mulroney's memoirs: "If I don't bring it out, I'm going to be judged against his memoirs. This way, his memoirs have to be judged against what he said to me." So perhaps he had a modicum of influence on the publishing sked after all, perhaps an amount that could be represented by a finger and thumb held a quarter-inch apart. In any case, when you're talking about the former PM and this high-achieving writer, the popular word is you're dealing with egos so large they can only be photographed from orbit. Both want their books to be definitive. No surprise there.

No, the surprise is that Brian Mulroney, who received little more than antagonistic press commentaries both in and out of office, could have been gully-jumped by a journalist who acted like a friend. Of course, Newman is adamant that he is not guilty of betrayal because he is not guilty of friendship with an interview subject. "There is a difference between feeling betrayed and being betrayed," he wrote. There's also a powerful difference between believing someone is a friend and that someone truly being a friend. Therefore the question is, how could a seasoned political hand like Mulroney, who has often referred to his significant collection of journalists' knives pulled from both his back and his front over the years, acquire the cockeyed notion that Peter C. Newman was his buddy? The answer: Mulroney's education was deficient. His reading material, to be precise. Mulroney was betrayed - or wound up *feeling* betrayed - because he didn't read enough fiction.

Truer than the truth

As Hemingway told us repeatedly, the best fiction books are truer than the truth itself. And in all the most popular fiction, the journalist character is always there strictly to get the scoop, and all else is pretense. Check your crime fiction by Michael Connelly, Robert B. Parker, Stephen Hunter and others. Check your thrillers by James Patterson, Michael Crichton, name your favorite. Unless the reporter is the main protagonist, he or she is always portrayed as a human shark, someone who smiles from the teeth out but whose only true instinct is to feed.

Mulroney's problem is that as he buckled down to being a world-beating Prime Minister, he read widely about economics, politics, government, Canadian and world history - all those true things that in the end were of no help to him in understanding his risks. He neglected his fiction reading, and so could not possibly have known, for example, how many NYPD or LAPD cops have had their cases ruined thanks to ill-advised pillow talk exchanged over a post-coital cigarette with a foxy reporter.

If he had read the most popular fiction writers, he'd have made the connection. Then he'd have known enough to tell even the most ingratiating story-seekers things like, "Well, of course Pierre Trudeau is a fine gentleman at heart, but I believe many of his ideas to be wrong-headed." Or, "I yield to no man in my respect for journalists, but I often wish they would be more diligent at putting things into the larger perspective, including my own administration." And then only in private, standing before the great windows at 24 Sussex

watching an orange sun set on the capital of the nation he loves, might he have raised a glass to himself and thought, *Man, I'm the best they've ever had, if only they'd see it...*

Well...everyone who stands up to criticize him says he's egotistical, so maybe he wasn't as great as he maintains he was. Then again, many of us who badmouthed him then might look toward Ottawa and pine for him now, considering. In any case, there remains one last thing elected politicians of all affiliations can learn from Martin Brian Mulroney: Take note of his woeful fate, lest ye run aground on those very same shoals of misplaced trust.

Pay more attention to your important reading. Put down that White Paper. Lose the history and economics tomes. They won't help you now. Just get some good novels and start studying before you make a terrible mistake.

Volunteers needed to help public affairs students

The PAAC office gets a number of calls from college students studying communications or PR asking to interview PA practitioners. It would be very helpful to find members willing to volunteer a bit of time to answer questions and assist students in completing project assignments. If you are willing to volunteer, please contact Graham Murray at the PAAC office: 416-367-2223.

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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