

PAAC E-News

Public Affairs: Your Online Newsletter

January • 2006

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- President's Message: We hit the ground running
- New Year's Leveé: Our mixer in pictures
- Event report: What you need to know about TV news
- Tips & Techniques: Neal Kelly's practical guide to TV news
- The Book Man: Stew Kiff on author Sharansky's latest
- The web editor: Election analysis, terse and in verse

[President's message](#)

We hit the ground running in 2006



*by Elaine Flis
PAAC President*

Your new PAAC Board of Directors and I hit the ground running in 2006, with new members, much to do and plenty of enthusiasm to do it as we get the year off to a powerful start.

One of our important new initiatives is the PAAC Chair of Public Affairs at Ryerson University, which will lend great weight to our efforts to increase the profile and status of our profession. We're honing our case for support,

and in the next few months we intend to begin fundraising for this important project.

Our other big initiative, the Statement of Ethical Principles now ratified and accepted, will get its official roll-out soon. Watch for news on that front as we develop the launch plan.

Also on the radar: An expanded outreach program, as we move to gather input from our members in virtually every part of the country, to identify what we can do in the short and long term to help all members feel more connected to the Association. A major move toward outreach in the Ottawa region begins as soon as we're over the hump of the federal election.

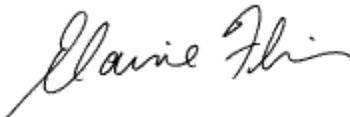
Our 2006 Events program is shaping up tall and strong, too. First was our New Year's Levée, kindly sponsored by TELUS - a photo feature on that is below. Our first luncheon session of the year is an important one: With the election campaign thundering down the home stretch, Darrell Bricker of Ipsos-Reid once again takes the stage for a pre-election PAAC crowd, mere days before the deal goes down. Will he be telling us the winner before the weekend? Will he make a valid prediction, only to have events take a hairpin turn over the weekend, as happened once before? Watch this space.

More exciting events will be on tap later in the year, and we'll provide details on them as plans become complete. To keep up with member needs, enhancements to this web site are under development, too. Even Conference 2006 is already in the planning stages.

So, my message to one and all is a hearty welcome to an exciting and eventful 2006. And it is my particular pleasure to welcome our newest members:

- Neil Walker, PublicEdge Communications, Inc.
- David Brazeau, Rouge Valley Health System
- Robert Laing, BC Real Estate Association
- Robert Daniel, Pollara Inc.
- Derek Fee, IKO Industries Ltd.
- Peter Regenstreif, Policy Concepts Inc.

As always, members are welcome to contact me with ideas, input, and feedback.



[Photo feature](#)

Our New Year's Levée: The PAAC mixer in pictures



On the evening of January 12, PAAC members and their guests gathered at the Fiddler's Green Pub to mingle & network. Top picture: PAAC President **Elaine Flis** and **Lisa Baiton**, Vice President at Environics Communications, get caught red-handed enjoying themselves. Below, **Adam Kahan**, Vice President of University Advancement at Ryerson University (left) and **Ian Bacque**, Director, Ontario Government Relations at TELUS and PAAC's Events Chair (right) caught in thoughtful moments as the talk swirled around them. TELUS was generous enough to sponsor this New Year's event. Ian brought along a box of 50 stuffed bunnies, made by Gund and used by TELUS as a promotional item. Everybody got a bunny on the way out at evening's end.



Below, L-R: **Brian Litman**, Client Relations Manager at CNNMatthews (check their new election information web site) and guest **Amanda Moddejong** seem to be reflecting on something her boss, consultant and political blogger **Allan Bonner** just said. But this is election time, and not everything is as it seems: Brian and Amanda were in the same photo, but Alan was added to the image from a separate picture taken that evening. (*National*

Enquirer photo editors, eat your hearts out.)



[Event report](#)

What you need to know about TV news

Big turnout on December 13 for Neal Kelly, former Managing Editor of News at Global Television Network. He was featured at our morning Tools and Techniques session at the top floor of the Sutton Place Hotel, where more than 80 PAAC members and guests packed the room to hear his presentation, *What Public Affairs Professionals Need to Know About TV News*.



Global outlook - Neal Kelly, superimposed on a file image of Toronto.

Kelly is also a former producer of the show, *Focus Ontario*, but the expertise he gained as ME in his years at Global was in the spotlight. Beginning in radio news in 1983, he switched to TV in '89 and worked his way up from the bottom of the ladder, working variously in all aspects of identifying, choosing, gathering and presenting news on television. His presentation to PAAC focused on what the audience came to hear: How to get your news

message out via television coverage, by working effectively with the people who decide what gets on the tube.

The Managing Editor, or somebody with a different title but similar responsibilities, is the one who determines what a television news operation covers, and how. "That person sets the agenda, picks the stories, and assigns the reporters," Kelly said. "That's the guy who can get your story covered." It's always the person who gets in early - Kelly was usually in the newsroom by six in the morning.

Most get their news from TV

It's a sad state of affairs, Kelly admitted, but most people get their news from television. To cultivate an informed world and national view, they should be reading the major papers and newsmagazines and Internet news, as most people in journalism and public affairs do. But often they don't. Most lives are ruled by narrow jobs and rigid work and home schedules, and a quick fix of TV news is what there's time for. "If you can't get your message on TV, then that's a failure," Kelly said. "The vast majority of people are watching the tube." And indeed, we can see this in the ongoing election campaign. All the staged election events are video photo-ops geared to the TV newsies. Print reporters are welcome to tag along, and are free to write incisive articles until their fingers are worn down to one knuckle, but the election will be won or lost on television. "If a leader doesn't come across as TV-friendly, he can't get elected."

People watch more TV than they care to admit. Guiding the television networks in their operations are the Nielsen ratings, which in Ontario flow from 500 selected families whose viewing habits reflect those of all, in much the same way as a public opinion poll reflects the big picture. Most of Ontario's Nielsen families are in the 905 area, with slightly fewer than 200 in the 416 area. "Smart news organizations will target the areas surrounding Toronto," Kelly said, if they want the Nielsen gods to smile upon them. And smart organizations won't do anything to cause those people to aim their remote control and pull the trigger. Said Kelly: "Think of the clicker as a weapon."

With this in mind, the Managing Editor takes a daily meeting with other senior people, notably including somebody who at Global is called the Promotions Producer. It is this person's responsibility to know the audience and what they want to see, so as to decide which news stories she can 'sell' to them - meaning, which will interest them as opposed to which will cause their eyes to glaze over and their thumbs to twitch on the much-feared clicker. Many is the good news story that was spiked because the Promotions Producer couldn't see how it would resonate with the audience. "Many times we backed off a story because of this."

Political stories and sports stories in particular have suffered such a fate at Global, where their flagship 5:30 p.m. newscast attracts a largely female homemaker audience, fresh from viewing their five o'clock episode of *The Young and the Restless*. When the news comes on next, these folks want to see stories about health, safety, and consumer issues, and it's the job of the Promotions Producer to see they get them first, if there isn't some must-cover breaking news that takes precedence.

A smack in the forehead

This was a forehead-smacking revelation - the kind of thing you never think of until an expert like Kelly explains it, but which you realize instantly must be true. On *Y & R* the very day Kelly spoke, the show's published synopsis said Sharon was tempted by Brad and Nick by Phyllis, while Sheila and Tom made plans to ruin Michael and Lauren's honeymoon. Anyone who thinks they can hold the same audience with Jack, Paul and Stephen rassing in the mud is not thinking clearly. Global news led that evening with the story of a student

charged with multiple counts of groping girls at his Brampton high school, his identity kept secret by the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Don't touch that dial. TV news managers know their audience, and public affairs people should understand each station's approach if they want to get a message through to a particular audience. "Everything is geared toward the supper hour audience," he added. "The other shows are window dressing." Reporters - fifteen of them in the case of Global - all file for that deadline, and their assigning editors make sure they're working on stories their audience tunes in to see. "People want good local content at the supper hour."

In the overall ratings in the Toronto/Ontario supper hour news market, CTV defends their top spot, like King Kong atop that skyscraper, by concentrating on Greater Toronto Area stories and sticking with a familiar lineup of news anchors who have built a loyal audience. They keep stories short and to-the-point. CTV is very agenda-driven, and will send cameras to any press conference - but not necessarily reporters. They'll often send just camera-people to suck up video, then cobble together the story with a voice-over back at the shop. Still, he said, "If you do a news conference for an agenda-driven story, it'll end up on CFTO."

Global has been trying to knock them off their lofty spire for years, so far without success. Global remains a strong second, hampered by a blurry parade of different news-faces over the years, each occupying the anchor slot for a relatively short time before moving on. "As soon as you started to build something," Kelly recalled, "you lost your main player." Yet Global offers more in-depth stories (up to three minutes, a long time in TV news and double the length of a good CTV news clip) and routinely covers stories across the province. These days they're assaulting the great Kong by trying to be more 'edgy,' with an almost Fox-TV-ish stylistic approach.

CITY-TV is next, with its focus on 416-area stories. "They're hip, fast paced, with a younger audience," said Kelly. "Not a lot of depth, but they get some decent scoops." CITY also benefits from a long-running and familiar "cast of characters," as Kelly calls the CITY anchors.

CBC is number four and well positioned to stay there. Long-ago cutbacks to the CBC hit local coverage hardest, gutting virtually everything but their big national news operation. Yet CBC is still a good conduit to the public for all stories political.

Bottom line: "It's important to have a clear idea what you are pushing, and what audience you want to hit." So: If the story is young and Torontocentric, contact CITY-TV. If it's agenda-driven, get it on CTV. Political? CBC will love it. Safety and health related? Call the Global Television Network.

[Tips & Techniques](#)

Neal Kelly's practical guide to TV news

Solid and practical tips and techniques were there for the taking at Neal Kelly's breakfast session:

Tip: There are fewer than 10 people in the Toronto/Ontario news markets making decisions as Kelly does at Global, and none of them are reporters. TV reporters go where they're assigned and cover what they're told from the top.

Technique: Get to know the managers but don't waste any effort on the reporters. Take those decision-makers to lunch. Stroke them. They won't mind, and it helps your cause if they know who you are when you call.

Tip: News conferences make for boring TV.

Technique: "Spice it up. Take it outside." In that spirit, try to provide added visual appeal wherever you can. The Mike Harris juggernaut had a great idea a decade ago, with their then-innovative approach of plastering Harris's smiling mug across the side of the campaign bus, big as a T-rex. Canadian elections hadn't seen that before. Now everyone's doing it.

Tip: Reporters are lazy.

Technique: Have all the information they need ready for them in nice handy press packages. Make it easy for them with backgrounders and FAQ sheets and experts standing by to be quoted.

Tip: Reporters want a human element in their stories.

Technique: "Bring in a character, some person who is affected by the story," Kelly advised. Case in point: That Global story about the Brampton High School groping featured interviews with girls who had been victimized at school, their faces discreetly cropped from the video.

Tip: Press releases can easily vanish in a blizzard of everyone else's press releases. News managers do read them - Kelly said they particularly keep an eye on CNW, and many watch other services like CCMatthews - but you can't depend on yours being noticed.

Technique: "Follow up with a phone call," preferably early in the day - the earlier the better - to that key person who is already at work when the day is still the merest blush on the horizon. Don't worry if it takes some persistence to get attention. Persistence works. Just don't call at news time.

Tip: Other events or breaking news can blot out your planned event, be it a news conference or other video opportunity.

Technique: Don't schedule your event opposite another big news event if you can predict it. If breaking news threatens to put your event in deep shade - a natural or human disaster, or a political eruption - reschedule your event.

[The Book Man](#)

A book to start the year: Sharansky on freedom vs. tyranny



by Stewart Kiff

The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror, by Natan Sharansky

This book has been out since November 2004 but I read it this fall and I loved its unorthodox and unique storyline. It begins in the birth of the Soviet *refusenik* movement of the 1970s and 1980s. This was a protest movement mobilized against the Marxist-Leninist state which was oppressing Soviet Jews who applied to

emigrate from the Soviet Union to live in Israel. It was a high-profile human rights issue. Those who applied were not only refused (hence the name) but were fired from their jobs, barred from employment and suffered further restrictions. Some, like Sharansky, did time in Soviet prisons and in the gulags. It took years for permission to emigrate to be granted, and when it was, it was frequently for only one family member at a time. The purpose of all this was to weaken opposition to the regime. But what it accomplished was to create an anti-Soviet human rights movement with worldwide sympathy.

What set many of these *refuseniks* apart as human rights activists was their decidedly right wing point of view, yet their years of activism in and out of the Soviet gulags endowed them with unimpeachable credentials. Particularly indigestible to the more conventional left-wing "human rights" activists in the west was the *refuseniks'* embrace of then U.S. President Ronald Reagan as their de facto patron saint. Most Canadians and Western Europeans had and still retain a fairly dim view of Reagan. To the *refuseniks*, however, Reagan, through his unnuanced rhetoric of confrontation with the Soviet Union, and through his use of labels such as "Evil Empire," forever captured their hearts and minds.

This book is the story and manifesto of one of the most prominent of these *refuseniks* - Anatoly (Natan) Sharansky. It is the story that begins with his birth and upbringing in the Soviet Union. It carries through to his years as a scientist working within the Soviet system, to his disenchantment and finally his identification as one of the leaders of the *refusenik* movement. It details his emigration to Israel and his election to the Israeli parliament (Knesset) as the leader of the Russian immigrant party, which became a cornerstone in the governing Likud coalition.

This book is an articulate and powerful assault on conventional wisdom, especially in regards to support for human rights. Sharansky's thesis, for which he draws inspiration from Ronald Reagan, is that freedom is for everybody regardless of ethnicity or religion. If many of the former Soviet states can become functioning pluralistic democracies in a few short years, he argues, then certainly so can other states with an equally poor record in democratic practice, especially Arab ones.

In the part of the book that reads like a manifesto, Sharansky describes the *modus operandi* of tyrannies as "fear societies" that have to create an external enemy in order for the ruling clique to maintain control. He argues this was true of the Soviets in their demonizing of capitalism, and is true now of the Palestinian authority and other Arab states in their demonizing of Israel. He calls for such states to be forced to respect human rights at a very basic level.

Sharansky's main thesis, amply supported by his personal anecdotes, is that only through forcing tyranny to recognize human rights is real peace and prosperity eventually possible. Ultimately a hopeful tome, Sharansky's book belongs on your reading list because of its clarity, and because the thrust of his argument is so clearly at odds with Canadian conventional wisdom that it yields unexpected insights.

This is a well written book and a must read.

Highly 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 cremation of Paul Martin

by David Silburt
PAAC Web Editor

There are strange things done on the campaign run, by the people who toil for votes;
Election trails have numerous tales that make them the butt of jokes.
These Northern lights have seen strange sights, but the strangest they'll ever see
Is if one winter night at the end of the fight, there's another minority.

Old Jean and his men were kings back when, of the true north strong and free;
But some took their fill from the public till, and distrust is the legacy.
A Conservative thrust may seem to be just, and Steve Harper is leading that fight;
But wherever he goes here in Ontario, people say he's too far to the right.

Is there serious talk that the man from the Bloc would be a sane choice for Prime Minister?
Would an end to the hate on for the man named Layton really be so very sinister?
Does there live any choice to make voters rejoice, when the campaigns are slinging mud?
Or must we vote Green or some other extreme, thinking all the main choices are duds?

Should we give up and squawk that it's all just a crock? Well, I say the answer is no.
Just pull up a chair, if you still give a care, and I'll tell you the way it can go.
The key to the plan is the pollsters' stand that majority prospects are dead;
And whoever does lose, of the reds or the blues, that man's party will hand him his head.

If Paul Martin wins he can hold up his chin, but a verdict like that resolves nothing;
Yet if Steve Harper's thing is to act like a king, then he's in for a solid rebuffing.
He might feel glee, but he wouldn't be free to act as a right-wing elite;
Because party three, the NDP, would be there to hand him defeat.

Two years down the road - or less if they're bold - the Grits would have a new face out;
With Paul Martin gone they would have a new dawn, 'round the time Harper's crew did a flameout.
Most Canucks would embrace a new Liberal face, having settled their outstanding quarrel;
With Conservatives dumped and the New Dems a rump, the country could get back to normal.

There are strange things done on the campaign run, by the people who toil for votes;
Election trails have numerous tales that make them the butt of jokes.
The Liberal plight's an unusual sight, but the best thing those Grits could see
Is if one winter night at the end of this fight, there's a Tory minority.

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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