

Public Affairs: Your Online Newsletter

July • 2005

- President's Message: Lobbying is part of democracy
- Calling all contributors: We welcome input
- The coming Conference: The best is yet to be
- Career connections in the public affairs sector
- The Book Man: Political incorrectness plus Canadian Stalinists
- The Web Editor: The worst insult in Canada

[President's message](#)

Lobbying is part of democracy



by Chris Benedetti
PAAC President

As of last month, a new set of rules and regulations came into effect concerning the activities of lobbyists. While some people believe that changes are needed since, unless tightly controlled, lobbyists will bend the rules, seek to circumvent them, and betray the public trust, the reality couldn't be further from the truth.

The laws that bind

Lobbying is a just part of the democratic process - a fact mentioned time after time in relevant legislation. The PAAC Statement on Ethical Principles, to be unveiled later this summer, will underscore this fact. But the laws that bind lobbyists must be understood in their appropriate context, and governments must actively work to

improve the environment under which lobbyists operate.

The federal Act is an effort to enhance transparency in a profession that is often misunderstood. Indeed, the underlying premise of a lobbyist registry is simply for those individuals and firms who advocate on behalf of their clients to appropriately disclose who their clients are, and the measures they take to influence government policy and decision-making. Influencing is not a prohibited activity. Influencing is a core component of any well-functioning democracy. Wouldn't we want our elected officials and senior policy makers to be well educated on all aspects of a particular issue before making their decisions? Influencing and educating go hand in hand - when they are done properly and professionally.

Unfortunately, calls for enhancements to such statutes are often made in the context of preventing certain transgressions - as has been the case in reference to the MFP scandal in Toronto. As public affairs professionals, lobbyists should embrace the opportunity to provide greater transparency into our activities and to prevent illegitimate activities from taking place. But it should be understood in the proper context. Strengthening rules and regulations around lobbying should never prevent or try to stifle the very important process of advocating ideas and issues to government. They should only serve to better protect the public interest, and the professional credibility of lobbyists and their clients.

Administrative burden

The recent changes to the federal Lobbyists Registration Act are relatively mundane. Registrations now need to be updated twice a year - adding to the administrative burden. In-house lobbyists, however, will now only require the most senior officer (i.e. the President or CEO) to file a single registration on behalf of all subordinates that spend at least 20 per cent of their time engaged in lobbying activities (although the names of such subordinates must also be provided in the registration).

Lobbyists were previously only required to register when engaged in activities clearly designed to influence government. To clear up this ambiguity, lobbyists are now required to register whenever their activities will lead them to contact government officials on behalf of their clients (be they consultant lobbyists or in-house representatives). The new law also requires a registration to take place when stakeholders are solicited by government to provide comment on various matters. However, this does not apply when communication between government and stakeholders takes place in a public forum. There is also now an explicit exemption for the need to register when a contact with government is made solely to obtain information.

Other changes include the need for former elected officials, political staff and senior servants to detail previous positions held in government.

These changes will likely do little to change to day-to-day practice of lobbying - albeit to hopefully reinforce the legitimacy of these types of activities. More work however is

needed to strengthen the ties that bind governments to their stakeholders, and to better understand the valuable role that lobbyists play in this process. Improved communications between practitioners and government on these important issues will go far achieving this objective.

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And now, it is my pleasure to welcome the latest new members to the Public Affairs Association of Canada:

- Sam Boonstra, Industry Canada
- Jane Pagel, Jacques Whitford Limited
- Anthony Delorenzo, Yukon Government
- Chris Churchill, Ontario Energy Board
- Sarah Roberts, The Jeffery Group
- William Fripp
- Rebecca Irwin, GPC Public Affairs
- Marc Zwelling, Vector Research & Development Inc.

Thanks to everyone for your continued support. Please feel free to contact me with ideas, suggestions and input, at cbenedetti@sussex-strategy.com.



Calling all contributors

*by Graham Murray
Former PAAC President*

PAAC's board of directors has agreed that we should invite E-news contributions on the public affairs environment in the various large and small Canadian centres where PAAC now has members. As noted in this month's President's Message, our newest member resides in Whitehorse, Yukon. Our Association also has members in Halifax, Montreal and Vancouver - in addition, of course, to strong membership concentrations in Toronto, the surrounding regions and in Ottawa.

All members of PAAC would benefit by learning of the public affairs challenges facing practitioners across the country. Your contributions could help make PAAC a truly national organization. Please submit your contributions no later than a week prior to

the end of the month.

All contributions are subject to approval by the Editorial Board.

[Conference update](#)

The best is yet to be



by Elaine Flis
PAAC Vice President

The most important event of the PAAC year is coming steadily closer: Our Annual Conference, *The Art and Science of Public Affairs*. Each year it takes place in October, and the mind-boggling task of planning the next one begins shortly thereafter, in January. This year the action begins the evening of October 26 with the Presidents' Reception, followed October 27 by the Conference itself. The venue: Toronto's centrally-located Sutton Place Hotel, the site of many of our regular luncheon events.

Among last year's Conference highlights were Michael "Pit Bull" Bryant discussing how to lobby politicians successfully; author, journalist and reputed Liberal insider Warren Kinsella on whether new fundraising rules would take the fun out of fundraising, and GR expert Lisa Stilborn, on the process of guiding a Private Member's Bill from conception to delivery. There were sessions on staying current in a world of fast-breaking news, and sessions on crisis communication - always a hot button topic.

For the new upcoming Conference of '05, we're working hard to set up sessions featuring new speakers on current topics, such as *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* and, closer to home, *The Nanny State: Is Government Taking Over?* We're also planning sessions on the importance of Internet Blogs, the shaping of government agendas, and more information on successful lobbying. We will return to and expand upon themes that always draw in interested crowds: What makes a winning crisis communications strategy, how to use strategic polling, and a topic that becomes a

hotter hot button each year: Ethical standards and integrity in Public Affairs.

Look for more information to come your way on these and other current and important topics as we gradually fill out our agenda and line up names and details in the coming months. And watch for an excellent closing plenary session titled, *Entering the Twilight Zone: When the Dark Side goes to the Darker Side*. That one's about the phenomenon of journalists moving into politics or political advisory roles.

I'll keep you posted as we get closer to the date. In the meantime, have a wonderful summer - and don't hesitate to contact me with Conference ideas and suggestions.

[Our partnership with Brainhunter](#)

Career connections in the public affairs sector

The Public Affairs Association of Canada's (PAAC) CareerSite is dedicated to connecting the best talent in the public affairs, policy development, government relations, lobbying, communications, opinion research and public relations industries with top-notch jobs through a quick and easy to use interface. For job seekers, the PAAC CareerSite is ideal for seeking new opportunities. The PAAC CareerSite optimizes the opportunity for the best employment fit for everyone involved.



Brainhunter, one of Canada's leading technology staffing firms and a pioneer in web-based recruitment and staffing, has partnered with the Public Affairs Association of Canada to provide a specialized career site linking the country's public affairs community with prospective employers and job opportunities. The new PAAC CareerSite is now up and running on this web site.

Unlike general job boards, the PAAC CareerSite is focused on jobs for the public affairs, policy development, government relations, lobbying, communications, opinion research and public relations industry and on providing resources devoted to the sector. The outcome is better service and results for both job seekers and employers seeking qualified, professional candidates to fill open positions.

The PAAC CareerSite is the first job board of its kind dedicated exclusively to the public affairs sector in Canada. Now more than ever, members at the Public Affairs Association of Canada have a resource dedicated to helping them find the right career with the best tools.

As with all Brainhunter career sites, the PAAC CareerSite is free for job seekers.

Employers pay a small fee to post jobs - an extremely cost-effective employee recruitment strategy. Income from the CareerSite will generate a revenue stream that can be re-invested in further services to PAAC members.

PAAC knows that the Public Affairs profession has specialized career needs and therefore the PAAC CareerSite is the best place on the web to support your job search. Whether you are actively looking for a job, casually searching for your dream job, or would just like a place to store your resume, the PAAC CareerSite is the place for you.

Members of PAAC can enjoy the following job seeker/member benefits as part of their registration on the CareerSite:

Complete control over the confidentiality of job seeker information. The PAAC CareerSite takes privacy very seriously. Our job seekers can be assured that they have complete control over the accessibility of their resume at all times. There are several levels of privacy for job seekers to choose from:

- display full resume and contact details to any registered employer
- display only resume without contact information to registered employers
- DO NOT include resume in the searchable resume database for registered employers

Job Search Agents that bring the job to you. Job seekers can set up to five personalized job search agents that will notify them of opportunities that meet their career needs. Job seekers can apply directly from the job notifications, saving valuable time and reducing the grunt work associated with job searches.

Search job opportunities using over 10 different search criteria. The PAAC CareerSite gives you the flexibility to search our database using 10 different search criteria. Some of these include Keyword Search, Job ID#, Location, Job Stream, Job Type, Company, Salary/hourly rate, Date job was posted, etc. With these filters in place you can be assured that you only see jobs you are interested in.

Search for job opportunities 24/7. The PAAC CareerSite is available whenever you are. Job seekers have full access to view and apply to open job opportunities, register and update their resume and profile at any time of the day or night, and check the status of their job applications.

For more information on how to register and get your profile uploaded or for questions regarding how you can tap into the PAAC's database of qualified professionals for your hiring needs, please contact our CareerSite support centre at careersite@publicaffairs.ca.

[The Book Man](#)

In search of the politically incorrect, and Whatever happened to Canadian Stalinists?



by Stewart Kiff

Freakonomics, by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner

Certainly, one of the gravest errors one can make in political discourse is to tell the unmitigated truth. Think back to the 1993 general election and then Prime Minister Kim Campbell's disastrous attempt at candour. Her statement that elections were not the time for substantial discussion of public policy only confirmed to the public their perception that she was not up to the job. No amount of damage control could undue this misstep and neither Campbell nor her party ever recovered from that watershed election. In politics the bald truth is relegated to the back rooms, where we lobbyists repackaged it as \$250/hour "wisdom" for the educated and connected.

Hence, it is with clear delight that I cracked the cover of a book that not only brings us some of the most politically incorrect opinions of our young 21st century, but it does so with near unassailable scientific backing. *Freakonomics* is the non-fiction equivalent of melding Ralph Klein's political sensibility with Bob Rae's oratory - way too much brain power up to no good. It is a clear delight to read, just don't ever let any politician quote any of it. Careers have been ended for muttering just these sorts of *bon mots* near an uncovered microphone.

In a refreshing stroke of fairness, this book's opinions are equally offensive to both left and right. Take for example its most shocking thesis - that abortion reduces crime. To the right, this is a rejection of the pro-life agenda. To the left, it directly links the birthing practices of the underclass to future criminal tendencies. Just typing these words brings a mental image of MPPs Bob Runciman and Peter Kormos tripping over each other in the race to the microphone to express their mutually opposed outrage.

For our education friends, *Freakonomics* author Levitt gleefully spends a chapter detailing how he composed an algorithm to catch literally hundreds of Chicago area teachers red-handed fixing standardized test results for their students. Again, even Mike Harris, at his worst, could not offend so many people so quickly or so adroitly.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Red Diaper Baby - A Boyhood in the age of McCarthyism

by James Laxer

This at times stranger-than-fiction memoir is the tale of the early life of prominent left wing intellectual and York University Political Science professor James Laxer. Laxer is also well known for leading the NDP waffle movement and challenging David Lewis in 1971 for the leadership of the federal NDP.

Laxer grew up near the working class enclave of Christie Pits in central Toronto during the 1950s, but as the son of a prominent paid organizer for the Communist Party of Canada, his childhood was anything but normal. Instead of attending standard summer camp, for example, Laxer attended communist summer camp, where all families had a pro-Moscow bent. During Korean War, while most Canadians cheered on the Canadian troops and their UN allies, Laxer and his family supported the North Koreans and their Chinese allies, and admits to secretly celebrating every time UN troops suffered a setback. But because of the unpopularity of the communists in Canada in the 1950s, Laxer says he knew instinctively not to share his family's fervent beliefs and opinions with other kids, neighbours or society in general. In some ways, Laxer himself was the "enemy within" even before his seventh birthday.

As a young grade-schooler, Laxer recounts the sad story of all the children in his class being asked to tell what their father did for a living. When his turn came, Laxer, even at that early age, knew not to talk in open society about his dad's job as a communist organizer. So he stood up in class, and claimed implausibly that he did not know what his dad did. When his mother found out about this, she wrote a scathing letter to the teacher about how "inappropriate" it was for this subject to be raised in class. Apparently, even "normal" activities were neither normal nor casual when your family is on the leading edge of Canadian Bolshevism.

Laxer also shares how powerfully he was affected in 1956 by death of Russian Dictator Joseph Stalin. He recalls openly weeping and being crushed in sadness over the loss of his "Uncle Joe."

It is anecdotes like these that allow the reader to revisit Canada's forgotten and in some cases deliberately ignored history from the early cold war. The twist is that we are seeing these events through the eyes of a Stalinist child who later became one of Canada's leading leftist intellectuals.

I recommend this book for its simple humanity. This is the first and only book of Laxer's that I can say I enjoyed. It is a simple story, directly recounted, and very touching in the way he talks about the love of his family and their self imposed exile from "normal" society. It also succeeds as a testament to an era that Canadians seem to want to forget, and the unsavoury nature of Canadian Communism - a part of our

history contemporary Canadian leftists seem only too willing to forget.

RECOMMENDED

Besides being an avid book reader, Stewart Kiff is a PAAC member and is the Toronto Vice-President of Solugik Public Affairs. He can be reached at stewart@solugik.com and welcomes recommendations for reviews and acerbic feedback.

[The Web Editor's corner](#)

The worst insult in Canada

*by David Silburt
PAAC Web Editor*

At a recent social gathering a good friend, who is known to wish nothing good to pols on the political right, sputtered laughter at the idea of Stephen Harper's 'getting-to-know-me' tour. "He's got to be the most frustrated guy in politics," the man said. "No matter how rotten the Liberals look, his popularity just keeps going down."

The man is right. It's cause for mirth among the left, and head-scratching elsewhere, but it's true: No matter what vile revelations spew forth concerning the Liberals, Harper can't make gains in the public opinion polls in Ontario, where he must succeed if he wants to win an election. Why? The Man had the answer for that, too: "He's a (sputter, snicker) *Westerner!*"

Bingo. It's an unappetizing conclusion to reach in Ontario, where the citizens have made a more elaborate show of acceptance and tolerance than any other people in our nation. But it is the best explanation of why Harper has the Curse of the Hidden Agenda on him in Ontario, and Paul Martin doesn't.

Liberals have been very successful persuading Ontarians that Stephen Harper has a hidden agenda, inimical to the maintenance of an open, accepting society that will continue to include all races, religions, sex orientations and Quebec. And maybe he does. Yet *all* politicians carry with them the risk of either a hidden agenda, or a lack of commitment to the one they advertise. Nobody understands this better than Ontarians, who not too long ago bought a used car from the provincial Liberals. Before that, they can remember electing a government promising a Common Sense Revolution, and ending up with one so committed to a set course of action that it moved like a runaway bulldozer, and lost public support as a result. Governments that irritate, inflame, betray and tick off the public get thrown out as punishment, in favor of new ones who then have an opportunity to earn support or lose it, based on their commitment to their stated agenda. But the Liberals, with Gomery dripping down their faces, are looking

better to Ontarians these days, not worse. Question is: Why?

The situation passes the duck test for bigotry against Westerners. It looks, walks and quacks like hostility against the idea of a Western Canadian becoming Prime Minister. It has been a very long time in this country since the days of John Diefenbaker. Joe Clark fluked his way into power, then bobbled the ball almost instantly. And Kim Campbell doesn't count because she was never elected by the public at all. Today, in 2005, it looks as if the Ontario public has a hidden agenda of their own, which works against Stephen Harper and which is proving useful to the party dubbed "The Libranos" by some wags at *The Western Standard*.

Ontarians, like other Canadians, don't have much to chose from when it comes to Paul Martin and Liberal corruption. Former Finance Minister Martin's possible involvement in payoffs, graft and ghost payments during the Chrétien years comes down to only three choices. First is the possibility that he was incompetent and didn't know what was going on in his own department. But in all other matters, his department did well in those years, which means Martin was not incompetent as Minister of Finance. He did a lot of good.

The second possibility is that he looked the other way, not wanting to poke holes in what was then his political boat as well as Jean Chrétien's. That's the equivalent of passersby on a street corner ignoring a crime because they don't want to get involved. But the only other possibility for Martin is that he was both involved and culpable, playing Paulie Walnuts to Chrétien's Tony Soprano. Each of those three choices reflects poorly on Paul Martin, but Ontarians don't seem to mind.

There is a vile word, an insult used against black people, which hangs in the air among racists even when they don't dare say it. It would have hung in the air over a black Presidential candidate running in the U.S. back in the 60s - we hope not now - in the middle of the Summer of Love. Imagine a candidate looking like Morgan Freeman, running on a popular anti-Vietnam war platform in those years. His platform might have been what was needed, but too many voters would have reacted to him only by thinking that one vile word, rejecting him as a no-account person who would degrade the property values if he moved in next door.

Today, it's beginning to look as if Stephen Harper is a white version of that same insulting word in the minds of Ontarians. A guy from somewhere that doesn't count, an outsider whose election we must assume would degrade our social values. This in Ontario, with its elaborate Gay Pride celebrations (*not that there's anything wrong with that!*) and cultural festivals of every type and description, putting everyone on notice that we won't tolerate intolerance here. Here in Ontario, where voters continue to prefer the scandal-sullied Liberals, who wake up every morning with a blue moon in their eye but the polls on their side, because the main alternative is a party led by a no-account Westerner.

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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