



PAAC E-News

Public Affairs: Your Online Newsletter

September • 2005

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[President's message](#)

Quiet summer, faster fall



by Chris Benedetti

PAAC President

Summer in these parts has been unexpectedly uneventful, all things considered. There has been a great deal of bright summer weather, with plenty of good old-fashioned summer heat. Best of all, the heat of politics abated. Springtime battles between Tories and Grits threatened to immerse us in a replay of last year's election, but instead we had a respite of sorts. Our Prime Minister was able to buckle down to rehabilitating his image, while his nemesis toured the country as the friendly and approachable Steve Harper, primping his own image for battles to come.

Except for Paul Martin choosing a new Governor General who turned out to be vulnerable to accusations of separatist sympathies, controversies have been low and Canada has been at peace. It was nice. Now, as summer begins to cool down, our events will begin to heat up.

In the works for fall: Your PAAC Statement of Ethical Principles. The final draft is to be circulated to the membership around the middle of September. From there it goes to

ratification at the Annual General Meeting.

The AGM and Conference, *The Art and Science of Public Affairs*, continues to be a focus at PAAC, with Vice President Elaine Flis quarterbacking the organizational effort. Before the Conference, however, look for the *Risky Business: Public Trust, Ethics and Dealing with the Government* conference, scheduled September 15 - 16 in Ottawa. This event is sponsored by the Pacific Business and Law Institute and PAAC, whose members receive a 10 per cent discount. It promises to be a relevant and timely event.

Next after that is our Conference. Then, at the end of November, comes the Canadian Institute's third annual Government Relations Summit, featuring interactive workshops and tools to help you finely hone your GR practices and techniques. PAAC will also be posting its regular event schedule, which is currently being finalized and will be announced shortly.

Also in the fall the Gomery Inquiry, back in view like some sort of a never-quite-vanquished Freddy Krugeresque villain, will be the subject of a previously postponed breakfast session by the American Marketing Association (Toronto). It's title is self-explanatory: *Ad Scam - The Gomery Inquiry: The Marketing and Advertising Community's Reputation on the Line*. There will be more information available on the new schedule for this in the future.

Be sure to keep track of these and other scheduled events by checking your PAAC

Events Page from time to time.

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Not so very long ago, the United States joined with other countries, including Canada, to fund and organize major relief efforts to aid victims of the Asian tsunami disaster overseas. Today major disaster relief efforts are underway in the U.S. itself as its government mobilizes to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina in the American south. Our hearts go out to the victims of that disaster.

At this writing our federal government has sent condolences and an offer of emergency medical supplies, and is considering deploying our Disaster Assistance Relief Team (DART) and other assistance the Americans may request. British Columbia has dispatched its Heavy Urban Search and Rescue team. Ontario has offered a high-tech mobile field hospital, hydro crews and other assistance as required. Others in Canada will no doubt offer aid in the coming days and weeks. In addition, anyone who wishes to make a private donation can do so online through the Canadian Red Cross web site. Not a bad idea, given the speed and enthusiasm with which Americans aid others.

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At this time I would like to welcome our latest new members:

- Aidan Carter, Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing
- Jodi MacDonald, MacDonald Consulting
- David Zurawel, Ministry of the Attorney General

- Tom McLaren, Stakeholder Strategies
- Christopher McLean, Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Robin Sears, Navigator

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

cbenedetti@sussex-strategy.com.

See you all at the Conference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. P. D.' with a large, stylized flourish underneath.

[Ottawa event](#)

[Risky business in the nation's capital](#)

Here's a précis of what's on tap at the upcoming Ottawa forum, *Risky Business: Public Trust, Ethics and Dealing with the Government*. The information comes from the redoubtable Sean Moore, who will chair the event.

The forum offers a broad overview and much detail on what is permissible and in dealing with governments in Canada. And what is not permissible. In a nutshell, it's a look at laws, regulations and rules, rules, rules:

- public ethics law and regulation including conflict of interest rules;
- political finance law and regulations;
- constraints on organizations which receive government funding;
- new lobbyists registration rules;
- rules and guidelines governing hospitality and gifts for public officials;
- rules related to selling goods or services to government;
- rules restricting advocacy by registered charities;
- rules for dealing with government when trying to persuade them on public policy issues, obtaining financial benefits or selling goods or services.

Also, Moore tells us, the forum will consider the impact of all these developments on the dynamics of the GR relationship. Speakers will talk about how to identify and manage the risks associated with dealing with government, and how to anticipate as well as respond to media coverage when there is a whiff of scandal in the air.

Check the Events page for the registration flyer.

[A glance back](#)

The Phoenix part of Canada

Summer has been good to both the provincial and federal Liberals. Our distinguished

guest speakers from this past spring provided PAAC members with all the necessary context to understand this Liberal transformation, and it's interesting to look back and see how the political planning we heard about worked out so well for Liberals at all levels.

On May 16, Jim Warren, Dalton McGuinty's Executive Director of Communications, told us of his plan to re-brand McGuinty using a finely crafted strategic communications plan. Critical to this plan was getting the news media to take up the issue of a \$23-billion gap between what the federal government collects from Ontario to fuel its transfer payments and what the province gets back.

Pinocchio nose

In those days, the Premier of Ontario was still being caricatured with a Pinocchio nose, and some journalists were still cracking wise in media scrums, answering McGuinty statements with tactless quips like, "is that a promise?" Not much of that to be heard now.

It's 23-billion-dollar-gap and McGuinty sticking up for Ontarians. Even the Liberal-chewing Toronto Sun ran an editorial that read like part of Warren's strategic communications plan: "...Premier Dalton McGuinty has been sounding the alarm about the 'fiscal gap' for months. He says the difference between what Ontario pays the feds and what it gets back to fund social programs has reached \$23 billion...." Warren said he'd re-brand McGuinty. Mission accomplished.

Prime Minister Paul Martin is also walking taller in the polls these days. The maneuvers he used are understandable in terms of what Darrell Bricker had to say to PAAC on May

18, one day after Martin swung Belinda Stronach like a cudgel and knocked Stephen Harper clean out of the boat.

In those days, Martin's focus was to delay, delay, delay, while the public had a chance to forget about Liberal corruption. Canadians appear to be doing as he wished. "If they stay above 40 per cent support in Ontario they have a chance," Bricker told us in May. Today it looks like the Liberals can make that easily, Gomery or no Gomery. Indeed, Martin's Quebec lieutenant Jean Lapierre recently said the worst of Hurricane Gomery has blown through. Justice Gomery is planning to ask Canadians for their opinions of the scandal through his commission's web site www.gomery.ca in advance of a report that, by all indications, promises to be fairly bland.

Gomery falls to gang war

Best of all for Paul: Gomery has been reduced to the status of Old News, overtaken in the minds of the news media by the need to keep score in Toronto's gang wars and to hound Karla Homolka wherever she may run. Political corruption is never as big box office as human tragedy.

Bricker said this could happen. The Conservatives had a chance to unseat the Liberals in the spring, but they were outmaneuvered and lost momentum. Today Ontario seems to have forgiven McGuinty over accusations of lying and Martin over accusations of stealing. Harper may think their tactics are cheating, but that's not a factor. "Harper is not a warm and cuddly guy," Bricker said in May. "He has a sharp edge." Sure enough, this

summer Harper was reduced to touring the country trying to make people like him better.

Winners don't have to do that.

And there is yet even more time for Canadians to forget the Liberal bad and notice the Liberal good, as both the provincial and federal party wings continue to pump out some very skillful public affairs and news management.

Said Paul Martin in published reports: "I think our members are confident but they're not cocky. They understand full well that governing in a minority government is not easy, and it won't be easy this fall and they're going to have to work very hard."

Translation: Barring a gift from God, the Conservatives are already defeated.

-D.S.

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[The Book Man](#)

Collapse falls short; war reporting charges ahead



by *Stewart Kiff*

[Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed](#)

by Jared Diamond - Viking Publishing

Collapse is the much-anticipated new book from the author of the Pulitzer Prize winning bestseller *Guns, Germs and Steel*. In his new work Jared Diamond asks and answers the question, "What caused some of the great civilizations of the past to collapse to ruin, and what can we learn from their fates?" This is a lengthy book, enriched by the immense depth and breadth of Diamond's scholarship and experience in detailing the collapse of past civilizations, in particular the Greenland Norse, the Maya, the people of Easter Island and the Anasazi people of Arizona.

Diamond identifies what lead to the collapse of seemingly healthy and prosperous societies. As juxtaposition, he compares the collapses of several ancient societies with the situation in his home in present day, water-starved Montana. Diamond sees Montana as a society which on the surface appears healthy and prosperous, but which has signs of deterioration that could lead to a collapse like those which fell before. He presents it not as a society which *will* collapse, but as one which, while healthy and prosperous on the surface, appears to be deteriorating to a point where it *could* suffer collapse.

Guns, Germs and Steel was an incredible work of non-fiction. Unfortunately, *Collapse* does not live up to the standard set by that earlier work. While the ideas presented in *Collapse* are sound and the arguments backed up with solid scholarship, the book is far

from engrossing. It is frequently bogged down with details that don't have much to do with advancing its main thesis of how societies collapse. After reading it you will probably agree that you know much more than enough about Norse animal husbandry and shipbuilding techniques, among other items elaborated on *ad nauseum*. Worse yet is Diamond's habit of interjecting himself into the storyline.

Collapse is neither entertaining nor original.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

[Generation Kill:](#)

[Devil Dogs, Iceman, Captain America and the New Face of American War](#)

by Evan Wright

We live in an era of truly great on-the-spot war reporting. One reason is the decision of the American military to embed thousands of journalists with its troops during the invasion of Iraq. Another is the commitment of great writers to bring authentic and gritty war writing to the field, injecting new life to this non-fiction genre. A high water mark for combat writing had already been set by Mark Bowen in *Black Hawk Down* and Anthony Swofford in *Jarhead* - a first person account from a Marine in the first Gulf War.

Now Evan Wright steps up. He was reporter for *Rolling Stone*, embedded with the U.S.

Marines elite recon unit, nicknamed the "First Suicide Battalion," as they invaded Iraq in

the spring of 2003. The unit performed 'reconnaissance' during the war, which usually means acting as the tip of the spear. These men would lead the Marine advance by driving their unarmoured Humvees directly into ambushes at high speed and causing as much disorder as possible. Wright was with them to document this gripping and true story with authentic accounts of life and death, fear and chaos.

Far from being a classic shoot-em-up, rah-rah cheerleading account, Wright drills down into the personalities of Marines who both plunged him into mortal danger and protected him from it. What emerges are individual portraits of Marines that show them as human and irritating as 19-year-old American males can be, though never losing sight that they have been trained as stone-cold killers.

This book's crude title may turn some readers away, which is unfortunate, since Wright has produced a delicate and nuanced portrayal of a highly emotional event in our recent history. *Generation Kill* is immensely readable and is a welcome addition to modern war journalism.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

Besides being an avid book reader, Stewart Kiff is a PAAC member and is the Toronto Vice-President of the newly formed Equinox Public Affairs. He can be reached at stewart@equinoxinc.ca.

[The Web Editor](#)

Crash and burn

by David Silburt

PAAC Web Editor

An Internet legend, which might well be true, tells the tale of an American whose remains were scraped from the side of some lonely desert mountain after he bolted an Air Force rocket-booster to a car for a high-speed run. He didn't think the matter through. He simply wanted to go fast. And he did.

Public statements made too fast, without thinking them through, can also lead to a spectacular crash and burn. Such as the now-infamous crime-fighting tip recently offered in haste and repented at leisure by Toronto City Councilor Michael Thompson. Toronto is currently in the grip of a vicious shooting war between rival gangs, in imitation of the infamous Bloods and Crips. The suggestion: Randomly stop and search young black men for illicit guns.

Did Thompson really suggest that? There has been much PR back-pedaling concerning this since the first reports hit the news. The latest bit of reverse-interpretation is that it was only a suggestion that police check out those they had the most reason to feel

might...um...fit the profile..uh, no, can't say that, let's see...how about call it something like probable cause...hmmm...

In any case, the original suggestion seems to have gone like this: A) Most of the shootings involved only young black men, therefore B) stop and search young black men for guns, secure in the knowledge that C) those who don't have them won't mind proving their innocence.

It's hard to know where to start with this. Let's see. It's unconstitutional, illegal, inflammatory, unfair and stone freaking wrong, but never mind all that. Suppose you could actually persuade police to do it:

"Hey, you. You're black, get over here so I can check you for weapons." (pat...pat...pat...)

"OK, you're clean, you can go...You over there, you're black too. Let's check you out..."

There, that's two punishing lawsuits against the city, primed and ready to go. But wait, here comes another young black man, and when the police search him they find a pistol in his pocket. What then? They can't charge him with anything because evidence seized in a stop-and-search without probable cause is Fruit of the Poisoned Tree. So they take his gun and tell him to get lost - and that incident would come back as lawsuit number three, and the presence of the illegal gun won't matter a whit to a court because it's not admissible.

By this process it would be possible to confiscate several guns, while generating enough lawsuits to break the city financially, in a single afternoon. Its other major accomplishment

would be inflame, outrage and alienate all the black citizens who aren't part of the problem - those who don't have weapons, don't want them, and wish the police and politicians could come up with a way to make their city safer. And finally, it would hold Toronto up to international ridicule and opprobrium. That's a long list of accomplishments for one poorly thought-out idea. It may be the all-time worst crime busting tip ever concocted.

It was also a guaranteed loser of a public relations move from the instant it was made public, primarily because the man who made it, although most commentators agree his heart was probably in the right place when he said it, spoke before thinking the matter through.

Thompson later said he only wanted to generate discussion. In that, he succeeded. This has been some of it.

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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