



HEARD ON THE HILL

BY KADY O'MALLEY

Press gallery to discuss new strategy regarding PMO list in aftermath of CanWest breaking ranks

Prime Ministerial access barricades: To storm together or not to storm?

The Press gallery executive moved swiftly in reaction to last week's revelation that CanWest had decided to break off from the media pack and go onto the Prime Minister's list.

By Wednesday morning, an announcement went out to the full gallery membership, inviting all interested parties to a special lunchtime meeting this week to discuss the issue in the aftermath of the most recent developments.

Gallery president **Yves Malo**, a reporter at TVA, told HOH that the CanWest decision will mean a dramatic change in strategy—that that doesn't mean the gallery is ready to give up the fight to prevent the PMO from deciding who gets to ask questions at Prime Minister **Stephen Harper's** Hill press conferences.

"When someone decides to go on his own, and the Prime Minister's office gives them privileged access, we have a problem," he noted.

"The PMO gave privilege to CanWest, and to **Joel Bellavance**. What do our members say about that? Are we going to give [those reporters] the field because they are on the good side, and obey the Prime Minister's orders?"

(HOH notes that Reuters reporter **Randall Palmer** was also granted an exclusive interview with the PM after indicating that he was willing to go on the list.)

He's also angry that CanWest officials didn't bother to let the gallery executive know that it was backing out of the informal coalition of Hill media outlets that had agreed not to take part in the list.

"When they don't have the courtesy to call us to advise us that they decided to break the solidarity, what more is there to say? They chose to go it on their own."

He said that the gallery executive have a motion on the table at this week's meeting, which will be voted on by all attending members.

"It's going to be a lively meeting. I'm sorry to think that it is going to divide us, but that's just a fact."

Although many Hill reporters privately predicted last week that the CanWest capitulation would mean the beginning of the end for the gallery's battle against the list, an informal survey of media executives by HOH suggests that the PMO communications office may not want to schedule the victory party just yet. Most are waiting to see the outcome of this week's meeting, and as yet, none is ready to throw in the towel.

"For the moment, we're staying off the list," *The Globe and Mail's* managing editor, **Colin Mackenzie**, told HOH.

"We still think that there's a compromise available to all parties, and we still believe that it is not the sole discretion of the Prime Minister to determine who asks questions of him. That is where we are right now."

The meeting is scheduled for noon on Tuesday, Sept. 5, in the National Press Theatre. All members are invited, and light refreshments will be served. A debate over the independence of the press and the future of Hill journalism—and free pizza? HOH can't wait.

More CanWest controversy brewing?

Although HOH is normally no tin-foil-hat wearing conspiracy theorist, could there be any connection between CanWest's decision to split with the gallery over the Prime Minister's list and the appointment last week of **Derek Burney** as CanWest chairman of the board?

Mr. Burney, who was named a member of the CanWest board in April 2005, was chief of staff to Prime Minister **Brian Mulroney**.

Much more recently, though, he headed up the transition team for the current PM—and that raises a red flag for Liberal MP **Mark Holland**.

"People should be concerned at the idea that a media chain of that size and influence would appoint the head of the PM's transition team as chairman of the board. Where's the impartiality? How are they going to objectively report on issues that pertain to the government when the chairman headed up the transition team, and is the former chief of staff to another Prime Minister? How can this major media outlet maintain neutrality?"

Mr. Holland also pointed out that it was Mr. Harper's Conservatives who campaigned so ardently against the "revolving door" between government and lobbying.

"It's another example of hypocrisy, and of Harper's government saying one thing and doing another, and this revolving door where you have people who are members of the transition team, or senior strategists, going on to positions that they're clearing getting because of their access to the Prime Minister."

Although CanWest's acting interim chairman, **David Drybrough**, didn't register with the Lobbyist Registration Branch, Mr. Holland said he believes that Mr. Burney should do so immediately.

"He has no choice. There are going to be innumerable incidents where he will be contacting former contacts, and there will be enormous pressure for him to communicate the desires of the company. It's not hard to do the math on this—there's a very clear reason why he's been made chairman of the board, and the connections that he's made in the Prime Minister's office are at the top of the list."

According to the most recent advisory from the Lobbyist Registration Branch, outside chairpersons and board members who receive remuneration beyond reimbursement of expenses are required to register as consultant lobbyists if they engage in any communications, whether formal or informal, with federal officials, for the "making, developing or amending of any federal law, regulation, policy or program," as well as lobbying for federal contracts, or arranging meetings.

To help Mr. Burney remember exactly what he can't talk about with his former colleagues in Harper's PMO and Cabinet, he may want to check out a full list of taboo topics, courtesy of the most recent registration from CanWest CEO **Leonard Asper**, which include everything from amendments to the Copyright Act to advertising regulations.

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The Hill Times

Corrections

The article "Canadian government centralizes procurement as the trend is more decentralization, says procurement expert Hansen" (*The Hill Times*, Aug. 21) incorrectly attributed to Jon Hansen the notion that technology should not be adapting to the procurement process. Mr. Hansen said the reverse, that technology should adapt to the process and not define it.

Last week's *Heard on the Hill* referred to "the *Ottawa Citizen's* Mark Kennedy," but last February he was appointed managing editor of CanWest News Service.

FEATURE

The Spin Doctors

by Abbas Rana

"SES pollster Nik Nanos says a third of Canadians would consider voting for the Green Party, but the party needs organization and infrastructure to get more votes. When will the party wins a seat?"



Mike Storeshaw
Conservative Strategist

"Mr. Nanos is correct: getting people to consider voting for your party, and having the means to translate those good feelings into actual votes, are two very different things. The latter requires significant resources, party infrastructure, and membership and volunteer bases. These are the nuts and bolts of Canadian politics, and I'm not sure the Green Party has them in sufficient supply to generate a breakthrough into the House right now. They could always

prove me wrong.

"Hard work on the ground can make up for a good portion of those logistical shortcomings. More importantly for the Greens, I think, is the fact that whatever support they have is scattered throughout the country, with no effective 'beach head' upon which to build. I don't foresee the Greens capturing a seat in the House until they are able to galvanize enough support in one area of the country to generate a critical mass there, as opposed to a collection of respectable third or even second place showings all over the place. To elect an MP, the Greens may have to make a choice—spread its resources among 308 candidates and elect none, or focus its efforts on a select number of winnable ridings with its strongest candidates."



Leslie Swartman
Liberal Strategist

"Congratulations to Elizabeth May for her election as leader of the Green Party. May brings credibility, competence and a long list of high-profile connections in the environmental field.

"It's hard to say when they will win any seats, but certainly the party has made great strides in the past few elections. Where they are bound to have their greatest impact in the short term however will be to chip away at the NDP's support and cause them to lose seats.

"Agree with them or not, at least the Green Party stands for something. The NDP under Jack Layton has shamelessly sold its

principles for power, opting to side with the Conservatives on bedrock NDP issues like universal child care. He has destroyed the party's longstanding relationship with organized labour and his leadership pales in comparison to the likes of Tommy Douglas, David Lewis and Ed Broadbent.

"If the Green Party uses its \$1-million in public funding strategically, it will be the NDP who has egg on its face following the next election."



France Amyot
Bloc Strategist

"In politics, there is sometimes only a step from dream to reality. But when it comes to the possibility of the Green Party of Canada electing one or more candidates in Quebec, political reality is a little farther off than that.

"Certainly Quebecers are concerned about environmental issues. But the Green Party is not the only one proposing promising options in this regard. For example, the Bloc Québécois is a strong champion of the

Kyoto accord, and we have made concrete proposals for protecting the environment and achieving sustainable development.

"Then again, the Green Party platform deals for all practical purposes with nothing but the environment. For Quebec voters, this choice is too narrow—yes, the environment matters to them, but so do other issues: the constitutional question and Quebec's place in Canada, the fiscal imbalance, Quebec culture.

"There is a broad gulf between a social movement and a political party. A social movement is a sort of groundswell in civil society, a loud but inarticulate voice summoning politicians to do something. Unless it can build a platform around all the social and political issues of concern to Quebecers—and be in a position to defend those issues in Ottawa—the Green Party will not be electing Quebec MPs to the House of Commons any time soon."

Brad Lavigne
NDP Strategist

"Under the current first past-the-post system there is very little sign of any party without organization, infrastructure or broad base of support winning a seat in the foreseeable future. That's because our electoral system was established for a two-party state. Canada is a multi-party nation. The current electoral system is unfair, undemocratic, exasperates regional tendencies, shuts out alternative voices and should be changed.

"The question then is how we bring about that change. The Conservatives, Liberals and Bloc all benefit greatly from the current system. No party is more subsidized electorally than the Liberals and no party is more subsidized financially than the Bloc.

Change will never come by supporting or electing candidates from any of these three parties. And by voting for parties with no chance of winning a seat or forming a government, the system continues to shut those voices out to the benefit of the parties opposed to the very change the voter seeks.

"The second choice for most Green Party voters is the Conservatives—which is too bad because the only way to bring about proportional representation needed to elect a Green candidate is by voting NDP."

