

## Clinton In Calgary – A Media Relations Case Study

by Bonnie Elgie, APR

It sounds like the ideal media relations opportunity—a news story so hot the media are clamouring for interviews, photos and information. However, when the subject does not want media coverage and will not give interviews, there is a major conflict to manage. This scenario was the challenge Stephen Carter of Carter McRae Consulting faced as he prepared the media relations strategy for President Clinton's November 9th visit to Calgary.

Bringing a dignitary of Clinton's status to Calgary is no small feat. Calgary Renaissance, the group responsible for bringing Clinton to Calgary, began working on the multitude of event details several months ago. While Clinton would have been news no matter when he came to town, the tragic events on September 11th made his visit even more significant.

As planning began, the Clinton camp said there was to be no media at the event – period. They softened their

stance somewhat when they learned a portion of the event proceeds would be donated to the AIDS Calgary Awareness Association and the Canadian Paraplegic Association. In the end, reporters were allowed limited access to the event and one photo opportunity. There were no interviews, no questions from the rope line, and no unauthorized photos. Reporters violating any of the event guidelines knew their accreditation would be pulled immediately.

Several other factors proved significant obstacles from a media relations perspective. There was intense secrecy surrounding the visit and few details were released in advance. Carter explains, "Virtually nobody knew of the security arrangements. It was very difficult to develop a media relations strategy. I had to say 'I don't know' to the media a lot. It was frustrating for them because they weren't able to get the story they wanted due to the limited access."

Media were not included in the VIP reception where 100 guests paid \$999 each to meet Clinton and have their

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### CPRS • Member Profile

Gordon McCann, APR

by Pam Brandt, APR

It seems odd to talk about annual report cover shots and Zsa Zsa Gabor in the same breath. But in Gordon McCann's world, this unlikely juxtaposition is just another in the string of stories he tells. It's a juxtaposition much like his 40-year career where he made the seemingly seamless transition from insurance salesman to TV advertising guy to public relations whiz. Ask him how he did it, and the response comes quickly: serendipity – and a couple of well-timed cocktail parties! Although his tone is measured and calm, there is a quiet passion about everything he says. This is a man who clearly loves what he does.

Originally from Winnipeg, McCann transferred to Calgary

with Great West Life Insurance. From 1962-1967, he sold corporate pension plans throughout southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, and learned some of the marketing tricks that would later serve him well in his public relations career. When he didn't get a promotion he felt he deserved, McCann jumped ship. A career ad led almost overnight to CFCN TV and a job selling advertising. "CFCN was an



Gordon McCann

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## Inside Story: Politics and PR

by Sandra Sweet

Often controversial but never dull, Ezra Levant launched the Canadian Public Relations Society's 2001 professional development luncheon series on October 25<sup>th</sup> with a thought-provoking look at *Politics and PR*. His was an honest and revealing recollection of lessons he learned the hard way as communications director for Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day.

Levant opened by saying he never considered himself a public relations expert. In fact, he claims "until I was invited to speak here [CPRS event] I didn't think of myself as a PR guy. I was just a politician with a big mouth." Nevertheless, soon into Day's leadership, Levant quickly found himself in the PR hot seat as public approval for Stockwell Day shifted from "the man who could do no wrong" to something "reverse of the Midas touch."

One factor that quickly led to controversy was that Day's initial popularity was based on personal characteristics rather than a stance on issues. In hindsight, Levant says Day should have taken advantage of the media honeymoon to open doors and redefine himself. It was a golden opportunity to use every single interview to build up what he didn't have – a reputation on issues.

Levant also learned you can't hide from bad news. "Sometimes the news is bad and you can't put on a happy face," he says. But Levant says it's important to seize opportunities when the going is good to sell messages that are enduring because in the end, when the going gets bad, the substance of those enduring messages remains.

Levant says when he reflects on his 100 challenging days as Day's communications director, he learned several important lessons about crisis management and media relations.

- In crisis situations, get all the facts as soon as possible. If you don't know the facts, you can't develop your own crisis management strategy.
- Tell the truth. The facts always come out.
- Get the bad news out yourself so you control the message and the timing. Assume nothing is confidential, be prepared and have a plan in place.
- Don't take it personally. The media don't hate you. They just want a great story.

- The boss doesn't have to touch everything. Pick the appropriate spokesperson for each situation.
- Seek legal counsel on major communications decisions, but don't let legal precautions hinder your strategy.
- Sometimes you have to go around the media directly to your audience. Write letters, buy advertising, use your Web site, and use direct mail to get the story to constituents.

In the final analysis, Levant says he learned many important lessons from his time as Stockwell Day's communications director. But he adds he's learned as much, if not more, from failing as he has from winning. **m**

### Ezra Levant: A Brief Résumé

- Lawyer
- Special parliamentary assistant to Preston Manning: 1997-1999
- Communications director for Stockwell Day: Spring 2000
- Editorial writer and columnist for the *National Post*, *Calgary Sun*, and other newspapers and magazines
- News analyst for CTV Newsnet; appeared on Lloyd Robertson's national election night broadcast during the 2000 federal election
- Communications advisor to Richard Magnus's 2001 mayoralty campaign

## PR CANADA CELEBRATES ONE YEAR ON LINE



LANGLEY, BC - November 12, 2001. Weekly Internet newsletter PR Canada ([www.prcanada.ca](http://www.prcanada.ca)) is celebrating one year of publication today. Launched November 13, 2000, PR Canada is the only trade publication -online or off- that focuses on serving the entire Canadian public relations industry. Subscribers from coast to coast enjoy a lively mix of industry news, commentary and hands-on articles written by Canadian PR practitioners.

"Feedback has been very positive right from the first issue," says Editor and Publisher Kathee Muzin. "PR Canada has been well received and well supported by Canadian PR practitioners."

PR Canada features 12 regular columnists -along with many more occasional contributors- who have shared their expertise on topics including crisis management, media relations, ethics, research, public speaking, investor relations and more.

In its first year of publication, PR Canada has published 17 profiles of leading Canadian PR practitioners (with many more to come), and as many thought-provoking book and service reviews. "We have also built a freely accessible resource of well over 100 informative trade articles written by Canadian professionals in our Canadian industry," notes Muzin.

PR Canada has won a Golden Web award (for excellence in web design, originality and content); a listing on AboutPR.com (now [www.aboutpublicrelations.net](http://www.aboutpublicrelations.net)), and a listing on the comprehensive new resource "Marketing North America" ([www.marketingnorthamerica.com](http://www.marketingnorthamerica.com)).

PR Canada is published weekly on the Internet at [www.prcanada.ca](http://www.prcanada.ca), and features industry news, commentary and hands-on information for the Canadian public relations and communications professional. To view the current issue, visit our website at <http://www.prcanada.ca> 

### CPRS • Online PR Resources

## CPRS events go on line

by Lisa Rushka

CPRS is moving forward with a new development that should make it easier for people to register for and attend CPRS Calgary events. CPRS is now accepting registrations for its monthly events online through the CPRS Calgary web site ([www.cprscalgary.org/events.html](http://www.cprscalgary.org/events.html)).

The concept was introduced by board member Gord Hawker APR, who had considerable success with online registration at CPRS Saskatoon. Tabitha Beaton, web master extraordinaire, aptly handled the technical details. The process allows people to register in advance, receive an invoice and submit payment, all before the day of the event. This will make registration lines at events shorter and faster so our guests will be able to spend more time networking — and names will always be spelled correctly!

### How it works

The electronic form will be posted along with each event notice on the web site. Registrants can simply fill in their information, including names of guests, payment options and other details. After clicking the "Send to CPRS Calgary" button, the

registration information is forwarded to CPRS. An invoice will be generated and faxed to the guest, usually within 24 hours, and payment will be requested in advance. Cheques can be mailed to CPRS. Those who wish to pay by VISA will be telephoned by a CPRS representative to obtain the credit card information. An imprint of the card will be required once the registrant arrives at the event.

Upon arrival at the event, pre-paid guests and those paying by credit card will simply pick up their receipt and nametag at an express line, and proceed to the event. For those who prefer to deal in cash, mailing in your registration fee is obviously out of the question. We will still allow for payments at the door, but we expect the number of these transactions to decrease as guests experience the convenience of online registration, prepayment and the express line.

The Program & Professional Development Committee hopes that this process will make registering for and attending events easier. No doubt it will take one or two events to get used to a new way of doing things. Let us know how the process works for you via e-mail at [events@cprscalgary.org](mailto:events@cprscalgary.org) 

## Melissa Pennel: A Woman with a Vision

by **Natasha Joachim**



Melissa Pennel is the last one to sing her own praises, but modesty doesn't hide the incredible talent already recognized by her fellow students and co-workers. Pennel is much more than the University of Calgary CPRS student liaison. She is a person with a vision who knows

exactly what she wants and how she's going to get there. At age 21 and in her fourth year of the communications program, Pennel is well on her way to achieving success.

Pennel says a high school counsellor helped her choose a future career in public relations. "My high school counsellor told me I was really good at talking and I was a people person," she says. "He suggested public relations/communications and as it turns out, I love it."

Not only is the industry challenging and fast paced, but communications practitioners also have the opportunity to meet all kinds of interesting people.

Volunteer and work experience continues to provide Pennel with the most rewarding and beneficial experiences in communications. She has volunteered extensively for the Communications Studies Society and the Prospective Students Office, both of which have given her experience in public speaking and special event coordination.

The highlight so far, though, was a summer job with the Northern Lights Health Authority in Fort McMurray. "While working directly for the communications advisor and the CEO, I gained all kinds of experience such as writing communications strategies, press releases, articles for the regional report and, along side of Chris Wuh from Ozcar Communications, had the opportunity to build the Web site for the region ([www.nlrhs.ca](http://www.nlrhs.ca))," she says.

When asked of her future plans and dreams, Pennel said that she wants to travel and explore the possibilities of opening up her own business. "I want to take some time and travel, then come back to Calgary and work for a communications consulting firm or start my own and build it from the ground up," she replies. **m**

### Members on the move

**Elizabeth McLennan** is hanging her hat at the Alberta Mental Health Board for the next six months.

**Leone Bechard** has moved to Axia Netmedia as Director, SuperNet Communications

**Gail Robinson** has opened her own marketing communications company called TechCom. She can be reached at 630-5540 for more details.

**Jamie Leong-Huxley, APR** has joined Framework, Inc., a management-consulting firm, as a part owner and head of their new Communications consulting service.

**Jennifer Meads** has moved to Smart Technologies

### New Members

**Sneh Seetal**, Public Relations Specialist  
Enmax Energy Corporation

**Laura Renouf**, PR/Inside Sales/Marketing  
Coordinator, Enron Direct Canada Corp

**Colleen Blakely**, Public Relations Assistant,  
Calgary Cooperative Association Ltd

### Student Extension Members

**Kelly Goring**

Do you know someone who isn't a member of CPRS, but should be? This is your chance to help us inform and recruit potential new members.

E-mail potential members to  
Mona Gauvreau, Interim Membership  
Chair:  
[Mona@prworkscanada.com](mailto:Mona@prworkscanada.com)

## Communicators' Christmas Challenge

by Catherine Scheers




The holiday season will soon be upon us, and while visions of sugarplums dance in some heads, others are frantically spinning their wheels trying to figure out the perfect gift for loved ones near and far. People often use their talents to turn out fabulous gifts, for example bakers often give cookies and wood workers produce wooden toys, etc. Why not public relations professionals? This year I challenge you to **Give of Your Talents** to produce gifts for your family, friends, colleagues, and the world at large. Here are just a few suggestions of gifts of yourself that will be remembered for a very long time:

### Write it off!

- ***Straight from the heart!*** Write a genuine love note for someone you care about. Tell them why you love and appreciate their presence in your life. You could put the note in a Christmas card, on a plaque, or under a pillow. Or go even farther – Oprah suggests writing a “gratitude journal” chronicling why you are grateful for your loved one on a daily basis – what a truly memorable gift that would be!
- ***Turn the tide on gossip!*** Instead of gossiping about your relatives before they come for Christmas dinner, have everyone in your family write one positive thought about your guests on a scroll entitled “Why We Love You, Aunt Bessie” for example, roll the scroll, secure with a ribbon and place beside their plate. Imagine how blessed your guests will feel when they open their scroll after dinner and read all the nice things you and your family have to say about them!
- ***Build friendships, not just teams!*** Have everyone in your department write notes as to why they are grateful for each of their co-workers. Put each person’s “mail” into a small box, wrap nicely and give a gift of encouragement to your colleagues. Wouldn’t it be nice to have a box on your desk containing positive thoughts that others have of you?!
- ***Change the world!*** Write a letter to the editor (no, I don’t mean just think about it!), or write some P.R. for a non-profit organization.

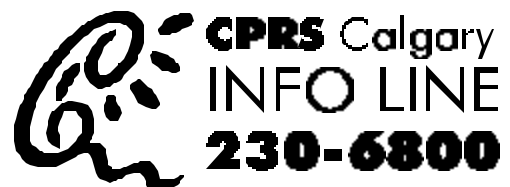
### Yak it up!

- ***Mend fences!*** Call someone you haven’t spoken to in years, or someone that you’ve nursed a grudge against. Use your “gift of gab” to light up someone else’s life!
- ***Smooth the waters!*** Act as a mediator between two people who need help settling a dispute. This will really put your P.R. skills to the test, but what a priceless gift for your friends!
- ***Warm hearts!*** Tell your friends and family “I love you” every day. You would be surprised how many people never, or seldom, hear those important words.
- ***Record history!*** Ask your parents and grandparents to record stories of their lives so that you may type them in a book, and pass them to your grandchildren some day. That’s a double gift – caring enough to ask your elders will mean so much to them, and passing family history forward is a gift of time and talent that will be immensely treasured.
- ***Don’t be a Grinch!*** Come out on December 6<sup>th</sup> to the CPRS/IABC Christmas Party. Don’t think of it as “networking” – that 90’s activity meant to further your career. Think of it as giving of yourself – gifts of greeting and laughter, sharing joy and gladness with old friends and new. Hope to see you there – GIVING of your talents! Happy Holidays! 

### Upcoming Events

Contact the CPRS Info Line for all the details on upcoming events

Or visit the CPRS Calgary Web Site at  
**[www.cprscalgary.org](http://www.cprscalgary.org)**



## Message from the President

Due to unforeseen circumstances, CPRS' Calgary Member Society has an immediate vacancy to fill on our Board of Directors. CPRS Calgary's Board of Directors is a great chance for you to take on a leadership role in Calgary's PR community, enabling you to share your wisdom and experience as we grow and enhance CPRS' current local offerings. This opportunity is open to any CPRS Member in good standing who has been a member for at least one full year.

For more information about this opportunity, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you in advance for your ongoing support and commitment to CPRS Calgary.

Shawn Kelly  
President, CPRS Calgary Member Society 2001/2002  
(403) 286-8187  
[shawnkelly@shaw.ca](mailto:shawnkelly@shaw.ca)


## clinton in calgary...

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picture taken with him. "One media outlet did find out the location of the reception (it was La Caille on the Bow) and showed up," says Carter. "I threatened to pull their accreditation for the event if they did not leave immediately, so they left."

Timing was another challenge. Clinton's plane arrived from Washington over an hour late. As a result, the reception, dinner and speech ran behind schedule, leaving the time of his speech in question. For reporters on deadline for the next day, the late hour was a major concern. Both the Globe & Mail and the National Post missed their deadlines. Furthermore, event organizers were not provided with Clinton's speech so reporters were literally transcribing his words as he spoke.

However, despite the many challenges and unexpected variables, the media coverage was excellent. Carter says although the media didn't like the rules, they followed them and the event received terrific press. Clinton's handlers were equally impressed with the professionalism of the Calgary media and their compliance with the requested guidelines.

Carter attributes this success to simply being honest with the media. "There were many things going on that we couldn't control," he says. "Even though the media were unhappy with the limitations they faced in getting the story, they understood our position. In the end, being open and honest was all I could do." 

## maxim team

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## gordon mccann, apr...

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amazing training ground for me," he says. "It exposed me to the media industry and pushed me to learn it from the ground up."

Enter cocktail party number one and a chance meeting with the owner of a small ad agency. Before he knew it, McCann had left CFCN and was an account executive. The agency was small and McCann wore many hats, essentially learning the business from the bottom up. One year and another cocktail party later, his career shifted again when he met the head of Baker Lovick, one of Calgary's largest advertising firms. McCann jumped at the chance to work for a larger agency.

Fate intervened once more when Calgary entrepreneur Sam Hashman offered McCann the job of public relations director for one of his many companies. For over five years, McCann whipped across Canada promoting construction ventures that included some of this country's most spectacular shopping centres and office buildings. For McCann, the job afforded him the opportunity to unleash the creative juices that he says are always simmering in the back of his mind.

"For me, public relations is about seeing possibilities where others might not see them," says McCann. "It's about making things happen, and adding that unconventional twist that takes something from merely good to absolutely fantastic." One such unconventional twist was the time he stumbled upon the happy idea of using Zsa Zsa Gabor to promote the 1974 grand opening of the Royal Centre Shopping Mall in downtown Vancouver. "We wanted someone larger than life, someone who typified big spending," says McCann. "Zsa Zsa was all that and more."

Okay, so they had to rent a vintage Rolls Royce just to get her across the street to the shopping centre. And maybe it was tough to find a hairdresser who didn't mind re-doing Zsa Zsa's hair seven times. And it's true, the maid quit after just 30 minutes. But in McCann's book, these are merely small inconveniences. "In the end, we stopped Vancouver lunchtime traffic and we had one of the most spectacular grand openings I can remember," he says with a grin.

McCann was – and still is – coming up with promotions like this. In business for himself since 1974, McCann continues to see the unconventional in the conventional. Today his client roster includes oil companies, homebuilders and restaurants. His tip to young practitioners: details, details, details. Whether it's an annual report, a corporate brochure or a special event, he is committed to making a list and checking it twice. "It doesn't matter how well something goes, you can always improve," says McCann. **m**

**date**  
Thursday, December 6, 2001

**time**  
5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

**location**  
Mescalero's Restaurant/  
Diablos Cantina "Blue Room"  
1315 - 1 Street SW

There is free evening parking available in the lot next to Mescalero's marked for monthly parking. Tell the attendant you are with the IABC/CPRS event.



**cost**

Members	\$30
Student Members	\$25
Non-members	\$40
Student Non-members	\$30

**Cash, cheque or credit card**  
Appetizers will be served.  
Cash Bar.

**INP**  
By Friday,  
November 30, 2001 at 3 p.m.  
[www.iabccalgary.com/events.htm](http://www.iabccalgary.com/events.htm)  
or phone: 270-IABC (270-4222)  
[www.cprscalgary.com](http://www.cprscalgary.com)  
or phone 230-6800  
When registering please include accreditation initials if applicable.

**cancellation policy**  
Cancellations must be made 48 hours before event for refund; "no shows" will be billed.






IABC/Calgary & CPRS/Calgary invite you to  
**SHARE THE WARMTH OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON**

The Calgary chapters of IABC and CPRS are uniting to warm your holiday season. Join colleagues and friends for an evening of lively conversation, tasty treats, seasonal music and reminiscences of the year gone by.

This season we invite you to share your warmth with less fortunate Calgarians. Bring along a pair of mittens or gloves for a man, woman or child, and we'll deliver them to a Calgary homeless shelter in time for Christmas. Warm up the mittens or gloves by inserting a holiday message to the person who will receive them. We hope to gather enough pairs to decorate the entire room.

So warm your heart by warming another's hands.  
We look forward to seeing you on December 6th.



Faxing sponsored by 

## Volunteer opportunities

### Sponsorship and Promotion

No, you don't have to ask for money! We need enthusiastic people to liaise with other committees, help write promotional literature, strategize, assist in correspondence, etc.

Contact: Janet Bliss APR at 249-6084 or [blissj@cadvision.com](mailto:blissj@cadvision.com)

### *maxim* newsletter – Writer

We're looking for writers to develop news articles of interest to CPRS Calgary members.

Contact: Simon Whitfield at 716-4086 or [simon.whitfield@home.com](mailto:simon.whitfield@home.com)

## Attention all members!

Do you have new contact information? Have you changed your job, location or your name? Please send us a note and we'll update our records so that you'll receive timely notices of our upcoming events and all issues of *maxim*.

Contact Mona Gauvreau APR  
Membership Chair  
[mona@prworkscanada.com](mailto:mona@prworkscanada.com)  
or by phone at 269-5957. 

## CPRS Calgary Board

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