

# From the Hill



OG  
GROUP

Strut Your Stuff



November 18, 2009

## Staffing changes in Michael Ignatieff's inner circle

Liberals headed into the fall session of parliament determined to trigger an election. On September 1, Michael Ignatieff proclaimed "Stephen Harper...your time is up" at a Liberal caucus retreat in Sudbury. Going into the fall session, pundits were predicting Canadians would be plunged into an election campaign – the fourth since 2004.

Following Michael Ignatieff's decision to no longer support the government on confidence matters, the NDP and Bloc voted with the government on the Home Renovation Tax Credit (C-51 An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures). The NDP also plans to support the Conservative government at least until bill C-56 (An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts) and C-50 (An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and to increase benefits) are passed into law. Bill C-56 is currently at the first reading stage. Bill C-50 has obtained Royal Assent.

According to polls, Liberal fortunes have markedly declined since Michael Ignatieff's declaration on September 1. A November 12 Ekos poll had Conservative support at 36.6%, Liberals at 26.6%, the NDP at 16.8%, the Greens at 11.2% and the Bloc Québécois at 8.8%. Polls from the previous week showed similar results to the 2008 election. For most of October the Conservative Party flirted with majority territory according to most polls. On September 29, Liberal Québec chief lieutenant Dennis Coderre resigned after an internal Liberal fight over the nomination process in the riding of Outremont. Michael Ignatieff reversed an earlier decision and allowed Martin Cauchon to carry the Liberal banner over Nathalie Le Prohon who Coderre wanted appointed in that riding. Le Prohon will now run in Jeanne-Le Ber. During his explosive resignation, Coderre suggested that Michael Ignatieff's inner circle required a shakeup, that it was too Toronto focused and did not understand Québec.

After a tough October, Liberals did poorly in all four by-elections on November 9. The NDP retained the seat of New Westminster–Coquitlam in BC. The BQ retained the Québec riding of Hochelaga. The Conservatives gained two seats including Cumberland–Colchester–Musquodoboit Valley in Nova Scotia and also a surprise upset in the Québec riding of Montmagny-L'Islet-Kamouraska-Rivière-du-Loup. The Liberals failed to place any better than third in any of those by-elections and were never competitive.

In light of all these developments, Michael Ignatieff has decided to make changes within the Office of the Leader of the Opposition (OLO). Former chief of staff Ian Davey has been replaced by Peter Donolo. From 1993 to 1999, Donolo was the Director of Communications in the office of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. Former communications director Jill Fairbrother, former principal secretary Dan Brock and senior aides Alexis Levine and Mark Sakamoto are no longer working in the OLO. Sachin Aggarwal has been retained and is now the Director of Operations. Warren Kinsella remains head of the Ignatieff war room. New faces include Principal Secretary Jean Marc Fournier, Chief Operating Officer Patricia Sorbara, Director of the Liberal Caucus Research Bureau and Senior Policy Advisor to the Leader Brian

# From the Hill



OG  
GROUP

Strut Your Stuff

Bohunicky, Director of Communications Mario Laguë, Caucus Liaison Karen Redman, Party Liaison Heather Chiasson and Executive Assistant to the Leader Jim Pimblett (bios attached). This team is being marketed as more representative geographically and also contains supporters from most of the previous Liberal leadership camps. On the new team, Peter Donolo had this to say, *“Indeed, as with any winning effort, to succeed we must work as a team, a disciplined and determined team. To that end, I am very pleased to announce the new senior staff compliment in the OLO. This is a very seasoned group of proven individuals with a wide breadth of experience in politics and the wider public sphere. Moreover, as you will see from the organization chart, the emphasis will be, as it must, on clear lines of authority and responsibility as well as accountability for execution and results”*.

The prospect for an election has declined dramatically since September. This should give the new Liberal team time to improve as an affective and focused opposition. With the Vancouver Olympics and G20 Conference being hosted in Canada in 2010, it is quite possible that there will not be another federal election until the fall of 2010 and perhaps even deep into 2011. Liberals hope the new OLO team will reverse polling trends and better prepare them for the next election campaign, whenever that occurs.

D.W. WOLK – 11.18.2009

# From the Hill



Strut Your Stuff



## **Bios of Key Staff Members:**

### **Principal Secretary – Jean Marc Fournier**

Jean Marc was the Liberal Member for the riding of Chateauguay in the Québec National Assembly from 1994 to 2008. He served, respectively, as Opposition Whip and, later, as Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister of Education, Minister of Revenue, and House Leader in the governments of Premier Jean Charest. After deciding not to seek re-election in 2008, Jean Marc was a senior advisor to Mr. Charest in the election that saw the Charest government return to majority status. As Principal Secretary, Jean Marc will provide senior strategic counsel to Mr. Ignatieff.

### **Chief Operating Officer – Patricia Sorbara**

Pat is one of the most experienced Liberal organizers and logistics experts in Canada. She was a senior member on the staffs of Ontario Premier David Peterson and several of his ministers. She served as Chief Returning Officer for the Liberal Party of Canada in 2006 Leadership Convention. In 1997, Pat co-founded Advanced Utility Systems, a software company she very successfully built and later sold in 2006. As COO, Pat will be responsible for the entire operations of the OLO, with all directors reporting to her.

### **Director of the Liberal Caucus Research Bureau and Senior Policy Advisor to the Leader – Brian Bohunicky**

Born and raised in Winnipeg, Brian served in the Chrétien government as an aide to Lloyd Axworthy and as Chief of Staff to David Anderson during the latter's time both as Minister of Fisheries and Minister of Transport. He has worked in provincial and federal Liberal campaigns in both Manitoba and British Columbia. Since 2000, Brian has been a public servant in four successive departments, most recently Agriculture Canada. Brian also holds a Rhodes Scholarship from Oxford University. In his new capacities, Brian will hold two roles: As Director of the LCRB, he will report to the Liberal Caucus Executive. As Senior Policy Advisor to the Leader, he will report within the new OLO structure.

### **Director of Communications – Mario Laguë**

Mario served as a communication aide to Québec Premier Robert Bourassa and as Québec's representative in Venezuela and Mexico. In the Government of Canada, Mario has been DG Communications in Inter-Governmental Affairs and he served for five years as ADM Communications in the Privy Council. In 2004, Mario served as Director of Communications for Prime Minister Paul Martin. He subsequently served as Canadian Ambassador to Costa Rica, and most recently, as head of global communications for the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the world's largest environmental organization, based in Switzerland. Mario will hold responsibility for all OLO communications, including the Press Office.

# From the Hill



Strut Your Stuff



## **Director of Operations – Sachin Aggarwal**

Sachin has been in the OLO since 2008. He was National Director of Operations in Michael Ignatieff's 2006 leadership campaign and managed Mr. Ignatieff's two successful campaigns for Parliament in Etobicoke Lakeshore in 2006 and 2008. Prior to joining the OLO, Sachin practiced corporate law at Torys LLP in Toronto.

## **Director of Legislative Affairs – Jeremy Broadhurst**

Jeremy has been in the OLO since 2006. He has served as senior policy advisor under Liberal leaders Bill Graham, Stephane Dion and Michael Ignatieff. Jeremy entered government in 2004, when Mr. Graham was Defence Minister. He also boasts practical political experience, serving as Mr. Graham's campaign manager in the 2004 and 2006 elections. Jeremy holds a law degree from the University of Toronto, and was an associate with the law firm Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg in Toronto. Jeremy will be the OLO lead on all matters pertaining to Parliamentary strategies and tactics, working in close coordination with the Opposition House and Senate Leader's offices.

## **Caucus Liaison – Karen Redman**

Karen was MP for Kitchener Centre from 1997 to 2008. She has served as both Chief Government Whip and Chief Opposition Whip, as well as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment. In her decade on the Hill, Karen was one of the most respected and hard-working Members of Parliament. Karen is already nominated to be the Liberal candidate in the next federal election.

## **Party Liaison – Heather Chiasson**

Heather has been involved with the Liberal Party since the early eighties. She has been a member of the National Executive, representing Atlantic Canada. Since 1992, Heather has been a constant and steadfast presence at the LPC National Office, first as a volunteer, later as a staffer. Heather has also been vice chair of a Crown corporation for 8 years and has also served on a variety of NGO and Community Boards. In her new role, Heather will serve as a link for the OLO – and with the National Office, the National Campaign Committee and active Liberals across Canada.

## **Executive Assistant to the Leader – Jim Pimblett**

Jim served as EA to Prime Minister Paul Martin from 2003 to 2006. Prior to joining Mr. Martin's staff, Jim was Director of Tour and Events in the office of then-Ontario Opposition Leader Dalton McGuinty. He has an MBA from Queen's University and was working as a management consultant prior to joining the OLO. Jim will travel with Mr. Ignatieff and be responsible for Mr. Ignatieff's schedule.