

IN THIS "INTENSELY POLITICAL" MINORITY 39TH PARLIAMENT, TRY LOBBYING NATIONAL CAUCUSES

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Last week, Paul Brown of Campbell Strategies co-chaired the Canadian Institute's Government Relations Summit held in Ottawa. Barry Campbell, President of Campbell Strategies also spoke at the Conference.

The Hill Times of Ottawa reported on the Conference in its June 26, 2006 edition. The Hill Times article is reproduced below.

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The Hill Times
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By Simon Doyle

In this 'intensely political' minority 39th Parliament, try lobbying national caucuses

Once MPs become champions of issues, they can use caucus to get the ears of ministers, although it drives ministerial staff 'crazy,' lobbyists say.

Although the bulk of government relations happens within the public service, the minority government's caucus is an effective way to get the ears of ministers, win support from committees and potentially "shoehorn" an issue onto the Conservative government's policy agenda, lobbyists told a government relations conference last week.

Barry Campbell, president of Campbell Strategies in Toronto, and Anthony Stikeman, president of Tactix Government Consulting in Ottawa, told a conference hosted by the Canadian Institute that **the current minority government is "intensely political" and it makes strategic sense for lobbyists to use politics—as opposed to the traditional route of the public service—to help move issues onto the government agenda.**

Mr. Stikeman told the conference that the Conservative government is "intensely political," centralized, and a "top-down" government, and although he estimated that 60 to 70 per cent of government relations is done within the public service, lobbyists can use the political levers of caucus and Parliamentary committees to "shoehorn" their issues onto the government's priorities.

"For those of us who are trying to interact with it, because it is so intensely political, and there's such a penchant for targeting voter sub-groups by this government, that those of us in this craft, in this trade, need to be equally, in my opinion, intensely political," Mr. Stikeman said. "You've got to show good policy that's of significant public interest and, so on, but it has to be seen by them as a political benefit in ways and means that they value highly."

Mr. Campbell, a Liberal member of Parliament from 1993 to 1997 and former Parliamentary secretary to finance minister Paul Martin, told the conference that in minority governments, committees and MPs carry much more influence. Minority governments are known to be more aware of the concerns of MPs and constituents because Parliament is unstable and, at any time, parties can find themselves in a snap election.

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Mr. Campbell said the traditional approach to government relations is to go through the formal channels, to talk to the clerk of a committee, to request an appearance before a committee on an issue, to talk to government officials and political staffers, but also said **caucus is valuable because it allows for an informal exchange of information.**

"It's a place to informally bend the ear of ministers. What you need to realize and understand when dealing with government is that there are formal processes and there are the informal," Mr. Campbell said.

Outside of caucus there are long and formal processes that MPs have to go through to talk to ministers, Mr. Campbell said, such as requesting a meeting and waiting while the ministers' aides prepare information and brief the minister. In caucus meetings, however, Mr. Campbell said ministerial aides are irritated by the fact that MPs can jump the administrative hurdles of formal meetings by talking freely with ministers or hand them memos.

"Once that caucus door is closed, there are no staff in that room, and you can just mosey on up next to a minister and bend her ear about something, and have a discussion, and the minister comes out of the meeting and says to staff, 'I think we should look at this or I think we should do that,' and I can tell you it drives staff crazy," Mr. Campbell said.

"In fact there's an awful lot of informal stuff that goes on, and informal ways in which information is shared. I can tell you that ministerial staff hate caucus meetings, absolutely hate caucus meetings for one simple reason—because that's when MPs can talk to ministers without anybody getting in their way."

Mr. Campbell said that, from his experience, if MPs also raise a lively discussion about an issue at a caucus meeting, the prime minister may take notice and instruct a minister to look into it.

"Many times, when I was there, the prime minister said, pointing to a minister in the audience—and the ministers all sit in with the members—'So and so, you ought to look at that. Go off and talk to Barry about this or go off and talk to so-and-so about that. There seems to be a problem and let's get it sorted out.' So it really is an opportunity for people to let off steam. It's an opportunity to air issues, and it is one more avenue for your issue to get listened to and get attention, and don't overlook it," Mr. Campbell said.

"If you manage to reach an MP or a group of MPs that organize around an issue to make it something that is the subject of discussion within caucus, you can have a very lively and effective debate in caucus on an issue and an effective outcome," Mr. Campbell said.

Mr. Campbell said caucus meetings have a microphone at the front of the room for MPs to voice their concerns, and both Mr. Stikeman and Mr. Campbell said lobby groups can effectively organize national coalitions to target regional or special interest caucuses. Mr. Stikeman pointed to the Conservative provincial and regional caucuses as well as the auto, border, energy, farm, forestry, grains and oilseeds and steel caucuses—which lobbyists could consider targeting.

Conservative MP Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, Ont.), first elected to Parliament in the 2004 election, told The Hill Times that Conservative MPs have easy access to ministers in weekly national caucus meetings, where ministers sit among the MPs.

"You can go and talk to them specifically, which is something I often do. I mean, I don't want to interrupt the listening process, but I've gone and I have my little list of things I need to speak to various ministers about, and I have zero problem with going and sitting beside them or catching them when they've gotten up for a coffee. I've never had a problem," Mr. Goodyear said.

Mr. Goodyear said that Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Calgary Southwest, Alta.) also gets involved in discussions in national caucus, and pays attention when discussions develop among MPs.

"In fact there's lots of times he gets involved in the discussion himself. We have a very active Prime Minister and, certainly, I can tell you that this is the first time I've seen a Prime Minister as much interested as he is in such a broad range of things," Mr. Goodyear said. "If a member chooses not to go to caucus, they'd be at a distinct disadvantage. They'd remove one of the many ways we have to communicate with ministers."

Lobbying caucus can also win support from committees, Mr. Stikeman said, which, dominated by the opposition parties in a minority Parliament, can take up a lobby group's cause. Mr. Stikeman said 53 out of the 126 Tory MPs are neither ministers, Parliamentary secretaries nor committee chairs, and they represent opportunities to raise concerns to get views expressed in caucus or on committees.

"The committees have not been tested properly in my opinion, to advance special interests," Mr. Stikeman said. "I think there is an opportunity for special interests to be pushed through the committees by those people who are really focused."

"Coalitions will help drill down into those sub-groups," Mr. Stikeman said, adding, "This is the summer to do that."

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Mr. Stikeman said the Conservative government is targeting voter "sub-groups" with its policies and this summer is the time to try to use coalitions to mine those groups for support on issues in ridings and eventually in caucus, potentially putting them on the government's agenda.

CAMPBELL STRATEGIES' ANNOUNCEMENT

Barry Campbell, President of Campbell Strategies, is pleased to announce that **FRANK SWEDLOVE**, former Assistant Deputy Minister for Financial Sector Policy in Canada's Department of Finance, has become associated with Campbell Strategies. A principal of Swedlove Consulting Inc., Mr. Swedlove served in the Department in a number of increasingly senior roles over the past 20 years. As ADM for Financial Sector Policy, Mr. Swedlove served as senior departmental advisor on financial sector issues to several Ministers of Finance. His responsibilities included the development and passage of financial sector legislation, the coordination of various regulatory agencies, and advice on the structure of the financial sector markets going forward.

Campbell Strategies provides a broad range of government relations and public policy advice covering all levels of government. Campbell Strategies assists clients to communicate effectively in the public sector environment by providing advice that helps to inform business strategies and enables our clients to manage regulatory and public policy challenges.

As a member of the **Campbell Strategies** team, Mr. Swedlove joins **Barry Campbell**, **Paul Brown** and **Mitchell Toker**. It is associated with **Media Profile** and its President **Patrick Gossage** for assignments which have a communications dimension.

Barry Campbell served as a Member of the Parliament in the Liberal Government from 1993 to 1997. He served as Parliamentary Secretary to the former Minister of Finance, the Rt. Hon. Paul Martin.

Paul Brown served in the Conservative Government of Canada from 1984 to 1988 as Policy Advisor to the Industry Minister, Executive Assistant to the President of the Treasury Board, and Chief of Staff to the Minister of Labour.

Mitchell Toker was a senior executive in the Ontario Public Service, where he held various positions in the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and other ministries.

***For more information on our team,
Please visit our websites:
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