

FEATURE: BUZZ



HEARD ON THE HILL

BY BEA VONGDOUANGCHANH

New polling firm to probe decision-makers and former PC senator Atkins dies at age of 76



It's David: David Coletto is the CEO of Abacus Data Inc.

There's a new polling firm in town, hoping to tap into the minds of Canada's public policy experts, including Parliamentarians, and it's partnering with *The Hill Times*.

David Coletto, CEO of Abacus Data Inc., a new Ottawa public opinion and market research company, will be creating a panel to probe some of the top Canadian decision-makers on a variety of issues, the results of which will then be published exclusively in *The Hill Times*.

"Imagine filling a room with hundreds of Canada's leading public policy minds and practitioners and being able to hear their thoughts on an important policy issue. That's what the Vertex Panel hopes to achieve," he said.

Abacus Data will be sending out invitations to Parliamentarians, political staff, senior public servants, heads of business and labour organizations, lobbyists, media and academics this week to join the online panel. They will then take part in surveys regarding public policy issues, all confidentially.

Abacus Data Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Summa Strategies Canada Inc.

Summa is owned by four partners: Douglas Young, Tracey Hubley, Tim Powers, and Ken Whiting.

Abacus Data is independently run by Mr. Coletto.

Roy running for election

Another Hill staffer is running for election. Marc Roy, director of communications to opposition Senate Leader James Cowan, has put his name forward in the Ottawa municipal elections for French public school board trustee in Orleans.

Mr. Roy has been on the Hill for 13 years, previously working as an associate communications director to former prime minister Paul Martin.

He said he's not running to launch a federal political career. "I've always believed that staffers should stay out of the spotlight. Although some young staffers come to the Hill and dream of one day doing what their boss's do, that's never been my case," Mr. Roy said, opting for school board trustee because

he's been "extremely involved" in his children's education as a member of their school's parent committee.

"There are some things you just can't change from the stands," he said. "Sometimes you need to jump into the ring."

There will be a fundraising event on Tuesday, Oct. 5, featuring Liberal MP Justin Trudeau and former Liberal Cabinet minister Don Boudria. Tickets are still available and more information can be found at www.marcroy.net.

The vote takes place at the same time as the Ontario municipal elections, held on Oct. 25. NDP staffer Theresa Kavanagh is also running for a school board trustee position in Bay Ward.



Norman Atkins died last week.

Former Sen. Atkins 'engineer in chief' of Big Blue Machine dies

Former Progressive Conservative Senator Norman Atkins, a legendary party organizer who retired from the Upper Chamber in June 2009, died last week at the age of 76.

Mr. Atkins was known as the chief engineer of the Big Blue Machine who worked on provincial and federal campaigns for more than 30 years.

Ontario Conservative Sen. Hugh Segal said in a statement that Mr. Atkins encouraged and brought countless prominent people into public life today and described him as a "huge and compelling figure" in national politics. "The leadership roles he played in countless campaigns in provincial politics in Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, and federally made immense difference to the politics in those jurisdictions. Progressive Conservative leaders, premiers and prime ministers, such

as Robert Stanfield, Hugh John Flemming, William Davis, Richard Hatfield, Duff Roblin, and Brian Mulroney all benefited from his wisdom, creativity and organizational skill," Sen. Segal said.

Mr. Atkins "believed in a positive politics of moderation and inclusion, organizational competence and respect for local needs and aspirations. He was and will always be the engineer in chief and engineer emeritus of the Big Blue Machine," Sen. Segal said.

Canadian Encyclopedia turns 25, parties on the Hill

The Canadian Encyclopedia is turning 25 and is partying it up on Oct. 6 at the Government Conference Centre at 5:30 p.m. The reception is being hosted by Interac, another Canadian company which is also turning a quarter of a century old this year, and Ensignt Canada. The Encyclopedia's editor in chief, James Marsh, will be attending, along with ministers, MPs, Senators and other Hill denizens to celebrate "this national institution," says Marc Chalifoux, executive vice-president of The Historical-Dominion Institute, which is now responsible for the Encyclopedia. "It's going to be a great party."

The reception will feature of video of birthday greetings from prominent Canadians, such as former governor general Adrienne Clarkson, comedian Rick Mercer and actor Paul Gross.

The Historical-Dominion Institute moved the Encyclopedia completely online in the last few years, and there are currently more than 50,000 articles free of charge on its website. More than four million users search the online edition every year.

"It's a massive project," Mr. Chalifoux told HOH. "It's a living document and resource for Canadians. The birthday party is an opportunity for MPs, Senators, Hill staff, and users to celebrate this Canadian achievement."

Conservative MPs Smith and Young host bone marrow donor registry event

Conservative MPs Joy Smith and Terence Young are hosting a bone marrow donor registry event called OneSwab, OneMatch, OneLife, on Oct. 6 on the Hill. In conjunction with the Canadian Blood Services, the MPs are encouraging Parliamentarians and Hill staff to sign up as stem cell and bone marrow donors as there are currently only less than one per cent of Canadians on the list. This makes it difficult for cancer patients to find a match.

The event will take place from 3:15 to 7 p.m. in the Commonwealth Room in Centre Block. bvongdou@hilltimes.com

FEATURE: DON KELLY



He's no fish out of water: Don Kelly also hosts APTN's *Fish Out Of Water*.

'Roughing it for me is not having a hair dryer'

Don Kelly, an urban Ojibway, is director of communications for the AFN, a standup comic, and host of APTN's Gemini-nominated *Fish Out of Water*.

By BEA VONGDOUANGCHANH

Don Kelly is the communications director for the Assembly of First Nations, but he also moonlights as an Aboriginal People's Television Network TV show host and as a stand up comedian. He likes to call this alter-ego his "evil twin," but he fits right into the premise of his Gemini-nominated show, *Fish Out of Water*.

"I'm not an outdoorsy person. Roughing it to me is not having a hair dryer," said Mr. Kelly, an urban Ojibway who "goes on a demanding new adventure every week to a traditional native land [and] through a series of misadventures pushes his limited limits to re-connect with his aboriginal roots and spiritual values."

The show starts taping its fourth season this week, but in the first season, Mr. Kelly said he got to a reserve and one of the elders called him a cement Indian. He said he took that as a complement as he thought it meant he was firm and strong—like cement. "But no, he said, 'It means your feet have never touched anything other than cement. I can tell,' and it's true," Mr. Kelly said, noting that he'd much rather be on his couch watching television or on the computer "wasting time," than eating, learning to chop wood or trapping buffalo. But, he said, it's been a "fantastic experience" and a "real treat to be out doing all this."

Mr. Kelly said *Fish Out of Water* is "the native version of *Jackass*." Over the years, he's eaten raw beavertail, which he said is not his favourite, but it was "interesting to try," and he's seen aboriginal elders make a children's toy with chicken bones and gizzards. Although some of his adventures can be scary, he said, "the whole idea is to get me out of my comfort zone." That means that his producers and director pick up on anything that's dangerous, funny or scary for him to participate in, and he's learned to "bite the bullet and do it." Through it all, he maintains a sense of humour, which is reflected on the show.

"Laughter is part of our culture," he said. "There is so much humour in stories. Elders will stretch stories and make them 10 times longer than they are originally and play off listeners. Every aboriginal person I meet is a stand up comedian."

Mr. Kelly said he also enjoys the feedback he's getting, especially from other urban aboriginals who say they can relate to him. "They say, 'We're not laughing at you, but with you, because we're not the only ones who didn't grow up on the land and we don't have to feel embarrassed,'" he said, noting a positive spinoff from the show has been a connection between the older generations and youth. "The elders want to reach out to youth and the youth want to learn, but they weren't connecting. Now they're connecting. I've learned that what sustained our people 100 years ago is what is sustaining us today and in the future. It's important for young people to know they can do it, and our culture is not a vague and fuzzy concept."

Aside from learning that he bruises easily and is not good with horses, he's also learned that it's possible for him and others to "have a foot in both worlds without losing sight of who you are."

Mr. Kelly, 47, lived on the Ojibways of Onigaming reserve on Lake of the Woods, Ont., before moving to Winnipeg, Man., when he was five. In Winnipeg, he worked as a writer and broadcaster for CBC. He then moved to Ottawa to serve as a communications officer with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and also helped write the commission's final report in 1994. He joined the AFN in 1999 where he has served under three national chiefs. He said all of these jobs have been about communicating aboriginal issues and "trying to tell people who we are in a real way." *Fish Out of Water* is no different, he said, noting that the show can reach more people using humour than through school lectures or by getting angry. "It's good for Canadians to see it, to cut through some of the misconceptions."

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