

HILL CLIMBERS: POLITICAL STAFFERS



Photographs by Jake Wright, The Hill Times

This just in: William Stairs and Mike Storeshaw are working together again and Dan Dugas, former director of communications to Defence Minister Peter MacKay, is now a director general at Transport Canada.

Like old times, Stairs and Storeshaw back working together

William Stairs bids the Hill farewell, starts new job as CEO of Delta Media.



BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

William Stairs had worked on the Hill for nearly 20 years when he bid a final farewell to Parliament last June—but he hasn't gone far, in fact, he's only one street down.

Mr. Stairs was hired on as CEO at Delta Media, one of Canada's largest public relations firms, two weeks ago, and now works out of their Sparks Street, downtown Ottawa office—mere blocks from his former stomping grounds.

The former Hill top-dog told *Hill Climbers* that just after leaving the Hill he spotted an ad for the position with Delta Media and said he thought the job looked "tailored" for him.

"Everything that they were looking for were things that I had done for 20 years on the Hill. So I applied and I got the job," said Mr. Stairs, who said he was "quite surprised and very pleased" at the news.

Former Delta Media CEO **Bernard Gauthier** announced on July 6 that he would step down from his position with the firm on Aug. 15 in order to join the faculty of Conestoga College's new bachelor of public relations degree program, according to a news release from the firm.

In his new position as CEO, Mr. Stairs said his primary job is team leader, a role which has him working closely with Delta Media's partners in order to set the company's strategic direction. Mr. Stairs is also responsible for managing the public relations firm's staff.

"It's very similar to working at senior levels of government. You plan where you want to go and what you want to achieve, and then you execute, making sure you have the resources and know-how to succeed," explained Mr. Stairs in an email to *Hill Climbers*.

Mr. Stairs had a very familiar face to welcome him to Delta Media; his former Hill col-

league **Mike Storeshaw**, who is executive counsel at the firm. Mr. Stairs and Mr. Storeshaw first met when the Progressive Conservative and Canadian Alliance parties merged to form Prime Minister **Stephen Harper's** current Conservative Party.

"It's a small world," said Mr. Stairs of the connection, "I'm very happy to work with Mike...the man is a consummate pro so it's fun to work with him because you know when you give him something to do it's going to get done."

Mr. Stairs worked as a spokesperson and media relations go-to for the Progressive Conservatives for a number of years, prior to the merger. In the 2004 federal election, Mr. Stairs was in the party's war room, working as co-manager of communications with another former top-dog, **Yaroslav Baran**, who now works as a principal at Earncliffe Strategy Group in Ottawa, Ont.

In 2005, Mr. Stairs began working as director of communications for then official opposition leader Mr. Harper, a role which had him working alongside other OLO notables like **Bruce Carson**, senior adviser, and **Ian Brodie**, chief of staff.

By May 2006, Mr. Stairs had left Mr. Harper's office to serve as chief of staff to **Vic Toews**, MP for Provencher, Man., and then minister of justice and Attorney General of Canada. During his time in Mr. Toews' office, Mr. Stairs worked alongside Mr. Storeshaw, who was serving as the minister's director of communications.

Mr. Stairs and Mr. Storeshaw stayed on to work for Mr. Toews under the same roles when he was shuffled to the Treasury Board portfolio in Jan. 2007.

Mr. Stairs stayed in Mr. Toews' office for a number of years until 2010, when he rejoined Mr. Harper's staffing roster to serve as senior adviser in the PMO, a role which had him working under then chief of staff, **Guy Giorno**.

He left his position in the PMO in January 2011, amidst rumours he would be joining then minister of Industry **Tony Clement's** office, MP for Parry Sound-Muskoka, Ont., as his chief of staff. Instead, in February, Mr. Stairs replaced **Stephanie Machel** to serve as International Cooperation Minister **Bev Oda's** chief of staff, the MP for Durham, Ont.

Mr. Stairs' arrival in Ms. Oda's office was seen as a 'fixer,' to help the embattled minister weather a storm of allegations that she knowingly misled the House of Commons while explaining an NGO's sudden loss of funding.

In June, Mr. Stairs descended Parliament's steps for the last time as a staffer.

"The Hill is its own community and there are days that you miss the Hill, you miss the buzz, you miss getting ready for QP and going to committee," said Mr. Stairs in an interview with *Hill Climbers*.

But there are definite benefits to his new position, for one thing, the

job has regular hours which "are a lot less brutal," said Mr. Stairs.

"You get to come to work at a decent hour, which is fun. I mean, since we formed government I was up at all hours of the night coming to work," said Mr. Stairs.

He told *Hill Climbers*: "Politics is a wonderful world but there are times when you have to move on, and my time had come."

Dugas is DG of communications and marketing for Transport

In belated news, **Dan Dugas** is now working as director general of communications and marketing at Transport Canada. Mr. Dugas has been working in the position for almost a year now.

For his role as director general of communications and marketing, Mr. Dugas oversees client services, media relations, internal and strategic communications and web presence for Transport Canada.

Mr. Dugas did not wish to comment on his position when contacted by *Hill Climbers*.

Before stepping up to the director general role, Mr. Dugas had been Defence Minister **Peter MacKay's** longtime director of communications. Mr. Dugas began working as D. Comm for Mr. MacKay, MP for Central Nova, N.S., in 2006, when the Minister was in charge of the Foreign Affairs portfolio.

Prior to becoming the Cabinet minister's spokesperson, Mr. Dugas was on the other side of the fence, working as a Hill reporter. Mr. Dugas worked as a reporter for a number of years, writing for publications like *Broadcast News* and, most notably, *The Canadian Press*.

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