

# GR Skills Conference

## The Elusive GR Ingredient: Harnessing Political Will

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TACTIX

GOVERNMENT CONSULTING INC.

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# TACTIX: Our Firm

- Established in 1996; seven consultants.
- Our reputation rests on four business principles:
  - Very close client relationships founded 'hands-on' servicing and sound strategic advice
  - Deep knowledge and experience with senior level advisors
  - Solid working relationships with political and government officials
  - Integrity
- We work with clients to integrate their priorities into government agenda:
  - Understand the business and factors influencing profitability and strategic interests
  - Explore the alternatives
  - Identify short- and long-term goals
  - Map out the strategy and action plan
  - Dig in and work hard to deliver results

# A Riddle Wrapped in a Mystery Inside an Enigma (WLSC 1939)

“Those who do not know the plans of competitors cannot prepare alliances.  
Those who do not know the lay of the land cannot manoeuvre their forces.  
Those who do not use local guides cannot take advantage of the ground”.

Sun Tzu

The Art of War

## Core of successful government relations initiatives:

- Build trust, develop relationships
- Fit into government agenda
- Provide useful accurate information
- Advocate credibly
- Shape the public debate
- Use the tools and institutions that Governments provide

# The Intangible and Elusive Ingredient

Political will: the confidence and/or courage to use power

otherwise .....

Political wilt: the failure to lead or to act decisively and determinedly

# Tapping the Will, Avoiding the Wilt

GR efforts run at different speeds:

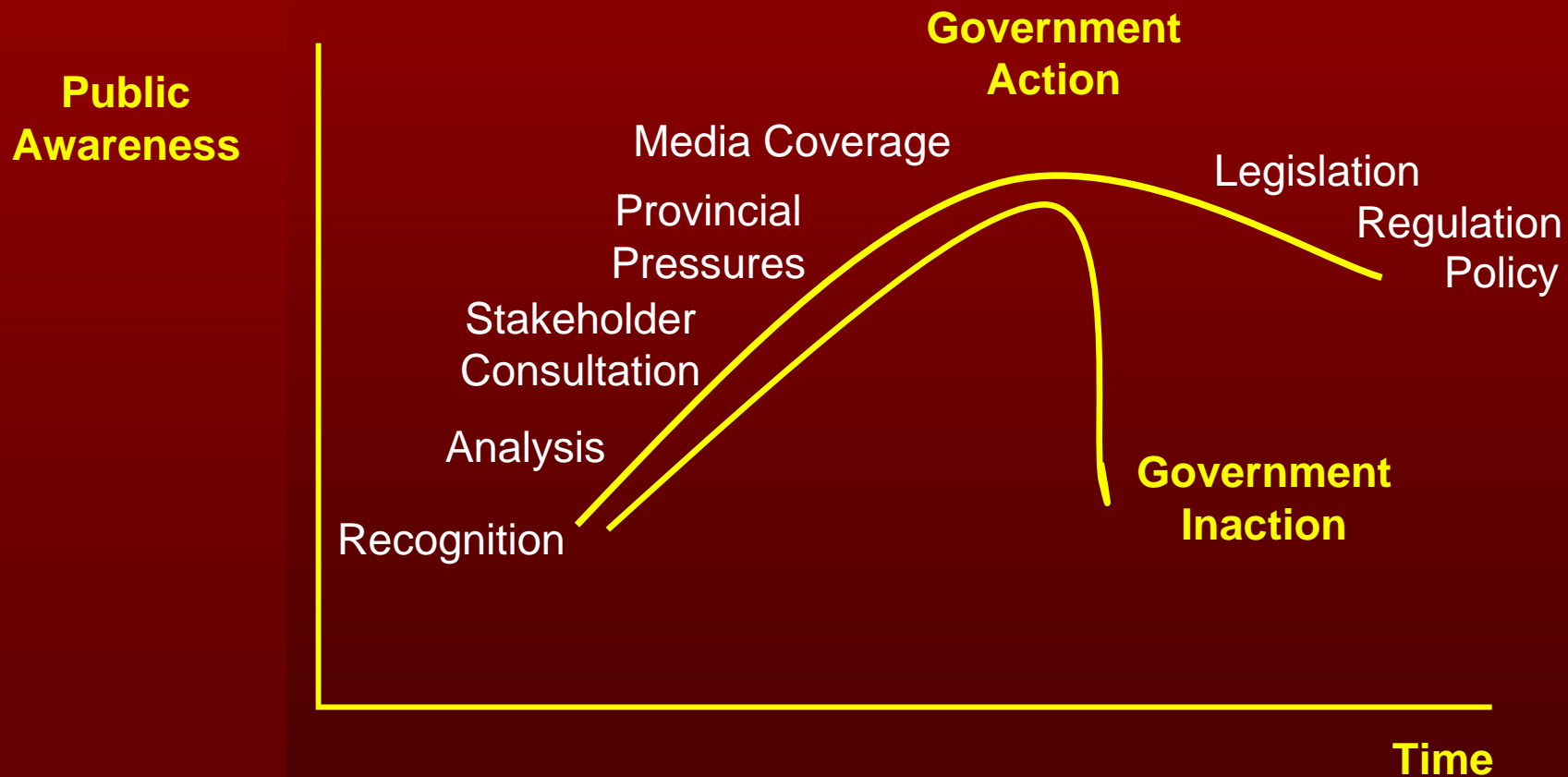
Slow: Lend support, but don't waste any chips

Medium: Push hard, but prepare to compromise

Fast: Go to the wall with:

- Persistence
- Passion
- Patience

# The Public Policy Curve



# 4 Case Studies

**Energy:** Establish a generic oil sands fiscal regime (success)

**Telecommunications:** Establish a Telecom Policy Review (success)

**Government financial administration:** Introduce a new FA credential (success)

**Aboriginal:** Establish pipeline loan guarantees (failure)

# #1 Case Study: Oil Sands Taxation

## Challenge:

- Convince federal government to establish, for the first time, a single generic taxation regime for all oil sands projects (1994-96).

## Proponent:

- National Oil Sands Task Force (6 producers led by Syncrude)

# #1 Case Study: Oil Sands Taxation

## Strategy / Tactics:

- Establish strategic importance and enormous potential of oil sands
- Demonstrate positive fiscal returns to government from lower taxes
- Address greenhouse gas emissions
- Underline economic benefits to Alberta and to Canada
- Mobilize National Oil Sands Task Force, coalition partners
- Converge PR, advertising and sponsorships with GR
- Develop champion department (NRCan)
- Relentlessly pursue officials, ministers and political staffs
- Letters, PPT decks, meetings, presentations, etc.

## Result:

- 18 month combined effort resulted in 1996 Budget changes

# #1 Case Study: Oil Sands Taxation

## Lessons Learned:

- Be tenacious, unrelenting, persistent
- Be passionate without being aggressive
- Continuously refine the message, update the facts, sharpen the story
- Keep the story simple, succinct
- Integrate GR with PR
- Wait patiently for the stars to align

## Political will:

- Ready to be engaged after 18 months when (i) the forces of change became overwhelming; (ii) every argument (pro and con) had been exhaustively answered; (iii) politicians decided there was minimal downside and considerable upside; (iv) our champion confronted the issue head on.

# #2 Case Study: Telecom Policy Review

## Challenge:

- Convince federal government to establish a wise persons panel to consider alternative telecommunications regime (2005)

## Proponents:

- Telecom service providers
- Coalition for Competitive Telecommunications (11 business associations)

# #2 Case Study: Telecom Policy Review

## Strategy / Tactics:

- Join in coalition with other interested parties (telcos)
- Create momentum through “new kid on block” and unique business positioning
- Align messages with government’s economic agenda (productivity, innovation)
- Manufacture a need for change and invent a way forward
- Meetings, presentations, conferences, etc.
- Sought support from Opposition parties in minority Parliament
- Merged GR with PR, i.e. op-eds, columnists

## Result:

- Combined efforts resulted in Budget 2005 announcement; report expected March 2006

# #2 Case Study: Telecom Policy Review

## Lessons Learned:

- Politicians can be reliably mobilized by special interest groups
- Don the cloak of the public interest and the government's agenda
- Public service opposition can be effectively overcome
- Patience, persistence and steadfastness can win the day

## Political will:

- Ready to be engaged after 12 months when (i) the forces of change publicly overwhelmed the status quo bearers; (ii) politicians and the centre decided it would be easier to accede than face ongoing criticisms; (iii) politicians could allow talk of change without committing to change

# #3 Case Study: Introduce a new Financial Administration Credential

## Challenge:

- Convince Treasury Board to introduce a new Financial Administration credential to the Public Service (2001-2005)

## Proponents:

- Certified Management Accountants (CMA Canada), and
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA, UK)

# #3 Case Study: Introduce a new Financial Administration Credential

## Strategy / Tactics:

- Focus on senior TB officials, not the Minister
- Leverage concerns about public service financial management competencies (sponsorship, HRDC)
- Solicit support from the public service union of financial managers
- Become part of the new Comptroller General's solution
- Become a focal point for the ongoing comptrollership initiative

## Result:

- Government announced it would implement pilot CMA-CIPFA trial in 2006

# #3 Case Study: Introduce a new Financial Administration Credential

## Lessons learned:

- Political will can be exercised by officials, not just Ministers
- Patience and persistence: keep at it for several years until the political agenda and the public service's agenda converge
- Repeat, repeat and repeat key messages again
- Maintain focus on the service offering
- Passionate about the win-win benefits

## Political will:

- Officials at the centre exerted necessary leadership
- Politicians unwilling to move until public service embraced this initiative
- Politicians followed – not led – until it fitted into government's agenda

# #4 Case Study: Establish Aboriginal Loan Guarantees for Northern Pipeline

## Challenge:

- Persuade federal government to provide loan guarantees to NWT Aboriginal organizations re Mackenzie Valley pipeline (2001-02)

## Proponent:

- Aboriginal Pipeline Group

# #4 Case Study: Establish Aboriginal Loan Guarantees for Northern Pipeline

## Strategy / Tactics:

- Establish principle that full Aboriginal participation is sine qua non to project's success or failure
- Demonstrate that government loan guarantees are only financial vehicle to allow Aboriginal participation / project enabling
- Try to demonstrate Aboriginal solidarity

## Result:

- Government failed to offer loan guarantees in 2002

# #4 Case Study: Establish Aboriginal Loan Guarantees for Northern Pipeline

## Lessons learned:

- Passion and persistence were lacking because Aboriginal commitment was incomplete
- Patience was thin because of other moving parts in the project
- Arguments were narrow compared to scope of the project and magnitude of the ask
- Effort was not sustained long enough to allow politicians and officials to converge (top down didn't meet bottom up)
- Failed to develop a champion within government
- Government could not see political or policy benefits
- Political and policy risks outweighed rewards

## Political Wilt, but later .... Will?

- Politicians did not engage THEN; not convinced they had to act
- Politicians concerned by lack of support among Aboriginal community
- Politicians appeared ready to reconsider in 2005

# Conclusions

## Conditions needed to engage Ministers (and officials) to exercise political will:

- Passion, patience and persistence (P3)
- Recruit and mobilize a champion
- Mobilize a coalition
- Fit the issue within the government's agenda
- Remove negatives:
  - Line up opposition parties
  - PR + GR: use the media
- Stay on message and repeat and repeat again; wear down the opposition
- Demonstrate futility of status quo; remove risks of change
- Emphasize important over urgent
- Wait for the stars to align
- Good public policy = good politics