

FEATURE

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gressive Conservatives, Alboim transitioned from journalism to public policy communications at what was then known as Earncliffe Strategy Group in 1993.

Alboim later worked for then-finance minister Paul Martin on developing a communications strategy for federal budget policy. Former colleague Scott Reid, who also worked for the Liberals at the time, credits Alboim for helping to innovate budget communications strategy.

"Elly was instrumental in what was an exceptionally innovative approach to communicating budgetary policy," said Reid, who became Martin's director of communications when he was prime minister. "He would use PowerPoint to provide visual cues for media and the public as

to the challenges we faced and then coupled that with a long-form communication of what our priorities were going to be ... all of that, Elly was central to."

"That created an innovative public communication arc that lasted from the fiscal update through to the budget," Reid explained.

Alboim would go on to serve as a senior adviser when Martin became prime minister.

Alboim also provided media consulting advice to numerous political campaigns at the federal and provincial level.

"Elly was extremely well-known and well-respected in Ottawa circles," said David Herle, a former Liberal staffer who worked alongside Alboim when the two worked for Martin and later at Earncliffe Strategies. "Elly was involved in all the

biggest files in the government. He was involved in the deficit issue, and he was involved at Industry."

Herle emphasized that Alboim "made everyone better."

"You've never come across a mind like his ... he could absolutely deconstruct any policy proposal and find all of its vulnerabilities, then lay them out to you," Herle said. "I never wanted to do another serious thing in my life without his advice. When I was called upon to chair the national campaigns for Paul Martin, I wanted Elly by my side."

Alboim's 'legacy will continue' says his son

Alboim was passionate about politics and journalism. He read several newspapers every day, right up to the end of his life.



Top Liberal advisers Terrie O'Leary, left, David Herle, and Elly Alboim, pictured on Nov. 14, 2003, at the Liberal leadership convention where Paul Martin was elected leader. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

"His belief was that journalism wasn't easy," Mansbridge explained. "You had to work hard at it. You had to spend hours on stories. You had to understand stories from every possible angle. You had to talk to people who were involved from every different angle. You had to read a lot. Elly was reading a paper the night he died. He never stopped."

Fellow Carleton professor Chris Waddell, who also worked with Alboim in CBC's parliamentary bureau and was later CBC's parliamentary bureau chief, said Alboim went beyond his duties to support the journalism school.

"[He] was a key player for quite a while in the committee that would review all master's students' applications every year," Waddell said. "I can't think of anyone who's had as much impact on the combination of political journalism, educating future journalists and

shaping public policy in Canada in the last three or four decades."

"You know, that's a very unique combination of skills," he said.

Jaime Alboim said his father's work to mentor and support other journalists continued right up until his father's death.

"He had an influence on literally thousands of journalists, and that legacy will continue," he said. "He almost worked 24/7 just providing counsel to hundreds of people. And that literally was up until moments before he passed. I don't know how he managed to do it."

On March 22, in the Atrium of Richcraft Hall at Carleton University's School of Journalism, hundreds of people are expected to come out for the celebration of Alboim's life. It will be held from 9 a.m.-11 a.m.

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Veteran political journalist and strategist Elly Alboim, right, who served as the CBC's parliamentary bureau chief from 1977 to 1993, recently appeared on the Jan. 6 edition of the *Herle Burly* podcast, hosted by fellow Martin-era Liberal strategist David Herle. Alboim and Herle discussed the state of the national media in Canada. *Image courtesy of YouTube/Herle Burly podcast*

HEARD ON THE HILL

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Ex-NDP director Anne McGrath shares how she survived St. Pius X High School shooting in Ottawa in 1975



Former director of the NDP **Anne McGrath** opened up recently about surviving a school shooting in Ottawa more than 50

years ago, and the compassion she has for those who have lived through the recent mass killing in Tumbler Ridge, B.C.

"I have actually lived most of my life not talking to people about it," McGrath told CBC's **David Cochrane** on *Power &*

Politics on Feb. 13, recalling her experience as a 17-year-old student at Ottawa's St Pius X Catholic High School. On Oct. 27, 1975, classmate **Robert Poulin**, 18, first raped and murdered 17-year-old Glebe student **Kim Rabot** in his basement bedroom in Old Ottawa South, and then set the room on fire. He then cycled to school with a shotgun in a duffle bag, opened fire on his religion class, ultimately killing **Mark Hough**, and wounding five others, and then killed himself in the hallway.

"It was total chaos. We were like zombies and we scattered," McGrath told Cochrane. "I remember going to the police station later that night to give a witness statement, or whatever it was, not realizing that I had blood and brains in my hair."

"I noticed in Tumbler Ridge the school is closed for the week. We went back to school the next day. I think it's what people thought was the right thing to do at the time," said McGrath, who said she appreciates today's school lockdown drills for these situations.

"I do think the response is much better now, the presence of councillors," she said, saying the survivors "are going to need people to be compassionate."

"I believe it's very hard for the family and friends who were not there or who experienced it second hand to know what to do," said McGrath, recalling the anger she felt long afterwards, and how it changed her behaviour, like making sure her desk always faces the door, and checking exits whenever she walks into a space.

McGrath, who's now with Catalyze4 strategic advisers, was also on the Hill through the 2014 shooting on Parliament Hill.

"I was at the front of the caucus room making a presentation. There was a bullet that actually came right through the door in front of me," she told Cochrane. "I remember lying on the floor in the translation booth and thinking 'How does this happen to somebody twice?'"

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