

FROM THE HILL TIMES: SEPT. 26, 2018

Yeewhaw! Hillites don plaid and boots for Political Party fundraiser

By EMILY HAWS SEP. 26, 2018

Bruce Anderson's crew kept with the usual country theme for their annual Blacksheep Inn hoedown, this time raising more than \$200,00 for a new political journalism internship.



Conservative MP Erin O'Toole was among several MPs who performed country music favourites at The Political Party held Sept. 21 at the Blacksheep Inn in Wakefield, Que. *Photograph courtesy of Dave Chan*

So, it turns out that some well-known journalists and politicians can really bring down the house with country music. Who knew there was this much musical talent on the Hill?

The Political Party, held Sept. 21, brought together about 250 Hillites from the political, lobbying, and media realms for a night of country music, with a dress code featuring cowboy boots, hats, and plaid shirts.

The sold-out night raised more than \$200,000 for a new political journalism internship, which will have recipients rotate through parliamentary news bureaus. So far, Bell Media and *The Globe and Mail* have been confirmed as hosts.

Party Central couldn't make it to the event, but organizer **Jane Kennedy** of Jane & Co. said it was bumpin' all night long. The venue, the Blacksheep Inn in Wakefield, Que., didn't lose power during the storm that night that saw two tornadoes rip through Ottawa and Gatineau, so the extent of the disruption was that some guests arrived later than expected, while others couldn't fly into Ottawa because their flights had been grounded.

Overall, though, only "a handful" of people couldn't attend because of the storm, she said. Organizers, who this year included Carleton University's **Susan Harada**, *The Toronto Star's* **Susan Delacourt**, and *Policy Options'* **Jennifer Ditchburn**, have been hosting similar events in recent years as fundraisers for the Jaimie Anderson Parliamentary Internship program, which has three young people come work on Parliament Hill as paid summer staffers every year. Ms. Anderson worked on Parliament Hill before she died of neuro-endocrine cancer at age 23 in 2010.

That internship is now self-sustaining, so it was time to move on to a new project, said **Bruce Anderson**, who was Ms. Anderson's uncle, in an email. He is also chair of Abacus Data and Summa Strategies, as well as a partner in Spark Advocacy (and a huge music fan).

The night itself was a family affair, with Mr. Anderson's wife **Nancy Jamieson**, their daughters **Mollie Anderson** and **Kate Purchase**, Ms. Purchase's husband **Perry Tsergas**, and their infant son **Kit** in attendance. Ms. Purchase is Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**'s executive director for communications and planning, while Mr. Tsergas is the president of Spark Advocacy.

The night was hosted by former CBC chief correspondent **Peter Mansbridge**, who delivered the well-received "host roast," said Ms. Kennedy. The Yellow Sheep, a special drink consisting of lemonade, bourbon, mint, and soda water, was also served, and the food included mouthwatering barbecue.

Along with dancing and food, guests participated in a live auction hosted by Liberal MP **Randy Boissonnault** that included dinner and wine for four at the Ottawa restaurant North and Navy, as well as other prizes such as Air Canada flights, a vinyl Rolling Stones boxed set, hockey tickets, and Fleetwood Mac tickets donated by the Ottawa Senators, Ms. Kennedy said.

The musical entertainment was headlined by **Kelly Prescott** and the **Prescott-Brown Band**, but also included actress **Cynthia Dale** (Mr. Mansbridge's spouse), as well as Conservative MP **Erin O'Toole** and Liberal MPs **Marco Mendicino**, Mr. Boissonnault, and **Rodger Cuzner**.

A few years ago, Mr. Mendicino got the audience up and moving to **Garth Brooks**' *Friends in Low Places*, and this year he did the same with Old Crow Medicine Show's *Wagon Wheel*. Mr. O'Toole, who was there with his wife **Rebecca**, sang the Traveling Wilburys' *End of the Line*.

Former NDP MP **Andrew Cash** and CTV's **Evan Solomon** also took a turn at the mic, while Indigenous Services Minister **Jane Philpott** did an impromptu performance. Mr. Boissonnault also sang *Keep on the Sunny Side* with Treasury Board President **Scott Brison** and others, a song choice that seemed fitting given their boss's "sunny ways" mantra.

National Post columnist **John Ivison** sang the Proclaimers' *I'm on My Way*, while Mr. Boissonnault belted out *I've Been Everywhere* that included localized lyrics.

Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister **Carolyn Bennett** remarked that the night was great on Twitter, while former Jaimie's Intern **Michelle Lahey**, now a lawyer, tweeted that Mr. Ivison "singing the Proclaimers is what we all needed."

Other guests included NDP MP **Murray Rankin**, CTV's **Craig Oliver**, **Don Martin**, and **Joyce Napier**, CBC's **Vassy Kapelos**, and *The Globe*'s **David Walmsley** and **Robert Fife**. Crestview Strategy's **Jennifer Babcock**, Coca-Cola Canada's **Brianna Ames**, United States Ambassador **Kelly Craft**, and former Jaimie's Interns, including **Jeanette Dundas**, and **Julia Deutsch** were also there, as was Canadian Bankers Association president **Neil Parmenter**, Engineers Canada's **Joey Taylor**, and Earncliffe Strategy Group's **Kathleen Monk**.

As expected, the Summa Strategies and Abacus Data crew was also out in full force, including **Alex Maheu**, **Robin MacLachlan**, **Jim Armour**, **Yvonne Langen**, and **Jeremy Bruce**.

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