

TELLING TALES

Line Drive

It was an evening of music, magic and millionaires when **Sir Richard Branson** welcomed nearly a thousand guests to the Direct Energy Centre, host of Virgin Unite's Midnight Magic Gala in support of his latest campaign for African charities. The entertainment included **Jully Black**, **Elvis Costello** and **Criss Angel** (the Vegas-based illusionist who's been attached to more young starlets than a pair of Uggs), and the former Mrs. Marilyn Manson, **Dita Von Teese**, who debuted her much anticipated *Black Swan Dance* for an enraptured audience. Well, most were enraptured: while the lovely Dita stripped down, Nickelback's **Chad Kroeger**—who earlier picked up a painting of Ray Charles during the live auction—took leave of the ballroom. Could this quick exit have been the rocker's silent protest against objectification of the female body? Actually, no. Kroeger was just looking to refill his cocktail but found more than a dozen parched partiers in line ahead of him. Wearing a sly smile, the Alberta-born chart topper pulled out a wad of cash, gamely offering to buy everyone a drink if he could move to the front—a seemingly fair trade until one female line dweller reminded him that the drinks were free. The moral: we all know that money doesn't buy happiness, but on some occasions it won't even get you a gin and tonic.

—SERENA TREVIS



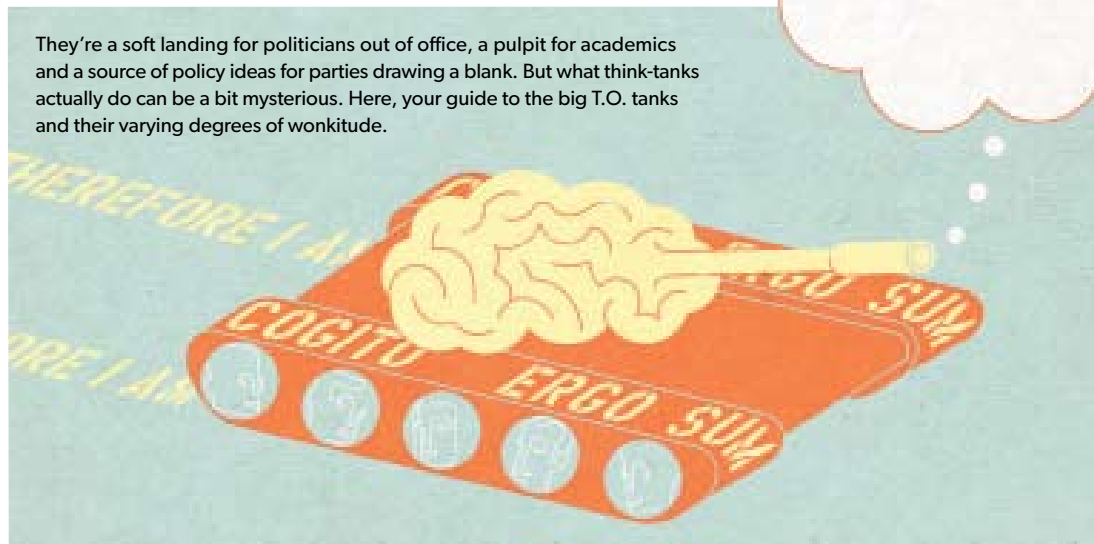
My kingdom for a cocktail: Kroeger's money is no good

ROUNDUP

Tank Heaven

Our brainiest, zaniest think-tanks BY MIKE MINER

They're a soft landing for politicians out of office, a pulpit for academics and a source of policy ideas for parties drawing a blank. But what think-tanks actually do can be a bit mysterious. Here, your guide to the big T.O. tanks and their varying degrees of wonkitude.



TANK TITLE: Martin Prosperity Institute
FUEL: Trying to define various ways a community can prosper.

And it's not just about economic growth; it could be reducing a carbon footprint or maybe an unflinching devotion to a useless hockey team.

STAR: **Richard Florida.** Local media went off like Beatlemaniacs when the guru of the creative class moved here to head up the Rotman School's new institute.

ALLIES: The *Globe* snapped Florida up as a columnist before he cleared customs.

BUGBEAR: Cities with a quitter attitude.

WONK FACTOR: **Medium.** They assemble people from various backgrounds for idea jam sessions.

TANK TITLE: The Fraser Institute
FUEL: Right-wing thinkers, based in the west but with a hearty Toronto office just for kicks (how inclusive). Basically, they think our markets could be freer.

STAR: **Mike Harris** is a senior fellow and is working on the Canada Strong and Free initiative with Preston Manning, laying out how Canada could be even awesomer.

ALLIES: Alberta. The ghost of Adam Smith.

BUGBEAR: Anything left of Ronald Reagan.

WONK FACTOR: **Upper-mid.** A lot of their work is politically charged, which spices up the prose.

TANK TITLE: C. D. Howe Institute

FUEL: Named after Mackenzie King's Minister of Everything, the institute examines all things economic.

STAR: Macroeconomics researcher **Michael Parkin**, who has a title that ensures no one will ever ask what he did at work today.

ALLIES: C. D. Howe was one of the few outside authorities cited in Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's October economic update.

BUGBEAR: Money being left on the table.

WONK FACTOR: **Mega.** These guys were at the head of the free trade charge in the '80s. Their reports ain't beach reading.

TANK TITLE: Energy Probe

FUEL: Solving our energy supply problems, but doing it green.

STAR: Senior researcher **Norman Rubin** leads the charge to cease the senseless splitting of innocent atoms.

ALLIES: Energy is everybody's problem. A report of theirs—endorsed by the Liberals, NDP and eventually the Conservatives—led to the demise of Ontario Hydro.

BUGBEAR: Nuclear reactors. They cry at screenings of *The China Syndrome*.

WONK FACTOR: Particle physics meets bureaucratic reform? This one's **off the charts.**