

OPINION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bannon's record speaks for itself

Re: Only golf club elected Councillor Bannon, letter to the editor by Mark Harper, Nov. 23.

Mr. Harper is once again trying to divide the community. Not content to pit lake resident against lake resident with his organization, the Friends of Musselman's Lake, he now wants to pit the lake residents against the community of Ballantrae.

The way voters cast their ballots in Ward 2, in retrospect, really was no surprise. Ballantrae is basically a retirement community and the doomed daycare centre is not an issue. They voted for the man who had worked the hardest for his community, Phil Bannon.

Musselman's Lake is a family community. The focus became daycare and an unknown candidate, Justin Altmann, who was promising to keep it open. When you have young children and need to work, your primary focus is affordable daycare.

Mr. Bannon worked extremely hard for two years to come up with an equitable solution, but to some voters, his efforts were not enough and they grasped at straws with a newcomer, who was promising to solve all their problems with his pre-election magic wand.

I think he borrowed it from Dalton McGuinty and it would have worked as well for Mr. Altmann after the election as it did for Mr. "Broken Promises" McGuinty.

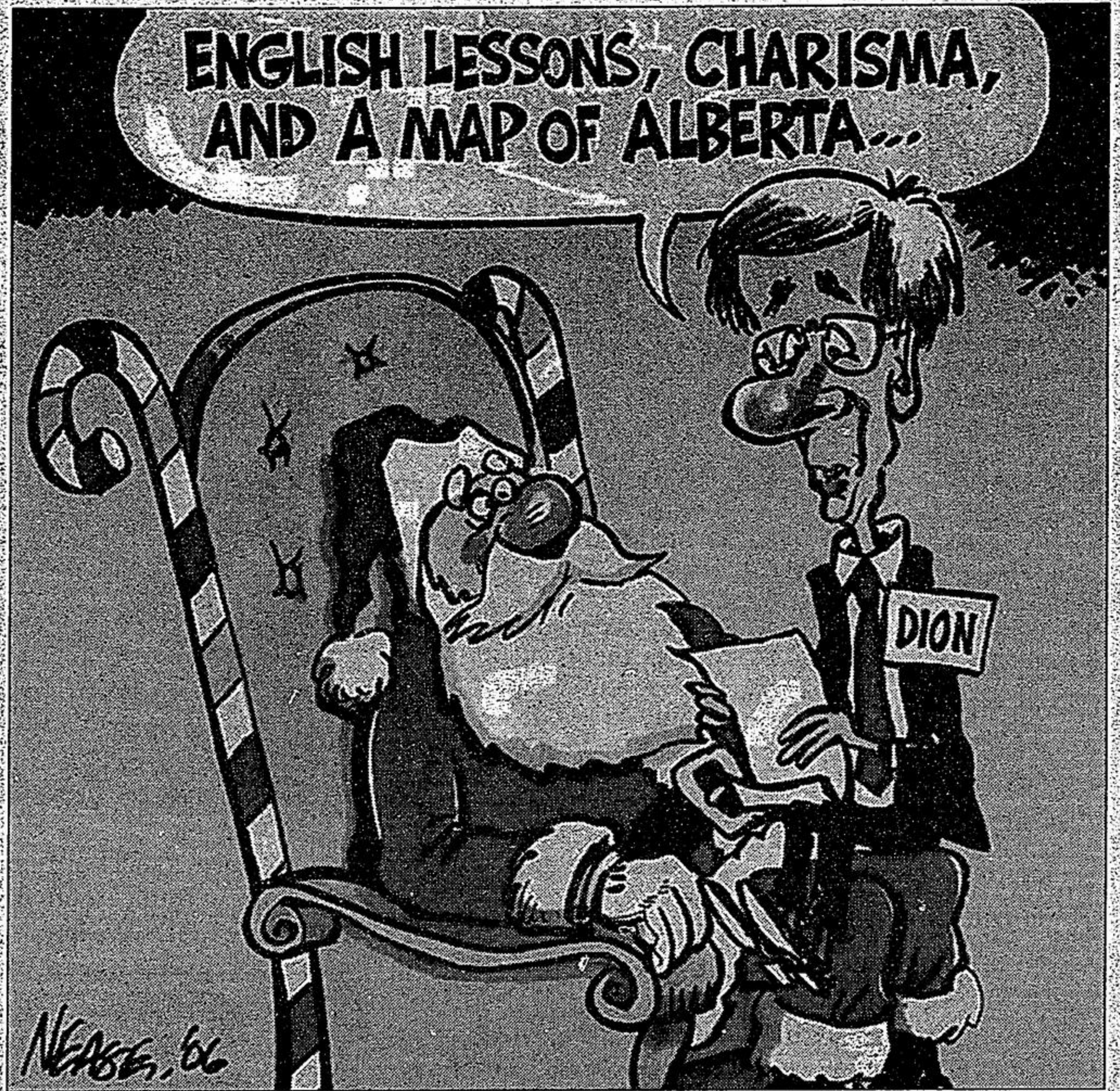
Mr. Altmann was magically going to, "Keep the daycare open", make trucks disappear from Aurora Road and, the best one, have lake residents design their own roads around the lake. (I guess we were all going to be granted engineering degrees.)

What is really sad is that a Ward 4 resident (Mr. Altmann) can see an opportunity (daycare), do a last-minute parachute into the ward and almost unseat a local Ward 2 resident (Mr. Bannon) who has worked tirelessly for his community.

Mr. Bannon was successful in closing an illegal dumping operation, which, if unchecked, would have polluted the air and water of the whole community. He has improved law and bylaw enforcement, improved roads, organizes the winter carnival each year at the lake and helps numerous charities.

I just wish Mr. Harper would follow his own advice: "Listen to everyone and respect everyone's opinion, not just those who support him". We do not need a divided community in Ward 2.

RICK WIGMORE
 MUSSELMAN'S LAKE



Licence to kill not answer to preserving caribou

How do you protect an endangered species? Well, if you're the government of British Columbia, the answer is simple — you kill stuff. That may sound crude, but so is what that province's government is considering to save endangered caribou.

Found in the eastern parts of B.C. and down into Idaho (where they are protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act), the mountain caribou is one of the most endangered mammals in North America.

Their population has declined alarmingly fast. While there were an estimated 2,500 animals in B.C. in the 1990s, today, there are fewer than 1,900.

To make matters worse, what historically had likely been one large population has been fragmented into as many as 18 sub-populations, some of which are completely isolated from one another.

Such isolation raises problems

of inbreeding and makes populations less likely to survive. Two of these small herds have recently disappeared altogether.

In 2004, the province convened a science team to assess the status of the caribou and provide options for the recovery of the species.

This fall, the panel reported back, providing a series of recommendations — from habitat protection to controlling access to critical caribou habitat to culling competing predators and prey.

Given that the primary underlying threat to mountain caribou is from habitat loss, the recommendation of protecting habitat was not surprising.

What was surprising, however, was the government's announcement that recovery options and management actions did not include maps of the caribou's core habitat or provide details on the recommended protected areas.

Instead, the announcement focused largely on just one of six potential actions — killing stuff. The theory is if you kill the cari-



David Suzuki

bou's potential predators (such as grizzly bears, wolverines, cougars and wolves), along with competing prey species (such as elk and moose), it reduces pressure on the mountain caribou. Yet the science panel itself was not definitive on the effectiveness of this action. Killing other species in hopes of protecting a specific one is a risky and unproven strategy.

Everything we have learned about conservation biology tells us ecosystems are extremely complex and interconnected. Crude,

simplistic methods of human intervention are likely to prove unhelpful and potentially disastrous.

We also don't know how much of a factor illegal hunting has been in the caribou's decline. Recently, University of British Columbia researcher Peter Arcese and others looked at the effectiveness of anti-poaching patrols in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park.

Their findings, published in the journal, *Science*, reported the abundance of a variety of species could be directly linked to the number of anti-poaching patrols conducted. Dr. Arcese noted recently in *The Vancouver Sun* that mountain caribou in British Columbia could be disappearing due to poaching, but we wouldn't know because there are so few officers patrolling the woods.

So here's the situation: We know nature is decidedly complex and we know invasive management techniques to recover species at risk rarely work.

We know logging is still allowed

in mountain caribou habitat. We don't know how much illegal hunting is occurring because we don't have enough conservation officers or a comprehensive system to monitor poaching.

And some of the creatures the government has suggested we kill to protect the caribou, such as grizzly bears and wolverines, are themselves threatened species.

Habitat protection won't save all the caribou, but it is the species' best bet and it will directly benefit hundreds of other species sharing the same old-growth habitat.

Protecting threatened species often requires making some tough decisions that can pit short-term economic goals against more sustainable long-term options.

Trying to take conservation short-cuts by culling other creatures may be politically expedient, but it is a risky strategy that history tells us is doomed to fail.

Take the David Suzuki challenge at www.davidsuzuki.org

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