

# After Iveson goes away, the pundits come out to play

Even though he's trying to improve our city, Don's hard work is being ignored because his critics are upset that Nickel lost his seat



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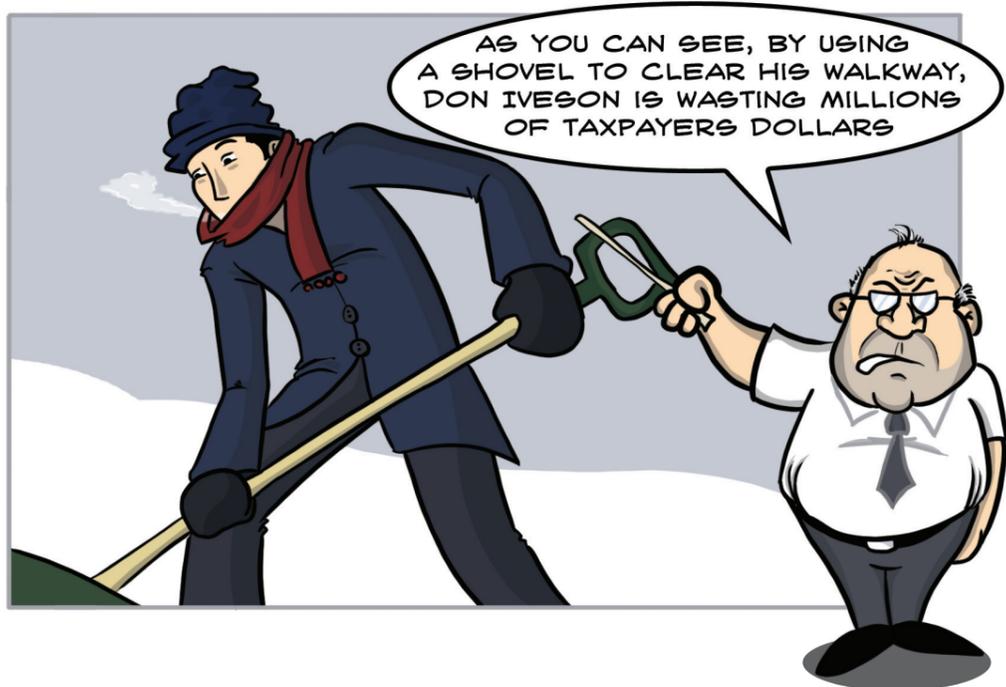
to be hypocritical about hypocrisy, claiming that the trip itself did more harm to the environment than good. Never mind that a month ago when the trip was made no one said a word—though, admittedly, that's not as important as trying to stick one to Iveson for knocking off their man.

While flying in 10 000 diplomats to talk about global warming certainly could have been more environmentally friendly, it's far from hypocritical to attend, and holding the conference at all was hardly Iveson's idea. Conferences such as these are important diplomatic tools, facilitating exchanges of ideas that require face-to-face contact.

Under certain situations, video conferencing and other such methods might very well make sense, but it's simply impossible to facilitate meaningful discussion of this scale and type remotely. The policy changes Iveson will suggest easily justify the trip—and besides, how was he supposed to get there? Sailboats and bicycles?

Iveson's critics even went so far as to say that UN climate change regulations only affect the federal government, and that the city has no business attending the conference. However, even if that were true, Iveson was, in fact, a presenter at a parallel event—the local government climate sessions, which brought together delegates from cities around the world. From transportation to industry, cities control the finalized form of environmental policies, and Edmonton, being no exception, needed to be represented.

Loath as I am to admit it, our city gets some things right environmentally—



CONAL PIERSE

Don Iveson's successful bid for city council was one of the few bright spots in what was an otherwise bland municipal election last October. Running a strong campaign with the help of students of this very institution, Iveson's fresh ideas (to this city, anyway) put him in a solid second and ousted "fiscal hawk" Mike Nickel. It was that last bit that had local pundits calling the win the work of a vast left-wing conspiracy—a sentiment that seems to be resurfacing again.

Last month, Iveson attended the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia. The timing is important, because 30 days is the estimated maximum turn-around time for a FOIP (Freedom Of Information and Protection of Privacy) request, and unsurprisingly, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) wanted to view his travel expenses.

The result? Economy-class return airfare (strike one), a hotel stay in a low-cost room (strike two), and a total cost of around \$3200 (strike three). All in all, a thrifty trip, considering the distance and the demand for accommodations among the 10 000-plus delegates. Faced with the prospect of not having anything worth complaining about, the pundits instead decided

especially recycling. We're even hosting the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives conference in 2009, which would have made our absence from this conference even more suspicious.

For those saying that someone more experienced should have gone, Iveson's main portfolio item is the environment. Imagine how this would have went down if he had refused to attend on the basis of emissions: Iveson proposes some manner of environmental measure the pundits don't like (such as his current proposal to curb

drive-throughs), and the CTF trots out the exact same "hypocrisy run amok" headline. After all, how dare the councillor propose a regulation to lower greenhouse gas emissions when he didn't even care enough to attend an important climate change conference? Either way, the right-wing smear campaign would have continued unabated.

As much as the CTF purports to be non-partisan, it isn't hard to tell what type of non-partisan politics they support. Lower business, income, and gas taxes don't exactly leave much room for social spending—even if governments

are as wasteful as the group claims. Admittedly, I don't pay a ton of tax as a student, but an engineering degree will quickly change that. What it won't change is the way I want my tax dollars spent, and the current Taxpayers Federation doesn't represent me.

This has nothing to do with emissions from Iveson's plane—the CTF thinks climate change is junk science and "alarmist propaganda" anyway. These critics don't care what he's being "hypocritical" about—just that he's being "hypocritical." And that's more than a little hypocritical itself.

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