

# Opinion

## MUSKOKA MOSAIC

### Introducing Matt Huddleston

BY PAULA BOON

Matt Huddleston was born to be an actor, and he can never stay away from the stage for long.

Now, the relative newcomer to Huntsville is starting a professional theatre company called Broken Moon, with plans to stage a production within a year. Eventually he hopes to present original plays, but in the meantime, audiences can expect the company's offerings to involve visual and multimedia artists as well as actors. "I'd like to support the talent of this region," he says.

Huddleston's first professional theatre experience came during high school in Calgary. It was a well-rounded introduction: he acted, took tickets, did sound and lights and stage managed. Then, the actor beat out 570 applicants for a one-year apprenticeship with Alberta Theatre Projects, something he calls an "amazing, phenomenal opportunity." The job paid \$75 a week for 16 to 18-hour days of office and stage work.

"My parents were awesome," Huddleston says. "They told me, 'You want to be an actor and be paid \$75 a week? Go! Do it!'"

Also by his side was his girlfriend Dawn, who is now his wife. "I'm truly blessed. I've got the most incredible wife on the planet," he says. "She's my unlimited support."

When the internship ended, Huddleston took some time away from the world of theatre, but he realized that he wasn't cut out for more traditional kinds of work. "I crave and need change," he explains.

Fate intervened, and Huddleston ran into a director who needed to replace an actor who had quit suddenly. She offered Huddleston the job, and he joined the cast about a week before dress rehearsal. "The entire eight-week run was sold out. No pressure," he says with a laugh.

Next, he and three friends started their own theatre company. In less than six months the group launched their first all-encompassing festival including stage, multimedia, art and music. "Of course, we had no money," he says. "That's how I am: tell me it just can't be done and I'll do it."

But when Huddleston's daughter Kalei was born in 2005, he began to wonder how he could provide for his family on an actor's pay and walked away from the world of theatre again.

Seeing how miserable he was, Dawn suggested he stay home with Kalei while she worked full time. "I wish every man could do that," Huddleston says. "Kalei taught me everything I was too stupid to realize was important in my life. She taught me to be what I needed to be, which was an actor."

Huddleston did some film and voice work when his daughter was a baby, and then, when she was two and a half, he joined a professional murder mystery company and was soon performing up to six times a week. "The catch



was there were three or four different scripts," he says. "We'd be learning our lines for Act 1 in the dressing room before the show and learn the second act during the intermission."

His favourite aspect of the job was the improvisation involved. "We went out before the show as our characters and mingled with the crowd, then used information we had gathered throughout the show," he says. "I loved that."

In 2007, Dawn told her husband she needed a change. As they discussed their options, Huddleston, who had spent his childhood summers at a family cottage on Clear Lake in Novar, said, "We could move to Huntsville," and Dawn replied, "Okay."

They met with a realtor the next day.

For their first year in Huntsville, the family rented a condo in Hidden Valley, where they developed close friendships. "We couldn't be surrounded by a tighter group," Huddleston says. They took position of their Hidden Valley home in July.

As his daughter gets older, Huddleston plans to audition for more TV and movie roles, but for now he's excited to be helping out with Irwin Memorial Public School's Christmas concert and enjoying life in Huntsville.

"What a great place," he says. "Some days I don't know how I got so lucky."

## LETTERS

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### Parliamentary democracy in Canada continues to be destroyed

I am greatly disturbed both by the political follies in Ottawa and by the lack of understanding about parliamentary democracy exhibited by many citizens.

The root cause of both our political crisis and our public misunderstanding of it is the growth of presidential politics within a parliamentary system of government. Steven Harper was not elected by the people of Canada. They have not given him any mandate to govern.

Nobody in Parry Sound-Muskoka voted for him in the recent election. A clear majority voted for Tony Clement and he is our wholly legitimate representative in Ottawa. That is all we did on Oct. 14. Mr. Harper owes his power to being selected by the Conservative Party members to be their leader. This makes him the head of the governing political party in the House of Commons. His mandate to govern arises from having the support of the House of Commons, not from the votes of the public. When he loses that support he loses his mandate to rule.

The action of the three opposition parties in creating a coalition to replace the present government is thus wholly democratic and constitutional in our parliamentary democracy. What is unconstitutional and undemocratic is the proroguing of parliament to avoid a vote of non-confidence. This has not happened since Charles I used force to disperse an uncooperative House of Commons in England in the early 17th century.

One may have had many misgivings about

the prospect of Stephane Dion becoming prime minister after a decisive Liberal electoral defeat and after being rejected by his own party. The choice of Dion to be the potential head of a coalition government may have been politically mystifying, if not unwise, but it was neither undemocratic nor immoral. What was both undemocratic and immoral were the actions of the prime minister. When one uses a grave national economic crisis as an opportunity to destroy political opponents and undercut the rights of women and public servants and then, when faced by the prospect of losing power, deliberately sets east against west and francophone against anglophone in order to remain in office, one has lost the moral right to rule.

Has the crisis in Ottawa taught our leaders any lessons? It appears not. The prime minister, saved from political death by the unprecedented proroguing of parliament, now responds by attempting to pack the senate for partisan advantage. The Liberal party, having lost their grip on power in no small part due to the inside takeover of the party by Paul Martin in 2003, now responds by staging another inside takeover of the party by Michael Ignatieff. Both of our major political parties are like the Bourbon Kings of France, of whom it was said that they neither forgot anything nor learned anything. Meanwhile, the ongoing destruction of parliamentary democracy in this country continues.

David Purchase  
Huntsville

### Kudos to 'class act' Bob Rae

Bob Rae is a class act. He truly exemplifies what it means to be a public servant. His measured, intelligent responses over the last few weeks remind us that powerful leaders need not rely on bombastic finger pointing in order to engage the public's heart and minds. His willingness to step down from the leadership race to do what is best for the party and the country in these challenging times is laudable, especially as it flies in the face of his own personal ambitions. Such strength of character is rarely seen in politics these days. Pay attention, Mr. Harper.

It seems that many people only think

of Rae Days when they think of Mr. Rae's term as premier of Ontario. And yet Rae days were a strategic attempt to avoid the aggressive slash and burn policies that were enacted by the Mike Harris Conservatives. Oh, that we would have the foresight to think past the ends of our noses.

Mr. Ignatieff, please make good use of this brilliant, politically astute, great-hearted man. He is one of Canada's gems. And as he said in a song he penned many years ago, "We're in the same boat now." Bravo, Mr. Rae.

Elizabeth Paddon  
Burk's Falls

### Legitimacy of federal coalition is not a partisan issue for reader

*Re: Federal coalition is legitimate*, letter to the editor, Huntsville Forester, Dec. 10.

In response to this letter by my good friends Bruce and Lenore Werry, they are correct when they say there is precedent in Canada for coalition governments. As their own historical resource has pointed out, however, these should occur as a last resort or under extraordinary circumstances. Such was the case during the First World War when Prime Minister Robert Borden headed a Unity Government.

Although I am not one who believes that Mr. Harper should have proposed at this time legislation to eliminate taxpayer support to all political parties, it certainly does not meet the test stated above, to justify a coalition so soon after an election. Under our system, the Tories won the most seats and they have a right to a legitimate oppor-

tunity to govern.

Far more important and abhorrent to me, however, is the type of coalition that is being proposed. Never in the history of Canada, nor I suspect of any other country, has a coalition been proposed where the survival of the government would depend on a written agreement with a political party whose stated objective is to break the country up.

To me, this is not a partisan issue. If the Liberals had won the most seats in the recent election, and the other three parties had proposed a similar coalition, I would have been equally insistent that it was wrong. I am a Canadian first and any concept of a government that relies on a separatist party to control Parliament is repulsive to me, and I believe to most Canadians.

Hugh Mackenzie  
Huntsville

### If anyone is attempting to subvert the will of the people, it's Harper

I have good news: Democracy is working in Canada.

Judging by letters to the Forester Dec.10, there seems to be considerable heat from both sides on the possibility of a coalition government "Just not done," "is legitimate" (pg. A7), "Coup d'etat" (pg.A17).

I think everyone can afford to relax a little, at least as far as a "coup d'etat." No matter what one's political allegiance, the defeat of a minority government in the House of Commons is democracy at work, not a "coup d'etat." So is the formation of a coalition government.

Anyone suggesting a coalition is tantamount to overturning the will of the people should look again at the results of the last federal election, when those very people gave 165 seats to someone other than Conservatives. If we hadn't done that, no coalition could bring down what would otherwise be a majority government. See? That's democracy working.

Indeed, if anyone is attempting to subvert the will of the people, surely it is the Conservative leader who, rather than face democracy in the form of a vote in the House of Commons, requested and got the House shut down, at the very time the "will of the people" is that our elected leaders

should quit acting like squabbling poultry and get to work on helping the country deal with the very real financial crisis leaking across our southern border.

And let's not blame our governor general for "not listening to both sides of the argument" ("Shutting down Parliament," pg. A17). Ms. Jean acts for the monarch, who is bound to accept the will of the current government. One would no more want the Queen's representative "listening to both sides" and making a judgment, than expect her to actually write a throne speech.

Lest Conservative readers conclude that I am a Liberal or (shudder) NDP supporter, let me add that if the coalition leaders had had the common sense not to telegraph their league-of-convenience in a press conference, they could handily have ambushed the Conservative government at the next vote in the House and then offered their combined services to Ms. Jean as a new government. Which pretty much leaves Canadians with either arrogance or incompetence in government, again.

As for me? I'm a member of the Sanity and Usefulness Party. I know; sadly, it doesn't exist. But it should.

Grant Hallman  
Huntsville



# HEALTHCARE HEROES



## Huntsville Centennial Seniors

If it's Christmas it must be time for the Huntsville Centennial Seniors to get together for a feast and to distribute some holiday cheer.

Tracy Robinson, HDMH Foundation Secretary, was invited to pick up a \$500 donation for our hospital. The cheque was presented by Gloria Toth, Treasurer. The seniors also support Huntsville Animal Shelter, Chrysalis, Huntsville Public Library and the Salvation Army.

The gift is added to a lifetime total of over \$24,000 from this vibrant organization for the health of their hospital. We appreciate the dedication of these folks to our community.

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