



COMMENT



THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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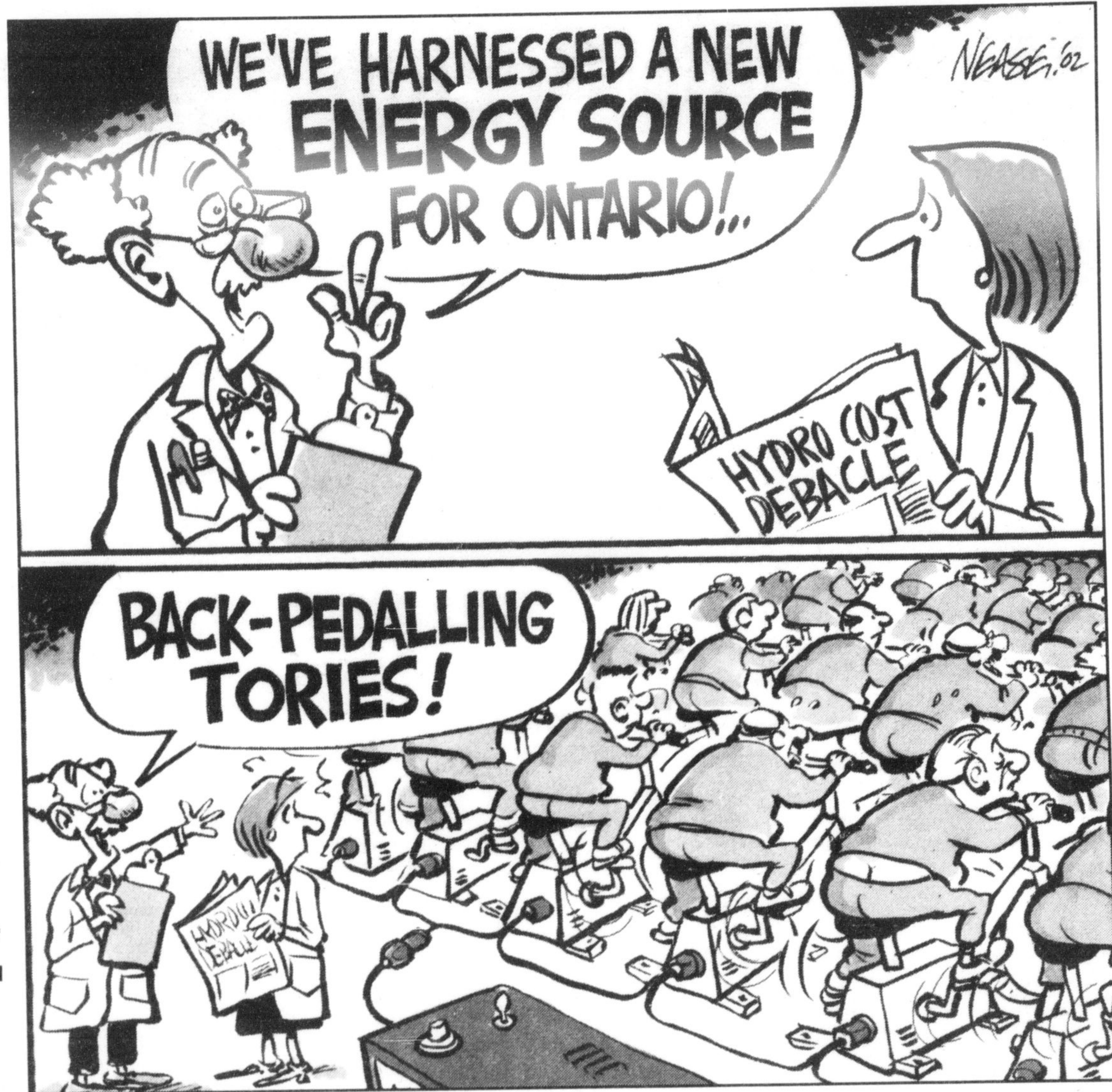
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Who has your vote?

Former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's brainchild aimed at ensuring Canada remained a just and free nation recently celebrated an anniversary and had a forest's worth of newsprint and plenty of hot debate for and against devoted to it.

But the latest legacy of the controversial Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the recent decision by five out of nine Supreme Court judges to allow federal prisoners to vote from their prison cells.

In the past, only those serving two years or less were eligible to vote. The change impacts only federal inmates — those incarcerated in provincial institutions largely remain separated from the ballot box.

Those in favour of the change feel that something as routine as a prison sentence shouldn't impede one's democratic rights, while those against feel that breaking the laws of the land should naturally result in a temporary forfeit of the rights of that land.

But, unfortunately, accountability isn't one of the virtues extolled in the Charter.

The idea of personal responsibility is being steadily stripped away in our culture, and by exclusively enshrining the rights and freedoms of its citizens, Canada forgot to protect its much-vaunted law and order. As a result, those who voluntarily act against societal rules can be treated no differently than those who agree to tow the line. It's equally gone mad. And it's becoming the norm.



OUR READERS WRITE

Longtime Quality Greens customer says local grocery store, staff will be thoroughly missed

Dear Editor:

I was present at the opening of Quality Greens and shared in the excitement with Andrew and his family around the vision for their new business.

The news of the closing of Quality Greens has left me with a great sense of sadness and loss.

As Nanci Brown stated so well in her letter to the editor in last Friday's Champion, "The small-town atmosphere is fading with the closure of Quality Greens."

The staff at Quality Greens have

gone out of their way to carry on the tradition that I've enjoyed in our downtown store for more than 36 years.

Loading groceries into our cars, delivering groceries to our homes and offering personalized shopping are just a few of the extras that customers have appreciated.

I'll miss the wonderful produce that Frank brought in during the wee hours of the morning.

I'll miss Rose's delicious salads and pastas and the chats we have enjoyed around our children and

grandchildren.

I'll miss the friendliness and helpfulness of Andrew and his staff and the small-town flavour that the store retained.

Thank you Andrew, Rose, Frank and all the staff at Quality Greens for the dedication, hard work and special care you gave to your customers.

We always felt that we were more than customers to you — we were your friends. You will be missed.

Judy Hunter
Victoria Street

Fax letters to (905) 878-4943, or e-mail them to miltone@haltonsearch.com.

I just shake my head in awe of these brave souls

Not everyone can say they put their lives on the line when heading off to work.

But certain people, like police officers and firefighters, face a greater risk of not coming home after their shift is complete. I like to think they spend some extra time saying goodbye to loved ones before heading out the door.

Police officers face the ever present danger of being shot or killed when arriving at a call. Even the most routine call can turn deadly in a matter of seconds.

But there's something about heading into a burning building that always makes me shake my head in awe of these brave (crazy?) souls.

I had the opportunity Saturday to witness first hand just what it takes to become a firefighter when Milton Fire Department technician Barry Kory and I headed up to the Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst.

Milton's newest recruits — some 19 of them — were preparing for their final firefighting testing that weekend. The last part in the year-long program was the Flashover Survival and Recognition Course, which put these young men in a container filled with heavy smoke and flames for about 30 minutes. The goal was to extinguish the fire using the "penciling" technique (a quick spray on two walls and the ceiling) while crouching in a confined area surrounded by thick, belching smoke.

It's definitely not for the claustrophobic.

As I watched the guys wait expectantly for their turn to enter the 8-foot square container, I couldn't help but feel a combination of nervousness and amusement — amusement because it's not everyday that you see people walking straight into a fire. The nervousness was felt on their behalf.



Random thoughts

with FANNIE SUNSHINE

As the recruits positioned themselves inside the container, six at a time, the heat was rising. It started out at about 16 degrees Celsius and worked up to 538 degrees Celsius. I know the guys had on protective gear and breathing equipment, but that's still pretty hot. But they survived.

Prior to entering the container, they went through the penciling technique with instructor

Ken Jones. They also practiced the "turtling" technique (lying on the side while spraying water above their heads in case fire surrounds them. The water took the form of an umbrella) but didn't need to use it on the inside because the environment was controlled.

Before the recruits headed into the burning container, Mr. Jones told me the purpose of the Flashover course was to get a grip on the situation and to know what to look for in a real scenario. Safety was the number one priority. This was also the first time the recruits participated in hands-on training. Prior to last weekend, it was strictly in-class and text book preparation.

Assuming the boys passed this final phase, they began working in town part-time this week.

As I mentioned earlier, you'd have to be crazy to race into fires for a living — or just extremely courageous.