

# Comment

## The Canadian Champion

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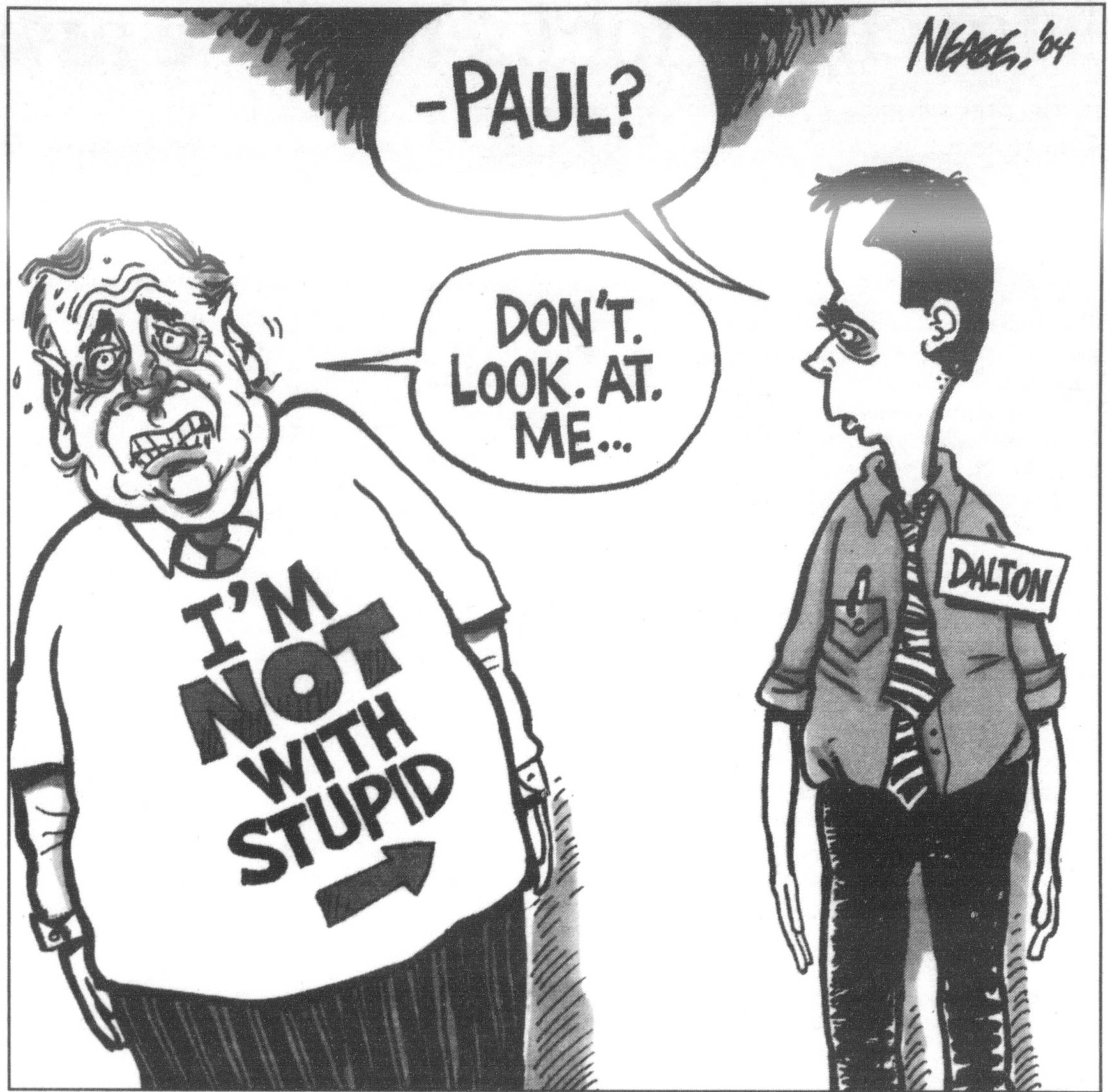
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## That sinking feeling

Prime Minister Paul Martin's worst enemy leading into the final four weeks of campaigning may be his own party.

The tainted legacy of Jean Chrétien, broken election promises of Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and an unresolved sponsorship scandal inquiry could prove to be the weight that sinks the one candidate who was supposed to cruise to victory.

Less than six months ago, few thought Martin would be touched in the next federal election. He was seen as the heir apparent, a can't lose candidate, who would lead the Liberals into its second decade in power.

What a difference a government scandal and some broken promises can make.

All Martin's efforts to distance himself from Chrétien's legacy evaporated the day Auditor General Sheila Fraser revealed the money-for-nothing sponsorship scandal.

Suddenly, Martin's Mr. Clean image is under heavy scrutiny. Supporters are forced to question how much their man knew about secret dealings while serving as Chrétien's finance minister. If Martin knew nothing about it surely his competence as a leader would be questioned.

These were the first substantial cracks in Martin's supposedly impenetrable leader-

ship armour.

As much as the sponsorship embarrassment has damaged the Liberals in Quebec, Martin's stronghold — Ontario — is shaping up to be the site of the PM's last stand.

Ontario has become the must-win province if Martin is to cling to the fading hope of a minority government.

McGuinty certainly hasn't made Martin's greatest challenge any easier. The premier's pre-election promise of no new taxes followed by a budget that slapped working people with geared-to-income health care premiums will undoubtedly impact voter perception of the federal Liberals on June 28.

Combine the Ontario electorate's current mood with the fact that many incumbent MPs are throwbacks to the Chrétien-era, and it becomes easier to comprehend how a Liberal minority is likely Martin's best case scenario.

Today, the PM finds himself politically adrift — losing ground with the release of each new popularity poll.

Somewhere, Jean Chrétien is probably smiling — having escaped this political quagmire while leaving a legacy that has become Martin's headache that won't go away.

## Our Readers Write

### Trash pick-up isn't working, says rural resident

Dear Editor:

Milton's experiment with rural garbage collection has been, for my money, a disaster so far.

Here's a prime example of that.

One morning not long ago I was walking my dog on First Line, a bit south of No. 15 Sideroad.

A garbage truck suddenly came thundering over the horizon heading south.

The driver at the wheel, upon noticing the bags of garbage at the end of a driveway, slammed on the brakes and brought his vehicle to a shuddering stop.

The dramatic black skid marks are still visible on the road. He tossed the bags in the truck, gave me a big smile and a thumbs-up, and sped off.

It's only a matter of time before a

garbage truck causes a serious accident somewhere in rural Milton. Will it involve someone walking a dog, a jogger, a child or just another vehicle?

Now that we're stuck with rural garbage pick-up, how about giving some thought to ways of doing it safely?

**Charles Small  
Moffat**

### Woman says reporter displayed courage expressing view

Dear Editor:

I recently came across Champion reporter Stephanie Thiessen's Milton Players' review entitled 'Play has too much sexual innuendo for my taste'.

I was so pleased to read that you do hold fast to traditional Judeo-Christian values like sex within the confines of marriage, and I thought unless I let you

know somehow you might not be aware that you indeed aren't the only one in Milton holding that view.

So that is the purpose of these few lines. Hearty congratulations on your courage in sharing your values with your readers. Keep up the good work.

**Esther Mitchell  
Milton**

## This 'snapshot in time' isn't looking very pretty

The look on their faces said it all.

Visitors to The Champion's Showcase Milton booth reacted with disgust when they stopped to pick up last Friday's paper hot off the presses.

Their heads shook to the left, and then to the right with disapproval as they read the front-page story 'Report projects 4.7% tax hikes'.

"Pretty soon we won't be able to afford to live in Milton," one woman commented to her husband.

The story centred around a recently-released consultant's report that analyzed the long-term financial impact of the town's population explosion.

"A snapshot in time" is how Town treasurer Jim McQueen referred to it.

The report by C.N. Watson and Associates — which estimates that tax hikes of between 4.7 and 5.1 per cent will be the norm every year between

now and 2021 — is only a prediction of the future.

But let's face it, this year's municipal property tax increase was a sign of what's to come. C.N. Watson only confirmed it. Gone are the days of 0 and 1 per cent tax increases.

Those who believed, or were led to believe, that growth would pay for itself may now be feeling like they've been conned, while others who've seen it all before may be stating knowingly, "It never does."

And those who have opposed growth may not be able to resist saying "I told you so."

The Showcase Milton visitor's comment about the town becoming unaffordable led me to wonder that while low interest rates have enabled so many people to buy new homes here, will the rising taxes end up driving them away?

Or will the new services in town — like transit,



*From the  
editor's desk*

with KAREN SMITH

an arts and cultural centre and an expanded library — make Milton even more irresistible and worth every penny?

While I strongly oppose tax increases — Canadians are already taxed to death while it seems there's so much waste — I first tried to cope with the news by looking to the bright side in thinking of ways our growth explosion could

actually keep some cash in my pocketbook.

I thought, won't I save money in gasoline and wear and tear on my vehicle by taking advantage of the new shopping opportunities that growth will bring? I will no longer have to drive to Georgetown, Mississauga, Oakville or Burlington to go to Wal-Mart or to a movie theatre. With gas prices as high as they are and with no end in sight, the savings over time could be huge. And that's not to mention the amount of time I'll have to spare — and you can't put a price tag on that.

Then I gave my head a shake. More realistically, we're going to have to find a way to put a lid on these projected tax increases, which really seem pretty ridiculous. You don't need to be a fortune teller to foresee that this will be a big issue at election time for years to come. And who knows, maybe there will even be a tax revolt.