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THE TRIBUNE

# Comment & Opinions

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EDITORIAL

## Prevent fire tragedies through new program

There's a new fire education program aimed at senior citizens with which everyone should be familiar.

Called 'Older and Wiser', the program is directed towards seniors, their family members and care givers.

Considering that the fire death rate for adults over aged 65 is four times higher than any other age group, this is an extremely important program.

Funded by Fire Prevention Canada and the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council with a contribution from the City of North York, the program will be available through all local fire departments in Ontario.

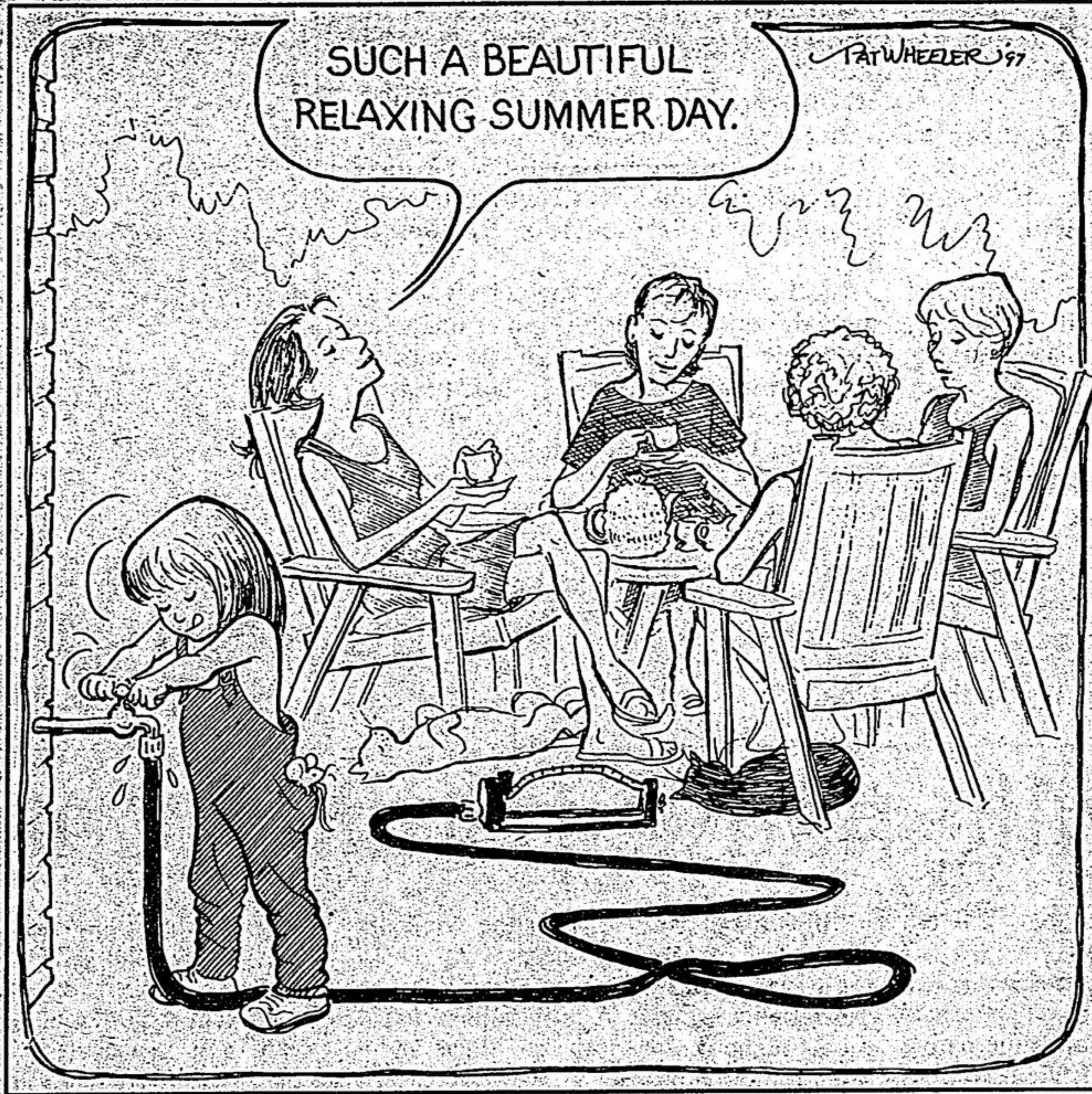
The first step in 'Older and Wiser' consists of a home safety check, which includes making sure that smoke alarms are not only working, but loud enough to be heard.

There's also instruction on how to look for some early warning signs of trouble, such as scorched pots and pans and cigarette burns on clothes, furniture or floors.

The next step is a 14-question quiz on fire safety procedures in the home.

It's an excellent program that both seniors and their families should take advantage of in order to avoid needless tragedy.

Contact your fire department for more information.



# Hydro's monopoly should be broken

The lessons of history are clear. Great civilizations, great powers, are seldom defeated by some external force. The end, when it comes, comes from within.

History is about to repeat itself for one of the last great bastions of public power in North America.

Ontario Hydro is beleaguered by crushing debt, an expensive and aging fleet of nuclear reactors and looming competition.

When Hydro eventually collapses



## Guest Column

Susan Elston

from its own weight, the shock waves will resound throughout the province.

The fundamental problem is that Ontario Hydro isn't being held accountable. This despite the fact that we, the

ratepayers of Ontario, own the utility. The Power Corporation Act is the key to Hydro's blanket powers. As one critic put it, Hydro is simultaneously the rule maker, the player and the referee.

This province's 300 plus municipal utilities are forced to purchase electricity from Ontario Hydro, and yet Hydro itself is in the retail business in rural areas. The act also gives Hydro regulatory powers over the utilities. Any rate recommendations made by the Ontario Energy Board, Hydro's only potential

regulator, are not binding. Hydro's antics have drawn the ire of an interesting cast of characters.

In April, the Municipal Electric Association (MEA), which represents the utilities, filed suit against Ontario Hydro for \$5.2 billion. MEA claims Hydro has used more than \$5 billion of ratepayers funds, slated to pay down Hydro's debt, for ongoing operations and self-promotion. The remaining \$145 million represents rate subsidies that were improperly collected for the municipal utilities.

In May, it was alleged that the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station had knowingly been dumping tonnes of copper and zinc into Lake Ontario since the 1970s. In response, a coalition of environmental groups submitted an Application for Investigation under the Environmental Bill of Rights two weeks ago.

Last week, the Atomic Energy Control Board (AECB) ignored Hydro's request for an unprecedented five-year licence renewal for the Pickering nuclear plant. The AECB even overturned its own staff recommendation for a one-year licence and imposed a nine-month renewal instead.

Hydro's response to all this criticism is to throw more money at its nuclear plants, and more of our money on public relations. The irony is that Hydro continues to fight change — hoping to maintain its long-standing monopoly.

Ontario's Minister of Energy and Environment Norm Sterling is under pressure from environmentalists, the utilities and the independent power producers to dismantle the Power Corporation Act.

This would hopefully impose a strong regulatory system that would make Ontario Hydro more accountable, while giving the people of Ontario a choice of where they purchase their electricity.

# Video viewing left much to be desired

And this week's award for the video to avoid goes to — 'Love and War', starring Chris O'Donnell and Sandra Bullock.

Like warnings on a cigarette package, the presence of these two actors on a video sleeve should not be taken lightly, especially if your budget is hard-pressed to withstand a \$4 outlay.

It's true, however, that I did once watch a Chris O'Donnell movie — 'Circle of Friends' — in which our man managed to portray a believable, fully-rounded character.

Ms Bullock, on the other hand, has always seemed to me to be a graduate of the Ali MacGraw school of acting, which appears to have been founded on the premise that starring in a movie, however ineptly, means never having to say you're sorry.

In the eyes of this curmudgeonly critic, her annoyance quotient is on a par with that of Andie McDowell. She of the gummy smile and annoying mannerisms which were displayed to particularly irritating effect in 'Four Weddings and a Funeral'.

In 'Love and War', Mr. O'Donnell played the young Ernest Hemingway (with apologies to Dave Barry, 'I am not making this up'), during his stint



## Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

with the Red Cross in Italy in the First World War. While he was there — behaving, if this movie is to be believed, like a spoiled kid from Kindergarten — he was badly injured and ended up in the tender care of the underwhelming Ms Bullock, unconvincingly portraying a nurse.

I kept expecting her to jump into the ambulance driver's seat and take off, never letting the speedometer dip below 50 miles-per-hour. Instead, she stood about using one of her two expressions to denote everything from amusement and angst to passion.

By the time my friends and I had sat through the whole thing, we had lost the thread of the story entirely, being more intent on a deep discussion of whether our Sandra had undergone cosmetic surgery, lip augmentation and other miracles of modern science.

After what seemed a lifetime — 'Is it still Tuesday?' inquired one of my friends — the movie limped to its con-

clusion.

The final scene took place at a cottage on a lake, somewhere in America, where the call of the loon was artfully interspersed with leaden dialogue.

The result ought to have been, but wasn't, a series of heart-breaking, gut-wrenching moments which, given our stars' wooden performances, even Kodak and Kleenex might have hesitated to sponsor.

Someone in makeup had stuck bristles on Chris's smooth chin because he was now supposed to be eight months older, but still eight years younger than poor old Sandra, who explained in a lacklustre voiceover that they never saw each other again. Why was I not surprised to hear this?

Other members of the cast included a gallant Italian surgeon who, when moved to passionate declarations of love by the sight of nurse Bullock, sounded perilously like Inspector Clouseau; and the male lead's requisite self-effacing pal, who also seemed mysteriously smitten by Ernest's ministering angel.

Still that's Hollywood, a place where, in the immortal words of Walter Winchell, 'they shoot too many pictures and not enough actors'.

## STOUFFVILLE TRIBUNE

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