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Comment & Opinions

(905) 640-2100
fax - (905) 640-5477
e-mail - thetrib@istar.ca

EDITORIAL

Get off the couch!

For physically active and inactive Canadians, there's good news and bad news. The good news is that more of us have been getting enough daily exercise to stay healthy; the bad news is that the rest of us were "couch potatoes" and putting an ever-increasing strain on our medical services and risk to our lives.

The 1997 Physical Activity Benchmarks report was released last month by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. It concluded that too many Canadians of all ages remain inactive, posing a threat to their own health and a drain on our health care services.

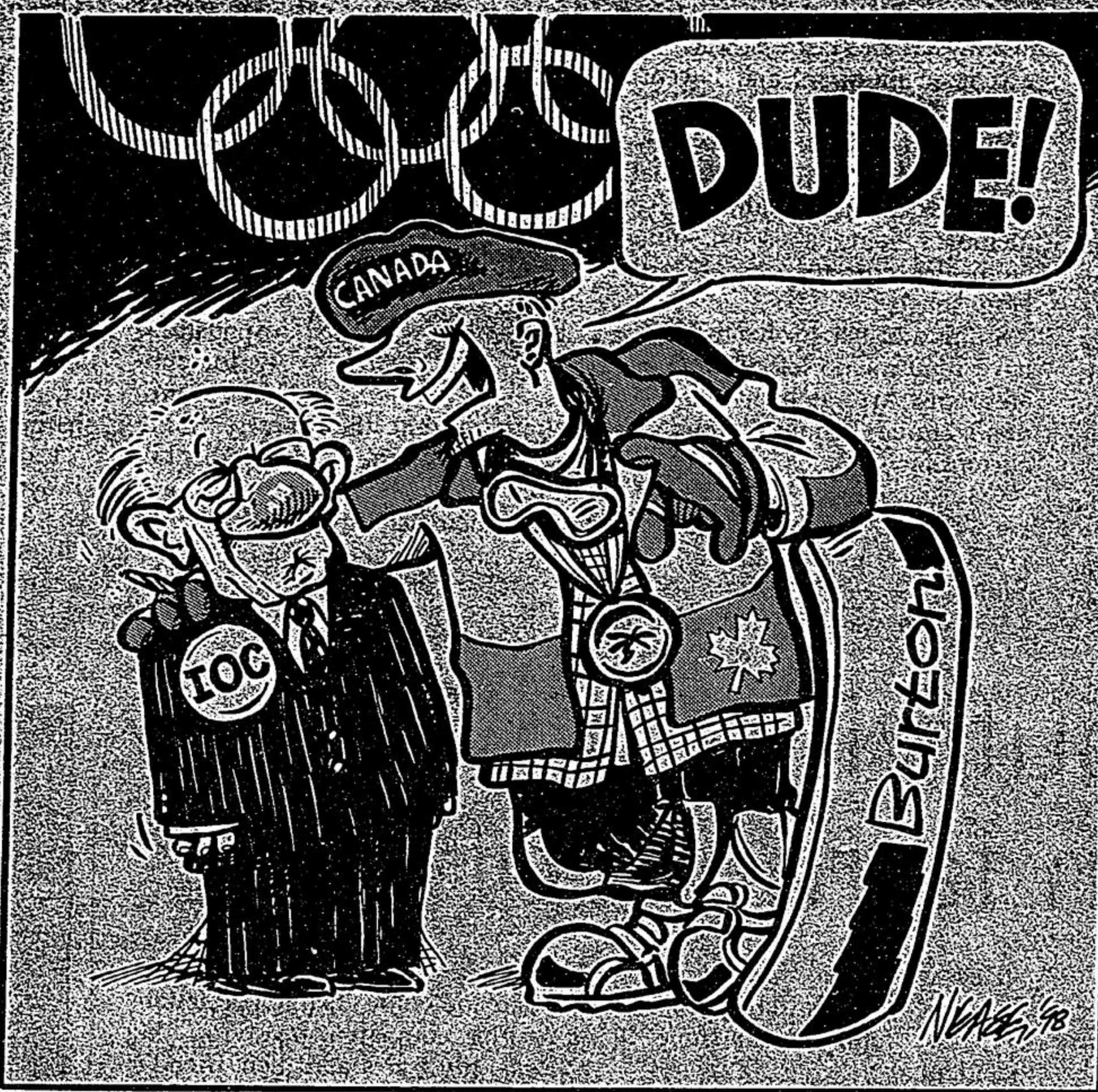
The good news? More of us are getting into the healthy activity habit every year. The number of Canadians active enough to reduce the risk of heart attack, obesity, back pain, depression, tension and a myriad of chronic diseases has almost doubled from 21 per cent in 1981 to 37 per cent in 1995.

What does healthy activity mean? It's the equivalent of walking for about one hour throughout the day, whether that's taking the stairs instead of the elevator at work or running between laundry room and kitchen and the school bus stop at home.

While the report shows that in every province of Canada more residents are becoming active, yet in every province, at least six in 10 adults were still not active enough.

Heart disease is the number one cause of premature death for men; the number two cause for women. One quarter of Canadians over 65 have heart problems. Estimates show the annual cost of treating heart disease, caused in part by sedentary living, is \$2.325 billion — costs for drugs, doctors and hospital stays.

Get off the couch. Walk the dog. You'll feel and look better, have more energy, and handle stress better. What have you got to lose?



This copper town had a heart of gold

I don't know how Senor El Nino has wormed his way into your life this winter, but for me and my neighbours he has brought rain. Rain, rain, rain and just when we thought the heavens couldn't possibly harbour another drop of moisture... a little more rain.

About two weeks ago I decided to run for it. I wasn't asking for much. I just wanted to go somewhere I didn't have to dodge puddles, wear a raincoat or carry an umbrella.

So I caught a plane to Scottsdale, Arizona, which, at first glance, seemed to be a huge mistake, because I don't golf. Scottsdale, as near as I can reckon, consists of 833 golf courses surrounded by some really poor farmland. Not golfing in Scottsdale is like not shopping in the West Edmonton Mall.

You want to know how many tourists visited Scottsdale, Arizona last year? Six point four million.

It helps if you visualize that as one point six million foursomes and a dangerously high concentration of plaid pants. So Scottsdale wasn't for me, and it didn't take me long to figure that out. Still, the sun was shining, the weather was shirt-sleeve warm and when I muttered the word umbrella,



Basic Black

Arthur Black

the natives looked at me like I was speaking Ukrainian, so I knew heaven couldn't be too far away.

I rented a Ford Capri, pointed the hood ornament away from downtown Scottsdale and headed for the desert. Two hours later, I found myself in a rustic old mining town, 2,000 feet up the side of a mountain. The town is made up of rickety, Dickensian-looking buildings and houses, some of them on stilts.

Hard to believe that almost a century ago, this town was the fifth-largest city in the whole state of Arizona, with churches, schools, mansions — even an opera house.

Copper was the reason and a Canuck was the catalyst. James S. Rawhide Jimmy, Douglas cut his teeth on copper mining in northern Ontario and made it to the Arizona mountains in time to cash in on what became known

as "the billion dollar copper camp". It was a rich town. A very rich town. In 1929, a year when the rest of the world was staring bankruptcy in the face, \$29 million worth of ore came out of just one mine and more than 15,000 people called this place home.

Today, it's fighting not to become a ghost town. What happened? Two things, both of them tough for any town to overcome. First, the bottom fell out of the copper market. And secondly, the town ran out of copper.

A headline in a Phoenix newspaper of Jan. 30, 1953 said it all: "END COMES TO FAMED MINING CAMP — LAST ORE DRAGGED FROM HOLES". One of Arizona's great mining camps will die as a mining town in about two months.

The newspaper story was accurate. The town did die — as a mining town. But something, some lizard/cactus toughness in its heart refused to let it die completely. The population shrank steadily. Within 10 years more than 10,000 people had left. By 1953 fewer than 100 people lived there full time.

But the town refused to roll over and die outright or even change very much. It still had the hulks of its once-state-

ly mansions. It still had those wildly-canted streets and almost gothic wooden buildings perched like swallows nests on the mountain wall.

Kind of a... living museum, if you like. Which is pretty much what the town has become. You can take walking tours or driving tours. You can also shop in a dozen or so tourist shops that offer higher than average quality Arizona arts and crafts.

The town is pretty much unspoiled. The scenery is uncluttered by Calvin Klein billboards or large golden arches. And as far as I can tell, the spectacular sunset I watched from a coffee shop in the centre of town that evening wasn't sponsored by anybody.

Warm in the daytime, chilly at night, sunshine all day long. It was a nice break for a winter-weary Canuck. I don't know that I'll ever get back to that town again, but I'd like to. And I'd like it even better if I found it just the way I left it. No tour buses. No Holiday Inns. No Taco Bells.

Of course, it's not going to stay unspoiled if idiots like me keep writing about it and singing its praises.

Fortunately, I forgot to mention its name.

Youths had no respect for snowboarder's disgrace

Dear Editor,

I am responding to your editorial on Feb. 12, "Athlete Robbed". I would like to share with you the reaction of some "Canadian sports fans" to the Ross Rebagliati medal situation.

I teach Grade 6 at Glad Park Public School in Stouffville. As part of our Language Arts class, I asked the students for their opinions in this affair, i.e. Ross Rebagliati winning, losing and then regaining the gold medal.

LETTERS

I was most impressed with their reactions. Almost unanimously, they felt that he should not have had the gold medal re-instated. Their reasoning was well thought out and what they had to say is important.

Unlike your editorial, they felt that what athletes, who are supported by

Canadian funds, do in their spare time is important, if they are going to represent Canada. Their reasoning was very simple — marijuana is an illegal substance, and Ross should not have been smoking it ever. He should not have done anything that would put his winning into jeopardy or that would embarrass his country.

To fully appreciate the full impact of this judgment, you should know that at least half of these students are avid

beginning snowboarders themselves.

My thinking as I went into this exercise was that they would have been as indignant as your editorial. As I listened to them — their arguments were well-informed and well-expressed —

they had no respect for this young person who had, in the words of one student, disgraced his country. Another perspective, from another age group,

Gerric Storr, Glad Park P.S., Stouffville

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about us

News
(905) 640-2100
Retail sales
(905) 640-2100
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(905) 640-2874
Distribution
(905) 640-2100
Fax
(905) 640-5477
E-Mail
thetrib@istar.ca
6244 Main St.,
Stouffville, Ont.
L4A 1E2

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