

SUN COMMENT

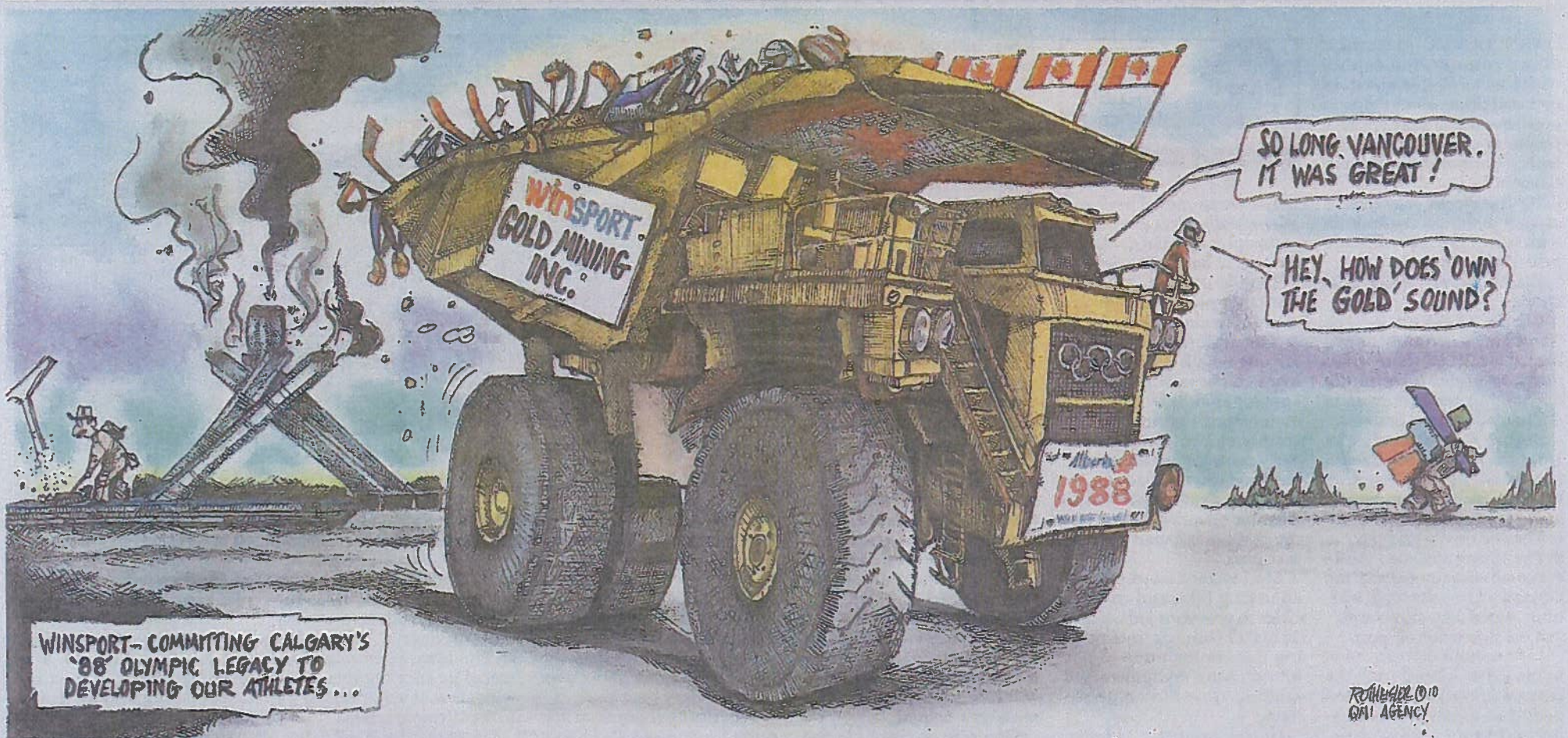
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World heard Canada roar

We can't justify spending billions on these Games, then starving our athletes of future funding

Vancouver's 2010 Winter Olympics was a game changer for Canada.

Our young people, our new immigrants, our long-time citizens, were swept up in a red-and-white storm of flag-waving patriotism the likes of which we have never seen.

That's something to be proud of and to carry forward.

The world heard Canada roar, heard Canadians say it's not enough for us just to show up anymore.

Our athletes erased — obliterated — the embarrassment of never having won gold on home soil.

We may not "own the podium" as our Olympic bureaucrats imagined it, but our athletes may take home the biggest chunk of

the golden top step. Incredible.

It's not cheap to compete at this level. The feds pumped \$55 million into Own the Podium over five years.

And most of the Canadian athletes competing in the Olympics trained at WinSport Canada facilities, a legacy of the 1988 Winter Games in Calgary.

Medals in skeleton, ski and snowboard cross, bobsled and ice dancing are the result — proof we're not just fast skaters, hard shooters and curlers.

And our women rock.

Our athletes' stories were inspiring, athletically and personally.

Recall, our first gold medalist, Alexandre Bilodeau on moguls, with his beloved brother, Frederic, who has cerebral palsy, cheering him on.

Amazing speedskater Clara Hughes winning her sixth Olympic medal and, at 37 years young, as impressive for her off-track accomplishments and charitable work.

The heart-wrenching perseverance of bronze medallist Joannie Rochette, skating through the worst

pain — the death of her mother at the Games.

We should be proud of our athletes who went for gold or broke, even if it meant losing a sure silver or bronze.

Anyone think Mellisa Hollingsworth didn't take her fifth-place finish in the skeleton hard, when she had been expected to win gold? If only some spoiled, multimillionaire professional athletes committed to their sports as seriously.

There was the selflessness of Jennifer Heil, Bilodeau and Hughes, who donated their federally-funded med-

al-winning prize money to charity.

The Games weren't flawless.

Hosting an Olympics is expensive — think billions — and excesses are sure to be exposed down the line.

But this isn't a repeat of Montreal's "Big Owe" Olympics fiasco in 1976. And, by hosting the Games, Vancouver now has a much-needed transit link to the airport, a new convention centre and athletic facilities.

Saddest of all was the death of Georgian luger Nodar Kumaritashvili on the controversial Whistler

sliding centre track, before the Games even started.

But long-term, no one will remember the lack of snow at Cypress, the fog in Whistler, the ice resurfer breaking down at the Oval, the failure to launch of one of the Olympic torch beams during the opening ceremony and a few disgruntled foreign journalists.

We'll remember the smiles, cheers, our flag, the party and our athletes.

And how can we justify spending billions on these Games, then starving our athletes out of funding going forward?

Oh, yeah ... and a gold medal for Canada in today's hockey final would be nice, too.

MICHAEL PLATT

Mayor has struggled in city without surging economy

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IAN ROBINSON

'Green' aldermen's carbon credibility takes a hit

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