



As I see it

by Peter Jaworski

The symbolism of speaking French

Stephen Harper is the newly-minted leader of the just as newly-minted Conservative Party of Canada.

The National Post made a big deal out of his election-in the main, positive. Columnist Andrew Coyne said the right guy won, and in the right party. Meanwhile, their editorial team also praised Harper and looked forward to the next election.

The Globe & Mail similarly gave the story the front page, even if their coverage was slightly less glowing.

One thing everyone commented on was Harper's ability to speak French.

Toronto Star columnist Chantal Hebert felt it necessary to point to Harper's mentioning of Quebec and of referring to French as Canada's founding language.

What's interesting about this is the extent to which French became an election issue. It's interesting not because of the impact that French has on our daily lives, or the various ways in which it might affect policy, but, rather, in the extent to which symbolism is part of the political game.

It should be fairly obvious the role French played in the leadership race. Pundits, columnists, and everyone in-between (myself included), commented on the French-speaking abilities, and disabilities, amongst the candidates. Some say it was a large part of the reason Belinda Stronach did not win-that and her status as a political neophyte.

So what gives? What is it about speaking French that is so important to securing leadership positions, and, well, becoming the governing party?

It is obvious that speaking French has something like no

impact on your ability to grasp economic concepts. You needn't have mastered *bonjour* and *je n'ai c'est pas* in order to get supply and demand curves, or trends in economic growth or decline.

Similarly, French is hardly necessary when you speak in Parliament, since all of what you say can be translated anyway. That's the purpose of those ear plugs that are attached to every member's desk. If you prefer to listen to politicians in French, you can just plug in.

It appears that the sole importance of speaking French is the symbolism involved in it. The symbolism of speaking a language a large proportion of Canadians use. The unspoken hint that says 'I'm sort of like you, in a way-I speak the same language.'

We look to simple symbols as part of our communication. What you're reading is just a set of symbols-words and sentences composed of individual letters that, when put together, hopefully convey meaning. When we speak we do so with a set of vocal symbols. When we marry, we do so with a ring that symbolizes eternity, with a white dress and a black tuxedo, with a kiss, and a grand ceremony. The whole thing is a complex of symbolism.

As I see it, part of the role of the Prime Minister is to be a symbol of Canada abroad, and a symbol for each of us within Canada. For those of us who seek to find meaning in broader groups-like Canadians from coast to coast to coast-it's important that our leader reflect who we are individually just a little bit.

In that way, we can find something to affiliate with and understand. French is just one obvious such link.



Sue McDonald with family pets, Jesse and Henk on her property in Kendal where she plans to operate a dog camp.

Dog camp mired in fees

Camp LotsaDogs is here to stay says its owner, Susan McDonald.

"I have done everything I can to try and comply with your rules, but they keep changing," she stated at Monday evening's council meeting.

Before McDonald purchased her property at 7413 White Road, Kendal, she checked with the clerk's department to find out what was required of her to operate a dog kennel on that site. She was told the property had to be at least five acres with an agricultural zoning, and she needed to be a member of the Canadian Kennel Club. Since McDonald knew she could meet these requirements, she went ahead and put an offer on the White Road property in

December.

McDonald was also told that before she could be issued a kennel license, the Planning Department would need a site plan of the property at the cost of \$850. When McDonald took possession of her property on January 22nd, the site plan costs had risen to \$3,000

and then they needed an elevation plan she says. Then I find out I have to widen my driveway to two lanes, and this I found out from the Board of Trade, McDonald told councillors. McDonald says she was also told that the the Ganaraska Region Conser-

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~ HAPPENINGS ~

Thursday, March 25
OAAA Minor Hockey Registration - at Orono Arena from 7 to 9 p.m. (first time players bring birth certificate). Also, Boys and Girls Baseball Registration.

Thursday, March 25
Orono Horticultural Society Workshop - Painting Flowers on Stones - with local artist Linda Smith. Orono United Church at 7:30 p.m. Paints provided. Bring flat rock and round #5 brush (brushes available for sale)

Saturday, April 3
Square Dance - 8 to 10 p.m. at Orono United Church in the main hall. Live music, refreshments, admission \$8.

Saturday, April 3
Grand Opening of Clarington's newest Museum and Archives - 62 Temperance St., Bowmanville from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Rare artifacts on display, refreshment and entertainment. Help celebrate the opening of the new museum.

Wednesday, April 14
Kendal Community Centre Annual General Meeting - 7 p.m., Kendal Community Centre, 6742 Newtonville Rd., Kendal.

Wednesday, April 21st
Turkey Supper and Euchre - Orono Oddfellows & Rebekah's Centre at 6 p.m. Tickets \$12 Advance tickets only - Call Norma 905-983-5358 or Irene 905-983-9590. Fundraising for a new roof (sponsored by Hall Board.)