

A step closer to bilingualism

Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson



For reasons more of ideology than of anything else, Ontario this week crept another step closer to official bilingualism.

To an orgy of mutual back-slapping by the cozy all-party club of MPPs who run things, the Legislature unanimously passed the French-language services bill.

What this all will cost no one will even guess. In fact, since the decision to proceed is ideological in nature, no one even cares. In establishment eyes, it is the right thing to do and the money is irrelevant.

Nor should anyone take seriously the idea that there won't be an effect on jobs in the public service. By definition, the already existing premium on being French-speaking has taken another quantum leap.

A considerable number of government jobs (Clerk of the Legislature, for example) are now barred to the 90 per cent of Ontarians who are unilingual Anglophones.

Still, in the main, the services bill just enshrines in law what has become practice over the years

far. It only applies where Francophones make up 10 per cent or more of the population or where they number at least 5,000.

This means Metro Toronto, with its 32,000 Francophones and 2.3 million other residents, is officially bilingual in terms of provincial government services.

How a situation like that will work in practice only time will tell. The bill is perhaps more important for what it left out than what it included.

Municipalities, for example, who provide most social services such as welfare and day care, are exempt from having to provide Francophone services.

It was the attempt to entrench such services in the constitution that caused the massive anti-bilingualism backlash in Manitoba a couple of years ago.

Other social service agencies, funded by the province but not operated by them, such as hospitals, and children's aid societies, may be designated bilingual by cabinet if it so desires.

The key word is "may". Conservative leader Larry Grossman suggested the new bill "does not guarantee rights; it does not guarantee the implementation of French-language services; it guarantees the government will consider the implementation."

As for the provincial government itself, the Liberals left themselves an out by leaving the power to exempt ministries with cabinet, although such exemptions cannot violate the "spirit" of the law.

For Serge Plouffe of the Ontario French-Canadian Association (ACFO), the big change is that Francophones now will "have a right to go to the courts in order to challenge the fact that the service is not there or if it is there, (that) the service is not good enough."

That's a fair analysis. The real question remains when the Liberals will stop pussyfooting and go the whole hog for the official bilingualism they so dearly want to impose.

After they get a majority, maybe?

Sunday status quo

Opening grocery stores on Sunday seems like a bit much for us.

We can understand the logic in Sunday openings for stores which cater to tourists and encourage family outings. The Hide House is a perfect example of this.

But last week when the major chain grocery stores in Georgetown opened shop, we had to wince.

Already some grocery stores in town are offering 24 hour shopping convenience. Grocery stores do not keep banker's hours. We really wonder if there are families who cannot do without buying their groceries on Sunday.

Some grocers will argue there is a demand for Sunday service. Other grocers will say if their competitors break the law and gain customers by doing so, they must do the same.

But why bring Sunday shopping to Georgetown? The issue really belongs at the hands of our government legislators and the courts.

As old-fashioned as it may seem, we still believe Sunday should be a quieter day when families can spend more time together. Many employees may not appreciate having to work on weekends, when friends and family are off. Also, our independently owned corner variety stores will probably lose business from the chain store giants, should Sunday openings be a permanent fixture.

Put to a vote, we'd cast our ballot for keeping Sunday as a special day.

Concerned people

The community owes a thank you to 23-year-old Brent Ferguson.

A member of the Burlington Braves football club, Mr. Ferguson came to the rescue of a girl who was attacked by a stranger. The assailant has now been charged with sexual assault.

Last week's attack illustrates two things. One is that there are still people out there willing to help those in trouble. Secondly, as the story unfolds, it makes us realize not everyone is willing to get involved.

Mr. Ferguson went one step further than we expect of most people. He actually caught the suspect. We and the police would certainly not advocate every citizen go to these lengths.

But it is our responsibility to help our police serve and protect. Apparently, some neighbors close to the scene where the girl was attacked last week did not respond to her screams. To keep our community safe from criminals, we need people who are concerned about each other.

Criminals need to know that they're outnumbered by residents who do want to get involved. As Mr. Ferguson says, "let's not let the criminals know the people are scared."

Buy locally

It's time to start buying Christmas gifts. If you're preparing for a trip out of Halton Hills for your shopping, think again.

Our town has just about everything you need for your yuletide gift-giving.

We have friendly sales clerks who are service-oriented and they'll gladly help you make a selection. We have businesses who care about the spirit of Christmas by contributing to local seasonal charities and displaying festive lights and ornaments around their shops.

We don't have the line-ups and parking problems you will find in larger malls to the west, south and east. We have a variety of one-of-a-kind shops to complement the group-buy bargains offered by chain stores.

We want our town to be a strong, vibrant commercial centre - not just a one-dimensional bedroom community. We prefer a healthy, local business economy because our municipality benefits from the taxes firms pay for the services we enjoy.

You can help contribute to this. Buy locally this Christmas.

My wish list

Staff comment

By Ani Pederian Herald Columnist

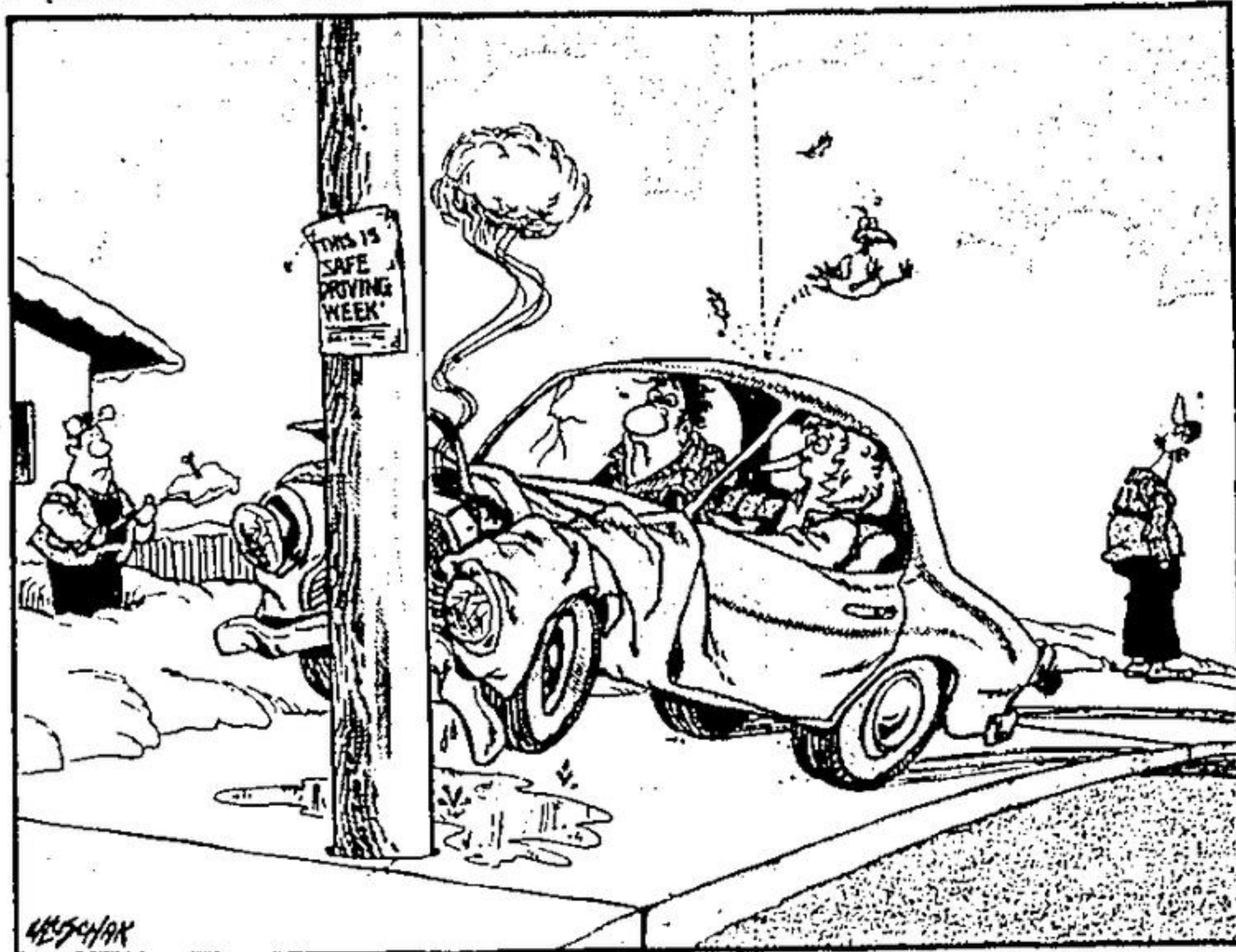


Dear Santa, This is my wish list. Would you please make it bright and sunny every morning when I have to wake up, especially on Monday mornings? It's so hard to leave a warm bed while hubby is curled up still in sweet slumber. Warm sunny rays may make it less difficult, especially in winter. Snow on Christmas morning would be nice, but not on the roads or driveways, please. And none of that biting wind, either, please, to make the post-Christmas dinner walk only a two-minute dash to the corner and back. Please make all the spiders take a year off from making cobwebs under my kitchen cupboards. They make it so obvious I haven't vacuumed for a long while. Even my husband notices. And that pile of shirts etc. to be ironed, would you make that messy mountain disappear into neatly hung clothing in a neat closet? Maybe you can inspire Berge to surprise me in this. How about sprinkling a little love potion on the eyes of that dashing

young man my sister has recently taken a liking to. Maybe you should make him a little less shy while you're at it, Santa - but mind, not too much.

Santa, please keep Monday night council meetings short and sweet. Help town planners Ian Keith and Bruce Maclean to speak like the rest of us and fight that irresistible urge to chatter away in planning lingo. Give town engineer Bob Austin more of those Cheshire cat grins, and make the dent around the fire chief's halo less so (a bigger hat, perhaps, Santa?). Santa, please always let me find hope, even when it seems everything is darkness and strife, and every phone call a complaining call. Let the sweetness of life break through and lift my spirits. Most of all, this Christmas, Santa, I wish for real peace and goodwill. So often that's just a traditional phrase pulled into use at this time of year, uttered by people who are thinking up their next nasty trick. Let the hurts of the past year wash away, and no new hurts be created, Santa. Let there be contentment.

Dear Ani, What an eloquent letter from one so young! It's so nice to receive a note from a person concerned about people rather than gifts. I'll talk to my elves and some other special people to see what they can do about your wish list. Merry Christmas, Love Santa



"I DID ALL I COULD - I BLEW MY HORN AT IT!"

Initiatives to improve car safety

During the past year, Transport Canada has introduced several important initiatives to improve road safety. Among these, a federal proposal to make daytime running lights mandatory by 1989; efforts to encourage the use of seat belts and child restraint systems; and government announcements advising drivers not to drink, have highlighted Transport Canada's 1986 road safety initiatives.

"Safe Driving Week, from Dec. 1-7, should serve as a reminder to all Canadians that road safety, good driving habits and responsible attitudes are the best ways of ensuring year round safe roads," the Minister said.

One of Mr. Crosbie's first announcements, when he assumed his new portfolio in June, was a plan to have all new cars, multi-purpose vehicles, trucks and buses fitted with daytime running lights by 1989, a requirement which will improve the noticeability of vehicles. Use of such lights, turned on automatically by the ignition switch, could reduce the number of daytime multi-vehicle collisions by 10 to 20 per cent.

Seat belt use plays a major part in road safety. Mr. Crosbie strongly urges all Canadians to use available seat belts and child restraints. The number of seatbelt users is improving; however, a safe car means secure passengers, use your safety belt at all times.

"There is no reason why Canada cannot achieve the 90 per cent and greater use rates observed in other Western countries," the Minister said.

Nova Scotia drivers recorded the highest rate of seatbelt wear with an 80.3 per cent average, up four times the use level of 1984. Nova Scotia legislated mandatory seat belt use at the beginning of 1985. Prince Edward Island and Alberta are the only two remaining provinces without mandatory seat belt use legislation.

British Columbia drivers had the second highest seatbelt use rate in the 1985 report, with 69.4 per cent, a level unchanged from 1984.

"For years, Transport Canada has carried out tests to study the effectiveness of seat belts in saving lives," Mr. Crosbie said. "We propel cars into a wall at our Blainville Test Centre, just north of Montreal, to ensure that manufacturers have complied with various federal safety standards."

"We also observe the effect on unrestrained mannequins in vehicle crashes. Transport Canada strongly supports the use of seat belts, but without driver intelligence and responsibility, our studies and regulations serve no purpose."

"Each year, children under five years of age are being killed or maimed in motor vehicles," Mr. Crosbie said. "If they are secured in

an approved restraint, which is properly installed in the vehicle with a top tether strap anchored to the vehicle, then the chances of survival are dramatically improved."

Transport Canada will require all car manufacturers to place anchorage locations for the top strap in all vehicles. Some do already.

Citizens' forum

Only in Halton Hills

Dear Sir, According to the local papers, the firm of G.A. Ventin Architects of Simcoe was awarded a four million dollar contract to design the first town hall for Halton Hills, at an in-camera meeting.

It is also mentioned that they did not leave any written material or identify their team members. Surely this must have been part of the requirements when submitting proposals.

As we have found out, however, elected officials in Halton don't always follow their own procedures, as witness, the Speyside Support Group's court challenge on the decision to close Speyside Public School.

Councillor Sheldon spoke to the press about in camera meetings and expressed the opinion that when proposals are as close as a tie vote, as indicated, the contract should go to a local firm.

Then she was ambushed and vociferously attacked for expressing her views. Unfortunately, Councillor Sheldon thought we lived in a democracy where free speech has been taken for granted for decades.

Councillor Bonnette recognizes the value of free speech as he reminds us of the recent Remembrance Day ceremonies. However, he also likens Councillor Sheldon to General Custer asking Sitting Bull for a rematch.

I believe, Mr. Bonnette, that if Sitting Bull read the newspaper stories, he would say you "speak with forked tongue".

Bully for you, Councillor Sheldon for expressing your views and enlightening the public on how council reaches decisions. Bully for you, Councillor Elliott for your support and views, also.

Only in Halton Hills, eh? Pity! Douglas A. Ford, RR4, Acton

Play was superb

Dear Sir, Anyone who hasn't attended Brigadoon at the John Elliott Theatre is missing perhaps the finest musical show ever presented in Georgetown.

Take it from one who has seen it three times. And each time seemed better than the first.

Globe has done a superlative job of casting. From leading lady and man, Helen Tobin and Dave Shrubsole to those with smaller roles, like Vic Dunleavy who plays the leading lady's father, the actors fit their parts like a glove and display acting as well as vocal ability.

Seats for the final week are going fast, but there are still some left for tonight, Thursday and Friday and possibly an odd one for Saturday.

I'd advise hastening to the Royal LePage office where tickets are available. You'll never get better value for an \$8 expenditure. Walter Biehn

Question: Do you think John Turner will win the next federal election?

In Your opinion

Is Turner suitable leader?



BRUCE McEWEN: "I don't think so. I really don't think we've had him. If there's enough of the ten came back Liberals. They Mulroney were responsible wouldn't have a deficit. We need a more conservative group in government."



JOHN LIGHT: "He might be able to, probably. He could do as good a job as Mulroney anyway."



BRUCE ANDREWS: "I don't know. Enough people are disaffected with John Turner as with Brian Mulroney. I don't think enough people are for John Turner right now."



SCOTT PETERSON: "I don't care if he does or not. I'm just not interested."



BOB CHRISTIE: "He has a good chance. I don't think the NDP will win. It's going to be between the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives again."

POETS CORNER

Only words pass between us like shuttlecocks between two players widely separated. I'd rather skip the game and share the sidelines. -MARLOWE C. DICKSON, R.R.1 Beeton, Ontario

GAMES