

Opinion

Sick day gratuities not affordable

The newly-elected provincial Tories are making changes to the way things are done and money is spent in Ontario. Here's a suggestion for change. The Ontario Taxpayers Federation reports retirement bonuses to retiring teachers for unused sick days cost York Region taxpayers \$1.9 million in 1993. It adds that as of the same year, the province's school boards are liable for payments of more than \$900 million to future retiring teachers.

The York public school board paid out \$1,525,572 in retirement gratuities in 1993, according to the



Viewpoint

Paula Crowell

report. The separate board paid out \$407,516 and is recorded as having \$12 million in unfunded liability toward these payouts. The law says employees cannot be paid more than half their final year's salary in gratuities.

The Ontario Taxpayers Federation is asking the provincial government to legislate an end to such payouts. In most boards these

payouts are defined in the collective agreement signed with the teachers' union. But the question that arises is, why should teachers, or anyone else, be paid for the sick days they don't use. Such policies are rarely found in the private sector, and if they are, they're not funded by taxpayers.

Some boards like the separate board in Waterloo County and the Windsor Board of Education don't pay such gratuities. Others have reduced the payout amount for teachers hired more recently.

And it's not just teachers who receive such a golden

handshake. Many municipal employees are also credited for their unused sick days as are government employees at the provincial and federal level.

Such bonuses are not in keeping with the times in which we live. It is not enough for school boards to gradually ease out of this responsibility through the collective bargaining process. The provincial government should introduce legislation which prohibits all publicly-funded organizations from paying out sick day gratuities to all employees from the top down.

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DID SOMEONE MENTION DOUBLOONS?



Know any ugly words?

The only system of currency with any real value is the one we all carry around in our heads. Language, which is made up of pennies and nickels and dimes and quarters that we call words.

Words from one language don't always play harmonically in another. Bob Dylan sang that Spanish is a loving tongue, but to French purists, it is the language of washerwomen. Most Anglophones find the sound of German guttural unpleasant.

I'm not sure how Germans would describe the noise we English speakers make, but "barbaric" would probably cover it.

Makes you wonder if there could ever be a universal language, pleasing to all ears. A half a century ago, a Norwegian author by the name of Agnar Mykle wrote a book called Song of the Red Ruby. In it, he fantasized about creating the perfect two-word introduction between a man and a woman. The man would look at the woman and murmur "Tananarivo?"

And the woman, if she was available and interested, would whisper back "Atacama."

"Just two words," wrote Mykle, "would be enough to give happiness and smiling freedom to all mankind."

Unfortunately, in the nasty '90s, any guy walking up to a strange woman and muttering "Tananarivo?" is liable to earn himself two rather different words.

Some words are almost universal. "Mama" is virtually identical in all the Romance languages. A psychologist at New York University claims that the nonsense word "juvalamu" is intensely pleasing to just about everybody, while the word "chakaka" is horrible to the ears of English speakers. Isn't there a rock group called



Basic Black

Arthur Black

Chakaka? If not, there will be soon.

You don't have to be a poet to know that the English language is full of beautiful words. "Flange" is one of my favorites. I also like "quiver." Somebody once asked American linguist Wilfred J. Funk for his opinion on beautiful English words. He responded with a list of 10: chimes, dawn, golden, hush, lullaby, luminous, melody, mist, murmuring, and tranquil.

As for ugly words, well, English has those too. A few years ago, members of the National Association of Teachers of Speech came up with a list of the 10 ugliest words in our language.

The nominations are: cacophony, crunch, flatulent, gripe, jazz, phlegmatic, plump, plutocrat, sap and treachery.

All of which makes me suspect the NATS suffer from pickle implantation in an anatomical region suffering from negligible sunshine. You want ugly? How about "victuals"? Try "flak". Or "glottis". Or "kibosh".

Of course, I have an unfair advantage over the National Association of Teachers of Speech: NATS is an American organization, whereas I am Canadian.

We Canucks know the true meaning of ugly words. Didn't we give the world a brand new word that sets a whole new standard for foul mouthing?

Mulroney. Now that's talking dirty.

Adam

by Brian Bassett

