

BEST EDITORIAL PAGE

THE SUBURBAN WEST ISLAND

This editorial page demonstrates tireless advocacy on the part of the newspaper and its editor and staff, as well as a high level of engagement among its readership, as evidenced by the well-written letters. The content, including the editorial cartoon, encourages the readers to think critically and to take an active interest in their community. This frontrunner clearly works hard to help its readers make sense of complex and controversial issues of importance to the community.

NUNATSIQA NEWS

This editorial page stood out in its class for the swift kick Jim Bell's editorial gives the government on its election promise of ending social promotion in the school system. The lively letters also demonstrate the community's engagement with the newspaper. The Nunatsiq News' editorial page clearly frames an issue of importance to the community with passion and a good dose of persuasion. Policymakers would be hard-pressed not to react.

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EDITORIAL

Nunavut schools: stop the lying, stop the fantasizing

Most of us heard Nunavut's new premier, Peter Taptuna, respond late last month to the territorial election campaign's biggest issue. He declared his government will bring an immediate end to a longstanding practice that parents, employers and young people are sick and tired of: social promotion. That's a brave, unequivocal commitment, founded on a vision that links education to jobs and economic development. We wish him the best of luck. Over the past year and half, numerous Nunavut residents have used that simple — and somewhat oversimplified — demand as a stand-in for a complex set of grievances about the quality of education that have festered since the 1980s. But though the idea of getting rid of social promotion sounds simple, it won't be easy. It's rooted in formal policies and informal practices that predate the creation of Nunavut. And it's linked to many other issues, most of which became weapons-grade headaches for the department many years ago. They include attendance, evaluation, standards, language of instruction and the perennial shortage of Inuit-language teachers. So it's unlikely that the Government of Nunavut can move on social promotion without at the same time moving on at least some of those matters. To be fair, the Department of Education doesn't advocate pure social promotion. Their way is somewhat different and they use the phrase "continuous progress" to name it. It works within a way of thinking about education they use more jargon to describe: "inclusive education" and "differentiated instruction."

This means students, regardless of level, still jump from grade to grade within their age group. To make this work, students are supposed to get "continuous learning assessments" within individualized support plans. That's the feature that makes "continuous progress" different than plain old social promotion.

But the Auditor General of Canada's recent report on the Department of Education revealed the GN's inclusive education scheme isn't working. That's because 100 many students don't get the assessments and special help they need to make their support plans work.

"We found that documentation did not state whether the students received the needed services or adjustments about 75 percent of the time." The result? Nunavut now gets social promotion by default.

That's just one of many findings contained in the auditor general's education report. It confirms what many teachers, parents and employers have long believed: that Nunavut's school system descends ever more deeply each year into a bottomless sinkhole of futility.

The auditor general's biggest finding, of course, is that the Department of Education will not meet its most delusional goal: a bilingual Inuktitut-English education system by 2019.

That goal exists because in 2008, the second legislative assembly Krazy-

EDITORIALS The Suburban QUEBEC'S LARGEST ENGLISH WEEKLY NEWSPAPER ESTABLISHED 1965 • VOL. L, NO. XXXVII

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A question of "values"

Let's put aside for a few moments all the pros and cons of the PQ's proposed "Values Charter." Enough has been written, with sufficient passion, on all sides. But what has not been sufficiently debated, even by those who favor this proposal, are the optical, tactical and legal errors of its presentation. We need to say something about that now.

It is important to look at these errors because even the fiercest opponents of the PQ have generally given it credit for knowing how to manipulate its agenda even if it sometimes did so on the edges of reason and regulation. The handling of this "values" issue has been so absurdly managed, that reasonable people may question the fundamental motives behind it.

To begin with the very name is inapplicable. The values that Quebec stands for are already outlined in Quebec's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In some ways the Quebec Charter may even be superior to the Federal one. Quebec's Charter gives at least a passing recognition of property rights; protects the inviolability of the home from state interference (sec.7) and even clearly sets out guarantees of no discrimination based on language (sec.10). This proposal of the Marois administration may be many things, but it cannot — with any degree of rationality — be called a "Charter of Values." That's been done. And not too shabbily.

What then is this proposal that has caused such discord and division? It is really nothing more than a public sector "Lobby Law." And it is in that context that it should be debated. For it is in that context that it fails to meet standards of equity and equality and must be remedied.

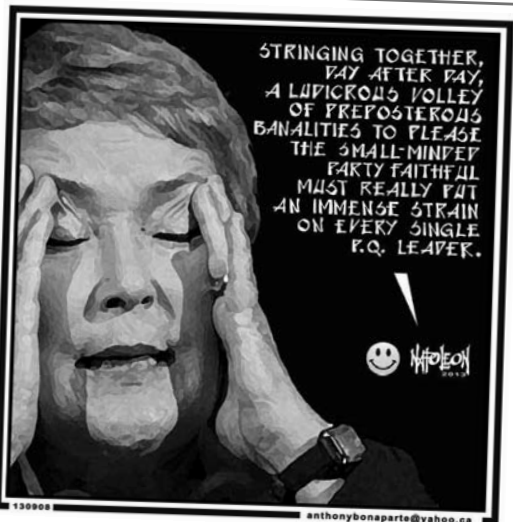
It is quite reasonable and acceptable in the western liberal pluralistic tradition to put up a firewall between faith and state. From American President James Madison stating, "The civil administration shall take no cognizance of religion" at the beginning of the 19th century, to the French "modèle Républicain" inspired by Jean Jaurès at the end of that century, freedom of religion has generally been accepted to mean freedom from religion as well. Certainly that religion shall not influence, or be seen to influence, the making of laws and legislation that must be universal in their scope and application.

Now the PQ seeks to extend the definition of "influence" to include not only the foundations of faith but the exhibition of elements of faith as well by banning the wearing of religious symbols by anyone working in the public service. Here is the first failure of the PQ proposal. As much as the drafters of this "Charter" were supposedly inspired by former Premier René Lévesque's similar initiative which has proven quite successful, the PQ took it too far on one count and not far enough on another.

Firsdly, reasonable people can put forward the argument that where laws are made; where justice is meted out; where authority exercises its rule and where young minds are formed, that these areas of endeavour should be free of religious symbolism. Not just because of a dogmatic devotion to secularism, but to put all faith communities on an equitable basis in the public, and publicly funded, square. Therefore, the argument continues, there should be no religious symbolism in the legislature, courts, police or public schools. This point of view has some basis in reason. Where the PQ failed is that they took it too far. To ban religious symbols in the entire public service flies in the face not only of reason, but of their own arguments that we have just set forth. To cite just one example, there can be no possible prejudice to society if medical professionals wear religious symbols. Hospitals are places where people should be made well. There are no laws or philosophies being propagated not just take a broad brush to everything.

Secondly, on another point, this lobby proposal does not go far enough. If the PQ truly does not want religion influencing politics, how can it boldly claim to leave in what has come to be called the "Christian exemption." Premier Marois and several of her Ministers have made the argument that the cross in the National Assembly (and one supposes the one in Montreal's City Hall) are exempt because they relate to Quebec culture and history. Well, an opportunity to educate Quebecers. And indeed every important voice in French media has ridiculed the PQ's position on this issue and pointed this out. The cross on Mount Royal has historic significance. It is a commemoration of the crosses put up by Cartier and de Maisonneuve. It denotes no societal obedience to the Church. The cross in the Assembly Duplessis in 1938-1937 to manifest an indefensible intimacy between Church and State. These glaring inconsistencies have not been addressed.

The central question that puts the PQ who favour total secularism in the public sector a law that cements age-old prejudices of religion and bigotry. The answers to these questions have been emphasized so far they may stem



Letters to the editor

Bill 14's possible end in committee

With regard to Premier Marois' comments last week that Bill 14 may end in committee, bravo to your Editor Beryl Wajzman and many thanks to him for going to the National Assembly and making us all proud in his protest against Bill 14. He did it in a dignified and brilliant manner. Many nationalists are clueless to his, and your paper's, aims of defending civil rights. He has always made it clear that the French culture should be preserved but not at the expense of another culture.

ed street. My wife pointed that out when she crossed the street with our children in their stroller. She had to go onto the adjacent street in order to get onto the sidewalk. I have seen buses swerve out of the way and cross over the middle of the street to avoid these new curbs. They are dangerous, destructive, and they are a problem looking for a solution. The real issue should be getting that ditch constructed at the intersection of Westminster and Sherbrooke.

Michael Helfield, Côte St. Luc

Shelley Boomhower Slater, Montreal Congrats on bringing the dangers of Bill 14 to francophones

Your editor should be congratulated yet again for all his hard work to bring to the surface, to francophones and in the French media, the negative implications of this deplorable Bill 14.

Westminster's new corner sidewalks

I wrote the Town of Montreal West and now I am writing *The Suburban* because something needs to be done on a potential safety hazard. The corners of Westminster and Curzon and Westminster and Parkside have new sidewalks projections. This is a very dangerous situation on several levels. It seems to have been done to slow down traffic; but emergency vehicles will not be able to pass when the other side is busy. The sidewalk does not have to stick out as much as it does. Also when turning into those corners the traffic blocks your way. This situation really needs to be corrected.

Montreal West Mayor responds to 'danger spot' allegation

Concerning "Montreal West danger spot" (Letters to the editor, Sept. 4, 2013), it is important to correct some errors in the writer's text.

Not letting our guard down

The hard work, dedication and perseverance of your paper and your editor are paying off! Thank you and all the others involved with ensuring that our rights and freedoms do not get compromised. Ne lachez pas... bon courage!

Get rid of those nasty curbs

Montreal West's Mayor Masella should consider removing the ridiculous (and newly constructed) corners that were just installed on Westminster Ave. They look nice, and have reflectors, but they narrow an already congest-

THE EASTERN DOOR

While this editorial page is disappointing in its lack of viewpoints, we start reading Steve Bonspiel's editorial as strangers, yet by the end, we want to join hands in friendship with those who have stepped forward. The editorial pulls no punches in explaining the devastating impacts these schools still have on the community today and challenges the reader not to look away.

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Editorial Page

Residential schools are a lesson for all

STEVE BONSPIEL
THE EASTERN DOOR

A docudrama on TV Tuesday chronicled a storyline so intense many people couldn't watch the whole thing.

"We Were Children" chronicled the lives of Glen Anaqood and Lynn Hart, two brave residential survivors who were mentally, physically and sexually abused as young children in the 1950s and 60s in Saskatchewan. Residential schools had an impact on their lives, regardless if we attended them or not. Hopefully this film will help more people to understand what those innocent children went through.

The trickle-down effect of intergenerational trauma is highlighted everyday.

Things like lateral violence, severely divided communities, and for some, the shame of being Native, are just a hint of being impacted these schools had on the many generations following the nearly 130-year history of residential schools.

That's not to mention the many forms of abuse that plague far too many of our homes.

Much of it comes from residential schools.

Prisons and jails representing United, Catholic, Presbyterian churches beat our children they spoke their language, they were mentally abused, they were helpless kids derogated, embarrassing them in front of their peers; treating them like they were sub-human.

They made the children out to be villains in the name of a higher power.

Prisons and jails also sexually assaulted them regularly, with impunity.

No one was there to stand up to these monsters. Even parents who sent their children to these schools had no clue what was truly going on.

Residential schools were a pe-

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is coming to Montreal April 24-27 and it is a chance to show our love and support for the victims.

The last residential school closed in 1996. This isn't ancient history we are talking about here; this is an ongoing saga that will continue for generations to come.

Out of the sorrow and grief, however, comes strength.

There are more and more of our people getting a good education and carving out solid careers today than ever before.

Our past is sordid, full of horrible stories that shaped who we are today.

But the future is bright.

We Were Children further underlined the struggles our people went through, alone in a foreign language, rife with stresses children should never have to endure.

We should thank those who persevered and stayed strong. Many won't tell us the stories from those days, some are too ashamed.

At a certain point in the film, he said he hoped people would one day listen to him and believe his story.

That day has finally come.

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