

The Suburban

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Grow up Quebec! Yes, bilingualism means higher pay! Quelle surprise!

We're used to the OQLF coming out with twisted and nonsensical reports that draw irrational conclusions and lead to rights-abusing actions. What is less frequent is when media — even nationalist French media — give it credence and incite and publicize hysterical reaction. Yet that is what happened this past week.

The Office released its analysis of the 2016 census that it claims demonstrated that those who use only English at work earn an average of \$46,047 a year while those who use only French at work earn an average of \$38,346. To draw those conclusions from census data is highly questionable since the census doesn't ask those questions in any even indirect relation. However, OQLF twisting facts is not new. It has to justify its existence after all.

What was more shocking was the Journal de Montréal's overblown coverage of it. It immediately gave a half page to Jean-Paul Perrault, president of Impératif français — one of Quebec's most intolerant nationalist groups — for a screed in which he called the OQLF's findings "Insulting and absolutely unacceptable." He of course never thought of examining its methodology.

Though we disagree with the Journal's nationalist bent, it is perfectly legitimate to hold its positions. What is not legitimate, is burying in the same story respected French academics disagreement with jumping to conclusions on the report. It's fine to be a nationalist. It's not rational to want your "nation" bankrupt.

Bilingualism is a marketable asset. And guess what? The international language of business is English! In that same Journal story, Jean-Pierre Corbeil, a Laval University sociologist, explained that the numbers are skewed because many of those who use English at work are executives — some brought in from other countries to work in the Quebec divisions of foreign companies — and the language of those companies is English. Globalization is a reality he said.

The Quebec government is constantly trying to get foreign investment. The closest foreign investors are Americans. And they speak English. So those Quebec employees who Amazon or Moderna hire who are bilingual will have higher managerial positions which come with higher salaries because they can communicate with the Quebec public in French and with their employers in English. But Prof. Corbeil's comments were buried in small type in the story not in block letter headlines that were given over to Perrault.

François Vaillancourt, professor of economics at Université de Montréal, has said that there is actually a move toward empowering unilingual Francophones in major companies to learn English so that they can be promoted and benefit from higher salaries. The argument of Perrault is inane. It is as if the nationalists want to penalize those Quebecers — French and English — who bring more talent to the workplace.

The 2021 census demonstrates a far different picture. Why the OQLF didn't use those figures are clear. It wouldn't make its political point. That census demonstrates that a bilingual Montrealer makes an average 40% more in income than a unilingual francophone OR anglophone! Unilingual workers in Montreal, whether anglophone or francophone, have an average annual income of \$43,280, compared with \$60,650 for their bilingual colleagues. Quelle surprise! Of course they do. They have more skills and are compensated for them. Just as skilled workers are paid more than unskilled workers. Would the nationalists be happier if unskilled nationalist workers made the same as skilled nationalists? Decidedly not. In fact, Montreal, Quebec City and Gatineau have the highest rates of bilingualism in Canada! Whatever the nationalists think, everybody — French and English — wants to be paid more for their skills and understand what skills to acquire to get paid more.

Would you hire a doctor or mechanic on a political basis that you object to the fact that they may have too many skills? No! You want the most skilled people you can get working on your body or your car. Quebec has had enough of a brain drain and sacrificed enough talent and treasure on the altar of nationalism. That's why we're not growing. That's why Quebec gets \$12.8 billion of Ottawa's national \$18 billion in transfer payments. We're stuck in the big muddy of hysteria and hate and foreign investors aren't that interested in dealing with it. Quebec is not that big a market. And the Journal's scare headlines don't help.



Letters to the Editor

Time for sensors to shorten traffic light times

Every day, Montreal drivers wait for pedestrian signals when no one is crossing. Not only does this block traffic unnecessarily, but there is significant environmental cost. Cote St. Luc Rd/Rosedale is a good example, where pedestrian volume is low, traffic volume is high, yet four-way reds (lasting 25 seconds) run 24/7. Can we do better?

Push buttons are an obvious solution, but Montreal says they're not safe enough. Montreal worries push buttons might not be pressed, and would rather have round-the-clock pedestrian signals, just in case. This leads to excessive GHG emissions, and promotes speeding to make up for lost time.

In my backyard, I have a security light with an infrared motion sensor. It has a range of 10m and a radius of 180d. It is designed to detect humans with bad intentions, but, so far, has only lit up raccoons and cats. If we can sense raccoons at night, why can't we sense pedestrians standing at a street corner?

Well, we can. Whether by infrared or optical sensors, or low-tech push buttons, traffic lights can know when pedestrians are present. Google "smart pedestrian signals" for more info. If pedestrians are sensed, their signals are activated, and drivers can also be alerted by special lights and tones. At night, corners and crosswalks can be spotlighted and pedestrians would be hard to miss. If no pedestrians,

their signals are suppressed and drivers get more green time.

Montreal talks endlessly about environmental protection and better traffic flow. Its pedestrian signals are well intentioned, but overall, a failure on both fronts. Given climate change has high importance in Quebec, shouldn't our provincial government have some comment? Do they not see that tens of thousands of vehicles in Montreal are idling multiple times a day for nothing? And why haven't environmental groups protested? Crickets here too.

We could go back to the 1990s where pedestrians crossed on full greens, had the right of way, and drivers waited. And, as far as I know, accident rates were no higher than today. Or, we can learn from our raccoons and invest in promising technology. Raccoon signals are the way to go. Why wait?

*Norman Sabin
Cote St Luc*

Bilingualism

The competition between English and French for the hearts and tongues of Quebecers is in a new phase. The threat of separation is no longer a billy club keeping French in the forefront of our preoccupations, and, as French nationalists, unlike well-meaning but misguided anglophones admit, French can't hold its own without a legislative leg-up.

Numbers are their own language, and

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7575 Trans-Canada Highway, Suite 500, St. Laurent, QC H4T 1V6
(514) 484-1107
suburban@thesuburban.com www.thesuburban.com

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