

the federal government began to right the old wrongs in part by providing services in French and hiring more francophones.

It also passed an act of Parliament in 1969. The Official Languages Act was designed to quell calls for Quebec's independence. Its architect was Pierre Trudeau and his purpose was to satisfy other Quebec intellectuals by making federal services bilingual across Canada. The notion that some federal employees might not want to become bilingual did not appeal to Mr. Trudeau. The fact that there might be no demand for it in certain regions did not concern him. The cost of this venture went unestimated.

Twenty-five years later what do we find? Has the purpose of the act been fulfilled? Is Quebec satisfied? With the expenditure of over \$600 million a year is Quebec now more comfortable within Confederation? I should say not. Quebec is closer than ever before to separation and the Bloc Quebecois is calling the act a failure.

On April 12 the Commissioner for Official Languages tabled a report that describes in detail not how civil servants across this land have embraced bilingualism, not how services are now adequate in both languages, not how the administration of the policy has been cost effective, no. The commissioner reported a litany of bilingual woe across Canada.

Many offices designated as bilingual can hardly deliver the service. Offices that have virtually no demand are hounded by the commissioner's language police to display bilingual signage. Imagine a Canada employment centre in Saskatoon being rebuked by the commissioner for putting up an ad for a job that was not translated perfectly. This rebuke came in response to one complaint and this is in Saskatoon. The commissioner forced the letter of the law upon an unwilling office.

Let me talk about a small post office in my constituency in the community of Sardis, B.C. The Official Languages Act says that where there is a significant demand for two languages, the service shall be provided by the Government of Canada. There is no definition of the word significant in the act although it does define a bilingual district as an area where 10 per cent of the population speaks the minority language.

To transfer the meaning of the word significant to my constituency, it would require a population of at least 8,000 people with French as their mother tongue to require services in French. After the last census the government determined there was a significant number of francophones who needed bilingual services in the tiny Sardis post office.

What does the word significant mean to the government? One point seven per cent of the population identifies their mother tongue as French. That is 1.7 per cent. Far fewer actually speak the language. That is their mother tongue. To top it off there was not one request in the post office for service in French, not one

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ever. Yet bilingual service must be provided. This is just one example of a silly policy that becomes horrendously expensive when it is repeated in different ways thousands of times across Canada.

It is no wonder bilingualism costs \$660 million every year. That is only the official figure. Add in the administrative inefficiencies, enforcement, lost opportunities and the opportunity costs and the real world figure is much higher.

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A comprehensive study done by Scott Reid says it seems reasonable to set this overhead cost at approximately 5 per cent of all public service staffing costs or \$951 million per year.

Donald Savoie, a noted Canadian scholar, hikes the figure to 20 per cent.

Is this incredible cost necessary to hold Canada together? Are French and English bound only by the glue of this frustrating, burdensome regulation, inefficiency and waste? Why maintain a charade of bilingualism when after trying and spending for 25 years people still do not want it?

If the loss of the Official Languages Act would cause Quebec to separate then the act must be one of the main pillars on which this country rests. We managed for a century without such an act. Is bilingualism really the substance of Canadian unity? I do not believe it.

Canada is much greater than that. Canada possesses the only cords strong enough to bind a nation together. They are not the shackles of language law, they are historic ties, unity within diversity, the bonds of shared sacrifice, shared elements of culture, shared hopes and values, bandaged where necessary with generosity and good will.

Petty arguments over language cannot sever the fundamental oneness felt between all Canadians. Like a storm on the ocean, there may be tumult above but beneath the waves the deep waters lie undisturbed.

I am grieved that the Bloc Quebecois, along with other intellectuals, has created such a storm in Quebec. Even though the problems of inequity are largely resolved, the media and the politicians have for 20 years repeated their perception that vast inequities still persist. They have trumpeted this concept and held out false promises to persuade people to pursue them in their folly.

What will be the result of their actions? Every Canadian of every group will suffer, chief among them the people of Quebec.

I question the attitude of the Bloc when I hear of its support for unilingualism in Quebec, asserting at the same time that even if Quebec separates the federal government should force bilingualism on English Canada. This is not the spirit of the tolerance and generosity that has helped make Canada one of the