

Ottawa Sun

Date: MAR 22 2007

Page: 19

Schools earn educational awards

Several local schools have come out on top during the presentation of the Fraser Institute's Garfield Weston Awards for Excellence in Education. The French-language Catholic board's Terre-des-Jeunes was the second runner up in the Improvement in Academics category and Montfort received an honourable distinction.

Other schools that received honourable distinctions were: Our Lady of Victory, and in the Overall Academic Achievement category, First Avenue and Katimavik. The awards were presented in Toronto on Tuesday.

Le Droit

Date: MAR 22 2007

Page: 8



Gratton

« Woodstock-in-Québec »

Le 22 mars. Il y a dix ans, nous étions 10000 Franco-Ontariens à crier « Montfort fermé; JAMAIS! » dans un Centre municipal d'Ottawa plein à craquer.

(À noter que ma chronique sur cette journée historique sera publiée dans un cahier spécial « Montfort » de 28 pages qui sera inséré dans notre édition de samedi).

Vous vous souvenez de cette journée? Quelle question. Comment l'oublier...?

J'arrivais d'une tournée du sud de l'Ontario durant laquelle j'avais tenté de me débrouiller uniquement en français. De Windsor à London, en passant par Burlington, Oshawa et Woodstock. Et partout où je suis passé, que ce soit au bureau des permis de conduire de London ou à l'hôpital de Burlington pour ne nommer que ces deux endroits, j'ai été incapable de me faire servir en français.

Le but de ce périple était de savoir, dans le cadre de la lutte SOS Montfort, si une personne unilingue française peut vivre en Ontario sans devoir apprendre l'anglais. Inutile de vous redire la conclusion...

Mais de cette tournée, je me souviens surtout de mon passage à Woodstock, une petite communauté agricole située à environ 30 minutes de London.

J'avais rencontré là-bas une dame âgée d'environ 70 ans du nom de Fernande Proulx. Elle m'avait raconté qu'elle avait élevé six enfants à Woodstock et qu'ils avaient tous fréquenté l'école primaire et secondaire de langue française. Mais elle avait ajouté que tous ses enfants avaient épousé des anglophones et qu'à la maison, enfants et petits-enfants parlaient tous l'anglais.

« On dirait qu'ils sont gênés de parler français, avait-elle laissé tomber.

– Mais pourquoi? lui avais-je demandé.

– Je ne sais pas. »

J'ai vite obtenu réponse à ma question en me promenant dans ce village. Il y avait l'école primaire Sainte-Marguerite-Bourgeoys qui était fréquentée par une soixantaine d'élèves francophones de la maternelle à la huitième année. Une belle petite école.

C'est au secondaire que ça se gâtait... Au secondaire, les élèves francophones devaient fréquenter l'école Sainte-Marie, une « école » aménagée sous le même toit que l'école secondaire de langue anglaise Saint Mary's High School. Les adolescents francophones et anglophones partageaient donc cour d'école, gymnase, bibliothèque, cafétéria, etc.. Mais à la commission scolaire Oxford County Roman Catholic Separate School Board (ouf!), on insistait pour dire qu'il s'agis-

sait de deux écoles distinctes. Elles se trouvaient simplement sous le même toit.

Et quelle était la population de l'école Sainte-Marie?

Réponse: 62.

Et la population de l'école Saint Mary's High School?

Réponse: 540.

Et M^{me} Proulx se demandait pourquoi ses enfants ne parlaient plus le français!

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Cette histoire m'est revenue en lisant un texte publié dans notre édition de mardi dans lequel on apprenait que les élèves de l'école primaire L'Envolée, de Campbell's Bay dans le Pontiac, pourraient partager dès septembre le même édifice que leurs camarades de l'école anglophone John Paul II.

Pourquoi? Parce que l'école de langue anglaise aurait des locaux plus adéquats et un plus grand gymnase.

Mais est-ce que quelqu'un de la Commission scolaire des Hauts Bois de l'Outaouais a soulevé la question de la langue parlée à l'école dans ce dossier? Je ne pense pas. Et pourtant, c'est connu que ces écoles « mixtes » sont de véritables nids d'assimilation. Des écoles « à la Woodstock », il y en a une poignée en Ontario. Et je mets quiconque au défi d'aller visiter la cour de l'une de ces écoles et de tenter d'entendre un seul mot de français...

Mais personne à Campbell's Bay n'a, semble-t-il, soulevé cette question inquiétante. Au contraire, la directrice de la commission scolaire, Marlène Thonnard, a même indiqué que « dans le Pontiac, les francophones sont déjà exposés à l'anglais ».

Ah bon? Donc, puisque les francophones sont exposés à l'anglais, ils ne risquent pas de s'assimiler si on les place dans la même école que les anglophones? Mais il est exactement là le problème, M^{me} Thonnard!

Faites le calcul. Si 90 % des anglophones sont unilingues anglais et que 90 % des francophones sont bilingues, quelle langue croyez-vous que les enfants parleront dans la cour d'école?

C'est le maire de Campbell's Bay, Jean-Louis Auger, qui a mis la cerise sur le gâteau dans ce dossier en déclarant: « À Campbell's Bay, tout le monde est bilingue. La cohabitation (à l'école) ne m'inquiète pas du tout. »

C'est ça, Monsieur le maire, tout le monde est bilingue. Sauf neuf anglophones sur dix. Alors parlons l'anglais, les enfants!

Et dire que nous sommes le 22 mars...

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Le Droit

Date: MAR 22 2007

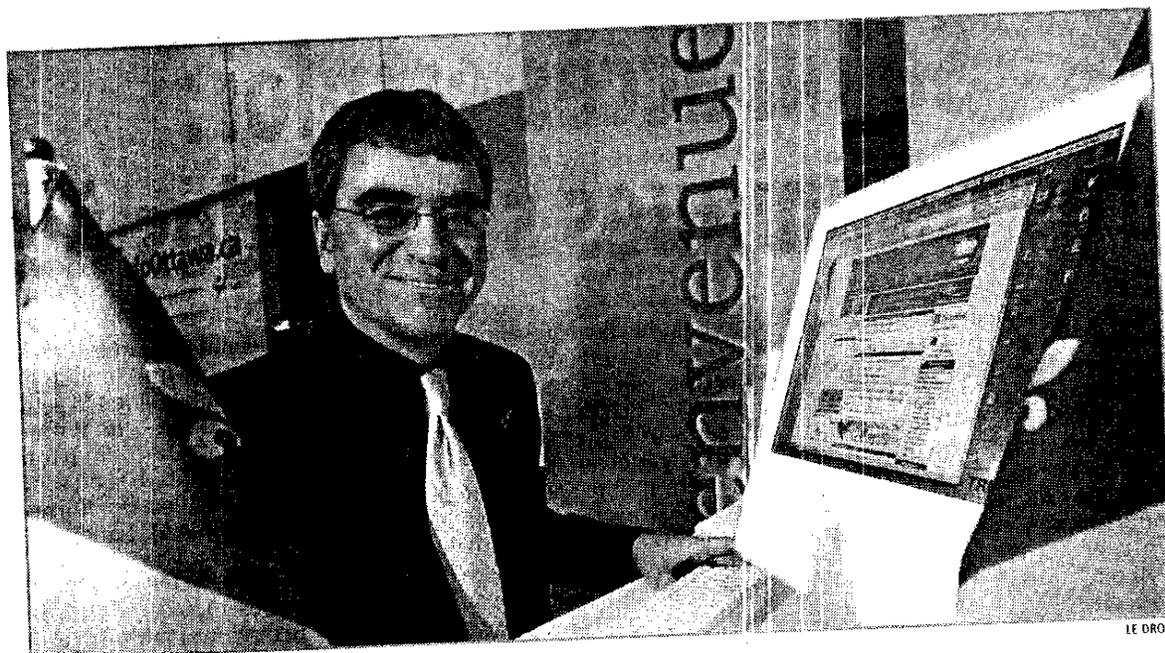
Page: 9

Un site pour les Francos

Les organismes et associations francophones d'Ottawa ont désormais un moyen supplémentaire pour diffuser leurs activités et renseignements directement au public.

La compagnie Trillys communications a officiellement lancé, hier matin, le site Internet francoOttawa.info, sur lequel les organismes pourront annoncer gratuitement leurs activités.

Les informations diffusées sur ce site Internet seront également inscrites sur francoService.info, le service web provincial et francophone de Trillys communications, en fonction depuis plus de trois ans. Sur la photo, on aperçoit le producteur du site Internet, Jean Sokolik, montrant quelques-unes de fonctions offertes aux internautes.



LE DROIT

Le Droit ^{1/2}

Date: MAR 22 2007

Page: 9

O'Brien reçoit les Francos à déjeuner

Le Droit

Depuis son élection en novembre dernier, le maire Larry O'Brien courtise allégrement les francophones d'Ottawa.

Il suit des cours de français depuis déjà plusieurs semaines, comme il l'avait promis durant sa campagne électorale. Il a choisi un nouveau chef de police bilingue, comme le souhaitaient ardemment plusieurs francophones de la capitale fédérale. Le dossier des garderies francophones subventionnées a franchi un pas important lors de la récente adoption de son premier budget.

Hier, il a joué le grand jeu auprès des francophones, en présidant le premier petit-déjeuner de la francophonie d'Ottawa; événement qui aura lieu annuellement le jour de l'arrivée du printemps. Le personnel de M. O'Brien se plaît à dire que c'est le maire lui-même qui a eu l'idée d'organiser cette activité pour célébrer les francophones d'Ottawa.

«Il est important de souligner l'apport que les francophones ont eu sur le développement de notre magnifique ville, a indiqué le maire O'Brien. Je suis très content de tenir cet événement pour les francophones, mais je crois qu'il serait aussi important que nous trouvions un équivalent pour les anglophones.»

Durant une allocution devant environ 250 personnes issues majoritairement de la communauté francophone d'Ottawa, il a lu quelques phrases en fran-

çais, afin de démontrer qu'il ne cesse de s'améliorer dans son apprentissage de la langue de Molière. Il a notamment salué – en français – le dernier maire francophone d'Ottawa, Marc Laviolette, qui était présent.

L'événement avait aussi comme objectif de lancer officiellement un nouveau site Internet rappelant l'histoire des francophones d'Ottawa. Le site, dont l'adresse est le www.raconte-moiottawa.com, est déjà en ligne. Il sera traduit en anglais d'ici mais.

Devant tant d'efforts de la part de leur nouveau maire, plusieurs leaders de la communauté francophones ont avoué être ravis. Lors de son élection, plusieurs craignaient que les dossiers francophones à la municipalité soient relégués aux oubliettes. «Je n'ai pas le choix de lui donner une bonne note jusqu'à maintenant», a exprimé Gisèle Lalonde, «M^{me} Hôpital Montfort» elle-même.

«Je suis agréablement surprise, a pour sa part affirmé la présidente de l'ACFO d'Ottawa, Maxine Hill. Il reste encore beaucoup de travail à faire, notamment pour que la politique de bilinguisme de la municipalité soit bien appliquée pour tous les francophones d'Ottawa. Force est d'admettre que pour le moment, l'appui de M. O'Brien pour les francophones est là.»

Même à l'interne, des fonctionnaires municipaux reconnaissent que M. O'Brien en a fait beaucoup pour la francophonie en peu de temps.

Le Droit

2/2

Date: MAR 22 2007

Page: 9



LE DROIT

L'ex-député et ex-maire de Vanier Bernard Grandmaître a saisi l'occasion de ce premier déjeuner du maire destiné aux francophones d'Ottawa pour s'entretenir avec Larry O'Brien... qui poursuit avec « franc » succès son opération séduction:



March 22, 2007

School beats bully woes Pinecrest program dramatically cuts suspensions

By LAURA CZEKAJ, SUN MEDIA

Over the course of three years, Pinecrest Public School has gone from having one of the worst suspension rates in the province to being awarded a \$105,000 grant in recognition of its successes.

The Ontario Education Services Corporation grant for improving the coping and integration skills of students is just the latest form of acknowledgement for the progress the west-end school has made under the leadership of awarding-winning principal Charles Austin.

"We work on the principle that it takes a community to raise a child -- and in this case, it certainly is true," he said, downplaying his role.

500 SUSPENSIONS

Three years ago, the primary school had less than 400 students, but had nearly 500 suspensions, which was the highest per capita in Ontario at the time and 35% higher than other schools in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

"It was quite out of control," said Jeremy Hannay, a behavioural specialist and teacher at the school.

Something had to be done. Austin recognized this need for change and with the assistance of school staff launched a program called Planning for Success.

The groundbreaking program dealt with not only the kids causing the problems, such as bullying, but also the victims of their actions.

"We needed to re-empower the teachers, too, and have them see this as a global problem that concerned everyone and that we are all responsible for all of the rules, all of the time, everywhere," said Austin.

Ron Morrish -- nicknamed the "Discipline Guru" by Pinecrest staff -- is a behavioural specialist and educator who helped the school formulate and launch the anti-bullying initiative.

The goal was to create a safe environment that was conducive to learning.

"Our kids were crying, screaming out for an environment of rules and regulations and training," said Hannay. "We put in place a system that would answer the need that was in place at our school."

A large part of the program included parental and community involvement. The response staff received when they asked for co-operation from those stakeholders was overwhelming, said Austin.

The results were astonishing and undeniable. Last academic year, the school had only 18 suspensions. The grant money will help fund the existing program, which requires staffing and resources.

Hannay said the province is looking for ways to keep kids in school and Pinecrest is a living example of a solution that doesn't involve expelling or suspending students.

"It's all about teaching and learning," said Hannay. "Our philosophy is not zero tolerance, because zero tolerance equals zero sense and there is no common sense involved."

Citizen 22 Mar 07

Schools downplay Islamophobia, students warn

Study says colleges and universities avoid acknowledging hate-motivated violence

BY PAULINE TAM

A groundbreaking study by Ontario's largest student group accuses universities and colleges of downplaying the growing incidents of hostility and hate-motivated violence toward Muslim students.

The report by the Canadian Federation of Students provides the first detailed picture of how young Muslims are coping with a rise in "Islamophobia" and hate-motivated acts, five years after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The report calls for universities and colleges to respond more quickly to complaints, do more to accommodate the needs of Muslim students and participate in public campaigns to fight racism and Islamophobia.

'We want the colleges and universities to acknowledge that they have an obligation to ensure a safe learning environment.'

JESSE GREENER

Ontario chairman,
Canadian Federation of Students

It also suggests students often don't report incidents because they either don't know where to turn, or don't believe their complaints would be treated seriously.

"We know far too many cases where the universities and colleges do everything possible to downplay these issues," said Jesse Greener, Ontario chairman of the student federation.

"We want the colleges and universities to acknowledge that they have an obligation to ensure a safe learning environment."

The report is the result of public hearings conducted at 17 campuses across the province. A 10-member task force, created in response to a string of anti-Muslim acts on Ontario campuses, heard from nearly 1,000 students, including those at Ottawa's universities and colleges.

The task force heard that Muslim students have become growing targets of racial and religious slurs. In extreme cases, some have been harassed and assaulted. Muslim women, particularly those who wear the hijab, reported being belittled, ostracized and singled out for being not "educated" or "liberated."

The report says days after the task force held a public hearing at the University of Guelph, the Muslim Students Association office was vandalized, and anti-Muslim graffiti covered the door. At Queen's University, a banner out-

side the Muslim Students Association office was set on fire.

According to the report, "the most egregious examples of systemic Islamophobia" took place in classrooms where professors and other students made hurtful comments that promoted negative stereotypes.

In one case, a University of Ottawa student told the task force that she and her friends routinely felt singled out in their sociology and feminism courses by professors who told them that Islam oppressed women.

The University of Ottawa did not respond to a request for comment.

Mohamed Sheibani, president of the Muslim Students Association of Canada and a University of Ottawa student who participated in the hearings, said a number of Muslim women at the university reported feeling they were "looked down upon."

At Carleton University, one student told the task force that when he tried to excuse himself from a class to attend prayer, his professor allegedly pressured him to drop the course. Another Carleton student said he felt belittled when a professor asked him if he was able to read during Ramadan while he was fasting.

Barbara Carswell, Carleton's director of equity services, said she doesn't know about the incidents cited in the report, but suggested they do not represent the behaviour of most professors. "You're always going to have somebody who is insensitive or makes a mistake," she said.

Ms. Carswell indicated that with a growing number of Muslim students on campus, her office has received more questions from professors about how to accommodate the religious needs of students.

Ms. Carswell said the university has conducted its own campus hearings on Islamophobia and established a committee to monitor complaints.

The university has also attempted to accommodate Muslim students by providing prayer space on campus, Halal food options and a once-a-week women-only swim at the athletics centre.

At Algonquin College, which has also seen an increase in Muslim students, vice-president Chris Warburton said the college meets monthly with leaders of the college's Muslim Students Association to discuss issues of concern.

He added that the college has an ombudsman who handles human rights complaints. "We would take any allegations of hate very, very seriously," Mr. Warburton said.

For more
Citizen 22 Mar 2007

SCHOOLS VICTIMS OF LIBERAL FANTASY



RANDALL DENLEY
COMMENTARY

The real world of school boards and the fantasy world of the Ontario education ministry have collided rather spectacularly in the government's latest announcement about more money for schools.

Listen to the ministry and you'd think the schools are awash in money, but major boards are having trouble balancing their books and Ottawa's public board is just one step from being taken over by the province.

None of that has deterred the propaganda machine at Queen's Park. The education minister told us this week that students are set for a fourth year of rising achievement, thanks to the McGuinty government's "significant investment" in schools. This year, the province is "investing" \$781 million, pushing total school spending to \$18.3 billion. Sounds like a lot, doesn't it?

And yet, curiously, Ottawa's public school board is still short about \$20 million to balance its budget. And that's just to do next year most of what the board is doing this year. Trustees have already trimmed \$7 million from the budget, cutting about 70 teaching positions. They have yet to consider more job cuts and reductions to transportation and kindergarten.

The provincial government released the school grant news on federal budget day, a curious choice for what is supposedly a good news announcement. The release on a day when the news would be low down on the media list makes more sense when you look at the details of the provincial announcement. Of that \$781 million, \$421 million will go to increased salaries for school board staff. In fact, the province touts a three-per-cent salary increase as an accomplishment. Last month, inflation was two per cent, up from 1.2 per cent the previous month.

By the time the higher salaries are paid, there's not much left for anything else. The province is putting in \$100 million for its promise of getting primary class sizes to 20 or less.

See DENLEY on PAGE C2

Citizen 22 Mar 2007

DENLEY: STUDENTS SHORT OF TARGET

Continued from PAGE C1

When it comes to utility cost increases, the province pretends it has only gone up one per cent. Transportation is supposedly up two per cent. The cold truth is that the province is not providing enough money for boards to do next year what they're doing this year, even though overall education spending is increasing by 4.5 per cent.

It's true that Ontario students have made incremental improvements in test scores during the four years of Liberal government, but they have not met the target of 75 per cent at provincial standards in any of the areas of achievements in grades 3, 6 or 9. The 75-per-cent mark was a "guarantee" made by Premier Dalton McGuinty in the last election campaign. Do we get a refund for failure to deliver?

The government is also touting an improvement in the high school graduation rate over the last two years. It has gone up from 68 per cent to 73 per cent. How pathetic is that? Most people without a high school education haven't a hope of attracting decent employment.

And this from the government that says "Ontario students deserve an education system that is the best in the world." Sure they do, but not even the provincial government can bring itself to claim that we actually have one.

The McGuinty government does deserve some credit, just not nearly as much as it gives itself. The province has put significant money into repairing our crumbling schools and has spent more time on literacy and numeracy. Its spending on modest reductions to class size in the primary grades is less obviously a winner, although parents like it.

The problem with the education

story, as the province tells it, is that much of the big spending increase has done little to benefit your child in the classroom. In fact, our schools are threadbare while labour cost increases continue to exceed the rate of inflation. A rational debate about just how much we are prepared to pay for education salaries, especially in a market with a glut of teachers, is long overdue.

What the government has delivered is more teachers for fewer students at a higher per-teacher cost. Although there are 60,000 fewer students in the system now than when the Liberals took over, education costs have gone up 24 per cent. This might seem like a stunning inflation in the cost of a declining service, but the Liberals say it's all good because our students are doing better. You can see the logic here. The more teachers earn, the more students learn.

The province has lowered teacher workload, too, by reducing elementary in-classroom time. An education release headlined "Paying people more to do less" might not be a vote-getter, but it would be closer to the truth.

The provincial government still has to figure a way to persuade you that the school board budget shortfalls are not its fault, but one can see the McGuintyites have their basic story together. Spending is up, test scores are up, vote for the Liberals. What more do you really need to know?

A number of readers have requested a mailing address for donations to Alex Munter's election campaign. It is: Alex Munter Campaign, P.O. Box 2084, Station D, Ottawa, K1P 5W3.

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