

Claire Hoy ? Silence from our leaders

It's almost too terrible to repeat here, particularly in a family newspaper.

But, incredibly, it seems that people strolling into some downtown Montreal businesses are greeted by sales clerks uttering ?Bonjour-Hi.?

The slippery slope if there ever was one.

And if that's not bad enough ? and it's hard to believe that it isn't ? a woman who owns a boutique in Chelsea, Que. ? a town evenly split between Anglophones and Francophones ? actually posted some English words on her Facebook.

Where will it end? Well, if Quebec's rapidly anti-English Parti Quebecois wins a majority in the next election ? as it likely will ? they plan to toughen their bigoted language laws even more.

The language police have already warned boutique owner Eva Cooper ? who, like all her staff, is fluently bilingual ? to edit the English from her Facebook or face legal and financial sanctions from the Office quebecois de la langue francaise.

And Diane De Courcy, Quebec's minister responsible for French Language, told a business group last week that there is ?an unacceptable slide into institutional bilingualism? in Quebec businesses, citing the apparently heinous use of ?Bonjour-Hi? as a case in point. Even worse, she said, this backdoor use of English words by Quebecers is ?not only in Montreal??

She went on to say that it's a wonderful thing if individuals want to learn different languages like English, Spanish, Man-darin and Arabic in their private lives, but institutions in Quebec and businesses must operate strictly in French.

?There is a difference with what is institutional and it must be without mercy,? she said.

If you think this is just one rogue cabinet minister shooting off her mouth, think again. You'll recall how thrilled we all were when the two Montreal sisters Chloe and Justine Dufour-Lapointe won gold and silver medals at the Sochi Olympics. A picture of them celebrating, waving their red and white Canadian Olympics/HBC mitts in the air, was apparently too much to take for Pierre Duchesne, Quebec's minister of higher education, who re-tweeted the picture after digitally replacing those offensive red and white mitts with blue and white mitts featuring the fleur-de-lis.

Then there was the congratulatory message from Quebec Premier Pauline Marois herself, congratulating the men's hockey team for winning the gold medal.

?My sincerest congratulations to the men's hockey team, who won the gold medal at the Sochi Winter Olympics, she said, pointedly avoiding the dreaded word ?Canada,? while making special mention only of the four Quebec-born members of the team.

Then, of course, there's the ongoing hearings over the PQ law to ban most forms of individual religion in the public. No more hijabs or crosses or skull caps to offend the sensibilities of Quebecers.

On top of all that, they're now saying they intend to rewrite all their school history books to make sure that Quebec children are schooled in the separatist propaganda, which views Canadian history as an endless series of insults against Quebec and its legitimate aspirations.

And so it goes, one very public insult after another from these haters, and barely a peep is heard from the entire cowardly political class.

Not a word from Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Nada from NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair and Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau, both born and raised Quebecers themselves. Nothing from Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, or for that matter any other premier or opposition leader that I've been able to discover searching the internet.

Imagine if a political leader in any other province groused about the use of the odd French word in business or commerce. All hell would break loose. Every human rights commission in the country would be on full alert. Newspapers would be churning out special editions on the horrors of linguistic bigotry raising its ugly head.

But when Quebec does it ? over and over and over again ? we hear only the sound of silence.

Granted, as a minority linguistic and cultural group living in a largely English North America, Quebecers do have cause to protect their position in a way that the rest of us don't. Fair enough.

It's one thing to promote your own culture, it's another thing to criminalize the use of one of Canada's so-called ?official? languages. Mind you, unlike the rest of Canada, Quebec has only one ?official? language, i.e. French. Imagine the outrage if any other province tried to eliminate the use of French.

Yet Quebec can go on insulting the rest of us, spreading their anti-English bigotry, with absolute impunity, and with the knowledge that every single political leader in this country lacks the courage to speak up.

No wonder they keep doing it. Who's going to stop them?

