

Saturday, May 02, 2009

From: Howard Moscoe  
To: The Chair and Members of the Government  
Management Committee  
Re: Ouch Canada ! ... Canadian Spelling

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Attached is a list of 84 words that have been kicked out by my Spell-Check (Appendix I). Every time my Spell-Check kicks out a Canadian spelling I feel like I've been kicked in my Canadian identity. It's bad enough when my American Spell-Check does it but it really hurts when it is sanctioned by my municipal government.

At present all of our software defaults to American English. Since 2006 I have been urging our administration to obtain software that defaults to Canadian English. Each time I raise the issue I am assured that the matter will be fixed and still nothing happens.

Yes there is an official Canadian English. It is set by two standards. The first is Hansard, the official record of the House of Commons in Ottawa. All records of the House are required to be in "Canadian English" and this includes all laws and statutes of Canada.

The second is the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Oxford

University Press, 2004 which is used by most editors,

It just so happens that, while our Microsoft Word does include Canadian English it always defaults to American English. Is Microsoft of California eroding our language because of some secret American plot to subvert our Canadian Identity or is it because we simply haven't asked them to produce a version of Word that defaults to Canadian

English? Is it too much to expect all orders of government in Canada, including the City of Toronto, to promote Canadian Identity?"

The Government of Canada is actually one of the worst offenders. A search of the official Government of Canada web site indicates that the word "colour" was spelled the American way 3,000 times. That represents 15.9% of the time that it was used. The City of Toronto is not far behind. Our official web site spelled "colour" wrong 8.8% of the time while the official Ontario Government only used the American spelling 2.2% of the time.

In a check of 8 Canadian spelled words (appendix II), Toronto again came in second to the Government of Canada which topped the misspelling of Canadian words at 15.1%. Toronto used American spellings 11% of the time while Ontario was best at 3.6%

From a scan of the official web sites of all of the provinces it appears that only Ontario and Alberta have made a conscious effort to promote Canadian English. On their sites the American usage was conspicuously low and can be mostly attributed to quoting American publications. Web sites like that of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia use the American spelling of "colour" 47% and 40% of the time respectively. B.C. has added a new twist by hiding its usage. When you scan for "colour" it makes no distinction between the American and Canadian spelling.

It costs the City of Toronto countless hours of staff time and lost productivity because hundreds of conscientious employees have to go back and correct, word for word, the American spellings. Yes, Microsoft Word, which the City of Toronto uses, has included spell-check for Canadian English since Word 2000. But you have to adjust the settings each and every time that you type something and it often

takes as long to do that as it does to go back and correct the misspellings.

The city's policy on these matters is also not clear. It hints at the use of Canadian spelling. Form 15, Report writing checklist from the Auditor General's office states:

“have you checked spelling with more than a Spell-Check? (Ref: Canadian Oxford Dictionary)”

It stops short of requiring the use of Canadian English and should be amended accordingly.

### Recommendations

1. The City of Toronto Contact Microsoft and ask them to produce a Spell-Check that defaults to Canadian English.
2. Through the normal replacement process, replace all of our software with that which utilizes Canadian Spelling for every day municipal business functions.
3. Require Canadian Spelling in all City of Toronto reports.
4. Require the use of Canadian Spelling in all correspondence both internal and external.
5. Require whoever administers the Official City of Toronto web site to ensure that it is expunged of all non Canadian spellings and to henceforth use only Canadian spelling.
6. Advise both the Federal and Provincial Government of the errors on their web sites and request that they change them to “Canadian English”. .....Oh Canada!

Yours in Government,

Howard Moscoe  
Chair of licencing and standards  
for the City of Toronto

## Appendix I

### Canadian English

### American English

#### Words that have been kicked out by my spell check

pyjama

pajama

odour

odor

arbour

arbor

ardour

ardor

armoury

armory

barrelled

barreled

behaviour

behavior

bureaux

bureaus

calibre

caliber

cheque

check

clamour

clamor

colour

color

councillor

councilor

defence

defense

demeanour

demeanor

enamour

enamor

endeavour

endeavor

epicentre

epicenter

equalled

equaled

favour

favor

favourite

favorite

fervour

fibre

flavour

gruelling

harbour

honour

humour

jeweller

labelled

labour

levelled

licence

litre

loonie

lustre

manoeuver

marvellous

metre

modelling

moult

neighbour

odour

panelled

parlour

paycheque

pummelled

poutine

rancour

ravelled

fervor

fiber

flavor

grueling

harbor

honor

humor

jeweler

labeled

labor

leveled

license

liter

.....

luster

maneuver

marvelous

meter

modeling

molt

neighbor

odor

paneled

parlor

paycheck

pummeled

fries with gravy and cheese

rancor

raveled

revelled  
reveller  
rigour  
rumour  
saltpetre  
saviour  
savour  
sceptre  
shrivelled  
signalled  
smoulder  
sombre  
spiralled  
splendour  
sulphur  
titre  
tonne  
toonie  
totalled  
travelled  
traveller  
tumour  
tunnelled  
valour  
vapour  
vigour  
woollen  
yodelled

reveled  
reveler  
rigor  
rumor  
saltpeter ‘  
savior  
savor  
scepter  
shriveled  
signaled  
smolder  
somber  
spiraled  
splendor  
sulfur  
titer  
ton  
.....  
totaled  
traveled  
traveler  
tumor  
tunneled  
valor  
vapor  
vigor  
woolen  
yodeled

## Appendix II

### Use of American and Canadian Spellings on Official Government Web Sites

#### Government of Canada

Word	No. of Times Used	Word	No. of Times Used	%
1. color	3,000	colour	18,822	15.9
2. favor	2,525	favour	20,375	12.4
3. neighbor	706	neighbour	6,730	10.5
4. sulfur	885	sulphur	3,020	29.3
5. smolder	42	smoulder	109	38.5
6. rigor	1,113	rigour	6,065	18.4
7. molt	89	moult	214	41.6
8. somber	43	sombre	173	24.9
	8,403		55,568	15.1

#### Government of Ontario

1. color	2,534	colour	115,983	2.2
2. favor	1,309	favour	16,060	8.2
3. neighbor	811	neighbour	21,633	3.7
4. sulfur	333	sulphur	2,359	14.1
5. smolder	38	smoulder	22	172.7
6. rigor	516	rigour	1,058	48.8
7. molt	39	moult	38	102.6
8. somber	34	sombre	151	22.5
	5,614		157,304	3.6



## City of Toronto

1. color	120	colour	1,360	8.8
2. favor*		favour*		
3. neighbor	30	neighbour	331	9.1
4. sulfur	42	sulphur	309	13.6
5. smolder'	1	smoulder	2	50.0
6. rigor	29	rigour	44	65.9
7. molt	0	moult	2	0
8. somber	4	sombre	6	66.6
	226		2,054	11.0

\* favor/favour is deleted because the City of Toronto web site is also translated into Spanish and the Spanish favor would be read as American Spelling