



A 3-D optical illusion is warning drivers to slow down in front of an elementary school in West Vancouver on Tuesday.

WARD PERRIN/PHG

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Phantom of the roadway has West Van drivers braking

BY TRACY SHERLOCK
VANCOUVER SUN

A selfless and courageous little girl ran repeatedly in front of cars in a West Vancouver street on Tuesday in an effort to teach errant drivers to mend their speeding ways while in school zones.

Or so it appeared to said drivers for a few seconds, anyway.

An elongated image of a little girl chasing a ball now adorns the pavement in front of Ecole Pauline Johnson elementary school in West Vancouver, an optical illusion unveiled Tuesday and designed to slow drivers down.

Nearby resident Cathy Imrie said while the illusion doesn't quite look realistic, it was enough to slow her down.

"You're not going to drive and go, 'Oh my god, I hit a child,' but it looks like a child," Imrie said. "It's enough

to cause you to think."

The 3-D optical illusion, the first in Canada designed to slow traffic down, will be in place for the next week.

Some drivers passing over the image on Tuesday slowed down, while other drivers showed no reaction.

West Vancouver's manager of roads and transportation, Brent Dozzi, said the project may be replicated in other locations and other formats if the one-week pilot is found to reduce speed.

"Certainly [Tuesday] it had a drastic effect," Dozzi said. "It's in your face, but motorists react strongly."

David Dunne, director of the Traffic Safety Foundation and spokesman for Preventable.ca, said the biggest risk to children in school zones are parents who make U-turns, stop in no-stopping zones, back up into crosswalks, roll through stop signs, ignore the school safety patrollers, let their children out from the driver's side and into oncoming traffic, and speed.

"This 3-D illusion reminds us to shift our attitudes, and drive as though you'd expect a child to run into traffic," he said.

Seven-year-old Lauren Fisher, the model for the 3-D image, which is a decal painted on the road, stopped by Johnson elementary on Tuesday afternoon with her parents.

"She kept saying, 'We're going to make people drive slower around schools,'" said Lauren's mom Sharon Fisher.

Congestion around schools is a problem throughout the Lower Mainland. In Vancouver, police and ICBC also reminded people to slow down and pay attention while driving.

The illusion initiative is a joint project of the West Vancouver police and Preventable.ca, which promotes public safety. Preventable.ca paid for the \$15,000 project.

tsherlock@vancouver.sun.com
With files from Andrea Woo

OPINION

Premier's eviction notice rests in 40,000 hands

Leadership ballot a test of just how angry Liberals are

VAUGHN PALMER
VANCOUVER SUN



VICTORIA

During an earlier challenge to Premier Gordon Campbell over his high-handed ways, B.C. Liberal supporter Scott Nelson raised a protest against the carbon tax.

"Who doesn't believe that we should have a cleaner, greener world?" declared the then-mayor of Williams Lake as carbon-tax-implementation day approached in mid-2008. "But we shouldn't do it on the backs of rural British Columbians."

Nelson styled himself as a party loyalist, even as he took on Campbell's new-found enthusiasm for fighting climate change.

"I have worked on the premier's campaign, I am a supporter of the government," he insisted. "But because you're a supporter, doesn't necessitate that you should be handcuffed and duct-taped not to protect your taxpayers and your municipalities."

To emphasize his complaint that the tax was nothing like revenue-neutral for folks in the wintry part of B.C., Nelson argued for a five-fold increase for northerners in the \$100-per-person climate-action dividend. He also threatened to withhold his city's share of the tax it would pay on municipal fuel purchases.

He backed off the latter after a meeting with then-finance minister Carole Taylor, wherein she made it clear that the boss was not in a giving mood. "The premier has closed the door, locked the door and shackled the door and put the key in his pocket himself," as Nelson described it.

Still, municipal leaders did manage to connect eventually. Campbell acknowledged as much at the Union of B.C. Municipalities convention in the fall of 2008, when he announced local governments would be reimbursed for their share of the carbon tax, providing they pledged themselves carbon-neutral within four years.

Nelson, for his part, wrapped up his term as mayor in December 2008, then sought to refurbish his credentials as a party loyalist by seeking the Liberal nomination in Cariboo-Chilcotin. He lost narrowly to Donna Barnett, the former mayor of 100 Mile House, who went on to win the seat, also narrowly, against New Democratic Party incumbent Charlie Wyse.

Today, Barnett is high on the list of likely targets for recall over the harmonized sales tax. Meanwhile, there was Nelson this week, airing his own reservations about the HST. But unlike his urgings on the carbon tax, he made no pretence this time that the concerns could be assuaged by mere tinkering.

"There's such anger and frustration out there, a lot of members are walking away," said Nelson. "They don't want anything to do with the B.C. Liberals."

Nor was the self-styled loyalist inclined to speak of the leader's good qualities in anything other than the past tense. "He's done some fantastic things, but there comes a time when your core, key supporters are leaving the flock. ... It's time for him to retire."

He speaks for growing numbers of B.C. Liberals, never mind that for many of them, Campbell is the only leader they've ever known.

He captured the party leadership 17 years ago this weekend at a convention dominated by his organizers, his fundraisers and his supporters. He has dominated the party ever since.

His method is the one evidenced on the carbon tax. He'll make the occasional concession when bone-tossing is unavoidable. But otherwise, it is his way or the you-know-what. As he told a caucus meeting during the depths of the public outcry against the carbon tax, the way to get rid of it was to get rid of him.

Instead, he won the next election, his third in a row. And that only reinforced his overweening self-confidence, evidenced in the rushed decision to harmonize the sales tax without the slightest effort to prepare the public for such a major reversal in long-standing provincial taxation policy.

But this time he went too far. The carbon tax, while angering some Liberals, also divided NDP supporters. The HST, because of the tax shift itself and the way it was handled, united pretty much everyone in opposition to the government.

Campbell, for his part, continues to act as if the backlash merely represents a failure of communication, blameable on Finance Minister Colin Hansen.

Instead, it is the culmination of an arrogant, one-man style government.

In an effort to put the blame where it properly belongs, Nelson is one of two Liberal insiders — Langley riding president Jordan Bateman is the other — to highlight the opportunity at hand for party members this fall.

They can send the premier an eviction notice by voting non-confidence in his leadership at a series of locally based riding association meetings. The vote is by secret ballot. The option is there for every paid-up Liberal who is inclined to find out when and where the meetings are being held and show up.

But it remains to be seen whether many of the estimated-by-Bateman 40,000 or so members will take the trouble.

Few Liberals have ever challenged him, even in private. The practice has generally been, "Let Gord do it." And as the record will show, he has been only too happy to do it, with as little questioning of his authority as possible.

vpalmer@vancouver.sun.com

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6376 Burns St. | Burnaby | BC | V5E 1T2 | C. 604.880.5090 | yvonne@chiangpr.ca | www.chiangpr.ca