



Issue 3

March, 2025

# Flowers blooms at PPL

Story by Richard Szpin

Jackie Flowers, CEO and Director of the Pickering Public Library system, was invited to be interviewed for this article.



## The Pickering Library system

The Pickering Public Library which serves Pickering, Ontario, operates three branches: the Central Library,

George Ashe Library, and Claremont Library. The library system has a long history, with separate branches operating since 1841, but it officially launched as the Main Library in 1990 with the opening of the Central Branch. The Library offers a wide range of services, including a collection of nearly 1 million items, public access computers, free Wi-Fi, and a Maker Space at the Central Branch. It also provides assistive services for patrons with special needs, such as home delivery and sign language interpretation.

As of 2020, the library system serves

approximately 100,000 Pickering residents across 31,000 households, with over 34,000 active members. It is recognized as one of the highest-used and most well-supported libraries in Ontario, offering various programs and events to all age groups including children's activities, adult learning opportunities, and community engagement initiatives.



## Jackie Flowers Director and CEO

In May, 2020, Jackie Flowers became the CEO and Director of Public Libraries at the Pickering Public Library in Pickering, replacing former head, Cathy Grant. Prior to her current position, Flowers was an executive in the City of Calgary's library system where she led the organization's innovation efforts, managing numerous teams and projects using a design-thinking framework. Her accomplishments include

See **FLOWERS**

## ***FLOWERS***

designing a unique learning space for school-aged children, establishing partnerships with universities, and launching a bookmobile service to reach underserved communities. Flowers' background also includes experience as a CPA at Deloitte, which has equipped her with strong financial acumen in her new role in the PPL. This combination of visionary leadership and financial expertise positions her well to guide the Pickering Public Library into the future.

### ***Responding to posed questions***

The Pickering Public Library launched its *2024-2027 strategic plan* last year. Our strategic plan acts as both a map and a route for the organization. It considers the big picture and provides focus around our goals. The process of updating a new strategic plan is rooted in community consultation. We work hard to find out what is important to residents so that we can work together on solutions, outcomes and new initiatives to build the future we want for Pickering. For our new strategic plan, this process took eight months to complete and involved over 1,600 community members.

We all know that Pickering is a strong and resilient community. And in the next 10 years, we must be future-oriented – we're a fast-growing city in a changing world. We have to embrace technology and champion community-centered innovation. The Pickering Public Library will continue to offer access to technology and learning opportunities to ensure everyone has the skills and tools to thrive in a digital world. I encourage

everyone to stop by our Maker Space to try out a new piece of equipment or book a '1-on-1' Device Assistance appointment to get help with a piece of technology you own.

And as the changes in our digital lives happen, we cannot forget about our IRL (“in real life”) connections to one another. These relationships need to be valued and nurtured as they underpin much of our wellness. The Pickering Public Library strives to create a caring culture that promotes social connection, combats loneliness, and helps connect people to the services and support they need. For this reason, we will continue to invest in our library locations to ensure they are fresh, inclusive, welcoming, accessible and safe.

### ***Pickering Library is proud of these numbers:***

- **1000:** Every day, over 1,000 people visit a library location.
- **40,000:** Over 40,000 community members have library cards – an increase of 3,000 people from the previous year.
- **21,000:** More than 21,000 people participated in 900 free library events that happened in the library and out in the community.
- **977,000:** More than 977,000 items were borrowed – whether that's books, DVDs, or one of our loanable Maker Kits.

### ***Pickering Public Library's 2024 initiatives***

We launched our new bookmobile, 'Ovee,' and are now able to take Library services outside our buildings to new and underserved communities

- We updated the lobby of the Central Library so that there was more social space for library clients

See *Ashe Library*

## *Ashe Library*

- We successfully piloted a Prayer Room at the Central Library during Ramadan
- We opened 4 solo work pods at the Central Library to allow for quiet work
- We launched the Seed Library at the George Ashe Library location and distributed 5,500 seed packets into the community.

## *Pickering Library, today and tomorrow*

The Pickering Public Library is proud of its record of service to the City of Pickering community and is committed to continuing the endeavours in the up-coming years. We welcome everyone in Pickering to join us a let us serve you today, and tomorrow.



## *Armed Carjacking, Pickering,*

Police are looking for suspects after an armed carjacking in Pickering.

On Monday, February 3, 2025, at approximately 7:30 p.m., members from West Division responded to an armed carjacking at Taunton Road and Altona Road. The victim, travelling westbound on

Taunton, was rear-ended by another vehicle just west of Altona. The victim pulled over and exited the vehicle to check for damage. While checking for damage, the victim was approached by the passenger of the other

The suspect vehicle is described as a dark SUV with no front licence plate. The suspect is described as male, Black, 5'9 with a slim build. He was wearing a black baseball cap, black medical mask, black puffer jacket, black cargo pants and black shoes.

Investigators are asking anyone with dash cam, cell phone, surveillance footage, or any information about this incident to contact the **Robbery Unit** at **1-888-579-1520 ext. 5355**

Anonymous information can be sent to Durham Regional Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or online at [www.durhamregionalcrimestoppers.ca](http://www.durhamregionalcrimestoppers.ca) and [tipsters may be eligible for a \\$2,000 cash reward.](#)



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Councillor Maurice Brenner



## Jennifer O'Connell - not seeking re-election

Story by  
Lisha Van Nieuwenhove  
*The Uxbridge Cosmos*

Jennifer O'Connell, member of parliament for Pickering-Uxbridge for the past 10 years, announced last Friday that she will not seek reelection in the next federal election.

“It has been an honour and a privilege to represent my community of Pickering-Uxbridge in the House of Commons, but I have made the difficult decision and informed the Prime Minister that I will not be seeking re-election for Member of Parliament in the next federal election.”

These words were part of a post on O'Connell's Facebook page on Friday afternoon, which shared a three-page letter to her constituents that, along with recapping her political career, outlines some of the issues that led to her decision.

O'Connell writes that online attacks had increased in the past few years, “especially when misinformation and disinformation was spread that lead to threats of violence and threats of sexual violence,” and that this played a role in her decision to “seek a more private life.” She points out in the letter that it was not just her affected when the online abuse occurred, it was her team and family as well.

“I've had to worry about the safety of my staff at times, and I've had to make too many phone calls to my family letting them know they might see some concerning things but not to worry I am safe.” O'Connell does

acknowledge in the letter that signing up for public office “comes with good and bad,” but expresses concern that, when physical safety for both herself and those she cares about comes into question, it was time for her to “seriously reflect on the risks and what was best for not just (her) own well-being but those who support this work as well.” She also addresses divisiveness in Canadian politics and expresses hope that politics will return to a “diversity of ideas and vigorous debates around policy and the best direction for this country.”

O'Connell began her political career almost 20 years ago, serving in Pickering, first as a city councillor, then regional councillor and deputy mayor, before becoming MP for PickeringUxbridge in 2015. During her time in Ottawa, O'Connell served as parliamentary secretary to several ministries, including Finance, Health, Infrastructure and Communities and Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cyber Security).

Her letter thanks many people, from to her riding association to those who volunteered. She thanks Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, several other MPs, her “team,” and her family and friends. She closes her letter with “Thank you once again to the people of Pickering-Uxbridge for your continued support, this has been the honour of my lifetime to serve our community, one that I am forever grateful to you all for.”

The federal Liberal party is currently seeking a new leader, following the resignation of Trudeau earlier this year. Once the leadership contest is decided, a general federal election will likely be called for later this year.



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

*Jennifer O'Connell*

Member of Parliament  
Pickering – Uxbridge

February 14, 2025

It has been an honour and a privilege to represent my community of Pickering-Uxbridge in the House of Commons, but I have made the difficult decision and informed the Prime Minister that I will not be seeking re-election for Member of Parliament in the next federal election.

I want to first and foremost thank the countless volunteers, my riding association (PUFLA) Board and President, supporters, friends, family, and my staff who have made this journey possible for me. But most importantly, thank you to the people of Pickering-Uxbridge for putting your trust in me and for your continued support and encouragement.

I have spent nearly two decades as an elected representative of my hometown of Pickering, serving as City Councillor, Regional Councillor and Deputy Mayor before serving as the Member of Parliament for Pickering-Uxbridge since 2015. Being able to represent my hometown on Council and in Parliament were something I never could have imagined the future held for me at 23 years old, when I was first elected nearly 20 years ago.

Thank you, Prime Minister Trudeau, and your entire team for the opportunity to serve in your government alongside you. Prime Minister, you set out to build a team that reflects this country and to make Canada an even better place. Your passion for this country and understanding that we are stronger when we help each other will be reflected in your legacy and I thank you for your service to Canada. I would also like to thank you on behalf of my community for hearing us and cancelling any future airport on the Pickering Lands. When you sought the leadership of the Liberal Party, you said you would support local communities and their representatives, and you remained true to your word. This will forever be an important part of our legacy to protect class one farmland and environmentally significant land on behalf of the people of Pickering and neighbouring communities.

Throughout my time serving as the Member of Parliament I have also been fortunate to serve as Parliamentary Secretary to several Ministers, including Finance, Health, Infrastructure and Communities and Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cyber Security). I'd like to thank each of the Ministers I have worked with, as well as their incredible teams; Hon. Bill Morneau, Hon. Patty Hajdu, Hon. Dominic LeBlanc and Hon. David McGuinty. I've learned so much from each of you and I am proud of the work we delivered together.

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Page 1 of 3

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HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

*Jennifer O'Connell*

Member of Parliament  
Pickering—Uxbridge

The highlight of my federal career has been in serving as Parliamentary Secretary to Minister Dominic LeBlanc, first as PS to Infrastructure and Intergovernmental Affairs and then as PS to Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity). Anyone who's worked with Dominic knows his humour and his unmatched political instincts, but I also got to know him as a mentor. Working with Dominic has taught me skills in developing good public policy but also learning how to build great working relationships that deliver results that matter. The Public Safety portfolio has been some of the most difficult and challenging work I have ever faced, but working with Dominic was like watching a political masterclass in navigating and addressing real issues faced by Canadians. He encouraged me to focus on policies and files that were of particular interest to me, including allowing me to lead on cyber security policies and legislation. Dominic's trust of my capabilities on these files, as well as my experience serving on the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians has ignited a passion in me for cyber and national security policy. Thank you Dom for your confidence and support, it has meant the world to me, not to mention my new addiction to Diet Coke, thanks to you as well!

The hardest part about this decision is going to be missing my colleagues that I have met through this journey. The friendships I have made I know will last a lifetime, including Wayne Easter who was a mentor to me in those early days when as a new MP I really didn't know what to expect. He always encouraged me to never be afraid to stand up for what I believed in and to be fearless in fighting for my community. I will especially miss my Ottawa crew; (Kamal, Mark, Darren, Mike, and John). I am fortunate that I found a group of people who made this experience even more special. We are like family and not many MP's get to experience a group of friends like I was fortunate to find. I look forward to our future adventures together.

None of this would have been possible without the support of my team and my family. This includes my friends, my staff, my incredible volunteers, and my riding association. I am so lucky to have the team I do, many whom have been with me since 2015 or earlier. You all keep me grounded but you also kept me motivated to keep fighting for what really matters even when it felt hard. I could not have done any of this work without the support of my family, especially from my Mom. She's knocked on so many doors for me and has done just about every volunteer role possible to help me realize my dreams and I am so grateful to her, she is the reason I am the woman I am today.

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Page 2 of 3



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

*Jennifer O'Connell*

Member of Parliament  
Pickering—Uxbridge

My team and my family took it the hardest when they would see online attacks ramp up over the last few years especially when misinformation and disinformation was spread that lead to threats of violence and threats of sexual violence. This has been a factor in my decision to seek a more private life. The stress and worry about the tone in which politics is evolving into doesn't just impact me, it impacts my family and my staff. I've had to worry about the safety of my staff at times, and I've had to make too many phone calls to my family letting them know they might see some concerning things but not to worry I am safe. Signing up for public office comes with good and bad, but when the physical safety of myself and those I care most about comes into question, I did have to seriously reflect on the risks and what was best for not just my own wellbeing but those who support this work as well. If we want Parliament to be made up of people who truly reflect the diversity of this country then there must be a consequence to those who incite and don't condone the conditions that are creating a shrinking of diversity in all its forms. If the political discourse does not change in Canada, we will see tragedies that we have seen in other countries happen here, it won't be a matter of "if", but a matter of "when". The Canadian electorate I hope will decide that the use of misinformation/disinformation for political gain will be met with a negative electoral outcome because of the division and hate that it creates. Hopefully, politics can get back to a diversity of ideas and vigorous debates around policy and the best direction for this country and not slogans or misogynistic hashtags that incite hate and don't condone violence as a political tool.

Thank you once again to the people of Pickering-Uxbridge for your continued support, this has been the honour of my lifetime to serve our community, one that I am forever grateful to you all for.

Sincerely,

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Story by Richard Szpin

## Durham Region Dementia Care updated

*\$93,000 investment will expand access to dementia care and support in Durham Region*

The Ontario government is investing \$93,000 to connect more people in the Region of Durham to dementia care, support and services they need, when they need them. The funding will support services delivered by the Alzheimer Society of Durham Region's community-based **First Link® Care Navigation** program that connects people living with dementia, and their families with help to navigate care, education, and resources.

### ***The goals of the investment***

The fundamental goal of the provincial government investment is for that **First Link®** will enhance the lives of Whitby and Durham Region residents living with dementia, connect them with vital resources, education and care and ensure individuals with dementia and their families receive the care and support they deserve close to home.

This funding is part of the Ontario government's plan to expand investment to \$6.9 million over two years to support those who have received a dementia diagnosis. The funding will support:

- hiring an additional 36 full-time medical staff;
- shortening wait times for existing

- patients;
- providing support for approximately 7,000 new patients across
- improved access to medical coordinators who will assist with care planning, care coordination, and referrals to community services

### ***Government commitment***

“Our government is taking bold and innovative action to connect people, at every stage of life, to the care and services they need, when they need them,” said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “Investing in increased access to dementia care through investing in this high-quality community-based program will allow more families to connect their loved ones to additional services they need in their community.”

### ***Ministerial comment on government medical care commitment***

*Through Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care*, the province is taking action to provide more people with the right care, in the right place.

“This investment will help ensure that individuals living with dementia in Pickering and Uxbridge, along with their families, can access the care and support they need when they need it,” said Peter Bethlenfalvy, MPP for Pickering-Uxbridge. “By enhancing community-based dementia care, we are building a stronger, more responsive healthcare system that puts people first.”

“The experience of having loved ones living with Alzheimer's is becoming more prevalent as the population continues to age,” said

see **PICINI**

## PICINI

David Piccini, MPP for Northumberland-Peterborough South. “Therefore, it is more important than ever to make sure our local community dementia programs have all the support they need to care for those living with dementia and their families. This investment in Alzheimer Society of Durham will allow them to connect more families with supportive programming and care options.”

“Under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Sylvia Jones, our government is making the important and necessary investment of \$93,000 to the Alzheimer Society of Durham Region to enhance programs, reduce waiting times and offer support to all Durham residents and their families living with dementia” said Todd McCarthy, MPP for Durham. “In caring for loved ones with dementia, families experience many challenges, and our government is committed to supporting all individuals no matter where they are in their journey.”

“Our government is committed to improving accessibility for dementia patients, who have unique care needs and rely on specialized support,” said Patrice Barnes, MPP for Ajax. “Through a province-wide investment of \$6.9 million, we have allocated \$93,000 to the Alzheimer Society of Durham Region's community-based First Link® Care Navigation program. This funding will enhance our ability to support dementia patients and their families across Durham Region as they navigate available resources, support services, and dementia education.”

## QUICK FACTS

- In Ontario, more than 250,000 people live

with dementia and this number is expected to grow as the population continues to age.

- Ontario is investing \$120 million over three years for dementia services (part of the 2022 Budget)
- the province accelerated the commitment of \$1 billion over three years to stabilize the home and community care workforce and support the expansion of home care services (In the 2023 Budget)
- the government is investing an additional \$2 billion over three years to boost this acceleration, support earlier investments to increase compensation for personal support workers, nurses and other frontline care providers, and to stabilize expanded services.( part of the 2024 Budget)



“The Alzheimer Society of Durham Region is incredibly appreciative of the Ontario Government's support of additional funds to support the **First Link® Care Navigation** program, which is a critical resource to ensuring those living with dementia and their families receive navigation support, education, and connection with others on a similar journey with dementia. This funding is a significant step forward in ensuring that those living with dementia and their care partners receive the support, care, and services they deserve. We are thrilled to see the Government's innovative approach to funding community-based dementia programs that empower individuals with pro-active care, expand critical resources, and foster stronger connections within our community.”

*Gillian Barrie, CEO*

*Alzheimer Society of Durham Region*



## **Brenner Report**

*Excerpted from Brenner Newsletter*

### **Pickering Planning Department**

Townhall, Feb 6/25

Key highlights of the meeting:

- importance of protecting community character along the Kingston Road corridor
- wide multi-purpose pedestrian-friendly boulevards
- architectural design controls to blend of structural forms
- the impact and process of tree removal during development

Councillor is committed to raising this issue for discussion at upcoming Council meetings.



### **Snow Removal**

Councillor expresses thanks to the City of Pickering and Region of Durham staff for snow removal and street maintenance during these recent heavy snowfalls. Councillor also extends thanks to Pickering residents for their cooperation and patience during the snow clean up.



### **Grand opening: Jersey Mike's Subs**

Congratulations to the owners, management and staff of the newly opened Jersey Mike's Subs in the Steeple Hill Shopping Centre West plaza at 570 Kingston Rd. The franchise is the 8<sup>th</sup> of the 300 planned for opening in Canada.

### **March Break events in the city**

March 9 – 15

- **Free public SKATE**  
Sponsored by Ontario Power Generation (OPG), the City will host a Free Public Skate  
Tuesday, **March 11, 1:00 - 3:00 pm**  
Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex Arena  
867 Valley Farm Road
- **Free public SWIM**  
Sponsored by Ontario Power Generation (OPG), the City host a Free Public Swim  
Tuesday, **March 11, 7:00 - 9:00 pm**  
Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex Arena  
867 Valley Farm Road

See **MARCH BREAK**

## MARCH BREAK

- **George Lake Big Band Event,**  
**March 23, 2 – 4:00 pm**  
The City the return of George Lake Big Band.

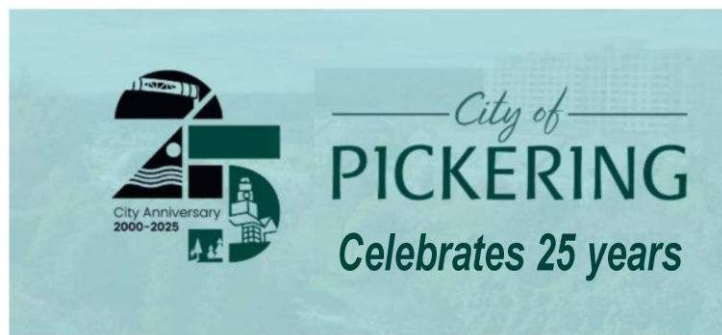
Attendees can expect a wonderful afternoon of live music and entertainment for their listening and dancing pleasure.

Tickets, \$8.25 each, available at:

- Chestnut Hill  
Developments Recreation  
Complex (905.683.6582)
- East Shore Community  
Centre (905.420.6588)
- George Ashe Library &  
Community Centre  
(905.420.2370)



- **Pickleball Rules and Demo,**  
**March 25, 11 – 1:00 pm**  
George Ashe Community Centre  
An opportunity learn in this Q&A demonstration session by experienced pickleball instructors



### Pickering 25th anniversary celebrations

Come and join the celebrations of Pickering's 25 year celebrations as a City. There are numerous celebratory events going on in and around the City.

For more details about these events, visit:

<https://letstalkpickering.ca/pickering25>.



### New Seaton Recreation Complex & Library

We getting closer to the opening of Pickering's new Seaton Recreation Complex & Library to reality.

This state-of-the-art facility, planned for Pickering's growing community of Seaton, will be the largest project in the City's history and represent the first multipurpose recreation complex built in Pickering in over 40 years.

For more details, visit:

[LetsTalkPickering.ca/Seaton](https://LetsTalkPickering.ca/Seaton)

See **COUNCIL NEWS**



News from DURHAM REGION TRANSIT

These are highlight regarding DRT for 2024:

City Council Highlights and news

- Executive Committee, virtual meetings, first Monday of the month, 2:00 pm.
- Planning & Development Committee meet virtually, first Monday, 7:00 pm
- Council meetings, held virtually, the last Monday of the month, 7:00 pm.

Access to information about our Council meetings and municipal government affairs is available at:

- [livestream](#)
- [website calendar](#)
- [Corporate Records](#)
- City's [website](#), and
- [City's Facebook page](#)

- 70,000 calls through DRT Customer Service.
- 60,000 new revenue service hours added to the transit network.
- 13.1 million customer trips.
- 18.9 million revenue service kilometres.
- Made arrangements for long-term transition to a battery electric fleet.
- Implemented an Outreach Worker program, in partnership with Social Services, to support unhoused and at-risk residents intersecting with DRT.
- Began the High School Ambassador pilot program at Ajax High School.
- Launched the One fare program in partnership with the Ministry of Transportation, eliminating double fares for customers transferring between DRT and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC).



*Opinion*

## **Public Profanity, Potty Mouth, F-Bomb, and Swearing**

By Bruce Singleton

### **Controlling your swearing?**

I believe that a person reveals their true colours when they lose their temper. To some degree this is likely true for all of us. Do you make an effort to use discretion before dropping the F-bomb in public in any of its popular forms? Does the same apply to other forms of profanity ?

I do but it seems I'm in the minority. I left that behind in school. There's a time and a place for everything but I'd prefer profanity not be used any time. It's a matter of self-discipline which can be difficult for many people - not just with swearing, but also with dieting, saving for the future, exercise and more. Personally I don't get it. Grow up! As adults we can choose to swear. My choice is not to - unless the setting is appropriate, or I am EXTREMELY angry. Even then I feel guilty.

For some it seems that once they escaped parental influence and rules, they felt the need to rebel taking pleasure in breaking past taboos. In my youth we were chastised for even saying "hell" or "damn". I only heard my father drop the F-bomb once or twice, and he thought he was alone at the time or that he was out of earshot. My mother never used it.

The problem (or NOT a problem depending on your view) is that unless you look around, you never know who is within earshot when speaking or shouting in public. The same applies to public figures in modern media. They have no idea who their audience might include. Such language is offensive to many seniors and it's inappropriate for young kids. I wonder if people who swear freely in public do the same at home in front of their own kids, or if they impose different rules.

In the popular reality TV show about the Osbournes, the family went out of their way to be foul mouthed.

Sadly I think that was why people tuned in. But let's be real - the entire thing was staged. At least if you didn't like it, you could turn it off or not tune in. In live performances or one-time specials, audiences don't know what is coming.

I am occasionally guilty of swearing - especially with friends in a small group drinking beer or playing golf. But every morning at a local coffee shop I hear profanity in almost every sentence from some people. It is also common in public places like stores and buses. I feel that it's completely out of place for leaders in our government, especially when being broadcast to massive audiences. Most national leaders avoid it - good for them. I am not a Trump fan but despite his relentless trash talk, I've never heard him drop the F-bomb.

Think of some of the funniest people on TV over the years, both men and women. They never relied on swearing for laughs. Perhaps they relaxed their discipline at a private club but not on a world stage. The networks would not have allowed it. Today even that has changed. The most notorious perpetrators simply sound pathetic and desperate. Some entertainers can't get through a performance without resorting to potty mouth. Bill Maher is a prime example. It's too bad because he is very clever without it.

If this makes me a prude or an elitist, so be it. I slip occasionally though rarely in public. That said, I frequently use religious references in anger which probably offends some people too. When I am alone I swear all the time in self-anger - stub my toe, break a dish etc. Unfortunately my spouse hears it and even more rarely she might swear in anger too - but never in public.

Like many aspects of decorum - morals, standards, tact, and good taste - this is one that seems to be disappearing. Sad.

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Rougemount Community &  
Recreation Association  
*Annual General Meeting*

Guest speaker, **P.C. David Jung**, Durham Regional Police, presented an informative and valuable talk about SCAMS and FRAUD.

### **Online scams and phone fraud**

David Jung,  
Durham Regional Police Constable

Online scams and phone fraud have become increasingly sophisticated in recent years, posing significant risks to individuals and businesses alike. As technology advances, so do the methods employed by scammers to deceive and exploit unsuspecting victims.

### **Common Types of Scams and Phone Fraud**

#### **Phishing Scams**

Phishing scammers impersonate legitimate organizations through emails, text messages, or fake websites to trick victims into revealing sensitive information such as passwords, credit card details, or Social Insurance numbers. These messages often create a sense of urgency, claiming that immediate action is required to avoid account suspension or other consequences.

#### **Impersonator Scams**

Fraudsters may pose as government agencies, Canada Revenue agents, law enforcement, family members, or trusted businesses to manipulate victims into providing personal information or money. These scams can be particularly convincing when scammers use spoofing techniques to make their calls appear to come from legitimate sources.

#### **AI Voice and Video Cloning Scams**

Advancements in artificial intelligence have given rise to a new breed of scams involving voice and video cloning. Scammers can now create highly realistic audio and video content that mimics the voices and appearances of loved ones, often

depicting them in distress and requesting financial assistance.

### **Telemarketing and Retail Scams**

Unsolicited calls offering products, services, or investment opportunities are common avenues for fraud. Scammers may use high-pressure tactics to convince victims to make immediate purchases or investments, often with false promises of significant returns or exclusive deals.

### **Grandparent Scams**

This type of fraud targets older adults by exploiting their concern for family members. Scammers pretend to be grandchildren in urgent need of money, often claiming to be in legal trouble or involved in accidents.

### **Defending Against Scams and Phone Fraud**

#### **Strengthen Your Digital Security**

1. Use robust, unique passwords for each online account and consider employing a **password manager** like LASTPASS, 1PASSWORD or BITWARDEN to keep track of them securely.
2. Enable two-factor authentication (2FA) on all accounts that offer this feature to add an extra layer of security. This is a 2 step verification that confirms it is you using the account.
3. Keep your devices and software up-to-date with the latest security patches and use reputable antivirus software.
4. Be cautious when connecting to public Wi-Fi networks. Best to connect at home mainly.

#### **Verify and Validate**

1. Always verify the identity of individuals or organizations requesting personal information or financial transactions. *If you receive an unexpected call or email, hang up or delete it and contact the purported organization directly using official contact information. Do not use the phone number listed in the received email but go to the official site independently of that email.*

2. Be wary of unsolicited communications, especially those creating a sense of urgency or requesting immediate action.
3. When making online purchases, ensure that the website is secure (look for "https" in the URL).
4. Create a **family code word** to verify the identity of family members in case of emergency situations.

### Protect Your Personal Information

1. Be cautious about sharing personal information online, especially on social media platforms.
2. Avoid clicking on links or downloading attachments from unknown sources, as these may contain malware designed to steal your information.
3. Regularly monitor your financial statements and credit reports for any suspicious activity.
4. Consider freezing your credit with major credit bureaus to prevent unauthorized accounts from being opened in your name.
5. Consider getting a credit card strictly for online use. Arrange for a financial limit on that card.

### Educate Yourself and Stay Informed

1. Keep up-to-date with the latest scam techniques and fraud trends by following reputable sources such as government consumer protection websites and cybersecurity blogs. Also talk to family and friends about these matters so all of you become more educated about them
2. Participate in cybersecurity awareness training if offered by your employer or local community organizations.
3. Discuss potential scams with family members, especially older adults who may be more vulnerable to certain types of fraud.

### Use Technology to Your Advantage

1. Consider using call-blocking or call-labeling technologies to reduce the number of unwanted calls you receive.
2. Register your phone number on the

National Do Not Call list to minimize telemarketing calls. In Canada, phone 1-866-580-3625

3. Explore spam filtering options for your email accounts to reduce the risk of falling victim to phishing attempts.

### Trust Your Instincts

If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is. Trust your gut feeling when something doesn't feel right, and don't be afraid to end communications or transactions that make you uncomfortable.

### Report Suspicious Activity

If you encounter a potential scam or become a victim of fraud, report it to the appropriate authorities. :

1. **Durham and Pickering Police, Ph 905 579 1520.**
2. **The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre Phone 1 888 495 8501**
3. Notify your financial institutions, bank, credit union.
4. Contact your credit card company if you suspect your card has been compromised.

### Conclusion

As online scams and phone fraud continue to evolve, it's crucial to remain vigilant and proactive in protecting yourself and your loved ones. By implementing strong security measures, staying informed about the latest fraud techniques, and adopting a cautious approach to unsolicited communications, you can significantly reduce your risk of falling victim to these malicious activities. Remember that *prevention is key*, and when in doubt, always verify before taking action or sharing sensitive information.

### Richard Szpin **BOTTOM LINE**

- If you didn't initiate it, terminate it
- Talk with family and friends to help educate one another other.

**Source:**

Richard Szpin, [www.szpin.ca](http://www.szpin.ca)

**Mayor Ashe invites you!**

**Town Hall**

Mayor Kevin Ashe

Click for **DETAILS**

**Trebilcock Coffee Roasters**  
**1035 Toy Ave., Unit #19, Pickering**

**Wed, Mar 19, 6:00 pm**

**Issues, Q&A's**

Hello Pickering residents,

As we enter March, I'd like to extend a special invitation to each of you to attend my "Coffee with Kevin," back by popular demand!

Join me on **Wednesday, March 19, at 6:00 PM** at **Trebilcock Coffee Roasters (1035 Toy Ave #19)**, a local business that is redefining the Canadian coffee landscape with their next-level Farm-to-Cup experience.

I'd love to catch up with you, hear your thoughts, and share what's happening in our City. Limited spots are available so please come early.

*Mayor Kevin*

Dear Friends,

As we enter into March and the spring season, I want to take a moment to reflect on the past month. February was a month filled with reflection, celebration, and education as we honoured Black History Month. February served as an opportunity to recognize the immense contributions of Black Canadians, both past and present, who have shaped our history, culture, and communities in profound ways. Whether through historical education, cultural celebrations, or community events, it was heartening to see how many of us came together to learn and celebrate the achievements and experiences of Black Canadians.

February will also be remembered as one of the most challenging winters we've had here in Pickering and across Ontario. The heavy snowfall we've faced over the past few weeks has certainly tested us all, but thanks to the tireless efforts of our Operations staff, our roads, sidewalks, and public facilities have been kept clear, ensuring everyone could stay safe and mobile. It's no easy task, and I truly appreciate all their hard work and dedication in making sure our City stays accessible, no matter the weather.

As we enter March, I'd like to extend a special invitation to you all for my Coffee with Kevin, back by popular demand! Join me on **Wednesday, March 19, at 6:00 PM** at **Trebilcock Coffee Roasters (1035 Toy Ave #19)**, a local business that is redefining the Canadian coffee landscape with their next-level Farm-to-Cup experience. I'd love to catch up with you, hear your thoughts, and share what's happening in our City. Limited spots are available so please RSVP at [coffeewithkev.eventbrite.com](http://coffeewithkev.eventbrite.com).

As we step into spring, let's continue to embrace the energy and optimism of the season. I look forward to connecting with you all, and I'm excited for the great things ahead!

As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office at [mayor@pickering.ca](mailto:mayor@pickering.ca) or 905.420.4600. Also, I encourage you to stay up to date on the latest news in Pickering by subscribing to my newsletter if you haven't already.

Yours Truly,  
**Kevin Ashe**  
 Mayor, City of Pickering



At the St. Paul's on-the-Hill Community Food Bank, we are constantly driven and inspired by the compassion and generosity of people like you! Every donation, including the items listed below, makes a significant impact in our community. Donations can be placed in our donation bin at the store exit.

**MONETARY DONATIONS ARE GRACIOUSLY ACCEPTED**

**E Transfer:** [foodbank@stpaulsonthehill.com](mailto:foodbank@stpaulsonthehill.com)

**MOST NEEDED ITEMS**

- Juice
- Pancake Mix & Maple Syrup
- Lentils
- Dry Beans  
(Chickpeas, Red Kidney, Mung)
- Cookies
- Peanut Butter
- Corned Beef
- Sardines

**100 % OF YOUR DONATIONS SUPPORT YOUR NEIGHBOURS IN PICKERING AND AJAX**



1535 Pickering Parkway Pickering L1V 7E9 | 905-839-9537 | [www.stpaulsonthehillfoodbank.ca](http://www.stpaulsonthehillfoodbank.ca)  
OUR CLIENTS AND VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT



**Your help is REALLY NEEDED**

# 2024 Hunger Count

## Our Year In Numbers



**23,015** Adults Helped  
**12,389** Children Helped



**10,330**  
Food bank visits  
(households)



**511,128** lbs of food distributed  
**50,000** lbs of food rescued\*  
**73,000** lbs of greenhouse gas emissions\*

\*Through donations programs like Second Harvest and the Loblaws Retail Program, food rescued in 2024 which would have otherwise been thrown out helped divert greenhouse gas emissions from entering the atmosphere.



This is the final edition of the PDNews.

We thank you for support and messages.

Though PDNews goes the way of so many other news sources, it has been an interesting and engaging experiment. Meanwhile we will continue to publish our other two publications:



our monthly newsletter, available on our website at [www.szpin.ca](http://www.szpin.ca), automatically emailed to donors and



our [www](http://www.szpin.ca) site at [www.szpin.ca](http://www.szpin.ca) a publication of researched articles, site visitors' commentary and opinions and material discovered in Internet explorations that we believe may interest our site visitors.

Thank you everyone.

Best,

*Richard*