



The **Szpinner**
NEWSLETTER

Issue LXXXII
2026

FEBRUARY

EDITORIAL: The world upside down

VALENTINE'S: Remember Valentine's

COMMUNITY BOARD: Notable FEB events

POLITICAL DESK: Messages from elected reps and neighbourhood associations

HEALTH: Alzheimers test, Mindful eating for better health

BOOKS: Reviews by the dynamo duo and Richard

TECHNOLOGY: Thoughts about AI, two notable apps

LAST WORD: Thank you everyone!

Editorial

Are our leaders thinking?

What kind of leaders are we electing, not just in Canada but elsewhere too.

Many leaders in various places think they are the ultimate authority, that when they speak, it is the epitome of truth, validity and fact.

Dog Ford, premier of Ontario, declares speed cameras are simply municipal cash grabs, disregarding experts and the research studies that justify speed cameras as practical regulators of traffic speed. None of these experts touts cameras as tools for generating revenue. They explain the purpose of speed cameras is to regulate traffic speed. But the loose thinker at Queen's Park focuses on an oblique benefit of these traffic controlling devices which he labels as an evil, in total disregard of experts. Is this political taking priority over policy?

T**** is too easy of a target when one discusses leaders who are out to lunch in relation to studies and research. However, T**** is a danger to AmeriKa as he has power of appointment and he appoints wackos who disregard science, authoritative research and established experts. He appointed Robert F. Kennedy as Secretary of Health and this wacko is an antivaxxer opposing vaccinations which have years of confirmation as being effective. Measles vaccinations, he claims are ineffective and cause autism. A ridiculous declaration according to medical experts and scientific researchers. Because of RFK's absurd claims, the numbers of measles cases in Texas is climbing at an astonishing rate.

The same kind of thinking is rooted in Alberta where the premier takes it a step further. Even if authorities show the opposite has more validity than Premier Danielle Smith's declarations, she kicks it up a notch by invoking the notwithstanding clause to pass legislation contravening Canadian constitutional declarations.

Perhaps policies and declarations which have no relation to physical well-being may be acceptable when there are no deaths occur, but medical declarations

should not be disregarded. The anti vaccination declarations are killing people. What's wrong with these leaders who seem to view a rising mortality has no importance? That they may be the direct cause of many deaths seems inconsequential. What kind of leaders are these ?

Valentine's

The story of St. Valentine...

The Heart of St. Valentine

Let me tell you the heart of the story of St. Valentine. the protester for love.

St. Valentine has become synonymous with love, chocolates , and romantic handwritten cards, yet the man himself remains an enigmatic figure —a blend of legend, faith, and enduring hope.

History, legend and folklore

We don't know exactly which Valentine we're celebrating. Historical records suggest there were several martyrs named Valentine in the early centuries of Christianity, and the stories have intertwined like vines growing together over time. The most popular tradition points to a priest in Rome during the third century, serving during the reign of Emperor Claudius II. According to legend, Claudius had banned marriage for young men, believing that single soldiers made better warriors. *Valentine, seeing the injustice in this decree, continued performing marriages in secret for young lovers.*

When his defiance was discovered, Valentine was imprisoned. While awaiting execution, Valentine befriended the jailer's blind daughter. Some versions claim he healed her sight through prayer; others simply say he offered her kindness and friendship during his final days. Before his death on February 14th, he supposedly wrote her a farewell message signed "from your Valentine"—the phrase that appears on millions of cards each year.

Blending fact and fiction

Like many early Christian stories, these accounts blend fact with legend. What we can say with more certainty is that Valentine was venerated as a martyr, someone who died for refusing to renounce his faith. The association with romantic love came later, developing through medieval tradition and poetry.

By the Middle Ages, Valentine's Day had become intertwined with the idea of

courtly love. Geoffrey Chaucer wrote of birds choosing their mates on "Seynt Valentynes day" in the 14th century. The tradition of exchanging love notes gained momentum, and by the 1500s, Valentine's Day greetings were common among the English aristocracy. The holiday evolved from there into the commercial celebration we know today, with cards, flowers, and heart-shaped boxes of candy.

Truth, legend, no matter

But beneath the commercial trappings lies something genuinely moving about St. Valentine's story—whether entirely historical or partially legendary. It speaks to the human conviction that love is worth defending, that compassion matters even in dark times, and that simple acts of kindness leave lasting impressions.

The image of Valentine secretly marrying young couples resonates because it represents love as an act of courage and defiance against unjust authority. His friendship with the jailer's daughter reminds us that love isn't only romantic—it encompasses friendship, mercy, and seeing the humanity in others. These themes transcend any particular religious tradition and speak to universal human experiences.

In our modern celebration, we've perhaps lost some of this depth. Valentine's Day has become primarily about romantic partnerships, with all the attendant pressures of grand gestures and perfect dates. Yet there's an invitation here to return to something broader and more inclusive—to remember that the day honors someone who saw love as worth sacrificing for, who extended kindness to a stranger, who stood up for what he believed was right.

Celebrate St. Valentine's Day with depth

Whether you're celebrating with a romantic partner, friends, family, or simply treating yourself with extra kindness, St. Valentine's legacy invites us to consider love in its many forms. It's the parent staying up late to help with homework, the friend who listens without judgment, the stranger who holds the door, the activist who fights for justice. It's the quiet courage of showing up for people, of choosing compassion over convenience.

The legacy of St. Valentine

St. Valentine, whoever he truly was, left us with more than a holiday. He left us with a reminder that love—in all its forms—is powerful enough to echo across centuries, to inspire poetry and art, to give people hope in difficult times. And perhaps that's the real miracle: not necessarily the healing of sight, but the way a simple act of kindness can illuminate the world long after we're gone.

Community Board

Pickering Councillors presentation: Community Safety Practices

**Join Us for a Special
Community Information Session**

Personal safety, Situational Awareness, Best Safety Practices

Tuesday, February 10, 2026
Central Library Auditorium: One The Esplanade
7:00 pm presentation followed by Q&A

Maurice Brenner
Ward 1 Regional Councillor

Linda Cook
Ward 2 Regional Councillor

Mara Nagy
Ward 2 City Councillor

Brian Gonyou, the session presenter, brings 25 years' experience in the military where he served with specialized units and 15 years as a tactical trainer and Human Performance officer, helping him develop personal skills in the fields of personal awareness and *Situational Awareness*.

The major topics relating to personal safety and situational awareness will explain *distraction and risk, awareness of one's situation, and levels of awareness*. The goals of the presentation to teach people how to:

- assess the risks they may be in,
- assess the levels of the risk they are in a situation, and

- consider the actions needed in the situation.

This presentation will benefit every attendee in regard to being safer everywhere in the community.

POLITICAL Desk:

News from councillors, elected reps and community associations



Political commentary:

Each month we invite elected officials and neighbourhood associations to submit messages.

We publish the responses we receive and thank those officials and association executives who give us their support.

From the Pickering City Council



Mayor Pro Tem
mprotem@pickering.ca

Councillor Maurizio Merello
merello@pickering.ca



Merello
merello@pickering.ca

Councillor Lisa Robinson
lrobinson@pickering.ca



Robinson
robinson@pickering.ca



Cook
cook@pickering.ca

Councillor Mark Nazy
nazy@pickering.ca



Nazy
nazy@pickering.ca



Pickles
pickles@pickering.ca

Councillor Shalven Bull
bull@pickering.ca



Bull
bull@pickering.ca



Phil Warne
President



Peggy Bowie
President
Ph 416.903.3284



February often brings snow, colder weather, and quieter streets—but it also highlights the importance of reliability, connection, and community care.

This winter, residents have consistently shared positive feedback regarding the City of Pickering’s snow-clearing efforts along the pathway through Lynn Heights Park. The pathway has been cleared promptly after every snowfall, allowing residents of all ages to walk safely through the park. I have personally reached out to Dan Finn, Manager of Parks and Recreation, to thank him and his team for their professionalism. Their consistency has made a meaningful difference for our neighbourhood.

The Lynn Heights Neighbourhood Association has also experienced exceptional growth since its launch. In just a four-month push, hundreds of households joined

the association. We now have **272 active homeowner members**, an impressive level of participation by any neighbourhood association standard. This growth reflects a strong desire among residents to stay informed, connected, and engaged in the future of Lynn Heights Neighbourhood.

Building on that momentum, LHNA recently launched its **Community Directory and Business Partnership Program**. While Lynn Heights has no traditional commercial strip, many residents operate home-based businesses, and several external businesses have stepped forward to support the neighbourhood through exclusive member benefits and sponsorship. This initiative helps strengthen local connections while providing tangible value to members. (Directory: <https://lynnheights.com/directory>)

The directory also opens the door for neighbourhood services—such as snow clearing, yard work, and babysitting—allowing residents and youth to offer services locally and families to find trusted help close to home. It is another step toward keeping support within the community.

LHNA was created to connect neighbours, support transparency, and advocate for responsible development and local priorities. The progress we've seen so far—from municipal collaboration to strong membership growth and community partnerships—shows what can happen when residents come together with a shared purpose.

As Valentine's month reminds us, strong neighbourhoods are built on care, consistency, and people showing up for one another. Lynn Heights continues to do exactly that.

John Meloche

President

Lynn

Heights Neighbourhood Association

Email: info@lynnheights.com

Website: <https://LynnHeights.com>

PWSCA

Pickering West Shore Community Association

Scott Loyst
President

HEALTH:

Briefly:

- **Pre-Alzheimers test:** a test to show your likelihood of Alzheimer's
- **Mindful Eating:** better health in every way

Pre-Alzheimers test:

ALZHEIMER's self examination – Pretty amazing !

The following was developed as a mental age assessment by the School of Psychiatry at Harvard University . Take your time and see if you can read each line aloud *without a mistake*.

The average person over 60 years of age cannot do it.

1. This is this cat.
2. This is is cat.
3. This is how cat.
4. This is to cat.
5. This is keep cat.
6. This is an cat.
7. This is old cat.
8. This is fart cat.
9. This is busy cat.
10. This is for cat.
11. This is forty cat.
12. This is seconds cat.

Now go back and read the *third word* in each line from the top down. Betchya you cannot resist passing it on.

Mindful Eating: better health in every way

Mindful Eating: A Simple Guide

Mindful eating is a technique that helps you pay closer attention to your food and how it makes you feel. It can help you manage your weight, reduce emotional eating, and improve your relationship with food.

What Is Mindful Eating?

Mindful eating is based on mindfulness—a form of meditation that helps you recognize and cope with your emotions and physical sensations. It's used to treat eating disorders, depression, anxiety, and various food-related behaviors.

Core principles of mindful eating:

- Eat slowly without distractions
- Listen to physical hunger cues and stop when full
- Distinguish between true hunger and emotional triggers
- Engage your senses (notice colors, smells, sounds, textures, and flavors)
- Let go of guilt and anxiety about food
- Notice how food affects your feelings and body
- Appreciate your food

Why Try Mindful Eating?

Modern life is full of distractions—TVs, computers, and smartphones often steal our attention during meals. This makes eating a mindless, rushed activity.

The problem: Your brain needs time to register fullness. If you eat too fast, you may overeat before realizing you're full.

Benefits of mindful eating:

- Helps distinguish emotional hunger from physical hunger
- Increases awareness of eating triggers
- Gives you time to choose how to respond to cravings
- Reduces stress around eating

Mindful Eating and Weight Loss

Research shows mindful eating can support weight loss by changing eating behaviors and reducing stress. Studies have found:

- A 12-week mindful eating program resulted in an average weight loss of 4 pounds
- Mindful eating may be as effective for weight loss as conventional diet

programs

- People who regain weight often struggle with binge eating, emotional eating, and food cravings—all areas where mindful eating helps

Mindful Eating for Binge Eating and Emotional Eating

Mindful eating can effectively treat:

1. **Binge eating disorder (BED)** – Eating large amounts of food quickly and without control
2. **Emotional eating** – Eating in response to emotions rather than hunger
3. **External eating** – Eating triggered by the sight or smell of food

Research shows mindfulness-based therapy improves eating behaviors and helps people regain control over food intake.

How to Practice Mindful Eating

Simple strategies to get started:

1. Eat more slowly—don't rush your meals
2. Chew thoroughly
3. Turn off the TV and put down your phone
4. Eat in silence occasionally
5. Focus on how the food makes you feel
6. Stop eating when you're full
7. Ask yourself: Am I truly hungry? Is this food nutritious?
8. Plate your food instead of eating from the package
9. Eat at a table, not at your desk or in front of the TV

Tip: Start by focusing on one meal per day. Once you're comfortable, expand to more meals.

Good Foods for Practicing Mindful Eating

While you can practice with any food, these require more attention and are great for beginners:

- Pomegranates (require careful sectioning)
- Edamame (slide beans out of pods)
- Cherries (remove pits)
- Peanuts or pistachios in the shell

The Bottom Line

Mindful eating is a powerful tool for managing your eating habits. It helps you develop awareness of your experiences, physical cues, and feelings about food—supporting better health, weight management, and your overall relationship with

eating.

Books Shelf...

Briefly:

Books: escapism for the mind, tools for learn and the cerebral alternative to TV



Gail and Heather, two very dynamic and discerning book enthusiasts, both retired school administrators, bring years of experience to the book shelves here. However, as they are pacifists, they eschew reading books about war and combat.



Richard also opposes war, finding it very difficult to accept any rationalizations and justifications for it. However, as a retired teacher of history, he recognizes wars are a fact of life in the world of *international relations*. He does read books related to warfare.

Richard's recent reads:

Recently, I have been reading the Harry Bosch detective series written by Michael Connelly. There are 25 books that star the character. Read one, you've read them all. All of them are the same, same style, same tension, same atmosphere. It isn't a criticism but a critique saying that they are consistent in theme, style and story line. A case, Hieronymus Bosch latches on to the case and begins his sleuthing. If you like detective stories that are written in a polished, readable style, Connelly delivers the package for you.

My two most recent:

[The Crossing](#)

The Overlook

Technology...

Briefly:

- **AI** - useful and a valuable working assistance but be cautious of its validity
- **APPS** worth considering: CLICKUP, SUBLIME

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AI

Access and availability

AI apps are increasing in number and availability at an amazing rate. Today there are dozens of different versions of AI, some free, some subscription-based.

Free vs paid versions

Free versions of AI have limitations, usually in the number of uses, often with limits to available features. Try a free version to assess the value and benefit of the AI app before you pay for it or subscribe to it. A Google search will produce a list of AI apps that are available. My preferred AIs are Claude, ChatGPT, and Perplexity, each having a free, less robust version. Of these, I like Claude for its speed and ease of use, ChatGPT for its personable responses and Perplexity for the power and depth of its research.

Browser acting like AI

Microsoft Copilot is a browser that acts like an AI app. Use its voice feature, and you will think you are talking to a live person. I use Copilot on my iPad and find it very useful. However it is a little frightening. Unless you take care to shut it off, it listens constantly and often responds aloud to one's surprise.

"Prompts," the fundamental way of interacting with AI

AI can become overwhelming and inundating if prompts, the basic method of interacting with any AI, are used carelessly, without clear focus. Prompts are the requests you make to AI. You write your question, your request, and AI will respond. However, you need to focus or concentrate your prompt. A broad generalization will result in a very lengthy and likely overwhelming result. Refine your prompt. I prefer typing my prompts rather than voice as it slows me down giving my prompt more succinctness and straightforwardness.

So asking it for instructions for making a lasagna could result in too much of a reply. Refine your question: give AI some parameters, the number of words, the level of sophistication, write an answer for a 10-year-old will result in a a different reply than an unfocused prompt. Re-ask: If the reply you received was unsatisfactory, modify your prompt and ask again. You're dealing with a robot computer that never tires.

In fact, AIs are constantly learning from every user, from everywhere in the world, and from every other source of information it can find. It is a constantly growing beast, but a very useful one.

Where I use AI

I use AI in many areas, in many ways: to summarize lengthy articles, to rewrite articles with subheading titles and bullets, to create new pieces such as introductions to articles, sometimes even for the articles themselves. I scrutinize AI results, edit, and rewrite them saving time and energy. Sometimes I use AI as a spring board to writing something new, often I use it to enhance, polish or correct what I have already written. I use AI to inspire me, give me ideas and quick search summaries. I am starting to use it a lot. Just ask. The more you use it, the more you should think about how to use it. It is a powerful way of searching and manipulating knowledge.

Be reminded however, that AI can make mistakes, known as hallucinations in the AI world. Therefore, read the results with scrutiny and some skepticism. AI just dumps out information with no regard to its factuality or validity.



Your All-in-One Productivity Platform

Richard about "CLICKUP"

CLICKUP's goal is to be a one-place, all needs app. The idea is that you should only need it alone for connecting your computer work. Everything in one place, but not the actual data. Rather it links all of your work into a collective network. The idea is nice but the navigation

of CLICKUP leaves much to be desired; the learning curve is steep, the logic of where everything is located is somewhat challenging and the recording and maintenance of your information is a Rubrik's cube of a pathways. I find using a browser, Google Tasks and an all-capturing app like **Sublime** works better for me. [Sublime review written below.]

What ClickUp Does

ClickUp helps individuals and *teams* organize, track, and collaborate on work—from managing complex projects to tracking daily tasks. It's built to be highly customizable, allowing you to tailor your workflow rather than adapting to rigid structures like the folder/file methods used by so many people. **ClickUp** is a comprehensive work management platform designed to replace multiple productivity tools with a single solution. It combines project management, task tracking, document collaboration, goal setting, and team communication into one flexible workspace.

How It Works

ClickUp organizes work hierarchically: *Workspaces* (your organization) contain *Spaces* (departments or projects), which break down into *Folders* and *Lists*, and finally individual *Tasks*. This nested structure lets you organize work at whatever level of detail you need. *Tasks* are where actual work happens. Each task can include assignees, due dates, priorities, custom fields, attachments, comments, and time tracking. You can view tasks in multiple formats: lists, boards, calendars, Gantt charts, or timelines.

Beyond tasks, **ClickUp** includes *Docs* for documentation, *Whiteboards* for brainstorming, *Goals* for tracking objectives, and *Dashboards* for visualizing progress. The platform integrates with hundreds of other tools like Slack, Google Drive, and GitHub, creating a central hub for all your work.

Clickup requires a mental shift. It works differently than most users are used to. It has a steep learning curve. Some may feel its payoff of customization and consolidation may make it worthwhile, *one powerful platform that adapts to your needs rather than juggling multiple specialized apps*. I found Clickup's learning curve to be of questionable value.

Link to: [CLICKUP](#)



Sublime

Sublime: A Smarter Way to Collect, Connect, and Use Knowledge

In an age of information overload, productivity is no longer just about managing tasks—it's about managing *ideas*. Sublime is a modern productivity and knowledge management app designed to help users collect information from across the web, connect the collected ideas meaningfully, and turn scattered insights into useful knowledge. Rather than acting as a simple bookmarking or note-taking tool, Sublime focuses on sense-making: helping you understand why things matter and how they relate to one another.

What Is Sublime?

Sublime is a collaborative knowledge library and personal research tool that allows users to save content—articles, quotes, highlights, videos, notes—and organize it into a living network of ideas. It blends features from bookmarking apps, note-taking tools, and knowledge graphs into a single system focused on insight, not just storage.

At its core, Sublime helps users answer one question: How do these ideas connect?

Designed for Thinking, Not Just Saving

Many productivity apps emphasize speed and volume: save more links, write more notes, complete more tasks. Sublime takes a different approach. It encourages intentional coordination rather than passive accumulation. You are doing something constructive with the information you have saved, arranging it into a meaningful and categorized collection.

When you save something to Sublime, you're prompted to add context—why it's interesting, what idea it supports, or how it relates to something else you've saved. Over time, this creates a rich web of connected thoughts instead of a forgotten archive of links.

This makes Sublime especially appealing to researchers, writers, students, strategists, and lifelong learners.

Key Features of Sublime

1. **Knowledge Cards**

Everything in Sublime is stored as a “card.” A card can be:

- A quote or excerpt
- A full article or webpage
- A personal note or idea
- A video, podcast, or image

Cards are modular and flexible, making it easy to recombine ideas in new ways.

2. **Tags and Concept Mapping**

Instead of rigid folders, Sublime uses *tags* and concepts. You can tag content with themes or labels like “climate policy,” “behavioral economics,” or “creative process.” Over time, Sublime visually maps how these concepts overlap, revealing unexpected connections.

This approach mirrors how human thinking actually works—nonlinear and associative—rather than forcing ideas into strict hierarchies.

3. **Idea Connections and Backlinks**

One of Sublime’s most powerful features is its ability to show relationships between ideas. When two cards share a tag or concept, Sublime highlights the connection. This allows you to:

- **Discover patterns across different fields**
- **See how your thinking evolves over time**
- **Reuse old insights in new contexts**

It’s especially useful for long-term projects, essays, or research where ideas resurface months later.

4. **Collaborative Knowledge Library**

Sublime is not only personal—it’s also collaborative. Users can explore public libraries created by others, follow curators, and discover high-quality, human-curated knowledge collections.

Unlike algorithm-driven feeds, Sublime’s discovery is slow, intentional, and community-based, reducing noise and clickbaiting, bouncing needlessly from topic to topic.

5. Browser Extensions and Easy Capture

Sublime offers a practical and easy-to-use browser tool, an extension that lets you save content directly from the web. You can highlight a specific passage, add a note explaining why it matters, and store it instantly as a card—without breaking your reading flow. Like having a secretary sitting at your side taking notes as you speak and explain.

This makes Sublime practical for everyday use, not just deep research sessions.

How Sublime Improves Productivity

From Consumption to Creation

Most people consume far more information than they use. Sublime helps close that gap by making saved knowledge easier to revisit and apply. Instead of asking “Where did I save that?”, users ask “How does this idea fit into what I already know?”

This shift turns passive reading into active thinking.

Reducing Cognitive Load

By externalizing memory—storing not just information but relationships—Sublime reduces mental clutter. You don’t need to remember everything; you just need to remember where your thinking lives.

That frees up mental energy for problem-solving and creativity.

Supporting Long-Term Projects

Sublime shines in projects that unfold over weeks or months. Because ideas remain connected and discoverable, you can pause work and return later without losing momentum.

Sublime Best For?

- Sublime is ideal for:
- Writers and journalists
- Academics and students
- Designers and strategists
- Entrepreneurs and thinkers
- Anyone who reads widely and thinks deeply

It may be less suitable for users looking strictly for task management or simple to-do lists.

Sublime vs Traditional Productivity Apps

While apps like Notion, Evernote, or Pocket focus on organization and storage, Sublime

focuses on meaning and insight. It's less about building blocks of data and more about building understanding.

Rather than replacing other tools, Sublime often complements them—serving as a thinking layer on top of your work flow.

Conclusion: Productivity Through Understanding

Sublime redefines productivity by emphasizing *clarity* over speed and *insight* over volume. In a world overflowing with information, it offers a calmer, more thoughtful way to collect ideas, see connections, and build lasting knowledge.

For users who value deep thinking, learning, and creative synthesis, Sublime is not just a productivity app—it's a tool for better thinking.



I hate Winter. This year it has become abhorrent, really fast. Mounds of snow, everywhere; bitter cold, all the time; hazardous driving, no matter where or when you go. I never complain about the other seasons as I do about the “Winter of 2025-26.” But we’re half way through it, the only redeemable aspect of this lament.


Valentine’s Day...remember to create a card, write a special note, cook something special. If your budget allows, celebrate your Valentine with something special, some chocolates, a special bottle of wine, maybe dinner out...no matter how big or small, remember to do something special to celebrate with your Valentine.



Thank you everyone reading *It’s gratifying to have support like this, making the work very worthwhile. Thank you and I wish you a speedy February with minimal snow shoveling and bearable cold.*



Richard
*(with support from Nadia
and occasionally from Fermo too)*

 **BOOKz COOKz NOOKz is Ad-Free**
Help keep it going with a [donation](#)

My publications are ad free which means no revenue is generated from any commercial source. I underwrite all publishing expenses personally. So any donations I receive are very much appreciated.

If you would like to consider making a donation, please do so via *Interac* to zippyonego@gmail.com

All donors receive the latest  automatically.

Thank you.