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## ***Mico reminds me of FERMO***

**EDITORIAL/MESSAGE:** The news you watch may not be new

**POLITICAL DESK:** Ontario Separatism, a possibility?

**RICHARD'S DESK:** Mico adapts to his new home

**HOME:** Fire precautions for your home

**BOOKS:** Digital vs hard copy reading, The Guilty

**TECHNOLOGY:** AI, a very valuable writer and photo image tool

**LAST WORD:** Appreciation and gratitude

[Some of the following material has been modified by AI.]

## ***EDITORIAL, COMMENTS & OPINIONS:***

Here's why you just cannot watch news anymore. Because it's not new.

It offers the same stories, day after day. They even use the same film clips repeatedly. If you stick to one news broadcast regularly, you will find they repeat topics, use the same video clips repeatedly, barely changing the script in new broadcasts.

The news broadcasters must be thinking they are getting new viewers every day, but this is unlikely. Most people like a particular broadcast and will view it regularly. New viewers are skimming telecasts, so they may not stay long enough to give the broadcaster a chance to win them over.

Daily news, when repeated over and over, will lose viewers. People get bored or want fresh views, new newscasts, not old news. Are you tired of hearing about T\*\*\*\* and his corruption? Are you tired of hearing of the Strait of Hormuz being blocked? Are you tired of hearing inflation in Canada is not as bad as you might think?

You cannot trust what you see. AI use is so prevalent and so capable in the digital world that you should be skeptical about anything you see. Not only can AI create unbelievably authentic looking images but now it can imitate any voice it hears.



And this photo is fake, AI generated.

### Bottom line

Watch the news with a skeptical eye. What you see is what the broadcasters want you to see. It may not be completely true. It has been edited. Think about what you see. If you have doubts about it being completely true, confirm the story with other news sources.

## ***POLITICAL Desk:***

*News from councillors, elected reps and community associations*

### ***Briefly:***

- **Note:** We try to get updated text from the various politicians each month. We publish what we receive.
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**[Note: No new messages permitted during the campaign period.]**

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## ***Ontario separatism***

***Being considered by the province***



## **ONTARIO SEPARATISM, a real consideration?**

For generations, Ontarians have been told a comforting story: that Confederation works for us, that the federal system serves our interests, that Ontario is the beating heart of Canada and therefore the chief beneficiary of the arrangement. It is time to question that story. A growing number of Ontarians are beginning to ask a once-unthinkable question—whether the province that powers Canada might be better off governing itself.

### **The Fiscal and “Voice-in-Ottawa” Imbalance**

Start with the money. Ontario has long been a net contributor to Confederation, sending billions more to Ottawa each year than it receives back in federal spending and transfers. For decades, the province subsidized the rest of the country through equalization and federal programs while receiving comparatively little in return. Even during the years when Ontario itself qualified for equalization payments, the structural reality remained: a disproportionate share of federal revenue originates in Ontario's economy, yet decisions about how that revenue is spent are made by a Parliament in which Ontario's voice, though large, is perpetually diluted by regional bargaining.

### **Sovereign Ontario benefits all of Ontario**

An independent Ontario would retain the full value of the taxes its citizens and corporations generate. The revenue currently redistributed to other provinces could instead fund Ontario's own hospitals, schools, transit, and infrastructure. For a province whose health care wait times and housing costs have reached crisis levels, the prospect of reclaiming those resources is not abstract—it is a matter of whether a family can find a family doctor or afford a home.

### **Democratic Self-Determination**

The deeper argument is about democracy. Ontarians are governed by federal policies they did not choose and often actively oppose, shaped by political coalitions assembled across very different regions with very different interests. Energy policy crafted for the Prairies, fisheries policy crafted for the Atlantic, language policy crafted for Quebec—each is imposed on Ontario regardless of whether it fits Ontario's circumstances.

Quebec has spent half a century demonstrating that a province can assert its

distinctiveness, extract concessions, and protect its own identity and economy through the credible threat of leaving. Ontario, by contrast, has played the role of the loyal partner who asks for nothing and is therefore given nothing. The separatist case holds that Ontario's restraint has been rewarded with neglect. A self-governing Ontario would make its own decisions about immigration levels, trade relationships, environmental regulation, and economic development—decisions calibrated to Ontario's needs rather than to the arithmetic of national unity.

### **An Economy That Can Stand Alone**

Skeptics will say Ontario could never survive on its own. The numbers suggest otherwise. With a population of roughly 16 million and a GDP exceeding a trillion dollars, an independent *Ontario would rank among the larger economies in the developed world*—comparable to nations like Switzerland, Sweden, or Belgium, all of which are prosperous, stable, and sovereign. Ontario possesses a diversified economy spanning advanced manufacturing, financial services, technology, agriculture, mining, and a substantial knowledge sector anchored by world-class universities.

### **Separation would benefit Ontario tremendously**

Ontario separation would benefit Ontario tremendously as the sovereign and independent province would control of its finances and production within the province. Ontario finances a great portion of Confederation's expenses. Ontario is the greatest contributor to the GDP of Confederation. Confederation gains with Ontario; Ontario loses with Confederation. Ontario does not need Confederation; Confederation needs Ontario.

Unquestionably, Ontario benefits tremendously with separation from Canada.

## ***RICHARD's Desk:***

### ***Briefly:***

- **Mico:** Nobody told me.....caught him ONCE in his de-energized mode.



Every once in a while, maybe after a few commands, *'Fermo'* slips out instead of 'Mico' but what would you expect when Fermo was an active part of our family for 14 years. He did it all with us: going everywhere, traveling to Quebec and Florida...one of the best back seat passengers we ever had. Bathroom break needed was signaled by a bark. Only time he ever hesitated was the first time he was on an elevator. Really surprised him and he never seemed to quite get used to elevators.

### **Mico, different yet same**

Mico is a terrier too, a mini Schnauzer. I underline terrier because they are independent as all get out. When Fermo got a command, there was a lengthy pause as he considered it. If the mood was there, he'd do it. If not there, love, money or treats didn't change his thinking. Mico is the same though his pauses are much shorter and he is quicker to respond. This might change as he matures.

### **Remarkable intelligence**

Mico seems to understand things quickly except for one thing...chewing. He just wont stop chewing anything and everything, including thumbs, index fingers, pinkies and noses. Luckily, his nibbles are very light and cause no pain. Puppy teeth.

One of his most valued and treasured attribute is when he hears his name, he comes to you like a bullet. He'll whip around bushes in the yard, around trees to get to you. A treat is appreciated but just praising him seems to do it for him too. However, I would like to see one addition to his response when called, a single bark to let you know where he is. When he is in the house behind some barrier, he just looks outward but cant move toward you. If he is not visible, you dont know where he is. A bark would be nice but you gotta be careful what you wish for because he disturbs no one with incessant barking....yet. The only time you hear him in at 6:30 am when he whimpers loudly, crying to be let out for a bathroom break. I get up and move fast these mornings as I feel badly for the little guy holding it for 7 or 8 hours which he does. But I hurry as fast as I can to let him out and he finds relief very quickly.

### **Responsive to commands**

Mico seems to respond to commands quicker and better than Fermo. Maybe he understands sooner but training periods, 10-15 minutes at most, are very productive and quite successful. He now responds to his name amazingly well, comes quickly when he is called, does the sit command well, the 'stay' not so much, 15 seconds maybe. And not at all if it is feeding time. Fill his bowl with kibble and he is wired by his feeding station...cant get to it fast enough.

At night time, he is put into his enclosure and invited to his cage with a small handful of treats. He knows it now and seems accepting of it as he no longer cries when put to bed. When he stops chewing things, I'll try taking him to the bedroom as Fermo was comfortable sleeping on his mat beside our bed. Patience Szpin, patience.

### **More about puppy training**

I decided to start a series recording our training experiences, successes and challenges on my website. Check out the series widget on the front page... [PUPPY TRAINING](#)

Once more, our home is filled with laughter, fun, discovery and smiles...thanks to Mico.

## **HOME:**

### **Briefly:**

- **HOME:** As I thought about an article for the 'HEALTH' section, the HOME came to my mind as your home should be a healthy and safe. Hence, my HEALTH piece is shifted a little.

Do you ever consider the safety of your home, its safety for your family? Have you ever reviewed home escape procedures with your family in case of an emergency? Have you ever practiced any of the escape procedures?



### **FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**

Does your home have fire extinguishers? I recommend four for most homes, located in:

- **KITCHEN**
- **MASTER BEDROOM**
- **BASEMENT**
- **GARAGE**

Modify the suggestions here to suit your particular residence, Certified Fire extinguishers can be purchased at Canadian Tire, Home Depot and other such retailers for under \$40.

### ***Placement of home fire extinguishers***



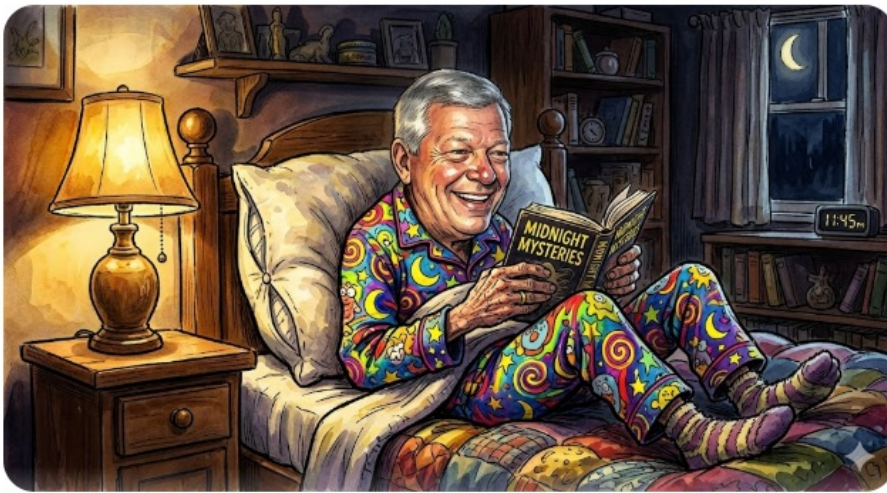
***A final word***

Once a year, you with your family should review and practice the necessary actions to be taken should there be a fire in your home. The highest priority is that everyone knows how to escape the home in an emergency.

## **Books Shelf...**

### **Briefly:**

- **Books:** mental escapism, tools for learning, cerebral alternatives to TV



I read nightly, about a half hour to an hour before lights out. Habit? Wind down time? It relaxes me but I stick to light stuff...usually something by my favourite authors, Baldacci, Grisham and Gerritsen.

### **Richard reads**

I keep a record of everything I read, more than 300 books, read, reviewed and recorded. I need the record as I forget the titles of many of the books I have already read. So it really helps to be able to examine the full list.

If you go to my website to [www.szpin.ca](http://www.szpin.ca) Select “Richard reads reviews” from the **CATEGORY** drop down box on the right, You will see a portion of the list....



### *Richard reads a lot.*

The list below shows the books I have read and reviewed. It reminds me and helps me remember what I have read.

Notice my favourite author is *Stuart Woods*. He writes 'adult comic books,' pure escapism, engaging entertainment. Nothing more but fun to read.

### **OTHER REVIEWS**

← Older posts

Newer posts →

- [The EDGE, David Baldacci](#)
- [ECHO BURNING, Lee Child](#)
- [EDUCATED, Tara Westover](#)
- [ELEPHANT WHISPERER, Lawrence Anthony](#)

On my website choose the category RICHARD READS to reveal the longer list and click these LINKS to see more

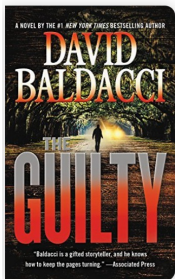
Be sure to click the circled links to see more titles in the list.

### **Why I prefer Digital books and my iPad reader**

I read almost all of my books on my iPad using the Libby app. I prefer digital reading to actual books as I can access the Internet at will to look up definitions, find locations on a map, even visit particular places they have Internet websites. It is a richer and more productive way to read a book than the plain and simple hard copy. Some people prefer the old fashioned way. Good for them.

### **Current read:**

#### **The GUILTY, David Baldacci**



#### **Synopsis**

Will Robie escaped his small Gulf Coast hometown of Cantrell, Mississippi after high school, severing all personal ties, and never looked back. Not until the unimaginable occurs. His father, Dan Robie, has been arrested and charged with murder.

Father and son haven't spoken or seen each other since the day Robie left town. In that time, Dan Robie--a local attorney and pillar of the community--

has been elected town judge. Despite this, most of Cantrell is aligned against Dan. His guilt is assumed.

To make matters worse, Dan has refused to do anything to defend himself. When

Robie tries to help, his father responds only with anger and defiance. Could Dan really be guilty?

With the equally formidable Jessica Reel at his side, Robie ignores his father's wishes and begins his own desperate investigation into the case. But Robie is now a stranger to his hometown, an outsider, a man who has forsaken his past and his family. His attempts to save his father are met with distrust and skepticism...and violence.

Unlike the missions Robie undertook in the service of his country, where his target was clearly defined, digging into his father's case only reveals more questions. Robie is drawn into the hidden underside of Cantrell, where he must face the unexpected and possibly deadly consequences of the long-ago choices made by father and son. And this time, there may be no escape for either of them.

***Richard says...***

This is the first Baldacci book that drags. It feels like the story will never end, just going on and on. Maybe I am just tired of Baldacci stories, but I don't think so. I think that it's just this story. It goes on and on. Nevertheless, it is still captivating in that Baldacci has you wondering all the time...what's next? What's going to happen now?

I am not finished reading this book yet but so far I would not recommend it as it tends to drag, on and on...too much for my liking.

## Technology Desk:

### *Briefly:*

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** I use AI, more and more.: to write text, to summarize, polish and rewrite text to generate images, to do research, to help with productivity and project organization and to edit and proof read. In short, it is an incredibly useful tool becoming increasingly helpful the more you use it

I write about AI a lot. It is one of the most important tools in my computer arsenal. I use it to generate articles as inspiration, to organize material, to edit and refine written text, to summarize long articles, to simplify complex articles, to create and edit images and to proof read material.

### **My AI choices**

There are many AI's available online: Anthropic's Claude, ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, Dall- e, Perplexity and many, many more.

### Claude

I have subscribed to Anthropic's Claude. The more I use it, the more I learn about it and the more I like it. Asking it to do things for you is the most important aspect of this AI.

If you use AI to glorify or enhance your searches, you are failing to use its greater potential. AI should be used take your work to the next level: ask it to help your organize things, create a plan for some, develop a scheme for a project you are working on.

Asking AI like talking to an assistant, the better or fuller your questions, the better and more constructive are the responses.

### **My project:** *"Help me organize my computer folders and files"*

I used AI to organize and simplify the folders and files on my desktop pc as it was a disorganized mess chaotically spread all over the place. Within minutes, AI had a plan for me. It took about an hour but now my desktop with its multiple drives is more cleanly organized and everything is more logically ordered. I feel better with the improved organization of my computer.



## **Text and images**

I do a lot of writing and research to support it and AI helps me in many ways with this from creation of introductions to basic write ups to editing and proof reading. AI takes away much of the drudgery of working with words and does it quickly and efficiently.

I also do a lot of work with images. Anthropic's Claude does not work with images. I use ChatGPT for that work but Gemini and Dall-e are AI's that specialize in image work. AI can generate images like my header with me in a naval uniform. It can clean up or edit images like removing the background or changing aspects in the image. Once again, AI does the work of a dedicated photo application but more importantly it does it with minimization of my input and effort.

## **Subscription**

As I found I was working so much with Claude, I decided to subscribe to it for approx. \$20/month. For my work, website, blogging, article writing, image creation, internet research, newsletter publishing, it is a very worthwhile expense.

AI was used to enhance and supplement this newsletter. It helped in development of the topics, edited or polished copy and helped find more information and proof read the final product saving me a lot of time and energy. Be sure to use it more than just a glorified search tool.

## **SAFETY/GUARD RAILS**

AI won't do everything you ask. It has guard rails in place to reject offensive or seriously negative prompts. When asked to insert the following image into my monthly header, it refused explaining the image violated its programmed regulations on violence....



I have not pursued this further, but I get the sense that something violent, criminal, and such will not be published as AI explains. I think there are likely work-arounds that hackers and moderately experienced computer users will learn to circumvent very quickly.

### **PROMPTS**

Ask and AI generates...know this public figure ? I asked AI to make modifications and it let me do a lot as you can see....





## CAUTIONS

AI can be a useful tool and a lot of fun. However, in malevolent hands it can become a tool that puts the boots to validity, fact and truth. The above images were generated in minutes. One can see that changing the requests, can turn innocent images into less acceptable results.

Just imagine how news images can be, may be, and likely are being edited and modified to suit the source.

[The images generated were not done to offend.]



Every month as the month winds down, I feel increasing anxious. I am dedicated to publishing my monthly newsletter every month, on the first day of the month (holidays excluded).

I have given AI a lot of attention over the past while because it is such a useful tool and also because it is being increasingly used more and more computer users, as it should be.

Readers need to be aware of this powerful tool as it is used in so many places now. Most importantly, knowledge and awareness are important to keeping you safe and secure in this dynamic and endlessly changing world. AI should not be ignored.

Again, thank you everyone who has donated to my publications, website and newsletter. Donors receive the newsletter automatically. Others can view full editions on my website at [www.szpin.ca](http://www.szpin.ca) ... click

the widget 

July marks the middle of summer....to quote the Pointer sisters, "The heat is on !"

Best,

*Richard, Nadia & Mico*