



The *Szpinner* NEWSLETTER

Issue LXXXIII

MARCH 2026

EDITORIAL: “*Idiotes*” can vote too

AGEISM: Alive and well in Pickering

COMMUNITY BOARD: Notable MARCH events

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SENIORS: Senior Protection alert systems

BOOKS: Reviews by the dynamo duo and Richard

TECHNOLOGY: OBITS exploitation (Scams!); software review

LAST WORD: Thank you everyone!

EDITORIAL:

“*Idiotes*,” is the label the ancient Greeks applied to citizens who took no active part in their democratic government system. The label may be valid and applicable to a few citizens today as disparaging as it may be.

Town Halls are the periodic means City councillors provide municipal voters with the opportunity of nearly actual-participation in municipal government. But the *idiotes* give the opportunity a pass all too often, for whatever reason. Very sad.

These same citizens are quick to complain about taxation, planning policies, or supposed councillor-developer corruption. But given the opportunity to voice their complaints in an open public forum like a town hall, they give it a pass and do not attend.

Town halls are golden opportunities for citizens to voice their complaints and concerns loudly, publicly, and vociferously. They can detail their complaints and suggest possible changes. But attendance is necessary. Councillors offer opportunities, but too few people accept or attend, and their numbers are decreasing.

Determining the cause of this lack of interest is difficult. Possible reasons, such as weather, the date and/or time of the event, and competing events. However, the most likely one is citizen apathy and indifference. People just don't seem to care. They are not willing to take a couple of hours and make the effort to become active in their own governance.

It is a very sad situation. This lack of participation in the governing process may erode our democracy. Public apathy is the vacuum into which autocrats insert totalitarian policies, as is happening in the United States today.

Democracy and good government must be protected and preserved, and it will only happen with active participation and energetic engagement by its citizens.

AGEISM:

AGEISM - Alive and well in Pickering

Age Blind: Stop Dismissing People Before You Know Them

A comment about a form of discrimination that still thrives in Pickering

Ageism – the stereotyping, prejudice, or discrimination of people based on their age – is so woven into everyday life that most of us don't even notice when we're doing it. Unlike racism or sexism, it rarely triggers outrage. It gets laughed off as a birthday card joke or waved away as "just being realistic." But ageism causes real harm, and it's long pastime we took it seriously.

What It Looks Like in Practice and its age varies

Consider Margaret, 58, a seasoned marketing director who applies for a VP role at a tech startup. Her portfolio is exceptional. But the 34-year-old hiring manager glances at her graduation year and thinks, *she won't get the culture here*. Margaret never gets a callback. No one said the word "old." No one had to.

Or consider Tyler, 24, a newly licensed financial advisor. A prospective client meets him, laughs, and says, "No offense, but I'd like to talk to someone who's actually been through a recession." Tyler has studied every recession since 1929. His age was the only thing evaluated that day.

Both are ageism. One targets the old; the other, the young. Both assume that a number on a birth certificate tells you something meaningful about a person's competence, relevance, or worth.

Why It's Wrong

The core problem with ageism is that it substitutes assumption for observation. It treats an entire class of human beings as a monolith – as if every 60-year-old is

technophobic, or every 25-year-old is naive. People are not their age group. Cognition, creativity, resilience, and wisdom distribute themselves with magnificent randomness across the lifespan.

Beyond individual injustice, ageism is a collective loss. Organizations that quietly push out older workers shed institutional knowledge that cannot be Googled. Teams that dismiss younger voices lose the perspective of people who will live longest with today's decisions. Society pays the price either way.

What We Can Do

Change starts with noticing – and noticing is harder than it sounds because ageist assumptions often feel like common sense. Here are some places to start:

- ***Catch the language***
Phrases like "okay, boomer," "kids these days," "a bit long in the tooth," or "not ready yet" are worth pausing on. Ask yourself whether you'd phrase it the same way if age weren't a factor.
- ***Evaluate the work, not the timeline***
In hiring, in promotions, in everyday collaboration – focus on what someone has actually done and can actually do. A resume isn't a birth certificate.
- ***Actively seek cross-generational input***
If every decision-maker in a room is within ten years of each other's age, that's a gap worth addressing. Mixed-age teams consistently outperform homogeneous ones.
- ***Challenge it when you see it***
If a colleague makes a joke at someone's expense because of their age, you don't have to lecture – a simple "that's not really fair, is it?" is often enough to make someone think twice.
- ***Turn the lens inward***
Most of us hold ageist assumptions we've never examined. The willingness to question your own reflexes is where real change begins.

We spend enormous energy fighting discrimination we can see easily. It's time to pay the same attention to the kind that hides behind a birthday cake.

A final thought...s

Follow up on promises made to people. Be professional, courteous and proper. If you are going to do something, promise something, say you are going to do something, then do it. People remember and will label you as you project yourself. Want to be viewed as a flake, filled with hot air, not worth the words you speak,

then just promise something, to do something and don't do it. After a couple of times, people will know you are not a person of integrity, principles and value. Deliver what you say, otherwise don't say it.

Community Board

Kudos: Councillor Brenner; Butt and Pickles...and to many Pickering citizens



Town Hall, Feb 25, 2026

One of the best attended ever, the recent Town Hall managed by Councillors Brenner, Butt and Pickles.

Congratulations to the Councillors and to all the citizens who attended. A marvellous demonstration of actively involved citizenry.

Read details at [**PICKERING:Best Town Hall**](#)

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.

From the Pickering City Council



Profile
mayor@pickering.ca

Councillor Maurice Brenner
Regional Councillor Ward 1

Councillor Linda Cook
Regional Councillor Ward 2

Councillor David Pickles
Regional Councillor Ward 3



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Councillor David Pickles
Regional Councillor Ward 3



Profile
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Community safety is a priority to the community and a priority to me. It is a precursor to enjoying living, working and playing in our community. I regularly engage with our local police staff, and even the Chief of Police at times, to pass along the concerns I hear from residents and hear about police response and programs. Often resources are needed and we have increased the police budget in the last two years to hire many new police officers and staff. Below I share further information on policing.

I have included information on two important City programs that have been in place and promoted for a while, but some residents may not be aware. Our Seniors & Persons with Disabilities Snow Clearing Program and our Property Tax Relief Program. See the details below to see if you are eligible.

Community Safety Meeting

The City's Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee partnered with Durham Regional Police Services (DRPS) to hold a community safety meeting regarding theft prevention on February 25th at Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex. The event brought together 68 residents, DRPS representatives, and members of Pickering's Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee. DRPS shared updates on current community safety initiatives, highlighted new tools available to residents, and reinforced the importance of ongoing collaboration between the community and police. Topics covered included:

Crime Prevention Resources – An overview of Theft Prevention Tips concerning home and auto-related thefts, and services that support neighbourhood safety.

More info: <https://www.drps.ca/community-safety-and-support/crime-prevention/>

CAMSafe Camera Registry – A voluntary registry that helps officers identify where security cameras are located when investigating incidents. The registry does not provide automatic access to footage. Details: <https://www.drps.ca/online-services/camsafe-camera-registry/>

Drone First Responder (DFR) Pilot Project – An update on the drone program, which is being used in certain situations to improve response times and provide situational awareness for officers and residents.

Program info: <https://www.drps.ca/community-safety-and-support/drone-first-responder-dfr-pilot-project/>

Follow-Up Contacts:

DRPS West Division – westdivision@drps.ca

City of Pickering – Community Safety and Well-Being – eknox@pickering.ca

Dave

Pickles

Councillor, Ward 3



Phil Warne

President



Peggy Bowie

President

Ph 416.903.3284



PWSCA

Pickering West Shore Community Association

Scott Loyst
President

RICHARD's DESK:

Briefly:

-

Numerous questions about...



Numerous people have asked about

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Who reads it? How many subscribers? How wide is the distribution? How much is a subscription?

About ***The Szpinner***...

The Szpinner was first published in 2015 as a spinoff from my website, started about a year before. The newsletter was intended as a source of information about the City of Pickering and as a source of information which I thought would be of interest and value to seniors, my original focus group.

Over the years, the newsletter grew with information that dealt with many topics, from current municipal affairs to health issues and technology. Today, it covers the same topics but in much greater depth than ever before, as I have polished my research skills and dig deep into many authoritative sites connecting with many professionals and authoritative sources. The Szpinner has grown into a more informative and powerful communication.

Readership has grown despite no active or structured promotion for subscribers. The goal has always been to concentrate on information, strong, well-researched and worthwhile information. Never to sell subscriptions. The Szpinner has always been commercial-free with no sponsors and no commercial advertising. It was an ideal state to be in as it free content from the pressures commercialism can bring to a publication. Perhaps this will change in the future as expenses grow, but currently we still manage without commercial sponsorship.

Subscriptions

The Szpinner has subscribers have donated to help it offset its expenses. These are

individuals who have deemed it justifiable and worthwhile to assist the publication with donations made via *Interac* to zippyonego@gmail.com Subscribers receive one significant perk: automatic transmission to their email address of each edition. The number of subscribers is still small, fewer than we would like but more than we expected.

Readership of ***The Szpinner*** is of greater importance. It is only recently that tracking and assessing readership has been undertaken, as some writers of submissions to the newsletter have queried the readership information. Readership varies from a few hundred some issues to a couple of thousand at other times. Our next step may be to analyze what readers find most interesting and give that more attention, but for the time being, what gets published is what I find interesting and noteworthy.

Readership is also widespread. People from various parts of the world read *The Szpinner*. I would never have heard about Burkina Faso, Africa, were it not for reader Ian writing from there. Now *The Szpinner* extends across North America, into South America [would you believe there are **5 Szpin's** in South America and into Europe with contacts in Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria?] It spins my head to receive messages, many surprising and unexpected places.

The Szpinner contact web extends to many people now, many more than when we first started. Now we regularly communicate and exchange information with a wide spectrum of contacts. The list of commenters, journalists, influencers, and medical professionals grows each month, and my appreciation for the information they provide grows too. Many of my articles are based on sources that are recognized as authoritative and important in the professional and business worlds, medical information from the Mayo Clinic, health information from the McMaster University portal, financial information from the likes of a Toronto Dominion Bank Vice President. And all commercial-free.

So, in short, *The Szpinner* is a real publication connecting with real people across the globe. We haven't hit Alaska or Antarctica yet, but we will. For now, we just say "thank you" to all those who do read *The Szpinner*. You're very appreciated and we hope you will continue reading us.

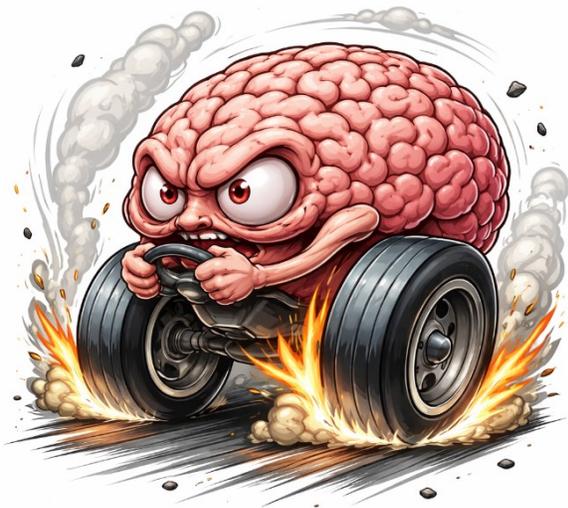


HEALTH:

Briefly:

- **Mush brain syndrome:** Ever feel you're losing it, upstairs?

Do you sometimes forget why you entered a particular room? Ever forget where you put your car keys? Occasionally hunt for the TV remote you left in the kitchen? Wonder why you even brought it to the kitchen? All this may frighten you into thinking, the mind is slipping, the memory wheels are spinning less effectively.



Ever get the feeling you're losing it mentally?

[Edited source: "Is it Dementia or Digital Overload?" Lisa Van de Geyn, Zoomer magazine, Jan. 30/2026]

More than half of Canadians are worried about developing the disease or another form of dementia. We're concerned – with 772,000 cases across the country, most of us know someone who has been affected. Projections predict that, as the older population grows, more than one million Canadians will

be diagnosed by 2030.

Sometimes it aint so...

"Not everyone who thinks they have Alzheimer's symptoms actually has or gets the disease. And we now have medications that can slow down its progression," according to Dr. Robin Hsiung, clinical neurologist at the UBC Clinic for Alzheimer Disease and Related Disorders. But there's hope on the horizon.

We're always on screens and overstimulation is a huge issue these days. Those file folders in our brains are filled to the brim, thanks to the vast amount of information we're constantly consuming during our waking hours – most of us are overloaded. Does screen obsession and constant scrolling contribute to what's become known as *executive dysfunction*, which includes forgetfulness, memory issues, concentration troubles and cognitive decline? Some experts say it may be so.

Digital dementia and digital overload

"Digital dementia and digital overload are new phenomena," says Hsiung, pointing to a study that shows how just *one newspaper today has more information than a person in the 1800s accumulated over their lifetime.* " We have digital information coming at us constantly. We have more distractions from screens than before and we're seeing issues like shorter attention spans in the younger generation."

Digital dementia and digital overload not linked

There's currently no evidence that shows our incessant scrolling actually causes dementia or Alzheimer's disease. While distractions from our phones can definitely mimic the signs of early Alzheimer's – it can wreak havoc on our focus and attention, memory and affect the way we once multi-tasked – but rather than symptoms of any the malady, these are often just memory lapses. If you don't find these issues are worsening, persistent or interfering in your everyday life, there's nothing to worry about.

Dr. Hsiung tells his parents "When they're concerned about memory difficulty, to gauge whether they can resolve issues themselves. When you're looking for something, try retracing your steps, and if you're able to figure it out yourself, that's normal forgetfulness. That happens to everyone, especially with age. However, if you cannot recall these things, or if you're forgetting the names of family or friends, for example, that should be discussed with a healthcare provider."

Get Healthy

While science still has a lot to learn about Alzheimer's, gradually we're learning more about the importance of prevention. "Poor sleep is bad for you, and there's a relationship between sleep and dementia," says Hsiung. "We also know there's a correlation between the disease and stress and poor mental health. And there are lots of studies that look at vascular risk factors. So high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol – those things aren't good for you for Alzheimer's."

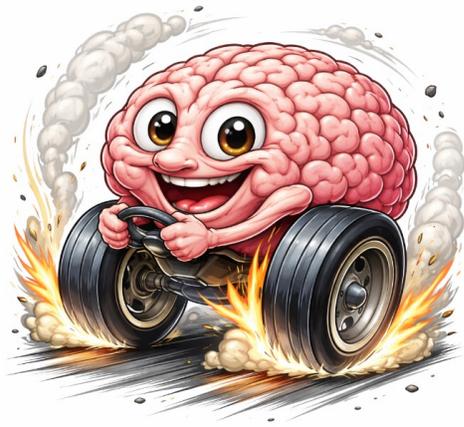
Move more, sit less

One key risk factor is leading a sedentary lifestyle. "Not only is getting up and moving around good for how your heart functions, but it's also good for how your brain functions," Hsiung says. "And social connection is also important. When people are alone and isolated, they're at a much higher risk of developing dementia than people who socialize and meet with friends a lot. This might be because when you're with a group of people, you're interacting, you preserve communication skills, and you keep interest in everyday activities. There's simply more stimulation for your brain."

Eat better, remember more and longer

Nutrition plays a big role here, too. Studies show that following certain diets – like the Mediterranean diet and MIND (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) diet – can cut your risk of Alzheimer’s by over 50 per cent and slow cognitive decline in aging. These diets focus on heart-healthy fats (olive oil, nuts, avocado), fish and seafood, veggies and fruits (especially leafy greens and berries), beans and whole grains, and they limit fried food, red meat and sugary treats.

Hsiung adds that the key to preventing the disease is to start early, especially for people in the 40 to 60 age range – that’s when you can really delay onset or work on prevention. “If you can avoid these risk factors, you can reduce the risk of Alzheimer’s by about 40 per cent, which is very significant,” he says.



New Treatments are Here

Late last year, Health Canada approved lecanemab, the “first disease-modifying treatment” for people with a clinical diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment or early-stage Alzheimer’s disease. (The drugs that have been previously available help with symptoms, not the actual disease.) “Data has shown that it can slow the progression of Alzheimer’s by removing the amyloid plaque in the brain, which are abnormal proteins that aggregate in the brain and affect the health of the cells and neurons. We think that too much of these abnormalities eventually causes brain cells to die. Evidence shows all the genetic forms of early-onset Alzheimer’s have excessive production of amyloid. The theory is that by removing the amyloid, we can slow the disease,” he explains. The new medication is given by intravenous infusion every two weeks and is only given to people who have had PET scans or fluid biomarkers to confirm amyloid plaque in the brain.

Hsiung remains hopeful that another drug called donanemab, which is already available in the U.S., will soon be approved in Canada. “There’s definitely movement in the right direction when it comes to slowing the progression of the disease.”

SENIORS:

Briefly:

- **Senior Protection alert systems:** Security and safety assistance for Seniors



SENIOR PROTECTION

The most advanced medical alert system in Canada.



Senior Protection, the service that provides seniors with the best medical alert system in Canada. Keep your older family members safe and in touch with protective service assistance using a service that has senior safety and security as its highest priorities. The mission of *Senior Protection* is service to individuals, families and businesses with senior clientele, providing the expertise and resources to meet the needs of seniors.

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. Both are away still shovelling snow and so no time to finish the books they are reading.



Richard keeps plowing, not shovelling, plowing away at his many books. You can read the full list of the books Richard has read and reviewed at his website the link

-> [**R Reads**](#)

Richard's recent reads:

Every night, my bedtime routine includes about half an hour or so of reading before I call it a day. Sometimes a bit longer, most often close to the 30 minute mark, but it is my way of winding down from the day.

My two most recent:

[**NASH FALLS, David Baldacci**](#)

[**The OVERLOOK, Michael Connelly**](#)

Technology...

Briefly:

- **OBIT Scams** - amazing the ways scammers dream up to grab your money;
- **AI** - a useful way to use AI
- **Software:** Two apps worth considering: CRAFT, STANDARD NOTES



This is amazing. Businesses are trying to cash in on grief, grab money from grieving families.

A Barrie family had family members receive obit notices relating to the death of their 44 year old nephew. The notices were a surprise, from an unknown source.

It seems this company was in the business of mining funeral home obits and then posting their company written obits and then sending links to family members trying to generate sales of virtual candles or funeral floral arrangements. The company had absolutely no ties with the funeral home or with any of the deceased nephew's family.

Though not actually a scam or fraud as actual service was being provided, this whole story does border scamming or fraud. It is an incredible attempted exploitation story.

Read the details at [GRIEF](#)

AI and *fake news*

AI can be a very useful tool. Use it to check the validity or veracity of an online story. Simply copy the headline of the story you find skeptical and paste it into whatever AI you use with the prompt to verify or validate its veracity. Within seconds you will receive a report giving you information and confirmation of factuality of the story. You will likely receive background information about the story, authentication if it is real and factual data relating to it.

A very useful way to deal with news stories that you doubt.



Standard Notes: A Comprehensive Review

What Is Standard Notes?

Standard Notes is a free, open-source *note-taking app* built around one principle: privacy. Every note is end-to-end encrypted by default — not as a premium feature, but as the baseline. The interface is intentionally minimal: a note list on the left, a plain-text editor on the right. No clutter, no AI upsells, no distractions.

Who Is It For?

Writers, researchers, developers, and privacy-conscious professionals will feel right at home. It's less suited to teams needing collaboration, students relying on embedded media, or anyone who wants a visually rich experience.

The Pros

End-to-End Encryption by Default — AES-256 encryption means even Standard Notes' servers can't read your content. For storing sensitive personal or professional information, this is a genuine differentiator.

Open Source — The full codebase is publicly auditable on GitHub, offering a

level of trust closed-source apps simply can't match.

True Cross-Platform — macOS, Windows, Linux, iOS, Android, and web. Linux support in particular is a rarity among productivity apps.

Offline-First — Notes are stored locally and sync to the cloud. No internet, no problem.

Rich Editors on Paid Plans — Markdown, code (with syntax highlighting), tasks, spreadsheets, and a Vim mode for enthusiasts.

The Cons

Bare-Bones Free Tier — No Markdown rendering, no themes, no file attachments, no rich formatting. Plain text only. For many users, this is a dealbreaker.

Expensive Premium Plan — At \$90/year, it's pricier than Bear (\$36/year), Obsidian (free), and comparable to Notion — which offers far more features for general use.

No Collaboration — No sharing, real-time editing, or commenting. It's a solo tool, full stop.

Minimal Organization — Flat note lists and tags only. No nested notebooks or visual hierarchy.

Pricing

The Free plan covers unlimited notes, sync, encryption, and the basic text editor. The Productivity plan (\$90/year or \$10/month) unlocks all editors, themes, the "Super" rich-text editor, 2FA, and daily backups. A Professional plan adds advanced integrations at a higher price. No family or team plans are available.

Overall Verdict

Standard Notes does something genuinely hard — building a sustainable, privacy-first app without compromising its principles. If privacy is your top priority, the premium plan is worth the cost. If it isn't, competitors like *Obsidian* (free, local-first), *Bear* (polished Markdown at \$36/year), or *Notion* offer better value for most people.
