



Remember FERMO

EDITORIAL/MESSAGE: Social erosion by ISMs

COMMUNITY DESK: Lynn Heights NA, Petapolooza

POLITICAL DESK: Messages from political officials, Mayor Ashe newsletter

RICHARD'S DESK: A final word about Fermo

SPECIAL COMMENTARY: retired CBS newscaster Dan Rather on T****

HEALTH: Alcohol consumption, risk levels

BOOKS: Digital reading vs. Hard cover

TECHNOLOGY: Artificial Intelligence obscures reality

LAST WORD: Appreciation and gratitude

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

EDITORIAL, COMMENTS & OPINIONS:

Our society: erosion by ISM's

Racism, sexism, ageism, consumerism, tribalism, individualism, nationalism, authoritarianism: these are a few of the isms plaguing our society today. Many of them are outright wrong. All of them are tainted in some way and detrimental to society making it less tolerable or outright dangerous living in it today.

Let's examine the arguably worst of the bunch: racism.

Our society is plagued with racism. Religious groups, people of colour, economic outcasts, there are factions in our society who suffer because they belong to a demographic that is the 'outcast of the moment.' Blacks have experienced horrendous oppression for decades, if not centuries, especially in the USA. Mennonites, Amish, Doukhobors are examples of religious groups who have experienced segregation and cruelty in many parts of North America.

Jews are a national/religious group who have suffered indescribable treatment throughout history but of special note in the 20th century.

Consider these recent antisemitic crime incidents in Canada alone:

- **4,882 incidents in 2024** (about the same as 2023)
- Hate crimes have **more than doubled since 2018 (+169%)**
- **Religion-based:**

- **1,342 incidents in 2024**
- **Antisemitic related:**
- Roughly **~19% of all hate crimes in 2024**
- **Relative targeting:**
- Jewish Canadians were **~25× more likely** to be victims of a hate crime than the average Canadian
- Anti-Jewish hate crimes **remain the most common religion-based hate crime** in Canada (consistent across recent years)

B'nai Brith tracked **antisemitic incidents** (including harassment, vandalism, etc., not just criminal charges):

- **~6,800 antisemitic incidents in 2025 (record high)**
- About **6,200+ in 2024**, also **near record levels**

👉 These numbers are much higher than police stats because they include:

- Online hate
- Verbal harassment
- Non-criminal incidents

Toronto (largest Jewish population in Canada)

- **177 anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2024**
- That was **40% of all hate crimes in the city**
- Of religion-based hate crimes:
~81% targeted Jewish people

Big picture trends in the last few years:

- Sharp rise 2022 - 2023, then high plateau in 2024-2025
- The **most common religion-based hate crime**
- One of the **largest single categories overall**
- Spikes often linked to **international events and social tensions** (noted by multiple reports)

Key takeaway

- Antisemitic incidents in Canada are **at or near record highs**

- Jewish Canadians, **disproportionately targeted** compared to their population size
- The problem is **much larger** when including non-criminal incidents beyond police data

So what does this say about our modern society? We are segregationists, selecting and persecuting groups in our communities even as we hypocritically declare that we believe in justice and fair treatment for everyone in our democratic society, underlining that everyone in it is treated equally and fairly.

Yet the Jews continue to be persecuted without effective reduction of the incidents. Why? Each Jew in our society is as human as each of us. They bleed as we do. They breathe as we do. They breed as we do. They are like any one of us. Yet they are polarized, isolated and designated as different, and treated as lesser beings.

What is the problem? Why do we let this happen? And why are the Jews such a damned group?

Community Board

Briefly:

- **News, events:** Notable events to put on your calendar for May

MAY 5



Upcoming Community Safety Events in Pickering

The LHNA is hosting a community presentation on Recognizing and Responding to Elder Abuse, delivered by the Durham Elder Abuse Network.

Participants will learn how to recognize warning signs of elder abuse and explore practical, respectful steps to take when concerned about a senior's safety and well-being. A complimentary lunch is included, and space is limited.

Tuesday, **May 5, 2026**

11:00 – 1:00 pm

O'Brien Rooms, **Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex**

[Register here!](#)

MAY 7



Upcoming Community Safety Events in Pickering

The LHNA is hosting a Community Safety Meeting focused on Homelessness Supports in our community.

Delivered by the Durham Region 24-hr Street Outreach Team, this session will help residents better understand outreach services, available supports, and how to safely connect individuals experiencing homelessness with appropriate resources.

Thursday, **May 7, 2026**

7:00 – 8:30 pm

O'Brien Rooms, **Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex**

Registration is appreciated to help us plan for refreshments, but not required.

[Register here!](#)

MAY 9



MAY 24



Upcoming **Community Safety Events** in
Pickering

The LHNA is pleased to offer our third annual Safety, Self-Defence and Walking Home workshop.

This free, in-person workshop focuses on awareness, confidence building, and practical, personal safety strategies. This session is delivered by Villari's Martial Arts Centre and led by Master Joan Richert. Master Richert was recently recognized in April by the Association of Women Martial Arts Instructors with a Hall of Fame award honouring over 50 years of martial arts training,

commitment, passion, and dedication.

Participants are encouraged to wear comfortable activewear and running shoes.

For ages 14+.

Sunday, **May 24, 2026**

11:00 – 1:00 pm

O'Brien Rooms, **Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex**

Registration is required.

[Register here!](#)

POLITICAL Desk:

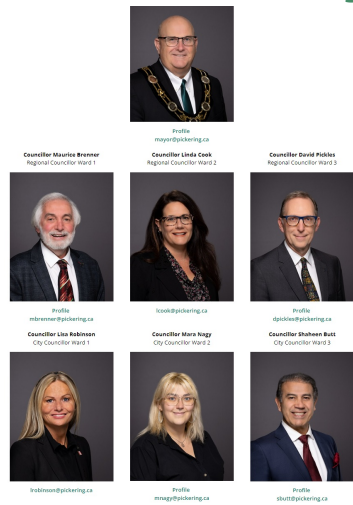
News from councillors, elected reps and community associations

Briefly:

- **RESTRICTIONS:** The upcoming election restricts campaigners from posting public messages during the campaign period.
- **Monthly:** Each month elected officials and neighbourhood associations are invited to submit messages to The Szpinner.

[No new messages are permitted during the campaign period.]

From the Pickering City Council



Mayor Ashe MAY 2026 eNEWSLETTER, [CLICK ... -> ASHE](#)



Phil Warner
President



Peggy Bowie
President
Ph 416.903.3284



John Meloche
President



Pickering West Shore Community Association

Scott Loyst
President

RICHARD's Desk:

Briefly:

- **Fermo:** Thanks for all those good years. Now rest in peace.

Fermo passed away almost two months ago. Our home has felt it, an emptiness we never expected. But he was with us, every day, everywhere for 14 years. It is understandable that we would miss him, though we were surprised as to how much.

Pet owners, cat and dog lovers will be able to relate to this, especially dog owners. Often dogs are like lovable, clinging children. They are curious and usually want to be close by. Fermo was that way in his middle years. In those days he was better than our door bell, barking as soon as someone stepped on the porch's first step. Supper time was signaled by an assertive bark punctually every night at 5:30p and was not taught these things but learned on his own. What a guy!

We miss him terribly.

SPECIAL COMMENTARY:

Briefly:

- **Dan Rather:** Dan Rather was the long time successor to Walter Cronkite and he continues writing commentary regarding President T****, always critically scathing and always poignant and acutely on target

Dan Rather is 93 years old. His mind is decades younger. Read his latest commentary regarding Donald T**** at [**RATHER**](#)

HEALTH:

Briefly:

- **ALCOHOL:** Is there such a thing as a healthy level of alcohol consumption?

I drink one scotch with soda water, daily. I look forward to it. I savour each sip and enjoy it. I tried a second one a long time ago and found I did not enjoy it as much as the first. Plus I did not like the physical feeling after the second one. So I have stuck to just one, each afternoon and enjoy it thoroughly. But I got to wondering, is it healthy?

Now I am not advocating prohibition or teetotaling. The topic just came up and I thought it worthy of writing about here.

I asked my doctor about it. He's an abstainer and indicated...

Most leading health organizations, including the Centre for Disease Control in the USA and various heart associations, define *moderate drinking* for an adult male as **2 drinks or fewer per day**.

However, newer global health perspectives (such as those from the WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (UN) and the 2023 Canadian Guidance on Alcohol and Health) suggest that the *lowest risk* for alcohol-related consequences is found at **2 standard drinks or fewer per week**.

Consuming **3 to 6 standard drinks per week** is generally considered a "*moderate risk*" zone for developing certain cancers and other health issues.

Consuming **7 or more standard drinks per week** significantly increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, and liver disease.

Some more research led to.....

Healthy Alcohol Habits: Finding Balance in a Drinking Culture

Alcohol is woven into the fabric of social life — celebratory toasts, weekend wind-downs, dinner with friends. For many people, drinking is less about excess and more about ritual and connection. But even moderate drinking deserves a thoughtful approach. Developing healthy alcohol habits isn't about abstinence or deprivation; it's about making conscious choices that protect your body, mind, and relationships over the long term.

Know What "Moderate" Actually Means

The word "moderate" gets thrown around loosely, but health organizations offer concrete benchmarks. According to guidelines used by many health authorities, moderate drinking means up to one standard drink per day for women and up to two for men. A standard drink is defined as 14 grams of pure alcohol — roughly a 12 oz beer at 5%, a 5 oz glass of wine at 12%, or a 1.5 oz shot of spirits at 40%. Many people are surprised to discover that the oversized pour at a restaurant or the craft IPA at 8% ABV counts as significantly more than one drink. Understanding these numbers isn't about obsessing over every sip — it's about having an accurate picture of your actual intake.

Build in Alcohol-Free Days

One of the simplest and most effective habits is designating regular alcohol-free days each week. Many health professionals recommend at least two to three consecutive alcohol-free days per week. This gives your liver time to recover, resets your relationship with drinking as a reflex, and helps you distinguish between genuine desire and habit. If skipping a day feels surprisingly difficult, that's valuable information about your dependency level — and a sign that stepping back is even more worthwhile.

Eat Before and During Drinking

Drinking on an empty stomach accelerates alcohol absorption into the bloodstream, intensifying its effects and increasing the likelihood of poor decisions and next-day consequences. Eating a balanced meal — ideally with protein, healthy fats, and complex carbohydrates — before or while drinking slows that absorption considerably. This isn't a trick to "drink more safely" in excess; it's a basic physiological practice that keeps your blood alcohol level more stable and prevents the sharp spikes that lead to feeling unwell.

Stay Hydrated

Alcohol is a diuretic, meaning it causes your body to expel more fluid than you're taking in. Dehydration is responsible for a significant portion of hangover symptoms — headaches, fatigue, and brain fog. A straightforward habit is alternating alcoholic drinks with glasses of water, and always drinking a large glass of water before bed after a night of drinking. Staying hydrated won't eliminate all negative effects, but it meaningfully reduces them and encourages you to pace yourself naturally.

Be Honest About Your "Why"

Healthy drinking habits require some self-reflection. Are you drinking to enhance a social experience, or to escape anxiety, loneliness, or stress? Using alcohol as a primary coping mechanism for difficult emotions is a warning sign regardless of the quantity consumed. If you find yourself reaching for a drink after a hard day as a consistent first response, it's worth exploring other outlets — exercise, journaling, talking to someone — before the pattern becomes entrenched. This isn't a moral judgment; it's a practical observation that alcohol suppresses rather than resolves emotional distress, often amplifying it over time.

Pay Attention to Context and Triggers

Certain environments, people, or moods reliably prompt heavier drinking for many individuals. Recognizing your personal triggers — whether it's a particular social group, stress at work, or even just watching sports — gives you the power to make intentional choices rather than automatic ones. You might decide to attend the event but set a drink limit beforehand, choose a lower-ABV option, or hold a non-alcoholic drink to reduce social pressure. Awareness is the foundation of agency.

Understand the Cumulative Health Picture

Even moderate drinking carries some health considerations that are worth understanding. Research continues to evolve, but current evidence suggests that alcohol, even at low levels, is not without risk — particularly regarding certain cancers. At the same time, research on the social, psychological, and even some cardiovascular nuances of light drinking remains complex and context-dependent. The goal isn't to frighten yourself out of ever having a glass of wine, but to make informed choices rather than assuming "a little is always fine." Talk to your doctor, especially if you have a family history of alcohol-related illness, liver disease, or certain cancers.

Know When to Reassess

Life circumstances change. Pregnancy, new medications, mental health challenges, or a family history of addiction are all reasons to revisit your relationship with alcohol. Healthy habits aren't static — they require periodic honest check-ins. If people close to you have expressed concern, or if you've tried to cut back and found it harder than expected, those are meaningful signals worth taking seriously, ideally with the support of a healthcare professional.

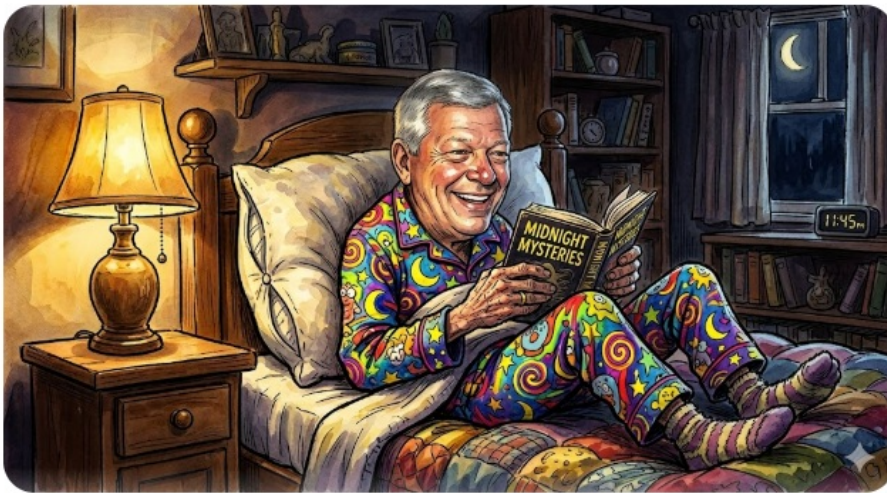
Healthy alcohol habits aren't about perfection. They're about intentionality — drinking when you genuinely want to, in amounts your body can manage, for reasons that add to your life rather than detract from it. That kind of mindful relationship with alcohol is entirely achievable and, for many people, makes the occasions when they do drink feel more enjoyable and worthwhile.

And never drink and drive!

Books Shelf..

Briefly:

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



I read nightly, half an hour to an hour before lights out. Habit? Wind down time? It does relax me and I read light stuff only...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 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

- [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

Newer posts →

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

Goodreads website

I use a book website called 'goodreads' to search for books I might be interested in reading. You can search by author, genre, ISBN...a very easy and practical way of looking for books to read.

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 a definition, look up a location on a map, even visit a particular place if it is on the Internet. It is a richer and more useful way to read a book than the plain and simple hard copy. Some people prefer the old fashioned way. Good for them.

Presumed Guilty, Tess Gerritsen

Read my latest review of Tess Gerritsen's *Presumed Guilty*. Gerritsen is what I would call an old fashioned writer. She writes polished stories with straightforward, well developed plots. She builds suspense and excitement with every page. Nothing overly complicated or super sophisticated like Dan Brown or John Grishman. Just plain, simple story telling in a comfortable and engaging style. Every book she has written is that style, engaging, entertaining and comfortable reading.

Technology Desk:

Briefly:

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** I use AI a lot, to generate images, modify ideas which I suggest, editing, summarizing lengthy texts with subtitles and bullets.

AI is an important tool in my computer work as a website creator and writer. It is a tool that not only combines many of my other programs and apps but in many instances exceeds what they do, more efficiently and effectively.

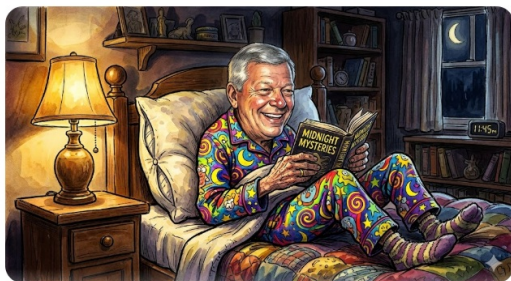
AI inspires

AI is like having a team of creative professionals at your side. Ask it to create something and it delivers in seconds. An intro to an article? An idea for an article? A commentary? An evaluation? An assessment? The list is endless. You think it up and AI will take it, run with it and deliver much more than you would expect, almost instantly.

This newsletter is enhanced and supplemented by AI. It has helped develop topics, edited or polished my copy and helped find more information where I needed it. As a search tool, it far surpasses Google Search, Google Search on steroids I say.

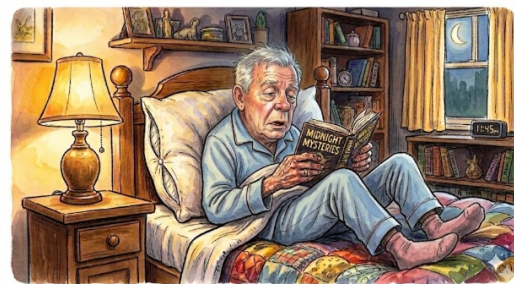
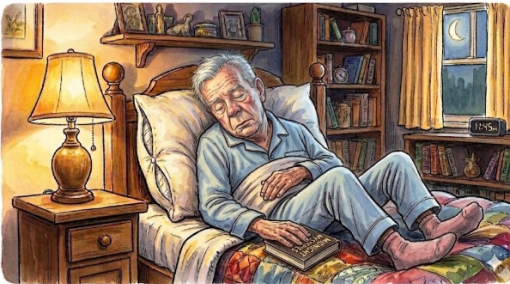
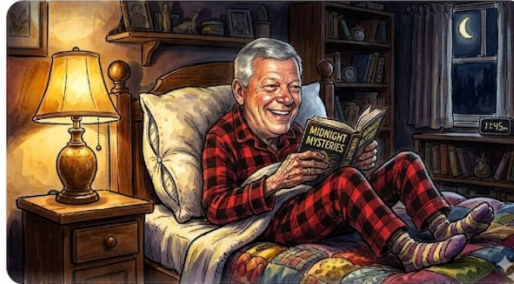
AI create images

AI can produce images on demand. More importantly it can edit the images you request. Here are two images generated by AI...



Edit as you wish

Each image below has a change AI generated in seconds.



SAFETY/GUARD RAILS

Curiously, as it should, AI does have safety guard rails in place. 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 young adults learn to use very quickly.

PROMPTS

Ask and AI generates...know this public figure ?





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, factuality and truth. These images were generated in minutes. One can see that changing the prompts, 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.]



Each month I have the fun of creating a newsletter that offers information, news, diversion and some humour. This month there was a lot of material that related to Artificial Intelligence. Readers would see AI can become a dangerous tool in the wrong hands or if used malevolently. I hope my intent was as informative as intended.

Thank you everyone who has made a donation. You receive the newsletter automatically. Others can see the full edition on my website on line at www.szpin.ca ... click the widget



May is finally here. I hope you can enjoy the improving temperatures and the increasing sunshiny days.

Best,

Richard, Nadia