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## **Editorials**

### ***Briefly:***

Editorial comments are solely the opinions of the site manager and are not intended to offend or insult any individual, group or social faction.

Something is rotten in the state of City Councils...

The taint and dissatisfaction may not be applied solely to your City. It may apply to numerous and many municipal councils. Here's the rub....

Too much of what goes on at city councils goes on behind closed doors, in isolation or privately. In doing such, democracy and citizen involvement is jeopardized. The pillars of democracy, transparency, openness and visibility are seriously threatened when council operations take place behind closed doors.

Private emails between councillors discussing municipal material is not transparency. Unregistered lobbyists is not openness. In-camera discussions prevent citizen participation.

The risks to democracy's vitality and existence may be threatened even more with the Strong Mayor's Act. Mayors of provincially designated municipalities can pass city by-laws, municipal acts with as little as one third support from their councils. Historically, democracy calls for 50+% vote, no less.

Your City may not be any more guilty than any other municipality in the province, at eroding democracy but it is tainted.

Consider the suspension of a councillor without pay for expressing views contrary to the majority. Consider isolation of a councillor for supporting polarized groups in the community in opposition to the majority of the council. Discussion muted, opinions gagged, democracy endangered.

Open and transparent discussion should be the norm in municipal politics. As well, full disclosure is paramount if the principles of democracy are to be maintained and adhered to. Your City may be skirting full adherence to democracy and its principles by gagging a councillor with suspension. They may be compounding the isolation transgression with punishment of salary loss.

Something is rotten in the state of City Councils.

***Happy Valentine's everyone***

***Fermo's reminding you...***



*It's not what you give...  
but that you remember !*



***The history of Valentine's Day***

Once upon a time, in ancient Rome, there was a festival called Lupercalia, a wild and crazy celebration of fertility and the coming of spring. Young men draw names of young women from a box, and they'd be paired up for the festival, kind of like a prehistoric Tinder, but with less swiping and more name drawing.

***Then....came the Christians***

Along came the Christians who decided "February was a dull month in need of a bit of sprucing up." So, they replaced Lupercalia with something a bit more saintly picking February 14th to be named after not one, but two guys named Valentine. Christians go overboard!

***Next....***

One Roman rebel, named Valentine, went against the Roman Emperor Claudius'

decree forbidding the marriage of young men who he believed made better soldiers if celibate. But Valentine continued the marrying of young male couples until the Roman's caught up with him and executed him. Broke his heart, at the very least.

Another story maintains that a prisoner named Valentine supposedly fell in love with his jailer's daughter and signed a letter to her "from your Valentine." Captivating!

### *Valentines take off in the Middle Ages*

Fast forward to the Middle Ages, love was in the air and knights began writing poetry and singing ballads. It was the time of courtly love, chivalry and romance. What better way to express your undying affection than with a handmade valentine adorned with lace, ribbons, cupids, and hearts. Missives of love before modernization.

### *Modern times*

Then came the 18th century and postal service. People sent valentines to their crushes from miles away. Modernization of long-distance relationships!

And as if that wasn't enough, the 19th century brought commercialization and mass production of valentines with fancy designs and pre-written sentimental messages. Love on the assembly line.

Today, Valentine's Day has become a global phenomenon, flowers, chocolates, and sappy cards. But let's be real –a brilliant marketing ploy by florists, chocolatiers, and greeting card companies. St. Valentine, the unofficial patron saint of consumerism!

So there you have it – from ancient matchmaking festivals to modern-day commercial extravaganza, the history of Valentine's Day is a roller coaster of love, rebellion, and good old-fashioned capitalism. And through it all, we've learned that no matter how you celebrate it, love is still the most important. Dig into that wallet and celebrate the day with 'your Valentine.'

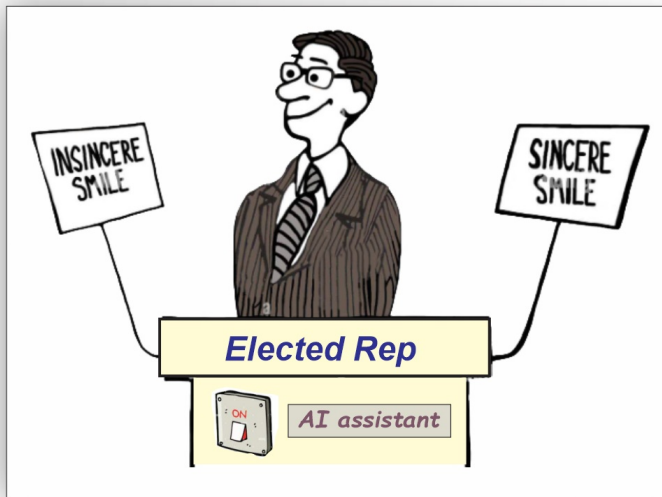


What are you  
planning for  
your Valentine?



**Chocolates, nice....  
Flowers...even better !**

## ***POLITICAL Desk: News from councillors, elected reps and community associations***

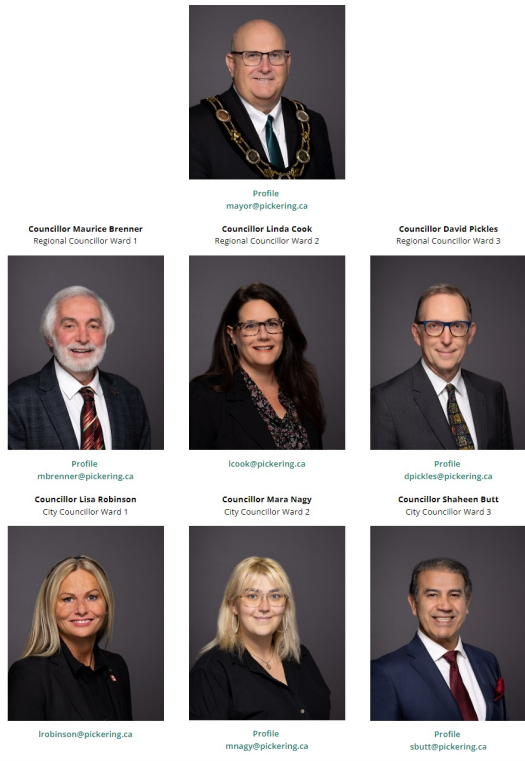


### ***Political commentary:***

Each month, we invite every elected representatives of the region and municipality to write a message for our *Political Desk*. We publish what we receive and thank those who responded.

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***From the PICKERING City Council***



Congratulations and best wishes Councillor Mara Nagy on your engagement and wedding in 2023.

Now, congratulations are in order to Councillor Linda Cook for his recent engagement to beau Brian. Marvellous news!

The City better test the water at the Water Department to make sure it doesn't become affect other councillors is some way.



***From Jennifer O'Connell, M.P.***

*Dear Neighbours,*

*I hope you had the best of the holiday season! Happy New Year!*

*Throughout my conversations with residents in Pickering-Uxbridge, affordable dental coverage is a gap in our public health care system that has been repeatedly highlighted, especially for children and seniors. At the end of 2023, our government announced the Canada Dental Care Plan, a \$13B investment that will bring dental care coverage to approximately 9 million Canadians who need it the most. In order to roll out the program smoothly, we are opening it in a phased approach.*

*Families that make a household income of less than \$90,000 a year and have children under the age of 12, are eligible for the current Canada Dental Benefit, which will be available until June 30th, 2024. As we switch to a more sustainable solution, seniors across Canada with a net income of less than \$90,000 a year will be able to enroll in the Canada Dental Care Plan through a phased approach:*

- *Those aged 87+ can apply in December 2023*
- *Those aged 77+ can apply in January 2024*
- *Those aged 72+ can apply in February 2024*
- *Those aged 70+ can apply in March 2024*
- *In May 2024, all eligible seniors will be able to apply.*
- *All remaining eligible Canadians 18+ can apply starting in 2025.*

*By the Spring those who enroll will start to be able to receive the critical dental services they deserve.*



*Some of these services will include:*

- *Dental Cleanings*
- *Polishing*
- *Dental Exams*
- *X-Rays*
- *Fillings*
- *Removable Dentures*
- *Root Canals*

*We know there is always more work to be done, but this national plan to address Dental Care is a step in the right direction. As we head into 2024, I hope we can continue to build a strong community and deliver more programs that will address our most pressing needs.*

*It is an honour to serve Pickering-Uxbridge as your federal representative, should you need any assistance please don't hesitate to reach out to my office (905) 839-2878 or via email [jennifer.oconnell@parl.gc.ca](mailto:jennifer.oconnell@parl.gc.ca) or you can visit my constituency office at 4-1154 Kingston Rd., Pickering ON, L1V 1B4.*

*Sincerely,*

***Jennifer***

*Jennifer O'Connell*

*Member of Parliament for Pickering-Uxbridge*

*Valour Building, Room 700, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6*

*Tel: (613) 995-8082 | Fax: (613) 996-658*



*Dear Friends,*

*I hope you are all having a great start to 2024, filled with excitement for the possibilities that lie ahead in the new year.*

*February holds significant importance as we celebrate Black History Month, a time to honour the profound contributions and achievements of Black Canadians who have shaped the fabric of our city and our nation. The rich tapestry of cultures and traditions within our community is strengthened by the vibrant presence of the Black Canadian community in Pickering.*

*From artists, educators, entrepreneurs, and more, the Black Canadian community has played an integral role in shaping the social, cultural, and economic landscape of Pickering. Their contributions, past and present, have enriched our city in countless ways, fostering diversity, innovation, and inclusivity.*

*As we celebrate Black History Month, I encourage each of you to take the time to learn about the remarkable achievements and enduring legacy of the Black Canadian community in Pickering and beyond. On February 1, 2024 join us at Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex at 6:00 pm for our Together We Rise Durham: Black History, Intersectionality and Joy celebration in partnership with the Region of Durham. Visit [durham.ca/blackhistorymonth](https://durham.ca/blackhistorymonth) for more information.*

*As we look ahead to the coming weeks, I am excited about the initiatives and projects that will further enhance the quality of life in Pickering. From community events and programs to infrastructure improvements, there is much to anticipate and celebrate.*

*I look forward to working hand in hand with each of you and continuing our journey towards a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving community in 2024 and beyond.*

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

*Yours Truly,*

**Kevin Ashe**

*Mayor, City of Pickering*

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Councillor Linda Cook  
Regional Councillor Ward 2



lcook@pickering.ca

*Hello Pickering Constituents,*

*Welcome to February, or as I like to call it, Fun Feb!*

*This year being extra special with an added day, for Leap year I thought I'd provide a quick round-up of some winter programs the City & Region are offering - with a gentle reminder that you should have received your first Tax notice in the mail. Check out the [Tax program available](#) for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities who qualify.*

*With taxes season underway, there is still time to get a home renovation tax credit. Noticed a chill in your house? Time to replace that furnace? Be sure to check out the [Durham Greener Homes](#) project launched in 2023 by the Region of Durham to help residents save money on energy costs.*

*Need a new hobby to get out of the house? Check out the [Winter Activity Guide](#). Please note that some program registrations do start in March.*

*For those in the 55+ Zone, try our [Senior's Centre Without Walls](#) for some fun social chat, via a phone in program.*

*Have a teen at home that is also looking find an activity to do? Look at the [Free Teen Stuff](#) page on our City website.*

*Need more? The library also has a wonderful selection of programs for all ages, though some do require registration. Consider attending the Claremont Winter Carnival, Feb 10<sup>th</sup>, at the Claremont library, from 10:30-1:00pm.*

*Visit the [Library events page](#) for a full listing of upcoming programming*

We also celebrate Black History month in February. The theme for 2024 is Black Excellence. The City has curated a collection of events for you to participate in each day of month. Learn more about celebrating [Black History month](#) here, and across the region.

With so much going on, it will be spring before we know it - with more cultural, fit, fun and fab events to celebrate.

Wishing you a wonderful February.

**Linda**

Regional Councillor Ward 2

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The Fairport Beach Neighbourhood Association will be holding an Executive Meeting on Feb. 6, 2024 at 6:30 pm, to set the budget and agenda to be presented at the Annual General Meeting for approval by the membership. Any new business arising is open for discussion. The AGM will be set for sometime in March or as set by the executive.

**Paul White**

President

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**ROUGEMOUNT COMMUNITY AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION**

City of Pickering Regional Councillor, Maurice Brenner, will co-host the Feb 12<sup>th</sup>, 7 pm Ward 1 Town Hall to be held at the George Ashe Community Centre.

RCRA executives Abdullah Mir and Joseph Poon will explain the role and functions of the RCRA to

*the meeting attendees. Additionally, they will list some of the important events planned by the RCRA for the spring 2024.*

*The RCRA will hold its annual General Meeting on March 12, 2024 [venue to be announced.]*

***Peggy Bowie***

*President*

## Health and Aging...

### ***Briefly:***

HEALTH: This month's feature is ***LIVEWELL PATHWAY Health Care Services***

[ ***Always consult with your doctor*** before undertaking any new medical initiatives or changes ]



Ph: 1-855-274-2228



Founded on over 30 years of nursing experience and care, we understand the importance of creating a personalized care plan for your loved one and ensuring you are involved in the process. We take the time to educate you on the disease, illness or situation your loved one is facing to help remove any fear or concerns you might have surrounding their care.

At ***LiveWell Pathway***, we ensure that all our caregivers are trained and educated on the latest developments and trends so that you receive consistent, quality care. We even strive to match the personality of our caregiver with your loved one for the best possible fit.

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Contact us —> [CONTACT US](#)

For more information, ph: 1-855-274-2228

## Travel...

### *Briefly:*

- Some of this travel material is untested or unconfirmed. It is presented here as we believe it has informational value for readers.
- Some of the material has been received from  subscribers who donated to the website at [www.szpin.ca](http://www.szpin.ca).



CanXplore is a tour operating company in the Durham region. We specialize in escorted tours for the 'young-at-heart.' Our accommodation in Newfoundland is in best of class hotels in each area we travel.

### ***Newfoundland Tour, 2024***

Our outstandingly popular Newfoundland tour is being booked now. This tour has received dozens of "5 star" reviews. Here are some of what our previous clients have said...

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Cathy was so much fun and the small group was perfect. I will book again soon!! Very professional driver as well.

Karen A.

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This coach tour brings Newfoundland alive. From west to east: Western Brook Pond, "Anchors Away" entertainment, to Gander- feels great to be associated with these people, to the eastern tip of Canada, and boat touring seeing icebergs, puffins and whales. Get screeched in to become an Honorary Newfoundlander. This tour brings it all together with smiles, tears and pride to have been part of NFLD for a short while!

W.B.W.

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This trip to Newfoundland was beyond amazing in so many ways.

Cathy created a diverse, interesting, and creative itinerary, encompassing the many aspects of Newfoundland. The geography of the area was an experience: tours of the Tablelands (i.e. the earth's mantle), a boat tour through the amazing fiords, Bonne Bay which showed us the other side of Gros Morne, all expertly explained by very knowledgeable guides. A bonus on our boat trips was being entertained Newfoundland style on our ride back to the docks.

We were fortunate to see icebergs, whales, and puffins on our other boat tours.

Newfoundland history was presented with tours of Trinity, Bonavista, where we saw a replica of Giovanni Caboto's ship, Signal Hill, and more.

And the fun stuff!!! Wine and beer tastings, our own kitchen party at one of the hotels, Anchors Away Show, and of course getting Screeched!!

Cathy's attention to detail was exceptional, making sure everyone's needs were met. Garfield, our bus driver, was a delight, going above and beyond.

I highly recommend CanXplore,  
Mary Ann M.

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What a fantastic 10 days in NFLD with a great group of people! The entire trip was very well planned out. Every day was packed with great sites, excellent food & lots of activities. Cathy did a fantastic job of keeping us well informed and entertained (especially on the bus). Our bus driver (Garfield) being a Newfoundlander, shared many stories from his past & present. He made sure I had my fill of bananas



I would recommend CanXplore for future trips.  
Karen M.

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Newfoundland has always been on my bucket list...fantastic 10 day bus trip. Cathy you could not have done it better..no complaints  
Carolyn N.

For more information information, see [CANxPLORE TOURS](#)

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## ***Newfoundland Discovery Tour, 2024***

Book at [www.canxplore.com/newfoundland](http://www.canxplore.com/newfoundland)... Or

Contact Cathy, CanXplore Director/owner at [cathy@canxplore.com](mailto:cathy@canxplore.com)



## ***ESTATE PLANNING Desk***

### ***Briefly:***

- **Estate Planning** should be done as foresight and planning. If not done, your heirs and family may risk difficulties in settling your estate. Your family deserves your instructions and good planning.
- Purchase the **ESTATE ORGANIZER**, a comprehensive, peace-of-mind planner that will help you organize your estate. Your family will appreciate your forethought and foresight.



The **ESTATE ORGANIZER** is a structured package that will help you record crucial *lists* needed for your funeral:

- Who should be contacted;
- Who should be invited to the viewing;
- Important names, addresses, phone numbers;
- The vital professionals needed;
- The financial expenditures;
- Even the music to be played and by whom and much more.

Keep the organizer in a safe place along with your will.

Prepare the package and give it to your family for when they will need to settle your estate.

Your family deserves such organization.

***On sale now \$19.99***

A sampler of the "Estate Organizer" is available upon request.

Send your request to [zippyonego@gmail.com](mailto:zippyonego@gmail.com)

## **TECHNOLOGY: WEBSITES and APPs of interest**

### **Briefly - Notes and comments about TECHNOLOGY:**

#### **WHY use a COMPUTER**

If you aren't a computer user, you should be. *Computers* and the *Internet* are valuable ways to stay informed, current, and have access to useful/usable information. These two tools are relatively inexpensive, fairly easy to use and a reasonably practical means of accessing, organizing and managing information.

#### **Feel awkward with COMPUTERS**

If you are unfamiliar with COMPUTERS, find someone you trust and feel comfortable with to help you get your feet wet.

#### **Keep it super simple**

Keep it super simple: dig as deep as you determine. COMPUTERS can become a Pandora's Box of sophistication and complexity. Keep it as simple as you like, but use computers.

### **Getting started with Computers**

#### **1. Determine your budget**

The cost of entry into the world of computers can vary from very inexpensive, a few hundred dollars to very expensive, a few thousand dollars.

#### **2. Electronic Choices**

Today's electronic world choices is huge: **Smartphones, iPads, laptops**, and **desktops**. Each of these devices has advantages and disadvantages but my preferences are two, **iPad** vs. **laptop**.

#### **3. iPads**

Only available at APPLE stores, iPads are relatively inexpensive and a practical entry level to information management. My recommendation is **iPad 10th Generation with 64GB of storage and with Wi-Fi connectivity will cost \$599 Cdn. before taxes and charges. [Part # MPQ13VC/A ]**

[ A note about iPads: The market for iPads is saturated and no one is replacing them. When it launched, it quickly became the fastest selling gadget in history. The iPad is a great device and it fits a very large niche, but that niche is full and the iPad 2 was essentially the perfect device. For what most people use tablets for, no one needs anything better. There's no reason to replace one. ]

#### 4. **Laptop**

On the other hand, a laptop is a computer that may offer you more versatility and capability. I have had good service from a local computer retailer, Canada Computers & Electronics, and they offer two decent entry level laptops, a 17" LPHEW02099: [https://www.canadacomputers.com/product\\_info.php?cPath=710\\_4418&item\\_id=245318](https://www.canadacomputers.com/product_info.php?cPath=710_4418&item_id=245318) at \$799 or an **Asus Vivobook 16 Laptop 16" WUXGA AMD Ryzen 5 5600H AMD Radeon Graphics 8GB 512GB SSD Windows 11 Home, M1603QA-RH51-CA** at \$599. Both machines include Windows 11 operating systems and should serve users well.

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### **Lessons on line**

IPad lessons are available at [www.szpin.ca](http://www.szpin.ca)

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## Book Shelf...

### *Briefly:*

- This material is intended to inform readers about current news relating to BOOKS. There is no affiliation with any BOOK related commercial organization.
- Though some readers still purchase hard copy BOOKS, with *global warming* in mind, we suggest book readers use their local libraries or turn to ebooks.



Gail and Heather are two retired school administrators and passionate readers of BOOKS in all genres. Their book commentary, suggestions and opinions are astute and comprehensive and presented here for their informational value.

#### **Gail Aziz**

Gail is a retired school administrator who is still actively involved with professional development and responsibilities in the community today. She is an avid reader whose book choices are eclectic and wide-ranging.

#### **Heather Stuart**

Heather also is a retired school administrator who is very active in the community as a dynamic and energetic Book Club manager of almost two dozen book club participants. Along with her book club members, she reads a wide assortment of books ranging from today's best sellers to popular classics.



### **Richard on BOOKS**

I read every evening before sleeping. I have favourite authors, Stuart Woods, John Grisham, David Baldacci but I read other authors in an attempt to expand my experience and reading tastes.

Some reading suggestions for you:

1. Use a booktracking platform like **GoodReads** or **StoryGraph**

As I have been a **GoodReads** user for years, this month, I will write about it. However, a cautionary word from others: Amazon is behind **GoodReads** and so it may add some commercialization. I have not noticed it but then I have not been watching for this.

I have been using **GoodReads** to get reviews of books, read their synopsis and to search for books. It has been very useful and served me well. I am now beginning to explore **StoryGraph**.

Click —> [GoodReads](#)

Click —> [StoryGraph](#)

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“Communication” ...it’s becoming a greater and greater challenge in this day and age to successfully communicate with people. Social media, electronic devices, computers and the Internet claim success in connecting with people but real world results make that very questionable.

Maybe the old methods are more reliable, telephone, neighbour-to-neighbour ... or just outright getting up and getting over there for a face-to-face.

***Talk*** to me !!!

As always, we wish you the best...

***Nadia, Richard and Fermo***



**Happy Valentine's...**

The **Feb** edition of ***Spinner*** newsletter is available now.

Donors receive it automatically.  
Please consider a small donation by eTransfer to [zippyonego@gmail.com](mailto:zippyonego@gmail.com)

Thank you.

***Best Richard***