



The DESKS

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 2. **CANADA DAY:** About being Canadian and/or living in Canada
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The FRONT DESK:



CANADA DAY edition

This issue is dedicated to Canada and all its citizens.

Readers were invited to submit comments about being Canadian and/or living in Canada. Received comments have been published in the issue and also on my website.

Happy Canada Day everyone

Best,

Richard



Being Canadian and/or living in Canada...

Each year readers/visitors of my publications are invited to write a comment about being Canadian and/or living in Canada. For me it is an exercise of joy and pride as the comments reinforce why for me Canada is the greatest country in the world and I am proud to be Canadian. Sure, our winters may leave something to be desired by many of us but no other country is as safe, has better health care, and offers as good a life as Canada.

Enjoy what others say about living in Canada.

I'm celebrating CANADA DAY, full out, with the same passion and pride as I always.

I fly the Canadian flag at the front of my home to show I am a proud Canadian.

For nearly eighty years, I have been able to live a safe and secure life here. I have made a good living working in my chosen profession, education, and I have been able to live wherever I wanted.

Canada is not a country without problems. I recognize life is difficult for some Canadians who struggle day-to-day, economically and maybe socially also. But I believe our governments at all levels are doing the best they can to make life better for all of us.

Our history has included turbulent times with undesirable people, an inescapable factor in the development of any nation. However, we have had and continue having political leaders dedicated to improving whatever they can.

The good about Canada outweighs the bad. I celebrate the good.

I am celebrating Canada Day. My Canadian flag is raised with pride and passion. Canada is the greatest country in the world and I am proud to be a Canadian.

To paraphrase another leader, ***"Vive le Canada libre!"***

Richard Szpin
Blogger,

community activist

***Other Canada Day comments...elsewhere in the
issue...***

From

***Mayor Kevin Ashe
Councillor Linda Cook
Councillor Dave Pickles***

POLITICAL DESK:

News from councillors, elected reps and community associations



Political commentary:

We invite many elected representatives, the Mayor and all the councillors, to send updates about their constituencies. What's new in their jurisdictional areas?

We thank those who were able to send us updates and thank all reps for their support of our publications. Thank you.

From the PICKERING City Council



Profile
mayor@pickering.ca

Councillor Maurice Brenner
Regional Councillor Ward 1



Profile
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Councillor Lisa Robinson
City Councillor Ward 1



lrobinson@pickering.ca



lcook@pickering.ca

Councillor Mara Nagy
City Councillor Ward 2



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Councillor Shaheen Butt
City Councillor Ward 3



Profile
sbutt@pickering.ca

Dear Friends,

Happy Canada Day!

Canada Day is and will always be a time to celebrate. But it's also a moment to pause and reflect on where we've come from, what we've overcome, and where we're headed together.

This past year has brought its share of challenges. Around the world, we've seen rising global tensions, economic uncertainty, and the strain of conflict and division. Even our relationship with our closest neighbour and trading partner, the United States, has experienced turbulence. Whether it's trade disputes, geopolitical unrest, or economic pressures, these issues ripple across borders and affect all of us in ways both big and small.

But if there's one thing I've learned, it's that Canadians know how to rise above. We don't flinch in the face of adversity. We roll up our sleeves; we put our elbows up, and we get to work, with strength and an unwavering belief in each other.

We've seen that resilience here in Pickering, in our food banks, our community organizations, our small businesses, and our neighbourhoods. We've seen people come together to support one another through hardship. We've seen what true Canadian values look like: kindness, perseverance, and community spirit.

This is what Canada Day is really about.

We celebrate the people who make our country strong, not just in times of comfort, but in times of challenge. We honour the stories, cultures, and traditions that have shaped this land. We recognize Indigenous communities as the original stewards of the territory we call home, and we recommit ourselves to the work of truth and reconciliation.

So today, as we proudly wave our flags and celebrate our heritage, let us also renew our commitment to the kind of Canada we want to build, one that is inclusive, just, peaceful, and united.

On behalf of the City of Pickering, I wish each and every one of you a safe and joyful Canada Day. May this day inspire us to keep building a stronger, more caring community, for today, and for generations to come.

Yours Truly,

Kevin Ashe

Mayor, City of Pickering

Councillor Brenner's eNewsletter is published regularly.
To access his newsletter, **CLICK** -> [Brenner](#)



To access Councillor Brenner's eNewsletter, **CLICK** -> [Brenner](#)

Canada Day 2025 - Renewed patriotism, renewed pride, renewed energy - all across our vast and beautiful country.

The groundswell of patriotism is creating a wave of pride across Canada, and that fills me with a sense of hope for our future generations. While always patriotic, particularly during hockey playoffs, we Canadians, by and large, are humble folk. Quietly funny, often self-deprecating and fiercely loyal to our brand of beer and poutine.

We have much to celebrate this year - the richness of our resources, the stillness of our National Parks, the expanses of our lakes and oceans.

I hope everyone is able to celebrate their Canada Day traditions as they choose too - whether that is with reflection, renewed commitment to reconciliation, or a good old-fashioned BBQ and social with your family and neighbours. This day means different things to different walks of life, newcomer, old timers, or indigenous original. Be kind to each other and embrace the diversity of what it means to be one Nation, aligned to stand on guard for thee.

We remain now, as always, glorious and free.

Happy Canada Day to all.

Regional Councillor

Linda Cook

Deputy Mayor &

Ward 2

Beautiful City of

Pickering

Hello everyone,

I want to wish everyone a Happy Canada Day! I truly believe we are blessed to live in the best country. Sure we have our problems and ups and downs, but I have had the opportunity to visit a number of places around the world and they all have issues, some severe, and I would not trade my country of Canada for any other. Enjoy Canada Day safely with friends, family and neighbours. Pickering residents always have a great celebration. Cheers all.

David Pickles

Regional Councillor - Ward 2



Councillor Robinson's eNewsletter is published online.
To access his newsletter, **CLICK** -> [Robinson](#)

Councillor Shaheen Butt...no update this month

Councillor Mara Nagy...no update this month



no update this month

Phil Warne

President



June 14 event

The ***Rougemount Community and Recreation Association (RCRA)*** held its annual Picnic and Play in the Park with games, vendors, music and people, lots and lots of people at the Rouge Valley Park on Rouge Valley Drive on Saturday, June 14, 2025 from 1:00 - 4:00 pm.





Everyone enjoyed a great day

Peggy Bowie
President
(Ph 416.903.3284)

PWSCA

Pickering West Shore Community Association

no update this month

Scott Loyst
President

Richard's DESK



A retired school administrator who motorcycled in his younger days, across Canada and the USA. Father Time has kiboshed riding giving Richard more time for his other passion, writing. Richard, along with his wife and stubborn Scottie have been Pickering residents for over 35 years convincing them that Pickering is one of the best communities to live in in all of Canada.

- ***State of the world:*** An age old question, “Why isn’t the world improving?”

Some people may think “Man is inherently evil or incredibly stupid.” Maybe. Consider....

Mankind seems so malevolent? Crime never ceases. Aggression assaults and injury will never stop. Wars look like they are unavoidable and will be with mankind forever. What is it that causes mankind to fail to learn and act on the past?

Read the headlines of the news; listen to the news; watch the broadcasts. Destruction and violence everywhere, every day and in every way.

We know the consequences of war. We know that arms build up and development has one goal, better warfare.

This isn’t a useless lament about the failures of humanity. It is an incredibility for the continuous folly and failure of mankind. Rather than focussing solely on improving the world, we constantly yield to our lesser personas, our malevolent psyches, our evil twins. Why?

We have the means, the tools, the experience and the intellectual capability to improve continuously in the world. But we don’t. Instead we succumb to our wicked sides, the evil in us and resort to anger, aggression and war. Why?

We lament the results of the malevolence within us. We criticize the rise in violence, crime and aggression. We deplore wars and international conflicts as if we were dedicated pacifists. But rather than doing something about it, we throw words at these things. We blame faultless others for these failures, politicians, social leaders, institutional directorates, never pointing a finger at ourselves, nor searching for the real causes of the problems.

Thankfully, the evil is somewhat counterbalanced by the good. There are many collectives, institutions, associations, leaders and people in general who work to improve our world. Without them, we would be living in constant chaos and calamity.

What should we do to act on what we have learned, to change the negativity in our world and make it a better place?

R's HERB GARDEN



A month ago, I started an herb garden on my kitchen patio walkout. I've never been a gardener but I had to add another regular activity to my life that would get me away from this computer. So an herb garden it was.

- ***State of the garden:*** Incredibly, my herb garden thrives.

First, a list of what I planted, from seedlings and from seeds: basil, oregano, thyme, sage, dill, parsley, cherry tomatoes, beefsteak tomatoes, onions and chives. I admit, the RGT (Resident Green Thumb) assisted with the tomatoes and onions while the chives were there from years past.

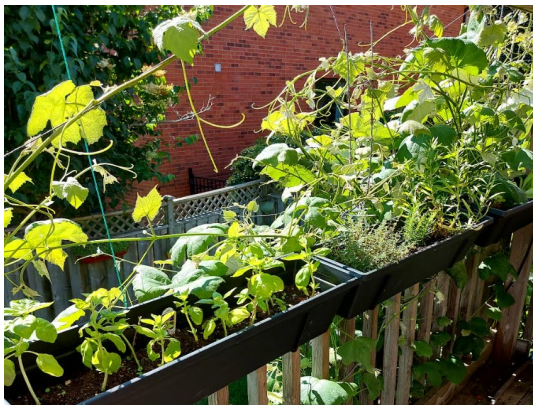
The first few weeks, things were not looking good. I was especially disappointed with the basil which I was looking forward to using the most of all the herbs: fresh shredded basil leaves on slices of just picked tomatoes with buffalo cheese...a repast from heaven. But from the look of my basil, this was unlikely to happen. The leaves were drooping, nearly wilted. Perhaps the dreary, cold early spring was the culprit, maybe I planted too soon. Who knows...but the garden and my sweet basil were not looking vibrant and vigorous. RGT advised monitor the soil dampness and keep watering.

Each morning I was out there checking the state of the young plants and each morning they still looked like death was imminent.

Mid-June, temperatures began climbing daily, sunshine was strong and beaming. By the third week, my plants began looking like they must have returned from a 'revival meeting;' their colour was vibrant green, the leaves were stronger and reached up for more sunshine.

This week, salvation. The revival returnees were gloriously vibrant and vigorous. I've learned, water with discretion. If the soil is wet, pass; if it begins to crumble like dry bread crumbs, water but again don't deluge their terroir. I didn't and the reward...the plants are growing like young teens, strong, richly green and vibrantly upright. The basil looks like it could win prizes.

Take a look at my beauties...



HEALTH:

Briefly:

- **PROMOTING BRAIN HEALTH:** a tougher battle as we age.

[A preface to this section

The goal here is to bring attention to a problem we all face, aging and decline of the brain. Upon self-evaluation and self examination, most adults will find memory loss and less problem solving capability.

Below are some strategies and ideas to consider using in the cerebral battle facing everyone as they age.]

Why is brain health important?

Promoting brain health is important because our brain is the control centre of our body and plays a critical role in our overall well-being. The brain controls everything from our thoughts, learning and memory,

language, visual and spatial ability, emotions, and behaviour; to our movement, senses, and bodily functions. *Maintaining good brain health can help prevent or delay the onset of cognitive decline and brain diseases such as Alzheimer disease.* that there are several actions you can take to promote brain health and delay or prevent cognitive impairment.

It is never too early or too late to reduce your risk of dementia.

What can affect your brain health?

Brain health can be affected by age-related changes in the brain, conditions such as stroke or traumatic brain injury, disorders such as depression, substance use disorders or addiction, and diseases such as Alzheimer disease and other types of dementia. While some factors affecting brain health cannot be changed, there are many lifestyle changes that might make a difference.

What do we mean by dementia risk reduction?

There are three main ways we think of dementia risk reduction:

1. Decreasing the lifetime risk of dementia
2. Delaying the onset
3. Possibly slowing the progression (this is sometimes called 'secondary prevention', as the person already has the disease)

What do we mean by risk factors?

A risk factor is something that increases the chance of developing a disease. We can divide risk factors for dementia into two kinds: non-modifiable and modifiable.

Non-modifiable risk factors are ones that are outside of your control, like your age or your genetic make-up. Modifiable risks are ones that you can do something about, and we're going to focus on those in this detailed overview.

The impact of lifestyle on brain health

Recent research has shown that there are several actions you can take to promote brain health and delay or prevent cognitive impairment. These actions relate to modifiable risk factors that you can change through healthy lifestyle behaviours and managing certain health conditions.

What are the important modifiable risk factors for dementia?

Modifiable risk factors are the behaviours, lifestyle choices, and health conditions that can be changed in order to reduce the risk of developing certain diseases or health problems. These risk factors include things like smoking, poor diet, lack of exercise, excessive alcohol consumption, and high blood pressure, among others. By making changes to these modifiable risk factors, you can improve your overall health and reduce your risk of developing certain diseases or health problems like dementia and cancer.

How much can I reduce the risk?

This is an active area of research, but The Lancet Commission identified several modifiable risk factors that might **prevent or delay up to 45% of dementias**. Two other recent studies found that engaging in 2-3 healthy lifestyle behaviours could lower your risk of Alzheimer disease by 37%, while **doing 4-5 healthy behaviours could lower your risk by 60%**. The behaviours were ≥ 150 minutes/week of moderate/vigorous-intensity physical activity, not smoking, not drinking too much alcohol, a high-quality Mediterranean type of diet, and engagement in cognitive activities.

So, the more of these factors you can incorporate into your life, the better it is for your overall brain health.

Modifiable risk factors aren't the only type of risk factors for dementia, there are also 'non-modifiable' ones. Non-modifiable risk factors are ones that can't be changed like **aging, family history, or genetics**. For example, the odds of developing dementia increase with age; and there are a small number of dementias that run in families and are often associated with particular genes.

It's important to remember that most cases of dementia aren't related to family history or specific genetic disorders. And a significant amount of dementia may be associated with several modifiable risk factors. There are also certain environmental factors – such as lower levels of education in early life – that are important things for us to try to address as a society, but might not be things that you can modify now.

Ways to promote brain health

In the following sections, we're going to focus on those things that you **can** change to promote brain health, where there is evidence of dementia risk reduction. Many of these factors are also associated with other health benefits, such as reducing your risk of cancer or other chronic diseases.

The World Health Organization and the Lancet Commission and others have examined the evidence and made recommendations for several ways in which people can promote brain health and reduce their risk of developing dementia. These include the following:

- Physical activity, sedentary behaviour, and sleep
- Weight management, diet, and nutrition
- Blood vessel health
- Smoking and alcohol
- Cognitive (brain) and social activity
- Hearing and vision loss
- Other health conditions and medication adverse effects.

Books Shelf...

Briefly:

- Everyone's been busy, so my posts may be somewhat abbreviated.



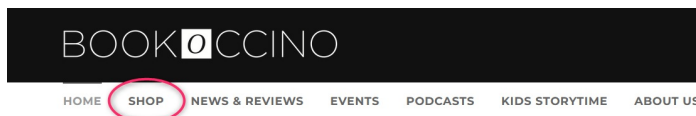
Gail and Heather, two dynamic and discerning book enthusiasts, both retired school administrators, bring years of reading experience to the book shelves here.

Gail suggests....

I read many books, the variety is broad ranging from bestsellers to traditional classics. To help me find books that pique my interest, I like to use two sources: **Bookocinno** and **Indigo**.

"Bookocinno," a clever portmanteau of "book" and "cappuccino," is a website that presents thoughtfully curated selections of books, ranging from current bestsellers and new releases to timeless classics and niche titles. It's the kind of place where you can get a personal recommendation from knowledgeable staff who are passionate about literature. They've built a reputation for having a wide and eclectic range that caters to diverse tastes, from contemporary fiction and memoirs to children's books and autobiographies.

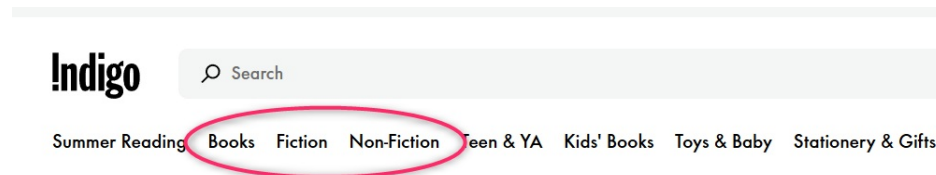
Though books can be purchased here, the Bookocinno website is great for perusing an enormous selection of titles in their 'shop' which feels like a huge book store with an endless selection of books in more than two dozen categories. It is a great place to browse for books to consider for purchase or to borrow from your local library.



Visit the website at BOOKOCINNO

Indigo is a Canadian bookstore chain founded by Heather Reisman who recently returned

to take the helm of the company when it was floundering. Reisman has resurrected Indigo to its earlier level of being a huge bookstore that offers more than just books. However, its book selection is tremendous and worth your time if you want to search for books to buy or titles for borrowing from your local library.



Visit the website at [INDIGO](https://www.indigo.ca)

Richard reads...but needs faster reading:

I read a lot, throughout much of the day and always for a while at bedtime. Increasing my reading speed may have some benefits like giving me time lost due to slow reading. Artificial intelligence offers these tips to increase rate of reading:

- **Stop Subvocalizing (The "Inner Voice"):**
Most people "hear" the words in their heads as they read. This is called **subvocalization**, and it limits your reading speed to your speaking speed. To overcome this, try humming, chewing gum, or placing your tongue on the roof of your mouth while you read.
- **Use a Pointer or Pacer:**
Use your finger, a pen, or a digital cursor to guide your eyes across the page. This keeps your eyes moving forward and prevents them from jumping back and rereading words (a habit called "**regression**"), is a major speed killer.
- **Preview the Text Before You Read:**
Before you dive in, skim the text by looking at headings, bolded words, and any charts or graphs. This "pre-reading" gives your brain a roadmap of the content and helps you identify key themes, which primes your brain for faster comprehension.
- **Read in "Chunks" of Words:**
Instead of focusing on one word at a time, train your eyes to take in groups of words, or "chunks," at once. By expanding your peripheral vision, you can reduce the number of times your eyes have to stop on each line.
- **Minimize Regressions (Rereading):**

Consciously practice a "no backtracking" rule. While it's sometimes necessary for complex material, going back and rereading words or sentences is often a habit that significantly slows you down.

- **Practice Regularly and Time Yourself:**

Consistency is key. Set aside dedicated time each day to practice. Use a timer to track your words per minute and comprehension to see your progress over time.

- **Expand Your Vocabulary:**

A larger vocabulary means you won't have to interrupt your reading to look up unfamiliar words. The more words you recognize instantly, the faster you can process the text.

- **Adjust Your Reading Speed to the Material:**

Don't read a dense textbook at the same speed as a novel. Learn to adjust your pace based on the complexity and your purpose for reading.

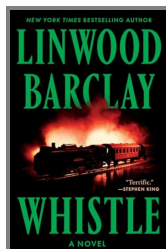
- **Create a Distraction-Free Environment:**

Find a quiet space, turn off notifications, and put away your phone. It's hard to read quickly and efficiently if you're constantly being interrupted.

- **Actively Engage with the Text:**

Taking notes, summarizing, and asking yourself questions as you read can boost your focus and comprehension, which in turn reduces the need for rereading.

Recently read...



New York Times bestselling author Linwood Barclay enters new territory with a supernatural chiller in which a woman and her young son move to a small town looking for a fresh start, only to be haunted by disturbing events and strange visions when they find a mysterious train set in a storage shed.

Synopsis

Evil has a one track mind...

Annie Blunt has had an unimaginably terrible year. First, her husband was killed in a tragic hit-and-run accident, then one of the children's books she's built her writing and illustrating career on ignited a major scandal. Desperate for a fresh start, she moves with her son Charlie to a charming small town in upstate New York where they can begin to heal.

But Annie's year is about to get worse.

Bored and lonely in their isolated new surroundings, Charlie is thrilled when he finds a forgotten train set in a locked shed on their property. Annie is glad to see Charlie happy, but there's something unsettling about his new toy. Strange sounds wake Annie in the night—she could swear she hears a train, but there isn't an active track for miles—and bizarre things begin happening in the neighborhood.

Worse, Annie can't seem to stop drawing a disturbing new character that has no place in a children's book.

Grief can do strange things to the mind, but Annie is beginning to think she's walked out of one nightmare straight into another, only this one is far more terrifying...

Richard says...

This is Barclay's first foray into horror/thriller/supernatural territory and he does a nice job.

The writing is engaging, nearly a irresistible page turning level. The story line very appealing with good development of the characters and suspenseful magnetism of the best writers of this genre.

Barclay launches the story with an enjoyable character who is a writer and an artist. Her debut novel becomes a hit but takes a hit when it inspires a 10 year boy to imagine he can fly and jumps to his death from a ten story New York City apartment building.

That tragedy is the foundation on which the story rests as it may be the reason for the visions and events the writer experiences as the story unfolds.

Some readers may find *Whistle* is too light reading as the characters lack depth and fuller development. The plot, of course, is not believable, remember it is fiction but well written fiction.

Readers will question if it is witchcraft or satanic as its central storyline. Regardless, *Whistle* is entertaining reading from start to finish.

An enjoyable light read!

TECH DESK:

Briefly:

- **AI** - you'll love the example of AI's work offered below

AI again

I have written about Artificial Intelligence numerous times and write

about it here again.

Why? For many reasons: I use it quite often where it saves me time and helps me in ways I would not even know how to do certain things.

AI has value and uses everywhere, from the Tech world to Science, Society, Culture, Economics, and even warfare.

Now, let me show you an example of AI being used in this video. This video assembles numerous celebrities repeatedly singing a phrase. In real life, producing such a video would take a tremendous amount of time, money and energy because of the mechanics involved. AI probably did it in less than a day, maybe just a few hours depending on the skill of the compiler.

To fully appreciate what AI has done, consider the number of celebrities, the settings each is put into, that it is all compiled, assembled and produced into one single 'movie' or video. A smooth, polished and high quality production that is *virtual rather than real*. AI...amazing.

Remember the video is NOT REAL, not actually compiled with live people. Look at the scenes; look at the settings; consider the variety of celebrities; consider how polished it is; consider the assembly of the scenes, one after the other...smooth, polished, clean, precise... amazing !

To view the video, CLICK -> [**VIDEO**](#)



To better days...

At first glance, the newsletter seems to be becoming a reporter of doom and gloom but *Canada Day's cheeriness* stopped the downward spiral. Then the Herb Garden and the Tech Desk came to the rescue. Now the newsletter returns to sunshine and cheerful melodies. Whew....thank goodness!



HAPPY CANADA DAY, everyone !



NADIA & FERMO TOO !