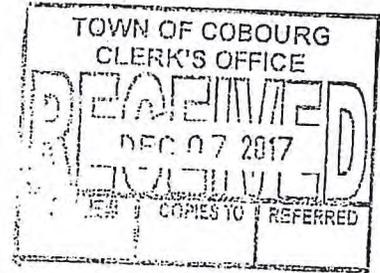


Dear Town Council;

Dec 7, 2017



There was a recent 'swap' between Torstar and Postmedia that resulted in the closure of 33 community newspapers. At the speed of blight, the websites of those 33 newspapers, redirected traffic to the surviving newspapers. All of that is understandable for business reasons going forward. However, there was a horrendous consequence to this 'swap'. The digital archives were rendered inaccessible.

Ever since news went digital years ago, Cobourg residents could link a news story in Northumberland Today on their Facebook page or Twitter or other social media. Parents could post an article about little Johnny getting the winning shot or little Jane winning a science award. All the prom pictures, inaccessible. These were linked by family and friends. Lots of intersectional bonding developed over the years. All of Pete Fisher's digital photographs of years of Cobourg events – inaccessible. All of the digital stories by Layton Dodge of pee wee, minor, major sports events – inaccessible.

Community organizations, Willow Beach Field Naturalists, Cobourg Ecology Garden, Horticultural Society, Cobourg Yacht Club, Rotary Club, Cobourg Poetry Workshop, Northumberland Players, Art Gallery of Northumberland, Habitat For Humanity, Sustainable Cobourg, VOS Theatre and all of the other charity groups that had posted articles or had articles published in Northumberland Today can no longer access them. All of the volunteers that worked assiduously to make Cobourg a better place, and were proud to have linked these articles onto their own social media. All of that has disappeared down the memory hole.

George Orwell wrote, "Who controls the past, controls the future. Who controls the present, controls the past." A wall has been put up around the websites of 33 community newspapers across Canada. This mass "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" is chilling in its implications. Those very human local stories were freely entrusted in the belief that it was for the record, not for deletion.

In the normal affairs of humans, it is the news media that holds governments to account. This is a moment when governments should hold the news media to account. There are many craven conflicts of interests to trust the media to report on themselves concerning this mass deletion. This is not normal. Neither local radio stations nor local tv news haven't even brought this up for discussion. Pathetic.

I ask Cobourg Town Council unanimously to demand that Torstar and Postmedia restore access to the stories of our community

  
Wally Keeler

Cobourg,