Democracy Should Begin at Thorold City Hall—and Independent Voices Matter

Executive Summary | By Nicholas Bozza | October 2, 2026

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The central question: What happens to local democracy when residents begin to believe their participation no longer matters?

A Statistics Canada study reported that only 12% of Canadians aged 15 and older were very hopeful about democracy's future. These national findings do not measure confidence in Thorold City Hall, but they provide a starting point for examining participation and accountability locally.

A "wall of votes"

My concern centres on the councillors I call the **UN-FAB FOUR: Mike De Divitiis, Nella Dekker (D'Epiro), Tim O'Hare and Ken Sentance.** I use a "wall of votes" as a metaphor for the barrier residents may feel when they believe an established group's position will remain unchanged regardless of the arguments presented.

Residents I have spoken with describe frustration, discouragement and doubts about whether council meaningfully considers their concerns. These conversations inform my opinion; they are not a representative survey or proof that decisions were predetermined. Councillors can independently agree, and shared votes alone do not establish a secret arrangement.

Transparency makes accountability possible

Residents should be able to readily identify how each councillor voted and understand the reasons offered. Difficult-to-navigate records can limit scrutiny before an election. Suspicions about deliberate concealment require evidence, but the need for accessible voting records remains.

When council hires consultants, residents should also be able to examine their mandates, findings and influence on decisions. Outside advice does not remove councillors' responsibility to explain their votes.

Participation requires confidence as well as convenience

Some residents tell me they doubt voting will change anything. That deserves attention, but it does not establish that a voting bloc has reduced Thorold's turnout. Local turnout data and residents' reasons for participating or staying home would be needed to assess that claim.

Clear voting procedures and documented safeguards matter. So does residents' confidence that their voices can influence decisions between elections.

Independent voices need room to contribute

A perceived voting wall could discourage capable prospective candidates, while motivating others to challenge it. Ken Steeve is one example I identify of a candidate bringing substantial management experience; other candidates' abilities also deserve fair consideration.

My conclusion: Every councillor should stand behind their own vote. Every proposal deserves a fair assessment. Every resident deserves a meaningful opportunity to be heard. Test my criticism against the public record and councillors' explanations, and reach your own judgment.

I thank the councillors who continue to question and offer alternatives, particularly Anthony Longo for his service, and residents who keep speaking up.

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