Mike De Divitiis: The Independent Voice Voters Expected—and the Record Voters Must Assess

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When Mike De Divitiis asked for my advice during the last municipal election, I recall him assuring me that he would think independently and put Thorold first. That mattered to me, and I believe it mattered to many others.

Now, after a term on council, voters can assess whether his record reflects that commitment. My concern centres on the difference between the independent representation I understood him to promise and the councillor I believe voters have seen.

This account reflects my dealings with Mike, my recollection of our conversations, my assessment of his public role and feedback residents have shared with me. Where someone else supplied information, I identify it as their account.

MY EARLIER DEALINGS WITH MIKE

I knew Mike through a former business partner and initially regarded him as a good guy.

Years ago, I approached him about bringing a physician client and a family medical team into a downtown building associated with his family. I recall making three approaches without receiving a return call.

I also explored arranging a family physician education dinner at his family’s event hall, across from Brock Golfland. With approximately ten days remaining before the event, I still could not obtain the communication and arrangements I needed. I moved the dinner to the Keefer Mansion, where we held a successful event attended by more than fifty local family physicians.

These were my experiences. They do not establish how Mike handles every business relationship, but they shaped my expectations about communication and follow-through.

Later, I helped bring the physician group associated with the late Dr. Preston Zuliani to Front Street, beside Henderson’s Pharmacy. Through my clinics, I had developed relationships with more than 500 referring family physicians. I was pleased to use those connections to help John Henderson without charging a fee, in appreciation of his family’s contribution to Thorold.

That connection was personal as well. As a high-school student, I had delivered prescriptions for Henderson’s Pharmacy. Helping bring physicians downtown was a way of giving something back.

WHEN MIKE ASKED FOR ADVICE

During the last election campaign, Mike contacted me directly. I recall him saying that he was concerned about his chances and that my third-party advertiser newsletter gave him the impression that I had a general understanding of what residents were thinking.

We had several telephone conversations. I offered general observations freely, without conditions or any obligation to follow them. I encouraged him to discuss those observations with people he trusted.

I did not have reliable polling establishing where he stood. We were discussing our impressions of a competitive election.

Among the concerns he discussed was how residents would perceive his real estate work, his family's property interests and student rentals. Residents had raised concerns about student behaviour in Thorold neighbourhoods. I told him that someone associated with student housing could face difficult questions, even when complaints involved tenants or properties unrelated to him.

That distinction matters. I am not attributing every student disturbance in Thorold to Mike or his family's properties. In fact, I believed his knowledge of student housing could put him in a useful position to help Thorold address these issues.

I also recall discussing his explanation of how taxes applied to his properties compared with those of another candidate. He mentioned commercial properties carrying a higher tax rate. My understanding from that discussion was that some properties might involve a blend of commercial and residential assessment.

That left me questioning whether the student rental component actually carried the higher rate he described. I would need the assessment and tax records before drawing a firm conclusion. This is a point Mike could clarify.

WHAT ALL UNDERSTOOD HIM TO PROMISE

The most important part of our conversations was independence.

I recall Mike telling me that he would address student-related concerns, handle conflicts appropriately and avoid blindly supporting a council voting bloc. My understanding was that he would assess proposals on their merits and support what was good for Thorold.

I was not asking him to vote as I directed. I expected him to exercise his own judgment while helping build a cohesive council capable of working through disagreements.

After he won, I saw him at a celebration at the Canadian Corps in Thorold. I recall him thanking me warmly and telling me that our conversations had helped him.

I welcomed his success. I hoped the independent approach we had discussed would be reflected in his council work.

COMMUNICATION AFTER THE ELECTION

After the election, I tried to speak with Mike about a proposal concerning Brock students renting in Thorold.

Initially, he indicated that he was busy. Later, he told me that his mother-in-law was seriously ill. I respected that and held off.

When I followed up again later, I did not obtain the substantive conversation I had hoped for. Eventually, I believed I had been blocked from his Facebook account. I acknowledge that I may have misunderstood how Facebook worked, so I cannot confidently present my own experience as proof that he blocked me.

Two current candidates have also told me directly that Mike blocked them. A new candidate told me that Mike had arranged meetings with him but failed to attend on multiple occasions. Those are their accounts; I did not personally witness those exchanges.

For me, the issue is communication and team building. Someone seeking to lead a council should be able to deal constructively with people who disagree with him, including people he might later work alongside.

My understanding is that these reported exchanges occurred while Mike was a registered mayoral candidate, before he withdrew from that race and registered to seek another council term. That context makes the question of leadership particularly relevant.

Voters can reasonably consider a candidate’s willingness to communicate when assessing his ability to work with others.

THE UN-FAB FOUR AND INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT

I refer to Mike De Divitiis, Nella Dekker, Tim O’Hare and Ken Sentance as the “UN-FAB FOUR” because I believe their voting pattern deserves scrutiny. Residents who have spoken with me have expressed similar concerns.

Agreement among councillors is not, by itself, evidence of improper coordination or a lack of independent thought. The question is whether each councillor can explain the evidence, reasoning and public benefit behind their decisions.

From my perspective, Mike became associated with the very voting pattern I understood him to say he would not blindly follow. Several taxpayers have shared that assessment with me.

He is entitled to disagree. But voters deserve a clear explanation of his record, including examples of when he challenged these colleagues, took a different position or improved a proposal through his own analysis.

If that group does not return intact, how would he approach council work with a different set of colleagues? That is a fair question for anyone seeking another term.

PROPERTY INTERESTS AND DECLARATIONS

The declaration-of-interest registry I reviewed, covering entries through July 16, 2026, lists no declarations by Mike De Divitiis.

Given his involvement in real estate and property-related businesses, I find that noteworthy. Residents have also asked me how those interests relate to his council responsibilities.

However, property ownership or business activity does not automatically require a declaration on every development, planning or downtown matter. The absence of an entry does not, by itself, establish wrongdoing.

My concern includes downtown decisions affecting an area where I understand he has business or property interests. I would like him to explain how he assessed those interests when participating in relevant decisions.

If a decision could financially benefit a property he owns or an associated business, residents are entitled to ask how he assessed that potential benefit and whether it required a declaration or withdrawal from the discussion and vote. Answering that requires examining the specific decision and the interests involved.

Where other councillors declared an interest and Mike did not, their circumstances should be compared before drawing conclusions. Different interests can lead to different obligations.

The question is straightforward: How did Mike determine when his interests required him to step aside, and how can residents assess that judgment?

The City of Thorold registry I reviewed records no declarations by him during the period covered. Mike can help resolve residents’ concerns by explaining how he assessed relevant matters and why he concluded that a declaration was unnecessary.

RESIDENCY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Based on what Mike told me, my understanding is that he lives outside Thorold and relies on a tenancy in Thorold, apparently rented for work, as the basis for his candidacy qualification. The precise basis should be confirmed from the nomination and qualification records.

I am not suggesting that living outside Thorold automatically disqualifies someone from running, as the rules do not. I am asking voters to consider how much importance they place on a councillor maintaining his principal residence in the community he represents.

Anthony Longo told me that, after moving to Welland, he did not feel it was right to seek another term in Thorold by relying on another qualifying connection. I respect that decision as he explained it.

Mike has taken a different approach. Voters are entitled to assess both perspectives. For his own benefit, Mike may wish to explain his connection to Thorold and why he believes his circumstances allow him to represent its residents effectively. That explanation would help voters assess his decision to run, just as they can assess Anthony Longo’s decision not to.

DEVELOPMENT, THE FORMER SUMMIT HOUSE AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION

I understand that someone employed by Mike as a property manager is also running for council against him. If that understanding is correct, I find the situation unusual. It does not establish that anything is improper, but Mike could clarify the working relationship and how they would manage any relevant employment interests if both were elected.

I also recall Mike describing himself as a developer in recorded council meetings. That experience could be valuable to Thorold, particularly when discussing downtown investment and housing.

My understanding is that a group with which Mike is associated purchased the former Summit House property and may be considering demolition and redevelopment to create more housing. If that is the plan, I applaud the goal of adding housing to Thorold. Mike could clarify the ownership, his role and the actual proposal so residents do not have to rely on second-hand information.

I also understand that some improvements to the existing building may be temporary while its future is determined. If demolition or substantial refurbishment is contemplated, avoiding unnecessary improvements can make financial sense. Efficiency matters, provided the building remains properly maintained and any applicable requirements are met.

I have been told that City bylaw officers visited the building for an inspection. I have also heard rumours about work orders, but I have not seen documents confirming them and am not treating those rumours as established facts. An inspection alone does not establish a violation.

Rather than speculate, I would like Mike to explain whether an inspection occurred, what concerns, if any, were identified and how they were addressed. That would help residents understand what has prompted questions about the building.

As a councillor who also describes himself as a developer, Mike has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership through the way he manages and explains projects. When residents are left in the dark, gaps in information can lead to misunderstandings.

What is planned for this property? Which other downtown projects is he involved in? What benefits could they bring to Thorold, and what challenges are being encountered?

Not every project proceeds smoothly. Explaining delays, practical difficulties and changes in direction can help build confidence. With so much attention on the downtown, this is an opportunity for Mike to use his communication skills and show residents what he hopes to accomplish.

Mike, please share the plans, the progress and the challenges. This is your chance to give voters a clearer picture of your work and its potential contribution to Thorold.

THE CHANGE FROM MAYOR TO COUNCILLOR

Mike’s move from seeking the mayor’s position to running for councillor also deserves an explanation.

Changing direction can reflect a considered decision. It can also leave voters wondering what changed. Some residents have told me that they see the switch as indecisive. Mike has an opportunity to explain his reasoning and what he now hopes to accomplish as a councillor.

Serving a term provides experience. Seeking another term requires voters to judge the results of that experience: communication, independent judgment, accountability and the ability to work with others.

WORDS, RESULTS AND DEALING WITH RESIDENTS

I enjoyed Mike's speech at the first candidates' night. In the recording I made, he spoke about caring for people and the community and emphasized getting things done.

Those are worthwhile commitments. I would like him to connect them to specific results from his last four years on council. What did he initiate? What did he improve? What problems did he help resolve? How did residents benefit? Several residents have told me that they view his first term as a probationary period: if he wants the job back, they expect answers to the questions that remain. I consider that a reasonable expectation.

I also recall watching a recorded council exchange involving Ron Devereaux of Port Robinson. My impression was that Ron was trying to hold staff accountable for their statements, while Mike characterized him as someone who was never satisfied. Ron became visibly emotional.

That is my interpretation of the exchange. The recording should be the basis for assessing the precise words and their context.

Nevertheless, it left me concerned about how residents are treated when they persist with difficult questions. A councillor may disagree with a resident's position, but I expect the substance of the concern to receive a clear response.

No one is perfect. The question is whether concerns are addressed meaningfully or left unresolved as another election approaches.

Perhaps Mike feels confident about re-election without providing further explanations. It is also possible that the residents speaking with me represent only a small portion of Thorold and that their concerns do not reflect the wider electorate. I acknowledge that possibility. Nevertheless, Thorold has invested four years in Mike's experience as a councillor. Responding to these questions would help voters assess whether retaining that experience would benefit the community.

A CAMPAIGN WEBSITE AND A COMPLETE CASE FOR RE-ELECTION

As far as I am aware, as of 11 p.m. on Monday, October 5, 2026, the City of Thorold's registered candidate list does not include a campaign website for Mike. In my opinion, and in the view of residents who have spoken with me, this represents a missed opportunity to answer questions raised in this article and in conversations around Thorold, while strengthening his case for another term as councillor. A website could give voters a clear account of his accomplishments, explain his voting decisions, clarify his property and development interests, and outline his priorities for the next four years. Seeking re-election is, in practical terms, applying to voters for another four years in the job. Providing that information would demonstrate openness and help residents assess his qualifications and commitment. To use the job-application analogy, residents have suggested that Mike should "fill out the whole application"—giving voters a complete account of his record and plans before asking them to hire him again.

THE QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN

Residents have told me that their disappointment comes from the gap between what they understood Mike to promise and what they believe followed. Their concerns echo my own.

I started with goodwill. I offered advice when he asked. I welcomed his election. I expected independent thinking and meaningful follow-through. I am offering advice to Mike again, although this time it is unsolicited.

Voters now have a council record to examine. I encourage them to ask:

• Where has Mike demonstrated independent judgment?

• How does he explain the votes that associate him with the UN-FAB FOUR?

• How has he assessed potential conflicts involving his business and family property interests?

• What results has he delivered for residents?

• How will he communicate and work with people who challenge him?

• Why did he change from seeking the mayor's position to seeking another council term?

Voters form judgments throughout a term, including when candidates are not campaigning. A good speech can help explain a candidate's intentions, but a record of results and responsiveness gives those words substance.

With council being reduced from eight seats to six, the competition for a place will be tougher. Mike still has an opportunity to answer the questions residents have brought to me and make a stronger case for another term. An incumbent can point to experience and an established record. That experience has value, but voters must still decide whether the results justify another term.

In my view, his public communication skills have grown over the last four years, and he has gained the experience of a full term on council. My advice to him this time is straightforward:

Use those skills to respond clearly, demonstrate your independent thinking and explain what you have accomplished. Without clear answers, he risks losing his position to new candidates who live in Thorold and present a stronger case to voters.

I welcome a substantive response and will consider evidence that challenges these conclusions.

Thorold voters deserve clear answers before deciding who should represent them for the next four years.

Best of luck to you, Mike!

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