Executive Summary: Ken Sentance: Two Terms of Decisions—and the Accountability Thorold Deserves

Part I of II: The Broader Record, 2018–2026

Approximately 1,800 words • Estimated reading time: 9 minutes
Source notes, verification limits and disclaimer excluded.

Ken Sentance is completing his second consecutive term on Thorold City Council. After nearly eight years, voters have a substantial record to examine: the decisions he supported, the safeguards he sought, the explanations he provided and the results delivered. This summary presents the main arguments from Part One of my assessment. Part Two will examine selected decisions more closely.

My principal concern is whether Sentance's confidence in the decisions he supports is matched by an equally strong commitment to scrutiny, disclosure and follow-through. Community involvement and enthusiasm matter, but they do not replace financial judgment, independent thinking or accountability.

I describe Sentance, Mike De Divitiis, Nella Dekker and Tim O'Hare as the "UN-FAB FOUR," referring to recurring agreement on selected council decisions. Shared votes alone do not establish improper coordination, misconduct or private motivations. Each decision must be assessed on its evidence.

Election history and independent judgment

Sentance was first elected in 2018 and re-elected in 2022, when eight councillor seats were available. His vote total fell from 2,141 to 1,895, a decline of 246 votes, or approximately 11.5%. He finished sixth in 2018 and fifth in 2022. Those figures alone cannot establish why voters supported him or whether his popularity declined.

This election offers only six councillor seats. Past success cannot guarantee another term, and voters must judge which candidates can meet the demands of a smaller council. I believe the stronger examination concerns Sentance's decisions in office and his capacity to deliver without relying on familiar voting allies.

Borrowing John Lennon's title, "Imagine," suppose Sentance were the only member of this group to return. Could he build agreement, negotiate changes and work effectively with councillors who disagree with him? Can he identify important occasions when he challenged his allies or reconsidered a position because residents presented persuasive evidence?

I regard this election as exceptionally important because of the smaller council and concerns about future responsibilities. The full article acknowledges that I have not established the exact scope of any transfer of regional responsibilities. Voters should demand clear explanations of workload, resources and representation rather than assume those details are settled.

Canada Games Park: confidence must be matched by safeguards

The City's December 2019 report recommended a $5-million contribution while acknowledging that only two of three preconditions had been satisfied. Final agreements defining the partners' roles, risks and responsibilities remained incomplete. The report also recommended $200,000 for outside professional services during due diligence.

Sentance supported participation and expressed confidence that Thorold's lawyers would protect the City. There was a reasonable case for exploring the partnership: the official report described problems with the aging James Whyte Arena, presented the partnership as financially favourable compared with alternatives and recorded majority survey support conditional on local access needs being met.

Nevertheless, confidence in a project and its negotiators does not establish that adequate safeguards were secured. The initial contribution was only part of the obligation. Operating costs, access, capital renewal and contractual rights would affect taxpayers long after construction. What protections did Sentance personally insist upon, and how did he verify that the final agreement delivered them?

The choice of a council representative also deserves examination. Published reporting records that Handley nominated Anthony Longo, Dekker nominated John Kenny and Kenny won by five ballots to three. It does not identify individual ballots. Although I recall Sentance supporting Kenny, that recollection is distinct from the published record. I would have preferred representation that included a councillor who had raised financial concerns.

A second-term opportunity for independent scrutiny

On October 3, 2023, Sentance voted against a motion seeking an external legal opinion concerning the Canada Games agreement and advice on obtaining financial records. The motion lost 5–4. This was a proposal for further scrutiny, rather than a proposal to abandon the facility.

Later that month, ThoroldToday reported Sentance defending the arrangement, its construction timing and the earlier democratic decision. His reported statement, "I'll vote for this 100 times," raises the central question of how willing he is to reconsider a decision he has already supported.

An earlier majority vote does not settle later questions about costs, disclosure or value. Another legal review could duplicate existing advice and cost money; that concern deserves consideration. However, if Sentance regarded further review as unnecessary, residents deserved a clear explanation of how outstanding questions would otherwise be answered.

Simply saying information is online is not enough if residents cannot understand the agreement or identify its financial implications. In my view, transparency requires accessible explanations. The lesson of The Emperor's New Clothes is relevant: honesty and the courage to speak plainly matter more than maintaining appearances. What new evidence would cause Sentance to revise his assessment, and what independent examination would he support now?

Transparency across both terms

When council approved the consortium agreement in May 2021, objections concerned public access to documents and disclosure restrictions. Sentance supported approval. The mayor disputed claims that information had been withheld and defended the process. Those competing accounts require careful examination.

The City's publication of documents today does not establish what residents could inspect before the vote. My recollections and residents' accounts raise questions about whether council and the public understood the commitment. The practical question is what Sentance personally did to make the agreement, costs and obligations understandable.

A separate issue arose in October 2024, when Sentance opposed an amended proposal allowing a councillor to choose whether an unsustained integrity-commissioner complaint against them would be made public. He cited legal advice against changing the existing protocol.

Following legal advice can be prudent. Council must also consider whether established procedures serve public confidence. These decisions invite scrutiny of Sentance's willingness to support additional disclosure; they do not prove an intention to conceal wrongdoing.

Council compensation: why increase it during the term?

In October 2020, Sentance supported increasing councillors' annual base compensation from $10,851 to $16,297, approximately 50.2%. The increase took effect in September 2021, during the existing term.

The earlier compensation was low. Comparisons with other municipalities and the goal of making public office financially accessible were legitimate considerations. My concern is the timing: sitting councillors benefited before voters could assess their performance at another election. Why did Sentance support implementation during his own term rather than after the next election?

Development approval must lead to measurable improvements

In August 2023, Sentance supported the townhouse proposal at 2248 Centre Street in Allanburg despite concerns about existing water pressure and traffic. The proposal had been reduced from 15 units to 10. Staff supported approval, and engineering advice indicated that the additional homes would have a relatively small effect on the broader water-pressure problem.

That technical assessment matters, but approval does not resolve existing residents' difficulties. What did "small" mean in practical terms? What measurable improvements did Sentance secure, what deadlines were established and which commitments have been completed? My concern is whether residents' needs receive consistent attention regardless of whose neighbourhood is affected.

The full article uses hockey replays and soccer cautions as metaphors for reviewing questionable decisions. The underlying point is that a majority vote should not end scrutiny or prevent corrective action.

A fair assessment must also recognize contrary examples. In June 2022, Sentance proposed returning a Confederation Heights development matter to staff to reconsider its commercial component. That prevents a blanket claim that he always supports development or automatically accepts staff recommendations. The question is whether he applies consistent standards across proposals.

A smaller council must remain accessible

Sentance brought forward the March 2026 proposal to reduce council from eight councillors to six. His reported argument centred on protecting Thorold from amalgamation. The motion passed 8–1, and the Province subsequently approved the change.

I understand the desire to preserve Thorold's identity. However, the sources reviewed do not establish a provincial guarantee that reducing council prevents amalgamation, or that Thorold has formally been placed "on probation." My concerns about provincial intervention are political interpretations, not evidence of such a guarantee or designation.

With population held constant, reducing eight councillor positions to six means approximately one-third more residents per councillor. That does not prove service will deteriorate. It does require clear answers about

savings, efficiencies, access and workload. How will six councillors maintain effective representation across Thorold's distinct communities?

The proposed parking arrangement needs a clear public account

In September 2026, council deferred a proposed parking arrangement with Thorold Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation. Reporting identifies Sentance as board co-chair and says he previously brought forward a motion concerning the proposal. Contemplated City payments were $10,000 annually for five years.

ThoroldToday reported that the City solicitor drafted the agreement, the corporation's lawyer reviewed it and public works director Geoff Holman directed staff to prepare it. Councillors questioned legal costs incurred before council decided whether to proceed.

This supports scrutiny of the process, but does not establish that Sentance personally bypassed council or ordered the drafting. His council and board roles raise questions about how he managed competing responsibilities. I have not confirmed that the corporation signed the agreement in advance. Questions about board approval, signatures, disclosure and the sequence of negotiations require records and explanations.

What authority covered the drafting and legal costs? What costs were incurred? What alternatives were evaluated? How did Sentance manage his dual roles, and had either party signed anything before council approved an arrangement? Residents deserve a documented account rather than assumptions about what happened behind the scenes.

Recognize contributions and demand accountability

Sentance advocated bringing Pathstone mental-health support to Thorold and identified roads, staffing, affordable housing and traffic calming as priorities. His recorded declarations of interest show disclosure on several matters involving organizations and his employer. His support for opening Lakeview Cemetery's Section A also had an expressed compassionate basis concerning the family of the child already buried there.

These contributions deserve recognition. Likewise, disagreements involving Jim Handley should be assessed on their facts rather than automatically characterized as punishment for political disagreement. A credible assessment must acknowledge strengths while examining controversies individually.

After two terms, voters should expect clear financial safeguards, accessible explanations, measurable infrastructure improvements, effective representation, examples of independent judgment and a documented account of commitments completed, delayed or abandoned.

My concern is whether a recurring majority becomes less willing to reconsider, compromise or answer criticism. Can Sentance demonstrate that he listens, supports scrutiny and delivers results with councillors who disagree with him? That is the record I believe voters should examine before granting a third term. The decision belongs to the voters.

Nicholas Bozza

Registered Third-Party Advertiser — City of Thorold

www.thoroldelectioncommentary.ca

nbozza@go2cai.ca

Source notes and verification limits

This assessment draws on City of Thorold documents and reporting of council proceedings, including the following sources. These notes and the disclaimer are excluded from the word count and reading-time estimate.

- City report PWCS2019-81, December 3, 2019
- City of Thorold: Canada Games Park consortium agreements
- ThoroldToday: December 2019 partnership decision
- ThoroldToday: May 2021 agreement approval
- ThoroldToday: October 2020 council compensation decision
- ThoroldToday: June 2022 Confederation Heights debate
- ThoroldToday: October 2023 external legal review motion
- ThoroldToday: October 2023 Canada Games Park debate
- ThoroldToday: August 2023 Allanburg development
- City planning report DS 47-2023
- ThoroldToday: October 2024 unsustained integrity complaints
- PelhamToday: March 2026 council reduction
- City of Thorold: provincial approval of council reduction
- ThoroldToday: September 2026 proposed parking arrangement

This is a review of selected decisions, not a complete audit of every vote. Meeting footage was not directly reviewed because the archive could not be retrieved. Reported statements are attributed to published coverage.

Disclaimer

This article expresses my opinions based on the sources identified. Questions and interpretations are distinguished from documented events. Shared votes do not, by themselves, establish improper coordination, misconduct or private motivations. I welcome documented corrections and responses.

Additional source: ThoroldToday, “Council commits $7 million to Canada Summer Games,” May 22, 2019. https://www.thoroldtoday.ca/local-news/council-commits-7-million-to-canada-summer-games-1467570