Part I of II: Ken Sentance: Two Terms of Decisions—and the Accountability Thorold Deserves

Part One of a Two-Part Series: The Broader Record, 2018–2026

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Graphs, charts, 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 assess: the decisions he supported, the questions he asked, the safeguards he sought and the results delivered.

This is the first of a two-part examination. Today, I consider the broader pattern across his two terms. Part Two will examine selected decisions more closely. I apologize in advance for the length of this article, but there was so much to review.

I have previously examined the records of Mike De Divitiis and Nella Dekker, two members of the group many describe as the "UN-FAB FOUR," whose members have been viewed by many as voting as a bloc in council. Ken Sentance and Tim O'Hare complete that group. This is my political description of recurring agreement on selected issues, as also described to me by many others. Shared votes alone do not establish improper coordination, and individual decisions must be assessed on their evidence.

Sentance deserves scrutiny because he now has two terms to defend. Community involvement matters, but voters should also examine financial judgment, transparency, responsiveness and follow-through.

His election history

Sentance was first elected in 2018 and re-elected in 2022. Eight councillor seats were available in both elections.

Election	Votes received	Finishing position	Term began	Term ends
October 22, 2018	2,141	Sixth	December 1, 2018	November 14, 2022
October 24, 2022	1,895	Fifth	November 15, 2022	November 14, 2026

His vote total declined by 246, or approximately 11.5%. The point is not to present his lower vote total as proof of declining popularity. The stronger and more meaningful examination concerns his decisions in office. In my view, controversy and disputes over transparency may have distracted attention from his individual record. The election figures alone cannot establish why voters re-elected him, but that record deserves scrutiny. More on this in Part Two of this two-part series on Sentance.

This election presents a different challenge. Only six councillor seats are available. Past results cannot guarantee another term for Sentance or any of the so-called UN-FAB FOUR voting bloc members, and voters must decide which candidates offer the judgment and accountability Thorold needs, if any within this group of four.

Borrowing the title of John Lennon's song, "Imagine," let us imagine that Ken Sentance is the only member of the group many call the "UN-FAB FOUR" who returns to council from this month's election. How effective would he be without being part of a majority voting bloc? Could he build agreement, negotiate changes and deliver results without his familiar voting allies? Can he do the job without voting as a voting bloc?

A smaller council already means greater responsibility for each councillor. Any future transfer of regional responsibilities following the changes that abandoned the regional government seat will require a separate assessment of workload, resources and representation.

I have not established exactly what this transfer will include, but the downloading of responsibilities will be significant and will make the job many times harder, in the opinion of everyone I have spoken to and according to everything I have read in the local papers. In my view, this downloading of responsibilities back to the City unarguably makes this the most important election in Thorold's history. This could mean that many candidates are either not capable of meeting the challenge or not prepared for it, even though the challenge has not yet been defined precisely. In my opinion, the need for independent judgment, without a voting bloc, is imperative because this is unarguably Thorold's most important election. Every candidate should be assessed vigorously against that expectation.

First term: enthusiasm for Canada Games Park

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

Sentance supported participation. Reporting records his enthusiasm and confidence that Thorold's own lawyers would protect the City during negotiations.

There was a reasonable case for considering the partnership. The official report described serious 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. But behind the scenes, many disagreed with this.

Nevertheless, confidence in a project and confidence in its negotiators are not substitutes for demonstrable safeguards.

What protections did Sentance personally insist upon before supporting the commitment? How did he verify that the final agreement delivered them?

These questions matter because the initial contribution was only one part of the obligation. Operating costs, access, capital renewal and contractual rights would affect residents long after construction.

The choice of a council representative for negotiations also deserves examination. ThoroldToday's May 22, 2019 report records that Handley nominated Anthony Longo and Dekker nominated John Kenny. Kenny was selected by individual ballots, five votes to three. The report does not identify each councillor's ballot, so it does not establish how Sentance voted in that selection.

But I specifically recall that Sentance did vote for Kenny, a member of his so-called voting bloc. In my opinion, and that of many others, both John Kenny and Anthony Longo should have been nominated together to

provide greater assurance of transparency. But that did not happen. Why not? What prevented this? The voting bloc? What could they have to hide, if anything?

My concern is whether choosing a project supporter provided sufficient challenge to the proposed terms. I would have preferred representation that included a councillor who had raised financial concerns. That is my judgment, and that of many others, rather than proof that the selection kept council in the dark even after this vote, as the temperament got even worse as time went on. What information did the representative provide, and what safeguards did Sentance seek in response?

Second term: defending the decision while questions remained

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, with the current Mayor being the tying vote in a recorded vote.

This was a proposal for further scrutiny. It was not a motion to abandon the facility. If the deal was as good as the so-called UN-FAB FOUR said it was in every way, then this was their chance to receive praise and full validation. But their reluctance to have the deal reviewed was more than odd. It was perceived as a reluctance to accept what transparency might reveal, rather than an opportunity to rejoice in the findings.

Later that month, ThoroldToday reported Sentance defending the arrangement, including its construction timing and the earlier democratic decision. His reported closing statement was:

“I’ll vote for this 100 times.” If they were that sure and were proven right, we might have had a statue of the UN-FAB FOUR or their faces carved into the escarpment like Mount Rushmore. They would have been heroes and living legends. But somehow, they didn’t want it. To date, many still wonder why not. See the following articles in this series for what might have been if the UN-FAB FOUR had voted to review and validate the deal, making them heroes.

In my opinion, that response exposes the most important limitation voters should examine: how willing is he to reconsider a decision he has already supported?

An earlier majority vote does not settle later questions about costs, disclosure or the practical value residents receive. It only compartmentalizes those questions in the archives. Nothing more.

Additional legal work can duplicate existing advice and cost money. That is a legitimate concern. But if Sentance considered another review unnecessary, voters deserved a clear explanation of how the outstanding questions would otherwise be answered. Their responses seem to be that it is all disclosed online. The numbers seem to be available, or at least were to some degree, as I understand it. But it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack without the needle: unless you are a seasoned lawyer or a forensic accountant, the information would not be comprehensible.

If that is what Sentance and Dekker call transparency, it only encourages taxpayers to suspect the worst and lose confidence in the system.

Perhaps, this Christmas, we should give them both a copy of Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Emperor’s New Clothes*. In the story, an emperor is tricked into believing he is wearing magnificent clothes that supposedly cannot be seen by anyone who is foolish or unfit for their position. Everyone pretends to see them until a child points out the obvious: the emperor is wearing nothing. The lesson is fitting—honesty, transparency and the

courage to speak plainly matter more than keeping up appearances. Should the so-called UN-FAB FOUR be forced to read this book?

What new evidence would cause him to revise his assessment? If we found a mistake in the deal that could allow Thorold to recoup millions, wouldn't Sentance and Dekker want to know? What independent examination would he support now?

Transparency across both terms

When council approved the consortium agreement in May 2021, objections were raised about public access to documents and restrictions on disclosure. Sentance was among the supporting majority, alongside Dekker, in what I describe as Version 1.0 of the UN-FAB FOUR's so-called majority voting bloc on council. Their agreement on this decision warrants scrutiny of their reasoning; it does not, by itself, establish improper coordination.

The mayor disputed claims that information had been withheld and defended the process. Many asked why the process needed defending in the first place. Those competing accounts should be examined carefully. The City's publication of documents today does not establish what residents could inspect before the vote, but my recollection is that the deal was not revealed before signing, if at all.

The question for Sentance is what he personally did to ensure that residents—or even council, for that matter—understood the commitment. I say this because, even after the deal was done, council meetings showed that no one in the room had an understanding of it or of their commitments. The more this was argued, the more threats of integrity commissioner complaints seemed to be implied. This is how many members of the public saw it, as they told me.

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

Following legal advice can be prudent. However, council must also consider whether established procedures serve public confidence even if the majority of council voted to change the protocol to protect an Integrity complaint from going public.

Taken together, these decisions raise a question about Sentance's willingness to support additional disclosure when existing arrangements leave residents or councillors dissatisfied.

They do not prove that he intended to conceal wrongdoing.

Council compensation: the timing matters

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

That was an increase of approximately 50.2%.

The original compensation was low, and the stated justification included comparisons with other municipalities and making public office financially accessible. Those considerations deserve acknowledgment.

My concern is the timing. Sitting councillors benefited before voters had another opportunity to assess their performance.

Why did Sentance support implementing the increase during his own term rather than after the next election?

Voters can reasonably expect a clear explanation. Was it because they could with a so-called voting bloc in place?

Growth and infrastructure: approval must be followed by action

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.

Funny how Sentance didn't ask anyone to define "small." Would he have done this if it had been a street that his brother lived on, or his own street? What if it had been Nella Dekker's street or rookie councillor Tim O'Hare's street? I can say with 100% certainty that he would not have done it on rookie councillor Mike De Divitiis's street because Mike D doesn't live in Thorold. Nor does rookie candidate Chantal McCollum. Do these people all think Thorold is that naïve? Would Sentance have voted for this 100 times, too, as he said he would for the Canada Games deal?

As a complete side note, I was watching a hockey game the other night, and they replayed a questionable call. If I recall correctly, it was so questionable that they had to call in the NHL's main studio of officials to review it. So, in keeping with protocol, please allow me to replay the play above. To recreate the scenario properly, I am doing this on my big screen, using it as my computer display, in front of others for effect and witnesses:

> *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.*

Readers, did you hear the crowd react to that replay the same way the crowd of 17,000 at the arena reacted to theirs? Maybe the caution wasn't that small after all, and the problem was more obvious, as suggested by the crowd's reaction to the replay?

Those facts matter. The proposal was supported by technical analysis; hence the caution was issued.

However, approval does not resolve the existing residents' difficulties.

What measurable improvements did Sentance secure? Should we have NHL officials with referee shirts to oversee the call or the vote? What deadlines were established? Which commitments have been completed?

His record also contains evidence of caution on this vote to approve what some thought were substandard specifications. In professional soccer, a referee would have shown Sentance a yellow card—a formal warning, called a caution. The player/voter stays in the council game. It can be given for a reckless tackle, arguing with the referee, delaying play or other misconduct or a reckless move. Two yellow cards to the same player in one match result in a red card. A referee can also give a straight red for a serious offence without first giving a yellow.

Now, let's remember the red card: the player is sent off. The player must leave and cannot be replaced, so the team plays with fewer players. Reasons include serious foul play, violent conduct or denying an obvious scoring opportunity in certain circumstances. But many say this couldn't happen to Sentance because the so-called UN-FAB FOUR voting bloc might intervene to change the rules using its majority. Did that ever happen on Thorold City Council with the bloc? Hmmm. Read this article and yesterday's twice for the answer.

As a side note to a side note, hometown councillor Carm Derose, a two-term councillor on the verge of a probable third term and a soccer star, was a goaltender in an elite college soccer league. I believe it was at Clemson, where they won the national championship. A huge accomplishment of teamwork. Plus, he volunteers tirelessly to help soccer leagues in the area support kids' soccer in Niagara. Maybe Carm could get us a couple of soccer referees at council to make better calls, with yellow and red cards at their disposal? I can only hope that when blue and red cards are used in officiating here, rookie councillor Tim O'Hare doesn't pull out the race card.

In June 2022, Sentance proposed returning a Confederation Heights development matter to staff to reconsider its commercial component.

That example prevents a fair assessment from claiming he always supports development or automatically accepts staff recommendations. This doesn't sound like independent thinking to anyone, does it?

The issue is consistency, fairness, transparency and independent thinking: does he apply the same standards for services, neighbourhood needs and follow-through across different proposals?

A smaller council: fewer representatives, greater responsibility

Sentance brought forward the March 2026 proposal to reduce council from eight councillors to six. His reported argument centred on protecting Thorold from amalgamation. Many asked whether this was an opportunity to increase the odds of maintaining a voting bloc into the next term, with two fewer seats potentially knocking out some, if not all, members of the so-called UN-FAB FOUR.

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 would prevent amalgamation. They also do not establish that Thorold has formally been placed "on probation." I regard "caution" about amalgamation as a reason to demand clear evidence and explanations, rather than treat that description as an established fact.

There goes that soccer word again: "caution." Where in the heck is that yellow card when I need one? LOL. Nonetheless, the province could force amalgamation on Thorold at any time without notice, even in the middle of a new term. I don't think good eyesight is required to read between these lines. Just a small amount of vision, say many taxpayers.

The relevant questions concern evidence and representation.

What demonstrated benefit justified the reduction? What savings, value or efficiencies are expected? How will six councillors maintain access across Thorold's distinct communities?

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 mean the remaining councillors must show how they will meet the greater demand. With the additional responsibilities assigned to council, having even one non-independent council member from the original voting bloc, without any experience of working on council without a bloc vote, could be a huge disadvantage, leading to unwelcome outcomes and provincial intervention. Having both Dekker and Sentance re-elected would probably increase the likelihood of amalgamation manyfold. This seems to be the feedback I am getting from Thorold taxpayers through my primary research in speaking to taxpayers and voters recently.

Community advocacy must withstand financial scrutiny

In September 2026, council deferred a proposed parking arrangement with Thorold Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation. Reporting identifies Sentance as its board co-chair and says he had previously brought forward a motion concerning the proposal. The 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 said he 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. But then why didn't Sentance approach other council members instead of going directly to public works director Holman? There was plenty of time between Sentance and Holman agreeing to proceed and having the legal paperwork drafted, reviewed and finalized. It seemed that council was in the dark, even though only council could vote to authorize the process of reaching an agreement and preparing the legal paperwork to execute it.

Sentance's council and board roles raise questions about how he managed competing responsibilities. Given his dual roles as a councillor for the City of Thorold and co-chair of the Thorold Non-Profit Housing Corporation, it seems odd that these roles alone do not establish an improper conflict, when other board members, including the chair, must have known about the arrangement. They probably even voted on it to get the City to draft the final paperwork, while Thorold City Council did not. It would be nice to know whether the Thorold Non-Profit Housing Corporation signed it before bringing it to City Council. Does this sound like independent thinking, or was Sentance relying on his council voting bloc to rubber-stamp it so he could keep everyone in the dark?

Many people I have spoken to say these are fair questions about how someone could negotiate both ends of this deal without a conflict of interest. One taxpayer asked me whether, if it can be done, the idea could be patented so the City of Thorold could benefit from patent royalties around the world. A rhetorical question, of course, but a fair one, I am told by many taxpayers. I'm still amazed by Councillor Sentance's skills as a magician: he was able to negotiate for both sides of a deal when, by law, realtors have been outlawed from doing so. ALAKAZAM—POOF! No red or even a yellow card administered here. Boy, his communication skills have really grown in two terms. What an improvement.

I have not confirmed that the corporation signed the agreement in advance. But it would be nice to know. It seemed there was some intent not to disclose here in the eyes of many unbiased taxpayers.

What authority covered the drafting and legal costs? Public works director Holman unselfishly took the hit for this, but given the amount of circumstantial evidence here, how can anyone blame taxpayers for questioning Sentance's role, which no one condoned? Even Sentance admitted it wasn't the best way to do this, but said it was important, implying a sense of urgency and a need for what we categorize as poor transparency and teamwork.

Isn't this the same justification pattern used during the vote on the Brock University deal? Is this a pattern, or is it the imagination of many taxpayers? Are they all seeing a mirage simultaneously, as if watching a simulcast of some pay-TV event that no one paid for—except, perhaps, the Thorold taxpayer unknowingly? What costs were incurred? How did Sentance manage his dual roles? What alternatives were evaluated, and had either party signed anything before council approved the arrangement?

The public deserves more than a dependable majority

Taxpayers can reasonably expect council to listen, explain its choices and demonstrate value—before, during and after the vote, many say.

Representatives must exercise good judgment, reconcile competing needs and fulfil legal obligations. Residents will not agree on every priority. However, those realities do not excuse dismissing public concerns or treating a majority vote as the end of accountability.

On selected controversial decisions, Sentance has voted alongside councillors I describe as his frequent voting allies. That alignment deserves examination, but it does not establish guaranteed votes on every issue.

My concern is the effect of a recurring majority: whether it becomes less willing to reconsider, compromise or answer criticism.

Can Sentance identify a pattern of occasions on important votes when he challenged his frequent allies, secured meaningful changes or reconsidered a position because residents presented persuasive evidence?

Can Sentance demonstrate that he can build support and deliver results without relying on his frequent voting allies? What examples show his ability to work effectively with councillors who disagree with him?

Even though the province never announced that the City of Thorold was on probation or that amalgamation would follow, it did put Thorold on notice that amalgamation was on the table. Was the timing suspect or coincidental? Based on what taxpayers are saying about Sentance, as I have encapsulated in this article, is Sentance on probation for his next term? Many say yes. But it’s up to all voters to act, or not act, on it through this coming election. On that, we are all in agreement.

What a fair assessment must acknowledge

Sentance’s record includes constructive contributions.

He advocated bringing Pathstone mental-health support to Thorold. He 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 at times. Some disclosures involved registering conflicts of interest; at other times, he appeared to suggest a conflict but still commented and voted, as it seems to many.

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 points deserve recognition.

Similarly, his lack of support for teammates such as assistant mayor and most senior councillor Jim Handley has been questioned. That decision can be examined for proportionality, but it should not automatically be characterized as punishment for legitimate political disagreement.

A credible assessment must acknowledge strengths and evaluate each controversy on its own facts.

What Sentance must imperatively demonstrate moving forward

Area	What voters should expect
Financial oversight	Clear safeguards and willingness to support independent scrutiny
Transparency	Accessible explanations of decisions, costs and outstanding questions
Infrastructure	Measurable improvements, deadlines and public follow-up
Representation	Evidence that a smaller council can remain accessible
Independent judgment	Specific examples of challenging allies and reconsidering decisions
Delivery	A documented account of commitments completed, delayed or abandoned

After two terms, participation and enthusiasm are no longer sufficient measures of performance.

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.

That is the record I believe voters should examine—and many have told me so—before even considering or granting him a third term. Should he be rewarded with a third term, or should voters send a message by declining to do so? As Shakespeare said:

> *To be, or not to be—that is the question.*

Did Shakespeare have Sentance in mind when he wrote this famous line?

Part Two of this article series on Ken Sentance will be uploaded late, Saturday, October 10, 2026.

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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