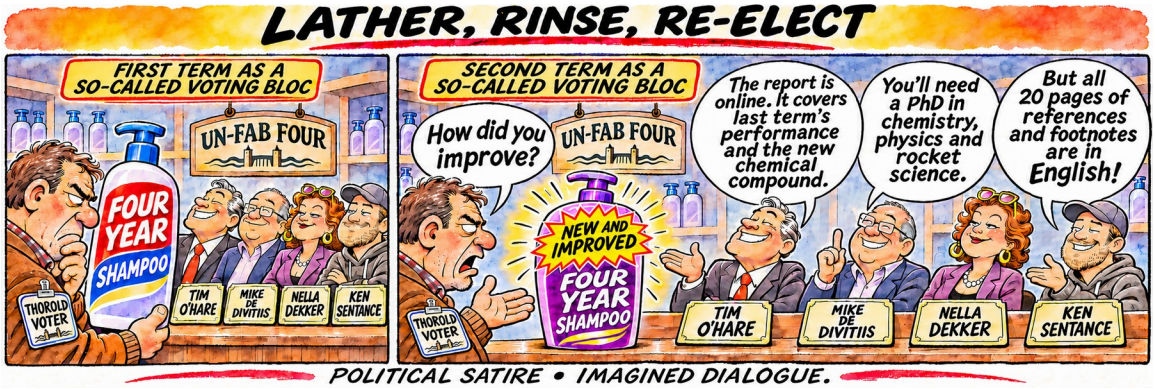
THOROLD ELECTION POST-MORTEM | PART 2A OF 4 Part 2B coming

How the Campaign Worked

Friday, November 6, 2026 | By Nicholas Bozza | Thorold Election Commentary

Registered Third-Party Advertiser—City of Thorold | nbozza@go2cai.ca
1,400 body words | Approximately 4 minutes 40 seconds
Reading time is based on approximately 300 words per minute, a high-school-level reading pace. Body word count excludes headings, notices, cartoon captions, sources and sign-off.

CANDIDATES CAN WIN EVEN when critics believe important questions remain unanswered. Familiarity, positive messages, testimonials and personal contact can all carry weight. In the view of many, when voters put up with too little transparency and the candidates still win, the old shampoo formula is ready for another term. Lather, rinse, repeat. Who wins? The people who get the job for another four years on their terms. The vote totals alone cannot tell us why individual voters made their choices.



POLITICAL OPINION AND SATIRE. This cartoon uses fictional scenes and dialogue to comment on Thorold's municipal election. "UN-FAB FOUR" is a satirical label used by some voters for a perceived voting alignment. The cartoon alleges no official caucus, secret agreement, unlawful coordination or criminal conduct. No endorsement by any depicted person is implied.

Nicholas Bozza | Registered Third-Party Advertiser—City of Thorold | nbozza@go2cai.ca

A campaign is a selection of the record

Nobody campaigns by putting every difficult vote on the front of a lawn sign. Candidates choose the qualifications, commitments and associations they believe will persuade people. Not the voter. Do voters get enough information to judge the job already done? Some voters who have spoken with me say they wanted more and have second-guessed their choices once the new term was underway. Many would like the city to offer candidates a thorough, standard questionnaire for public review, modelled on the kind of application an employer uses to assess job applicants.



POLITICAL OPINION AND SATIRE. This cartoon uses fictional scenes and dialogue to comment on Thorold's municipal election. "UN-FAB FOUR" is a satirical label used by some voters for a perceived voting alignment. The cartoon alleges no official caucus, secret agreement, unlawful coordination or criminal conduct. No endorsement by any depicted person is implied.

Nicholas Bozza | Registered Third-Party Advertiser—City of Thorold | nbozza@go2cai.ca

My review of Tim O'Hare's website and supplied campaign messages, considered alongside concerns others have shared with me, found commitments concerning housing, infrastructure, a safer community, age-friendly work and Thorold's identity. It also found testimonials and descriptions of committee involvement. **There was no material to assess it seemed.** Voters who discussed it with me wanted a clearer dated account of decisions, costs and outcomes. A hiring panel would ask an applicant to back up their claims with records. Why should voters expect any less from someone applying to serve another term? [4]

That distinction matters. A promise to improve infrastructure is not the same evidence as identifying the work completed, its cost and the remaining backlog. A photograph at an event establishes attendance; it cannot, on its own, establish responsibility for the outcome.

In my imaginary campaign pharmacy, the label could say "maximum-strength commitment." I'd still ask for the active ingredients, whether it's brand-name or generic, and the product monograph. How was it tested, and how well did it work under similar conditions?

The difficult decision behind the message

Canada Games Park provides a concrete example. Reporting on the October 3, 2023 meeting records that Handley's motion for an external legal opinion was defeated 5–4. O'Hare, Dekker, Sentance, De Divitiis and the mayor opposed it. O'Hare's stated reasoning included reliance on earlier legal advice and concern about paying for unnecessary further advice. [5]

Readers can disagree about whether another opinion was justified. The criticism voters have raised is that residents needed a convincing explanation of how the outstanding financial and agreement questions would be resolved. Refusing one proposed route makes the alternative route worth asking about.

The O'Hare review discussed here also acknowledged that he had questioned facility management on another occasion. It would be unfair to turn criticism of one oversight decision into a claim that he never asked questions. **The standard should be the adequacy of scrutiny**, not how easily a funny satirical illustration can make the point. [4]

This example shows the alignment behind the nickname used by some voters on a particular decision. It does not establish identical conduct on every issue, a secret caucus or an explanation of the election result. Yet the pattern continues to be questioned.

Familiarity and competing sources of confidence

An incumbent can bring name recognition, constituent relationships and a record of community involvement. Those are plausible electoral advantages. They can help someone win without persuading a critic that every difficult decision has been explained.

My earlier account of Mike De Divitiis distinguished my recollection of his commitment to independent judgment from my assessment of his subsequent performance. Voters can weigh that account alongside their own experiences; my recollection should not be attributed to people who were not part of the conversation. A voter with a positive personal experience may reach a different conclusion. That disagreement is worth understanding rather than treating every supporter as having been fooled. [6]

Likewise, the O'Hare review available to voters acknowledged favorable testimonials and contributions. **Supporters' accounts are not performance audits**[4]

The lesson is uncomfortable for both commentators and voters: publishing questions does not mean every voter reads them, accepts them or ranks them above other concerns. Neither commentators nor voters can infer those choices from the vote totals.

Credit and outside influence deserve separate tests

My farmers' market satire raises a related question: how does a collective achievement become a personal campaign asset? That article refers to Handley's October 23 post asserting his role in the idea. The satirical illustrations are invented, drawing on concerns and feedback shared with me by voters. The original post needs to be read before settling any disputed attribution. [7]

The practical remedy is straightforward: distinguish who proposed an idea, who developed it, who approved it and who delivered it. Staff and volunteers should not vanish when the camera arrives. A good idea can have several contributors without requiring several original inventors.

Political endorsements and party connections deserve the same care. Voters who have spoken with me worry that outside networks can give some municipal candidates advantages in recognition and campaigning. A documented endorsement can demonstrate public support; it does not demonstrate private marching orders or tell us how many votes it delivered. But also it is not a guarantee that of its absence. Time and behavior could be telling. **Some people read such support as suggesting a quid pro quo. That suspicion is a reason to ask about independence,** not evidence that a bargain occurred. However, voters say, when they ask about independence, a heated hatred seems to evolve from it in order to deter the questioning. How convenient some say.

Voters want local decisions explained through Thorold's needs, especially when councilors have wider political party association affiliations. Claims that a party directed a particular decision require evidence beyond shared photographs or similar messages. Such direction is not presented as established in this article. **But the party connection alone should be questioned and evaluated regardless. And without push back- yet the push back and resistance remain voters tell me.**

How residents can test the campaign account

Consider a common municipal campaign claim: a candidate helped deliver a community improvement. That claim might be entirely fair. The next step is to trace the contribution rather than either accepting it whole or dismissing it as publicity.

Was the candidate the first person to propose the work? Did they improve the proposal, build support, obtain funding or help residents navigate the process? Did staff already have the project in an approved plan? These are different contributions, and several people can deserve credit. The record should let residents see which contribution is being claimed.

Then ask whether the campaign supplies a result or an intention. A promise to seek affordable housing needs a different assessment from a completed project with documented affordability conditions. Participation in a committee can be useful work, but the title alone does not tell us what changed because of that participation.

Finally, look at the response to a difficult question. Does it address the decision, offer a relevant record or explain why the requested information cannot lawfully be released? Why enter into a deal knowing in advance that the info cannot be released? Body temperatures rise higher than 107 degrees whenever this question comes up. **And when the questions don't stop, the integrity commission always seems to be on speed dial to call off the dogs like the questions needed a dog catcher say many voters.** This is a real perception of voters. Disagreeing with the critic should be allowed and without a high price tag to deter them. Repeating the original slogan does not answer the original question.

These tests also apply to my preferred candidates and to my own commentary. A forceful sentence is not extra evidence. A popular satirical illustration does not establish a disputed fact. **But if it is funny, there's a reason it's funny.** If I have relied on a recollection, readers should know that, and if a record corrects it, the correction belongs in the account.

That is why, in discussing the result with others, I will not describe the four victories as proof that one particular strategy worked. Several methods may have contributed. More on that later. We can identify what was presented and examine what it left out. Measuring the electoral effect requires information this review does not have. Understanding that limit makes the analysis more useful, especially when we turn campaign promises into questions for the new term. And even more especially, if they don't get answered this term either. More on that later too.

What the victory does and does not establish

My assessment is that the four retained enough electoral support despite what many people who have spoken with me regard as an incomplete public accounting of their last term. That does not mean no explanations existed anywhere. It means the explanations made available for

examination did not resolve the concerns those voters shared with me. **The X-Files had a signature tagline**, **"The Truth Is Out There"**, closely associated with FBI agent Fox Mulder, played by David Duchovny. Many voters say it fits this situation.

Without reliable voter research, no one can assign the result to one tactic. Familiarity, personal service, campaign reach, different priorities and the spread of support among alternative candidates may all have mattered. My working view is that several probably did, but their relative effects remain unmeasured. So, we discuss, review, compare and analyze as much as we can.

What we can do now is stop confusing electoral success with a completed performance review. The campaign has delivered the seats. The next test is whether those occupying them can explain their decisions and deliver results.

Coming next in Part 2B — Who Really Won? Fewer councillors, a larger share of the seats for the returning four, and a greater responsibility to keep the public informed.

Nicholas Bozza | Thorold Election Commentary
Registered Third-Party Advertiser—City of Thorold | nbozza@go2cai.ca

Read More and Get Email Alerts

Read the series and earlier articles at www.thoroldelectioncommentary.ca. For email alerts, use "Get New Articles by E-mail" near the top of the homepage and confirm through the email you receive.

Political opinion and satire. "UN-FAB FOUR" is a label used by some voters for a perceived voting alignment among Tim O'Hare, Mike De Divitiis, Nella Dekker and Ken Sentance, not an official caucus or proof of unlawful coordination. Judgments and predictions are identified as such. Comic scenes and dialogue are invented; medical references are election metaphors, not medical advice. No endorsement by any depicted person is implied. Responses and corrections are welcome at nbozza@go2cai.ca.

Sources

[4] Nicholas Bozza, "Rookie City Councillor Tim O'Hare — A Record to Defend," Parts 1–3, Thorold Election Commentary, October 2026. This is the author's review of O'Hare's campaign material and council record. Thorold Election Commentary homepage. For the separate instance in which O'Hare questioned park management, see ThoroldToday's April 12, 2023 report.

[5] Thorold City Council open minutes, October 3, 2023, item 14.1, pp. 11–12, for the motion and recorded vote. For O'Hare's remarks, see Bernard Lansbergen, "City council closes door on Canada Games Park investigation", ThoroldToday, October 4, 2023.

[6] Nicholas Bozza, "Mike De Divitiis: The Independent Voice Voters Expected—and the Record Voters Must Assess," Thorold Election Commentary, October 2026. This is the author's account and assessment. Thorold Election Commentary homepage.

[7] Nicholas Bozza, "Farmers Market Credit not Debit," Thorold Election Commentary. This satire discusses Jim Handley's October 23, 2026 post about his role in the farmers' market idea. Thorold Election Commentary homepage.