ELECTION POST-MORTEM | PART 3 OF 4

A Smaller Council and a Larger Test

Sunday, November 8, 2026 | By Nicholas Bozza | Thorold Election Commentary

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Reading time is calculated at approximately 300 words per minute, a high-school-level reading pace. Body count excludes headings, notices, reference markers and sign-off.

POLITICAL OPINION AND SATIRE: This article contains the author's political opinions, commentary and satire. "UN-FAB FOUR" is a satirical label used by some voters for a perceived voting alignment. It does not establish an official caucus, a secret agreement, unlawful coordination or criminal conduct. Allegations, rumours and predictions require supporting evidence and must not be treated as established findings.

FOUR OF SIX COUNCILLOR seats represent two-thirds (66.6…%) of the councillor seats. **(Three sixes in a row—is that the sign of amalgamation? A satirical question, of course.)**. If the new mayor votes with those four on a particular issue, that would make five votes out of seven (71.4%). **That is a hypothetical voting outcome, not an established alliance. Residents should judge the smaller council** through the quality of scrutiny, the cost of representation, any loss of access, and the stewardship of public money.

Why fewer seats? The City's March 25 release presented the reduction as a way to streamline government, lower costs and preserve local identity. Those were the stated objectives; residents should now ask whether they are achieved. [2] Whalen won the race, and I am ok with that results. Just by knowing both candidates, it gave me a personal perspective on how difficult a close loss would be for either of them. I told many people beforehand I expected **the margin to be well under 100 votes.**

Four votes now carry more weight—perhaps they'll share their own secret recipe: four councillors, eleven herbs and spices, and no explanation.

The UN-change in voting strength is arithmetic.

Councillors O'Hare, De Divitiis, Sentance and Dekker occupy four councillor seats. DeRose and Daniels occupy the other two. Add the mayor and there are seven members. **Four aligned votes** can determine an ordinary simple-majority outcome when everyone participates. That does not predetermine what those four will do. [1] Nor should it. If a familiar voting pattern emerges again, as (**many**) voters predict, residents should be able to question it and receive a reasoned explanation without the discussion turning into a heated confrontation. More on this in later articles in this series.

The greater influence makes their individual explanations more important. Agreement can result from sound independent reasoning. **Residents should be able to hear that reasoning** rather than being asked to infer it from the tally.

DeRose and Daniels cannot be expected to supply every question, identify every financial assumption and do all the explaining to keep the UN-FAB FOUR in line. **Scrutiny is a responsibility for every member**, including those who generally support a proposal. In my view, Ugulini did an incredibly poor job of encouraging the scrutiny I and many others wanted to see. The next council should be judged by its public record, both present and past, not by speculation about anyone's future appointment or personal benefits. But the public should get more involved with issues. Handley's planned podcast could provide one forum. If I continue my commentary into the next council term, that could provide another way to bring your concerns forward. **But taxpayers can't rely on others to bring the issues forward all the time.** You have to be part of the council discussion. **Form small community groups** to make your concerns easier to organize and present.

The incoming mayor has powers but council still has duties

I am not reviewing the mayoral election. The governing role matters, however, because the new council operates within strong mayor rules.

The temptation is to imagine a cape, a telephone booth and a provincial instruction manual. Unfortunately for my satirical illustration department, Thorold already publishes the powers and written mayoral decisions. What remains to be seen is how the incoming mayor will use the authority and work with council. [3] That includes how he works with the un-four councillors. The Thorold Community Credit Union's public directory lists Tim Whalen as CEO and Tim O'Hare and Ken Sentance on its board. [4] Those connections warrant clear explanations where relevant to a municipal decision; they do not, by themselves, establish preferential treatment, a quid pro quo or a conflict of interest. I have not established any wrongdoing here. The directory cited here verifies the professional connections, not campaign endorsements. He deserves the same fair scrutiny as every other elected member. Any concerns should arise from the public record and his decisions. **I am ready to support him when he gets it right and offer constructive criticism when I believe he gets it wrong.** That is a role for taxpayers regardless of who wins. I want to see elected members welcome residents' help throughout the term, not just thank them for their votes. There is a difference. It is a test for them all—especially since God gave them free will. That last line is a callback to yesterday's satire.

Those rules include particular budget processes and powers connected to provincial priorities. Ordinary-majority arithmetic does not explain every outcome. Applicable veto overrides, for example, require two-thirds of all members under the provincial guide—five on a seven-member council. [5]

The practical point is that "the mayor will manage them" is not a complete plan. Councillors remain responsible for understanding proposals, asking questions and explaining their own votes. Voters remain doubtful about how consistently the UN-FAB FOUR will provide those explanations. **A stronger mayor does not relieve anyone else of the work.**

Fewer seats should come with a complete cost comparison

A designated deputy mayor would raise questions about additional duties, compensation and whether eliminating seats will actually save money. If council designates a deputy mayor with additional pay, residents should ask whether **the full cost is consistent with the savings promised** when council was reduced. Additional pay alone would not proove that the earlier vote was a misdirection but that is what many have told me voters will beleive if it occurs.

If a proposal comes forward, residents should see the existing arrangement, the proposed duties and **the full financial comparison** before the vote. Include councillor compensation, any deputy mayor supplement, benefits, support costs and transition expenses. **Two fewer seats** do not, by themselves, establish the eventual net saving. In my view, poor decisions by less could outweigh any savings from eliminating two seats. **I have not established a dollar estimate for that risk.**

More work can justify reviewing compensation. It does not justify keeping the arithmetic offstage. Nor should residents assume that a deputy mayor automatically receives the mayor's Regional role or special powers. Such authority should never be treated as automatic. Any proposed delegation or change in duties should be explained publicly. It would not, 'by itself', establish that amalgamation is coming. If a proposal appears to suggest otherwise, voters should be able to question it and receive a clear explanation to assess patterns they identify. In the view of many as it was said to me by many, some responses during the outgoing term were unnecessarily heated by the UN-fab group of four.

Before anyone takes a savings selfie, please show us the total at the bottom of the receipt.

Reserves are part of the public responsibility

Some residents have suggested to me that the incoming council might favour spending reserves locally before any future amalgamation. The rumour is circulating in conversations brought to me, but I have not established that this is

the four councillors' plan. Some residents may find that possibility plausible, but **plausibility is not evidence of an adopted plan.**

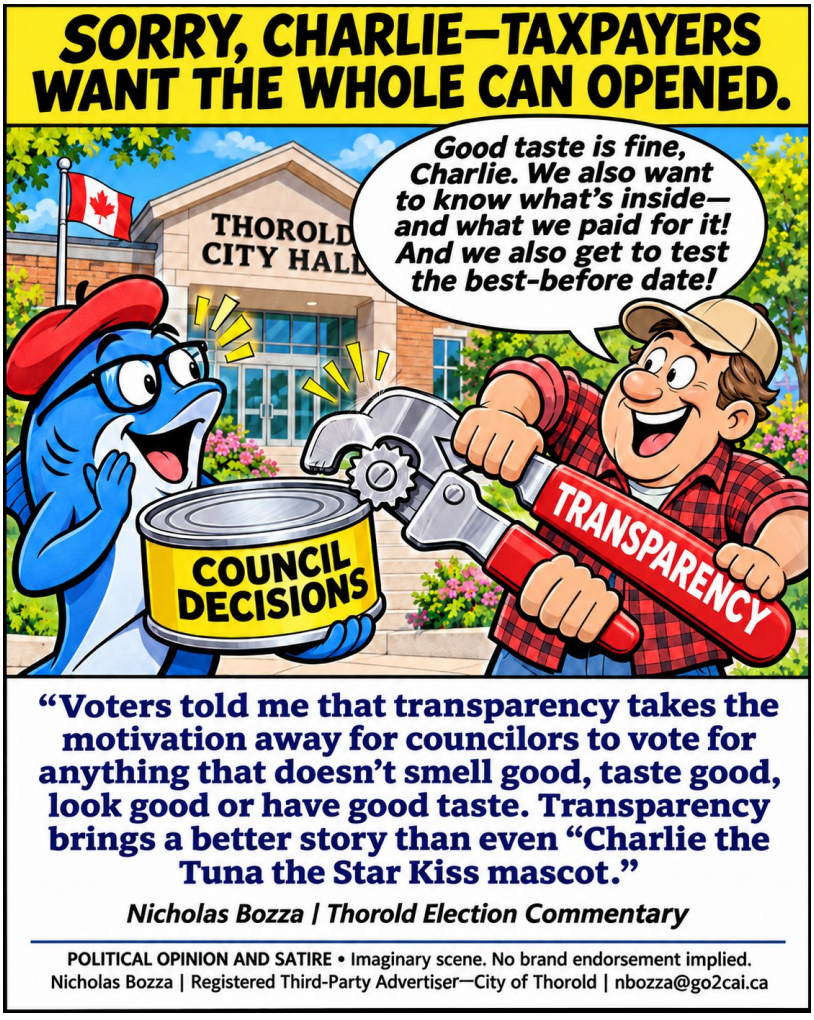
The possibility nevertheless points to a useful standard for every major reserve-funded proposal: explain the purpose, the funding restrictions, **the effect on future needs, the ongoing costs and the alternatives**. **A project can benefit Thorold and still be poorly timed or inadequately explained.** Repeated reliance on reserves without a clear account of the cumulative effect would leave a serious gap in transparency.

Reserves are not simply spare cash waiting for a politically attractive announcement. Neither should every use of them be treated as improper. **The test is whether council can demonstrate** the public value and the financial consequences and the trade-offs it is choosing to make.

That same principle should apply to grants and city-connected organizations: a clear public purpose, **appropriate financial reporting and visible results**. Housing and other essential services need continuity and lawful oversight, not an assumption that changing the organizational chart automatically fixes accountability.

Many voters tell me they don't believe in taking grants for things that are not already on our priority list simply because the federal government offers funding. My concern is that this can delay projects that never make the list for the same communities year after year, regardless of what the UN-FAB FOUR says.

Voters told me that transparency takes the motivation away for councilors to vote for anything that doesn't smell good, taste good, look good or have good taste. Transparency brings a better story than even "Charlie the Tuna the Star Kiss mascot. Charlie only wants things that taste good. In Thorold as taxpayers we fund the city, so we expect more.



Follow the decision beyond the vote

The vote is an important record, but residents also need to know what happened after it. A motion can pass and accomplish little. A defeated proposal can leave bitterness—or lead to an even better alternative. **Counting victories in the chamber does not measure either outcome.**

Take a hypothetical project funded partly from reserves. Before approval, residents should be able to see the full expected cost, why that reserve is appropriate and what competing needs would wait. Residents in communities such as Port Robinson who have spoken about waiting for improvements understand why that opportunity cost matters. After approval, they should see changes to scope, **spending against the budget and an explanation of material overruns**. When the project opens, the account should include **the ongoing cost of operating it.**

That is not an accusation that a particular project has been mishandled. It is the reporting standard voters have told me they want applied before the next attractive announcement. The same discipline would help assess a deputy mayor proposal or a claim that restructuring has reduced costs. Without a rigorous process, residents can reasonably wonder whether the presentation is smoke and mirrors. **Re-election does not answer that concern**; a clear public account does. Can the incoming UN-FAB FOUR accomplish in this coming term what, in the assessment of many Thorold taxpayers, the UN-FAB FOUR did not in this expiring one? A voter put that rhetorical question to me. If the stakes were not so serious, the repetition might almost be funny.

There is also a question of access. With fewer councillors, residents may have fewer people to approach when their first contact produces no useful response. **Council should explain how questions will be directed, tracked and answered** in advance. **The purpose is not to guarantee that everyone receives the decision they want**; it is to make sure a concern does not disappear between offices. Like employees scrutinizing how their pension is managed, residents may need to become more vocal to protect their long-term interests. More on this point later.

My earlier writing on how voters view potential conflicts asked how councillors assessed interests and explained participation. The question remains: do residents understand how the conflict-of-interest rules protect or not protect the public and how concerns can be raised? Some voters tell me they feel less protected than the people they elect. I share their concern about whether the process is accessible and understandable. That is criticism of how the system is experienced, not a finding that a councillor has breached the rules. **However, many beleieve and have told me that a perceived conflict is a conflict within itself and underminds the integrity of that elect.**

In a smaller council, the absence of one questioning voice can matter more. That makes **readable reports, meaningful answers and follow-up** especially valuable. They give residents a way to examine the decision even when the final tally seems predictable.

Autonomy needs a stronger case than a slogan

Niagara's governance changes remove independently elected Regional councillors and leave the area mayors plus an appointed Regional Chair. The Region explicitly says the current legislation does not itself amalgamate municipalities or transfer its programs and responsibilities. [6] That describes the legislation now; it is not a guarantee against future proposals.

Voters who have discussed this with me worry that poor local performance would weaken Thorold's political case for autonomy. I share that concern. **It remains a political assessment, not evidence of a provincial ultimatum, a secret deadline or an automatic consequence of this election.** Some readers may interpret the political direction more pessimistically. That interpretation is not proof of an undisclosed provincial decision. **HOWEVER those I know who have had successful careers out of reading between the lines all agree unanimously and have told me so- that there is a direct relationship between councils performance in Thorold and amalgamation.**

We strengthen our position through **sound finances, dependable services** and decisions residents can understand. These help Thorold whether the structure stays the same or future alternatives are considered.

The new term begins November 15. [1] In yesterday's satire, God created the world in six days, took the seventh day off, and joked that taking the day off was a mistake. It should begin with an explanation of priorities and an invitation

to examine progress through **transparent report cards assessed against published measures** by reviewers independent of the decisions being assessed. **Residents deserve more than another request to trust the packaging.**

Tomorrow: what a better approach would look like, how it could earn support and how Thorold should prepare for uncertainty without surrendering to it. Then, perhaps, a bonus article putting it all together. More illustrative satire in the works.

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Political opinion and satire notice

“UN-FAB FOUR” refers to Tim O’Hare, Mike De Divitiis, Nella Dekker and Ken Sentance solely as a satirical description of a voter-perceived voting alignment. The author does not allege an official caucus, a secret agreement, unlawful coordination or criminal conduct. Agreement on votes, endorsements, personal connections and board memberships do not, by themselves, establish a conflict of interest, preferential treatment, a quid pro quo or misconduct. References to such concerns express questions or opinions unless supported by identified evidence and an authoritative finding. Claims about appointments, benefits, motives, reserve spending or future amalgamation are not established facts merely because they are attributed to unnamed residents. No finding of wrongdoing by any named individual is asserted by this notice. Readers should distinguish documented facts from the author’s inferences, criticism, rumours and predictions. Imaginary scenes, dialogue, exaggeration and religious or medical analogies are satirical devices; they are not factual accounts or medical advice. No endorsement or participation by a named or depicted person is implied. The author writes independently, and this publication does not speak for the City of Thorold or any candidate. A disclaimer does not replace factual verification. Responses, evidence and requests for correction are welcome at nbozza@go2cai.ca.

Sources and references

Sources checked November 8, 2026. Numbered references support the facts identified below; they do not endorse the author’s opinions, allegations or predictions.

[1] City of Thorold — 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections Official Results, October 27, 2026. Confirms the mayor and six councillors elected and the November 15 term start. The four-of-seven calculation is the author’s arithmetic.

https://www.thorold.ca/news/news/2026-municipal-and-school-board-elections-official-results/

[2] City of Thorold — Media Release City of Thorold Answer Province’s Call to Reduce Their Own Size, March 25, 2026. Records the motion to reduce eight councillors to six plus the mayor, and the City’s stated objectives. Election results in [1] confirm the resulting six seats.

https://www.thorold.ca/news/news/media-release-city-of-thorold-answer-provinces-call-to-reduce-their-own-size/

[3] City of Thorold — Council Meetings, Strong Mayor Powers and Mayoral Decisions and Directives sections. Identifies powers and the public written-decision requirement.

https://www.thorold.ca/council-administration/council/council-meetings/

[4] Thorold Community Credit Union — Who We Are, team and board directory. Lists Tim Whalen as CEO, Tim O’Hare as a director and Ken Sentance (spelled “Ken Sentence” on the site) as a director. This directory does not establish any municipal misconduct.

https://www.thoroldcu.com/about/who-we-are

[5] Government of Ontario — The Ontario Municipal Councillor’s Guide, section 10 Strong mayor powers and duties, Veto power and council override and Municipal budget process. Describes two-thirds-of-all-members override thresholds and confirms that strong-mayor powers do not automatically transfer to an acting head. Five votes on seven members is the author’s arithmetic.

https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-municipal-councillors-guide/10-strong-mayor-powers-and-duties

[6] Niagara Region — Governance changes in Niagara. Explains the November 15, 2026 transition to 12 mayors plus a Regional Chair and states that the legislation does not amalgamate or dissolve municipalities or change the Region’s programs, services or responsibilities.

https://www.niagararegion.ca/government-and-council/council-and-committees/governance-changes-in-niagara/