THOROLD ELECTION POST-MORTEM | PART 4 OF 4

Bonus tomorrow to conclude the series — an article without holding back

Mission Possible—Putting Thorold First

This is the longest article in the series because it brings the biggest question into focus: what must council do now to put Thorold taxpayers first and strengthen the city's future? It deserves the space—and your attention.

PREAMBLE: Putting Thorold taxpayers first is a decision the UN-FAB FOUR can make if they want. By "Thorold taxpayers first," I mean the people who live here and pay the bills. Protecting the municipal corporation's interests does not, by itself, demonstrate that residents are being well served or even being put first. The municipal corporation is a separate legal entity that sears Councilors first loyalty. The taxpaying people it serves have pulses, blood flowing through their veins. (Receiving a service is not the same as having taxpayers interests put first. Council must explain why the service, its cost and the choices behind it represent good value for the people paying the bill.)

Voters who have spoken with me want transparent decisions, careful planning, documentation written in plain, high-school-level English, and results monitored and measured with precision. Explain how each major decision benefits residents, what it costs them and how success will be measured. If the response is, "We already do," the answer is simple: (Then show residents the evidence: the costs, the benefits and the results.)

The opportunity is theirs. They can earn a positive nickname and become Thorold's superheroes—or leave voters calling Kevin O'Leary, aka Mr. Wonderful, for something less flattering.

Monday, November 09, 2026 | By Nicholas Bozza | Thorold Election Commentary

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Independent political commentary. The author's registration does not imply municipal approval or endorsement.

REVIEW COPY | 2,995 body words | approximately 10.0 minutes

Estimated reading time is based on approximately **300 words per minute**, a high-school-level reading pace. The word count includes only the article body, including the preamble; it excludes titles, section headings, publication details, disclaimers, sources and personal review notes.

THE UN-FOUR RETURNING councillors can earn support by more clearly showing residents how decisions serve Thorold, what they cost and whether they work. Voters propose an early public plan and regular progress reports, with the same standards for every council member. Improve the present system first; if restructuring (amalgamation) is seriously considered, assess the options openly and prepare Thorold's priorities well before negotiations begin. **Amalgamation can be like a precancerous diagnosis: an early warning to prepare. If a worse diagnosis follows, Thorold may still have options to limit what it loses. This is a political metaphor, not a medical comparison of any individual.**

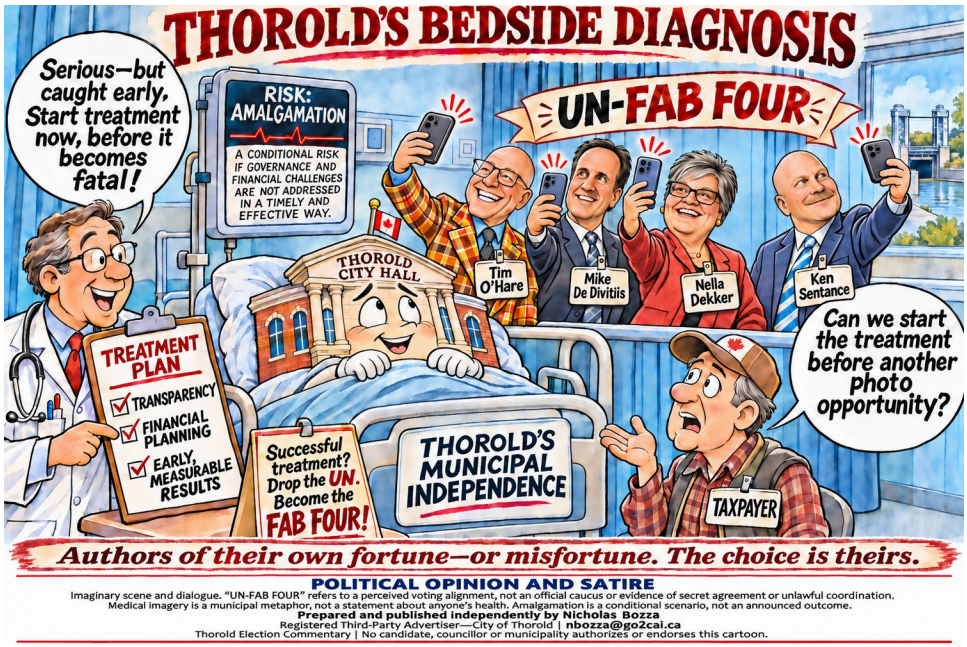
However, if council, with city staff support, cannot or does not deliver better outcomes quickly, many people much smarter than I believe pressure for amalgamation will keep growing rather than go into remission. No seat belt required, no roadside NRP seat belt checks: in this political metaphor, the collision

could arise from voters giving permission for councilors to provide less than safe political driving habits – by not explaining. Put a political vehicle in the hands of a majority of council that cannot steer it or decides safer driving is not a priority, and **residents 'may' start looking to the province for a rescue. This is voters' kryptonite for holding Thorold's UN-FAB FOUR accountable.** More on this in tomorrow's bonus article concluding the series.

Some people I have spoken with see amalgamation as an antidote to the UN-FAB FOUR as they feel they may be accelerating the process without regard of the consequences. **Local independence would be at stake.** In view of many I have spoken with pre-election, the willingness to risk surrendering independent judgment without considering the short- and long-term implications is what got us here. As it was said to me by many, this was an unformal warning if reading between the lines, not an announcement of a provincial plan. Many sense that the province's announcement had reasonings behind making these announcements prior to municipal elections in Thorold.

Think of it as becoming institutionalized: we grow accustomed to the arrangements and stop imagining something better. In the view of many as it was told to me by many, the pattern began during Ugulini's time as mayor. The UN-FAB FOUR have proved good at securing their seats; now they must show what they can do to save Thorold from their arch enemy being amalgamation say many Thorold taxpayers. **Batman and Superman cannot do the work for them.** It's also been said to me by many pre-election that if Thorold eventually loses its independence to amalgamation, perhaps UN-FAB FOUR flags on our properties could remind us where we mis-placed our trust. However, I strongly suggest that **if they help secure a better future, we should praise them big time.**

And for those inclined to religious humour, perhaps keep a priest on speed dial. If Thorold's municipal independence ever reaches its final hours, surely, it deserves last rites. But I still believe and preach to the UN-FAB non-believers, **we should root for them and give them a chance under these conditions.** They may want to consider acting as if **Thorold is already in Intensive Care**, to show everyone that the UN-FAB want to be converted to be FAB and UN-FAB. It's shouldn't be about power to rule. It should be it's about finding a cure for survival. That's the sense of urgency they need to get all of Thorold behind. That is, if they even want a chance to make Mission Impossible – Possible. But it's really up to them- isn't it?



A chance to become the FAB FOUR rather than the UN-FAB FOUR

Many voters who have spoken with me wanted a different councilor result. That position is on the record.

Judge council by its willingness to support better outcomes that are transparent, measurable and monitored with precision. Many voters I have heard from are rooting for transparent decisions and results that benefit Thorold. That does not require a promise to applaud before the work is done. **Fewer selfies and more useful explanations would help.**

The election is settled. The standard of performance remains open for examination. The UN-FAB FOUR returning councillors can demonstrate that greater voting strength comes with a greater willingness to explain themselves—or continue as before. I believe the latter course could carry a serious price by weakening Thorold's position if and when restructuring is pursued -or- imposed That is a concern, not a confirmed provincial plan. Thorold should seek to be in the strongest possible position rather than wait for others to make the call and impose the terms of amalgamation upon Thorold. If the UN-FAB FOUR want to become the FAB FOUR, **a real plan, explained fully and in advance, is the place to start.** But they may not want to. Then what? More on this later. But voters can have Mr. Wonderful on speed dial.

Put Thorold first in a way residents can see

Voters who have shared their concerns with me do not want "Thorold first" to become another slogan that means whatever an UN-FAB speaker needs that day. Explain the local problem, the available choices, **the tangible and intangible costs, the opportunity costs, the expected benefits and the possible drawbacks.** Some medicine may taste like Buckley's, but that is fine if it works. **Then monitor and report what happens through updates everyone can access. Think of the posted waiting times at the border, ski slopes or a hospital emergency department: keep people informed about where things stand and how they change both good and bad.**

The municipality's legal responsibilities and residents' interests need to be addressed together. Council's statutory role includes public representation, transparency and financial integrity. **Protecting the City of Thorold Corporation should NOT become a convenient answer to every question about how the people paying for it benefit. [11] In the view of taxpayers who have spoken with me, told me that answer is used much too often when taxpayers feel they are not put first.**

Nor should council's political party associations substitute for independent municipal judgment. I have not established that these four take private party instructions, but Dekker, received public endorsements from the local MPP. This can prompt voters to wonder whether something is expected in return; that concern does not establish a quid pro quo. The demand is that reasons given for local decisions stand on local evidence and public responsibilities, regardless of who supported the campaigns. More on this tomorrow.

Where interests overlap, disclose what is relevant, follow the applicable rules and explain the process. Optics and perceptions can affect trust even when no breach is established. **PEOPLE TOLD ME BEFORE THE ELECTION THAT WINNING VOTES IS AN EASIER TASK THAN EARNING TRUST.** Residents should be able to understand who is making a decision and any relevant connections, without having to investigate those connections themselves.

Start with an early plan and report against it

Some propose that council publish a first-100-days plan, measured from the beginning of the term on November 15, as a practical response to voters' calls for early accountability. Choose a manageable set of priorities, identify who is responsible and state what residents should expect to see. This proposed review

period is a public accountability test, not a legal deadline. [1] I verily believe Dekker proposed at the start of one of her earlier terms but it seems to have disappeared without follow up.

For major spending, **publish the full cost, the source of funds, future operating obligations and the effect on reserves.** For service improvements, give a starting point, a target and a reporting date. If compensation is reviewed, show the net effect before approving it.

Make public questions easier to follow: acknowledge the question, identify who will answer and provide a substantive response or explain the limit on disclosure. **A phone call returned is welcome; a difficult question answered is better still.**

Apply clear reporting conditions to public grants and review oversight of city-connected organizations, particularly non-profit housing. Where the City provides grants or other assistance to a separate organization, residents should be able to see what reporting conditions apply, how the money is used and how any councillor's board role is handled. Separate legal status should prompt clear accountability arrangements. If a different structure is proposed, examine costs, obligations and service consequences before assuming a takeover is the answer.

Transparency has lawful limits. Protected personal information and confidential legal advice cannot simply be posted online. But legitimate confidentiality should be explained, with public reasons and useful summaries where permitted. It should not become a reusable curtain that never gets washed or dry-cleaned. Perhaps that is where secrecy gets its dirty reputation?

Review progress after the first 100 days, against the first adopted budget and again at six months. Credit achievements specifically. Identify missed targets fairly and allow an explanation. **Apply those tests to each council member individually.**

Prepare for alternatives without declaring defeat

The first preference expressed by voters who have discussed this with me is better governing in Thorold. If the present arrangements cannot deliver, residents deserve an honest assessment of alternatives: improved existing practices, shared services and, if seriously proposed, restructuring or amalgamation.

The Region says current governance legislation does not itself amalgamate municipalities. No source cited in this series establishes that the province will force Thorold into amalgamation because these four were re-elected. The argument concerns preparation and political credibility, **not a prediction dressed as an official announcement.** [3] Let's read the political signals together, test our interpretations against the evidence and make Thorold a stronger voice in any discussion of its future.

Preparation means a reliable account of assets, reserves, debt, infrastructure needs and service costs. It also means asking residents what should be protected: representation, service access, local facilities, heritage, fair treatment of reserves and manageable transition costs.

Seek advice on the legal route and identify which proposed protections could be enforceable. Thorold cannot guarantee a preferred partner, a veto or terms accepted by others. Early preparation should strengthen its influence, although it cannot guarantee an outcome or manufacture powers Thorold does not possess. **Many believe a stronger, better-prepared Thorold would have more influence over any negotiations—especially if we begin preparing before someone else sets the agenda.**

My hockey comparison is a wish to have more say before a trade, not a claim that Thorold holds an NHL no-trade clause. **Waiting until we are financially or politically weakened is hardly a negotiating strategy.**

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"UN-FAB FOUR" denotes a perceived alignment; no secret agreement or unlawful conduct is alleged.

Make the promise measurable

An early plan should be specific enough that councillors and residents can recognize improvement without arguing over the meaning of a campaign adjective. “Better communication” must be more than a worthy intention. **To voters who have spoken with me, re-election despite unresolved questions risks rewarding a failure to explain. Let’s raise the bar for Thorold: explain decisions in advance and use transparency to strengthen the case for keeping local control. This is a strong move still available to us; let’s do it properly. A published question-and-response process, with reporting on outstanding items, gives that commitment a form residents can assess.**

The same applies to financial discipline. Council could identify the major commitments that require clearer explanation, establish the baseline cost and report changes consistently. **A missed target should bring an explanation of the cause and a revised plan.** Otherwise, each update can quietly redefine success until the original promise becomes impossible to find.

A proposed review should also recognize work that takes longer than 100 days. A complicated agreement cannot necessarily be repaired within that period. Council can still identify the problem, explain the steps under way and state when the next public account will be provided. **Early progress can mean better information and a credible process rather than a completed construction project.**

Residents have responsibilities too: consider the explanations, recognize when information genuinely cannot be disclosed and acknowledge when an error has been corrected. Councillors—even the UN-FAB ones—deserve credit when they earn it. I will wish them success while continuing to ask difficult questions I receive from taxpayers.

If councillors believe these standards are impractical, they can propose better ones and explain why. Voters who have spoken with me do not want a term measured only by announcements, appearances and an eventual claim that everyone was working hard. Effort matters. The public also needs to know what that effort achieved—or failed to achieve.

This is how the UN-FAB FOUR can change the conversation without first agreeing with all criticism voters have made through me and not through me. Start producing the explanations and results that allow confidence to grow. **Let residents see the difference for themselves.**

Support is available and scrutiny continues

If a different structure ultimately offers the best evidenced outcome for residents, pursuing it need not be an admission of failure. An honest review might establish that, despite our best efforts, the current arrangements cannot deliver what Thorold needs. If we reach that point, we should seek suitable partners and more favorable terms that are actually achievable while we can still make a strong case and because of our strong case. We cannot guarantee that we will choose the partner or control the outcome. **But waiting until others hold the stronger hand would give us less influence over our own future.** The choices we make now matter as it relates to amalgamation. To ignore it, would be a terrible mistake.

The immediate choice is within council’s reach: **explain more, demonstrate results and respond constructively to scrutiny.** That takes effort, skill and an honest willingness to accomplish this and not simply make it look like they are touching all the bases. **It is Mission Possible.**

If the UN-FAB FOUR want to become the FAB FOUR, show us early and often. A clear public progress report would be a fine reason for a selfie. I MIGHT EVEN SUPPLY THE CAPTION.

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That is the offer I'm hearing from voters. **EARN our confidence.** We will recognize progress, and we will keep asking questions. Some voters have put the challenge more bluntly to me: if the work required to improve Thorold and defend local autonomy is too much, step aside—even, they suggest, if a departure payment would help make that happen.

THIS IS HUGE: WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT THE UN-FAB FOUR when some taxpayers tell me they would rather pay them out in full up front for the next four years rather than stay and work? **The figure raised in those conversations is $100,000 upfront for each of the four—$400,000 in total.** I ASK READERS: if such a payment could lawfully clear the way for the improvements those taxpayers want, would it be worth it? **That is a provocative question, not a costed policy or a claim that a payout would deliver those results.** As for whether they are "worth it," I would have to call a L'Oréal hair-colour specialist. Joking of course.

That is a view reported from those conversations, **not an existing entitlement or a proposal council has adopted.** Any taxpayer-funded payment would need its own lawful basis and transparent justification. The immediate demand from some voters remains the same: **commit to the work and explain the plan.**

Other questions we can wrap up tomorrow are: Were interest groups or political parties instrumental in getting the UN-FAB FOUR re-elected? What role, if any, did outside campaign strategists play? **Those are questions, not established findings.** Some taxpayers have offered a sharper satirical comparison: if others supplied the campaign's tune, should we call the quartet Milli Vanilli? **The joke is about political lip-syncing; it is not evidence that anyone secretly directed their campaigns.**

Give the new mayor 40 days and 40 nights to get organized and show his approach to transparency. And if the explanations never arrive, should we start building an ark for the flood of questions about Thorold's future? That is the biblical joke—not a forecast of amalgamation.

My hope is that Whalen's experience at the Region will help him understand what may be coming and focus on fixing problems rather than launching a spending spree. More on that tomorrow in my bonus article, which puts it all together. I believe the incoming Mayor Tim Whalen deserves a chance to address what he just inherited after the period many have criticized as eight years of a majority voting bloc that began with Terry Ugulini's first term. During the campaign, I intentionally stayed out of the mayoral contest as a TPA because I know both D'Angela and Whalen. I expected a close race—I said under 100 votes, possibly closer—and did not want to influence that choice. I planned to wish both men well, and I do. Whoever won, my advice was always going to be the same: give the winner time to settle in and get organized before judging his performance. That is what I am doing now.

Tomorrow brings the final article in this election post-mortem series: the bonus instalment. It will be a little less politically correct and more to the point.

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