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THOROLD ELECTION COMMENTARY (Monday, November 16, 2026)

When Does It Become Election Interference?

To interfere or not to interfere, that is the question (Shakespeare spin)

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689 body words | Approx. 2 min 18 sec at 300 words per minute

POLITICAL OPINION, SATIRE AND DISCLAIMER

The cartoons depict fictional dialogue and imagined motives. Facebook posts are dated October 19, 2022 and September 30, 2026.

FRED DAVIES, OUR CONSERVATIVE MP, stayed out of the council race in Thorold, as I understand it by way of an announcement. Niagara Centre NDP MPP Jeff Burch made a different choice in 2022. In his October 19, 2022 post below, he called Nella Dekker a hard worker and a strong councillor and asked voters to support her re-election.

Burch publicly backed Dekker again in the September 30, 2026 post below. He posts that he is “always happy to support her” and appears beside her and a re-election sign.

So here’s the question Thorold voters would like to ask Burch. **What did you hope your endorsement would accomplish at Thorold City Hall?** Dekker and three other councillors had shown a pattern of voting together. With only six councillor seats this coming term, if all four were re-elected and kept voting together, **they would hold a majority among councillors.** Voters want to know what business you had getting involved in this election, and what the heck you were trying to do.

October 19, 2022 | Jeff Burch’s Facebook post



Continue on next page.

September 30, 2026 | Jeff Burch's Facebook post



What did Niagara Centre NDP MPP Jeff Burch hope to change at Thorold City Hall when he backed Nella Dekker again on September 30, 2026?

Many voters I heard from saw his endorsement as a show of support for all four councillors they call the UN-FAB FOUR. The October 3, 2023 council minutes show why that interpretation had traction. Dekker, Mike De Divitiis, Tim O'Hare and Ken Sentance joined Mayor Terry Ugulini to defeat a motion seeking an outside legal opinion on the Canada Games Park lease. The motion lost 5–4.

In the view of many Thorold voters, Burch's endorsement may have helped preserve that voting bloc. Those four councillors now hold four of the six councillor seats and can carry a vote when they stick together. So what did Burch hope a re-elected Dekker would accomplish? Does he want Thorold to lose its autonomy and have amalgamation imposed on us?

Mr. Burch, feel free to email me with your response at nbozza@go2cai.ca.



POLITICAL OPINION, SATIRE AND DISCLAIMER

In Clarence's satirical what-if, NDP MPP Jeff Burch never endorses Nella Dekker, all four members of the UN-FAB FOUR lose their seats, and Thorold uncovers millions in savings, recovers overpayments and avoids forced amalgamation.

Clarence figures Burch's endorsement of Dekker could have helped the whole UN-FAB FOUR. With several of the four backing one another, an endorsement for one could help preserve the group's voting majority. Four councillors voting together when there are only six councillor seats are like a broken drumstick. You can't beat 'em.

Plenty of thoughtful people believe better decisions and stronger financial results give Thorold its best chance to stay independent. Guardian Angel Clarence Odbody agrees. He helped save Bedford Falls, has called Thorold home since 1946 and earned his wings right here. In Clarence's telling, Mike De Divitiis lives outside Thorold, and the UN-FAB FOUR have four votes between them and zero wings.

Jimmy Handley? He's got a pair. One of Thorold's own, Jimmy earned his wings keeping watch over the city during his years on council. As Clarence puts it, "Jimmy's still keeping an eye on Thorold. He's just doing it from a higher altitude."

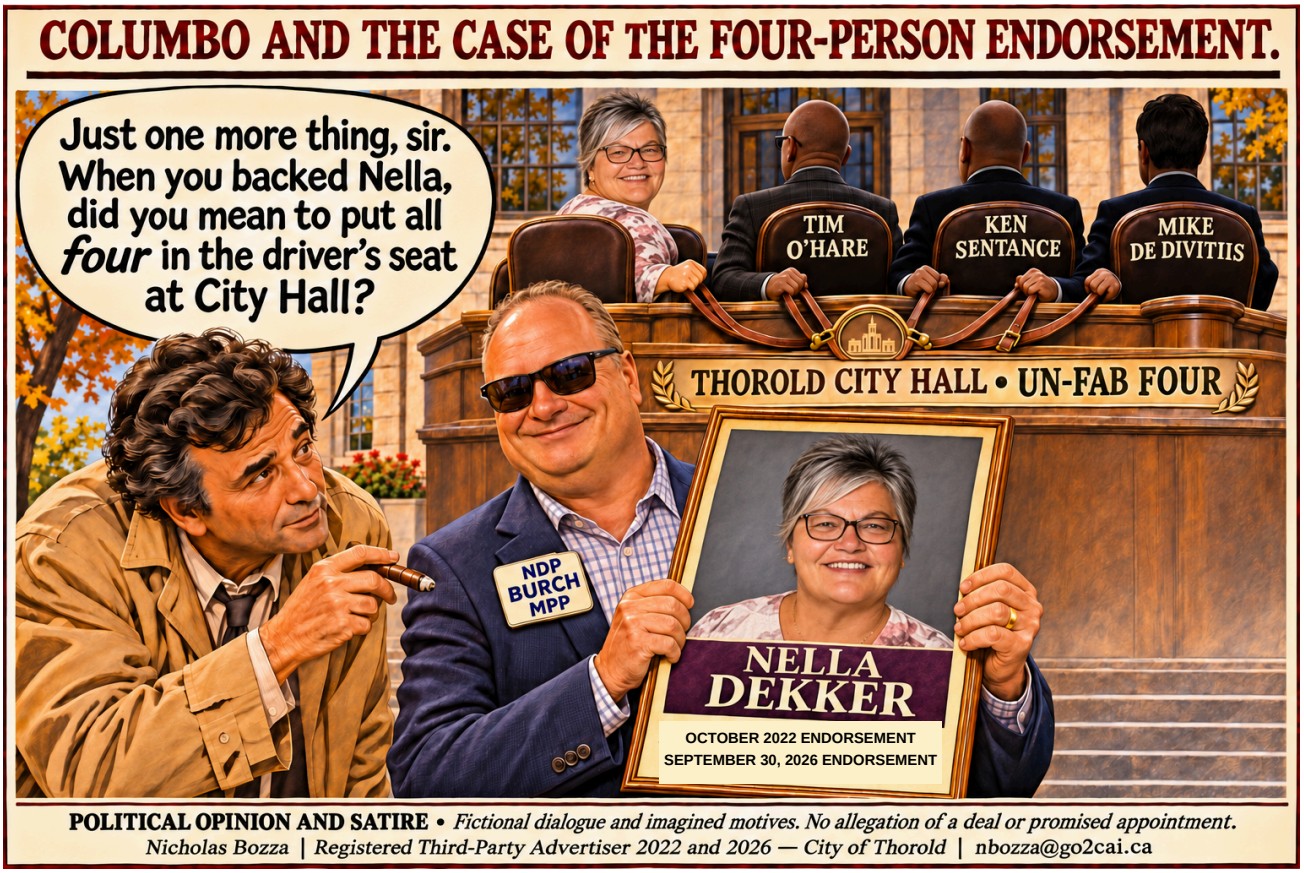
In this satirical preview, Clarence joins Jimmy this spring as his first guest and co-host for the podcast debut, "Two Pair." Wings, of course. Here in casino country, Jimmy and Clarence figure theirs is the only two pair that can beat a full house.

Jimmy's story is just beginning.

One Endorsement and Four Votes

Some voters saw Burch's support for Dekker as a signal of approval for the wider UN-FAB FOUR. On October 3, 2023, Dekker, Tim O'Hare, Ken Sentance and Mike De Divitiis voted against seeking an outside legal opinion on the Canada Games Park agreement. **Mayor Terry Ugulini joined them, making it 5–4.** That shared vote helps explain why some residents saw four names when the endorsement named one.

Did Burch intend to help one candidate win a seat, or was he trying to shape the balance of power at City Hall for a four-year term? The October 2022 post establishes his public support for Dekker in that election. His intentions beyond that are a question for him. In 2026, he publicly backed Dekker again. **What did he hope his support would accomplish the second time around?**



POLITICAL OPINION, SATIRE AND DISCLAIMER

The endorsements shown refer to Nella Dekker. The suggestion that they benefited other councillors is the author?s interpretation. The scene, dialogue and motives are imagined. The cartoon makes no allegation of an agreement, coordination or unlawful conduct.

In yesterday's article, I asked on behalf of Thorold taxpayers what Jeff Burch saw in Nella Dekker and how much of the UN-FAB FOUR's shared voting record he was prepared to stand behind. Some voters told me that when Burch put his name behind one candidate, they heard an endorsement of four. Did the trust those voters already placed in Burch or the NDP carry over to the other three at the ballot box? Many of the voters I heard from felt that, as the local MPP, he should have anticipated that his endorsement might be read that way.

I also raised a question about campaign resources. From what I've seen, a provincial party can spend more on campaign coaching than all the independent council candidates could hope to spend put together. Mr. Burch, did your involvement end with the public endorsement, or did any campaign advice or other support come with it?

More on next page.

The Five-Four Vote



POLITICAL OPINION, SATIRE AND DISCLAIMER

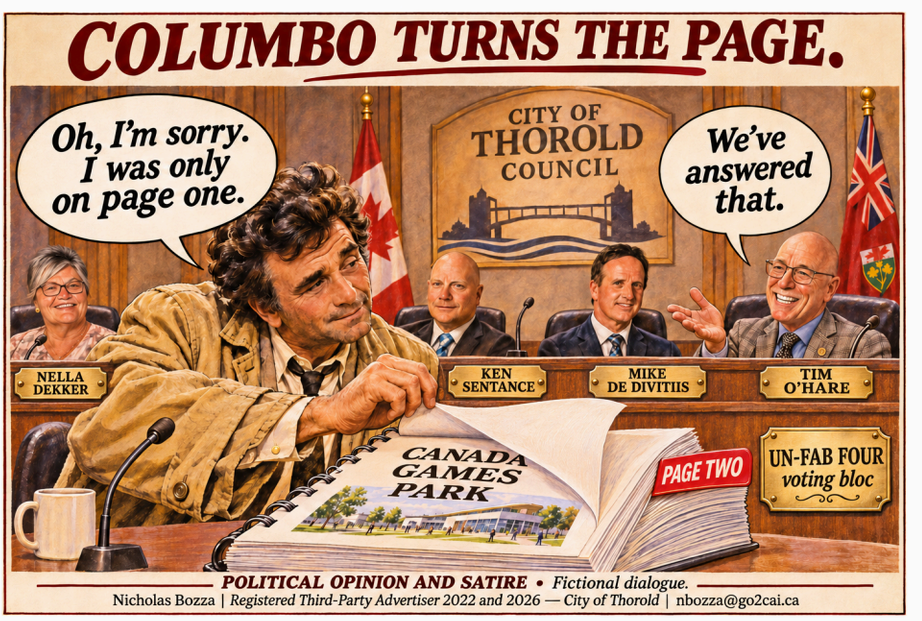
Some voters I've heard from say the Canada Games Park deal at Brock University was negotiated with too little transparency. In their view, former mayor Terry Ugulini gave away the farm. They call him the "Night Mayor," and some even invoke Fredo from *The Godfather* to express how betrayed they feel.

While regional councillors praised Ugulini as instrumental to the deal, critics ask what Thorold got for what they describe as 38 more years of payments. Did Thorold take on the largest financial burden while gaining the least ownership and only a limited say? Does the agreement cap Thorold's liability? Those are questions the contract and financial records should answer.

Talk of a possible appointment after Ugulini leaves the mayor's office has sharpened those concerns. Some voters wonder whether the two could be connected. The cartoon satirizes that suspicion. It makes no allegation of a promised appointment or quid pro quo.

Just One More Thing

A public endorsement is an attempt to influence voters. Whether campaign activity crosses a legal line depends on what actually happened. **Ontario has specific rules for paid third-party advertising in municipal elections.** So I'd ask Burch a plain question. **Did your involvement end with the public endorsement, or did it include campaign resources, paid promotion or other support? If it went further, what was provided and by whom?**



POLITICAL OPINION, SATIRE AND DISCLAIMER

The cartoons depict fictional dialogue and imagined motives. They make no allegation of a secret agreement, promised appointment or election-law violation. The Facebook posts are dated October 19, 2022 and September 30, 2026. The council vote occurred October 3, 2023.

Sources: Jeff Burch's Facebook posts, October 19, 2022 and September 30, 2026. Thorold council minutes, October 3, 2023, item 14.1. Ontario's 2026 municipal candidates' guide, "Third-party advertising."

Sources, references and disclaimers

Jeff Burch and the 2025 provincial election

Jeff Burch is the Ontario NDP Member of Provincial Parliament for Niagara Centre, the provincial riding that includes Thorold. He represents residents of the riding at Queen's Park on provincial matters. First elected on June 7, 2018, he was re-elected in 2022 and 2025. As of November 16, 2026, he had served for about eight years and five months. The Legislative Assembly lists him as NDP caucus chair and critic for Municipal Affairs and Skilled Trades.

Elections Ontario recorded **20,408 votes for Burch across Niagara Centre** in the February 27, 2025 provincial election. Its official tabulation reports ballots by poll and includes advance and combined polls. The published table does not give a Thorold-resident subtotal. A separate Thorold-only total could not be verified from it.

Legislative Assembly of Ontario — Jeff Burch
Elections Ontario — Niagara Centre official tabulation, district 068

POLITICAL OPINION, SATIRE AND DISCLAIMER

Whole article. This publication combines political commentary and satirical illustrations. Statements attributed to voters are their views as reported by the author. Questions about influence, appointments and contract terms are commentary. The article makes no finding of election interference and alleges no quid pro quo, private agreement or unlawful conduct.

It's a Wonderful Endorsement Preview. Clarence's alternative election outcome, financial review vote, savings, recovery of overpayments, avoidance of amalgamation and podcast are fictional. They are neither findings about the contract nor predictions.

Columbo and the Case of the Four-Person Endorsement. The cited endorsements concern Dekker. Any suggestion of a political benefit to other councillors is the author's interpretation. The depicted conversation and motives are fictional.

Columbo and the Five–Four Vote. The recorded 5–4 vote concerned obtaining an external legal opinion. The pictured dialogue and speculation about a future appointment are fictional. There is no allegation of a promised appointment, a quid pro quo or an improper motive for any vote.

Columbo Turns the Page. The depicted exchange never took place as shown. The "UN-FAB FOUR voting bloc" label expresses the author's opinion about voting alignment. It makes no allegation of a formal caucus, secret agreement or unlawful coordination.

Canada Games Park advance poll and Thorold estimate

Official count. Elections Ontario recorded 877 votes for Burch at the Canada Games Park advance poll (ADV005). The poll location does not identify where those voters lived.

Rough population-based estimate for Thorold. About 4,100 votes. Thorold had 23,816 residents in the 2021 census, about 20% of Niagara Centre's population of 119,799. Applying that share to Burch's riding-wide total of 20,408 yields about 4,058 votes before rounding. This estimate assumes similar voter eligibility, turnout and support across the riding. It is not a count of Thorold ballots, and the 877 advance-poll votes are already included in the riding total.

Elections Ontario — riding population | BMA Municipal Study — Thorold census population