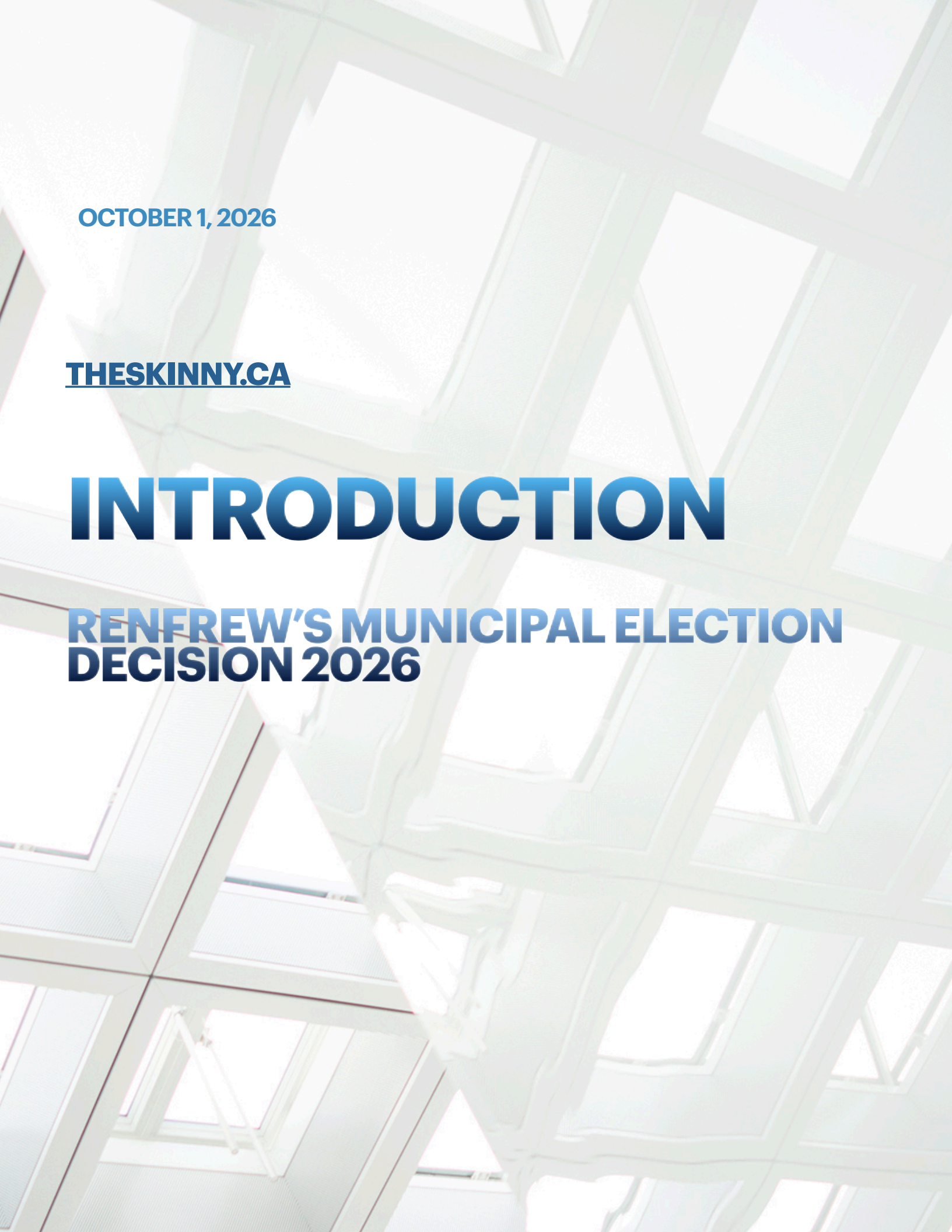




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INTRODUCTION

**RENFREW'S MUNICIPAL ELECTION
DECISION 2026**

With a little more than three weeks to go before Renfrew's municipal election, I suppose it's time to start looking into things more closely.

Which isn't really accurate, in that I have been paying attention, actually quite a bit of it, despite not being an eligible voter residing within Renfrew's municipal boundaries, living just on the other side of the fence.

But since arriving here nearly forty years ago, I now consider Renfrew to be my home. So despite not having a vote, I seem to still care enough about the place to take more than merely a casual interest. Also, I have many friends that do live within the boundaries, taxpayers every one of them, and their well-being is something important to me, as well as the quality of political representation and governance they receive.

Renfrew's municipal government has been through its share of rocky rides over the years, and some issues remain in the public conversation that reflect the calamitous nature of some of the twenty-odd years as we transitioned from an Old Boys Club to a, well, I'm not entirely sure what. It might still be a club of sorts, just not with the old boys anymore.

I spent the better part of two years immersing myself in the current council and Renfrew's administrative staff. That doesn't make me any smarter than anyone else, since I often left meetings feeling stupider than when I arrived in the first place. Thousands upon thousands of words were written, none of it influenced by the convenience of artificial intelligence and the ubiquitous chat boxes. All of that original writing was intended to provide some sense of clarity, perhaps greater understanding, and even a measure of appreciation and understanding for the work that all of these people are tasked to do and the accountability that goes along with it.

I'm approaching this current effort as if I was an eligible voter, and want to arrive at a slate of candidates that I would support if I did, in fact, have a vote. Despite this approach, it's not my intention to publish this final roster of my picks. I don't feel it's my job or responsibility to do that, and also understand that there are not a lot of people in the world holding their breath and waiting for me to decide who they should vote for. There are some eligible voters, perhaps as many as a dozen or so, who do have some interest in my opinion, and do assign me some measure of credibility. But that said, there are many thousands upon thousands who do not.

What makes things really interesting is that in the coming races for mayor and counsellor, a Volkswagen showing up with a load of committed voters could be enough to change the game in either or both races.

Last time out, in 2022, voter turnout was abysmal, far below 50%, somewhere in the mid-forties. In such cases, close races are almost a guarantee, and 2022 didn't disappoint.

The current mayor, Tom Sidney, scored a landslide victory, riding a twelve vote cushion over his nearest rival, Sandi Heins. Tom's 873 votes — I'm not kidding — was enough to triumph over Sandi's 861, with Mike Coulas not terribly far behind at 691. I don't know if you can fit 12 people in a Volkswagen, but I think you get my point here. Maybe with a roof rack of some sort it could be accomplished.



As to the 2022 council race, the numbers were tight as well, with Jason Legris and Clint McWhirter finishing in the top two spots, Legris snagging 1,619 votes to McWhirter's 1,615. And yes, I believe four people can be stuffed in a Beetle.

It was also close at the back end as Andrew Dick successfully scored the final council spot with a 35 vote margin over the next candidate, Brady Enright, 1,258 and ,1,223 respectively, a margin of 35 votes, which is pretty much by the hair of a person's chinny chin-chin stuff.

So obviously numbers are important, and getting the vote out doubly so. And the candidates who are most successful at this have an excellent shot at being rewarded. Admittedly, some candidates have a higher name recognition than others, but there are a series of issues out there that will likely be aggravating factors for the campaigns of some of the better known among them.

There is nobody in these two races who is absolutely assured of anything, and many have stuff from the past still sticking to the bottoms of their shoes.

That's likely to emerge as a problem to a degree for some.