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THE RACE FOR COUNCIL

**RENFREW'S MUNICIPAL ELECTION
DECISION 2026**

On October 26th of this month, voters in Renfrew will turn out — we hope — to support a number of the ten people standing as candidates for Renfrew Town Council as councillors.

I say we hope because back in 2022, only forty-some percent of eligible voters bothered to turn up and scratch an X out for a candidate. If some candidate were ever to address this by aggressively and actively going after a chunk of that un-mapped potential, it could very well be a difference maker.

Let me correct myself. It **will** be a difference maker.

There are two kinds of voters in play. The committed voters that candidates have already lined up and can be expected to show up on the 26th, and eligible voters, who appear to be a disinterested lot, preferring I guess to stay home and watch *Wheel of Fortune* instead of taking advantage of their political rights in a democracy. And let's face it, when people in a democracy stop voting for whatever reason, it results in a diluted and less effective democracy.

Wheel of Fortune will certainly be on television that night, it always is. But another form of it will be playing out right here in Renfrew on election night. Only in this case, the fortune is found all over Renfrew, and it's largely untapped. It's out there in Horton Heights, it's found on Prince Avenue and Monroe Street. You'll find it here and there along all the Raglans, North, South, and Centre. It can be found along Hall Street and in the subdivision behind No Frills. You find it in places like Baldwin and Ready and all along Basswood and Oak Crescent.

Around 45% of eligible voters took advantage of their right last time out, which means that 55% of the eligibles are still out there. And they live all over town.

The person that goes out and gets that, or a chunk of that, has an awesome chance of a successful outcome on election night. Lawn signs, websites, Facebook pages and mailbox stuffers aren't going to do it for these folks. Stuffing campaign literature in a mailbox and scurrying away is something, I suppose, but sadly most of that stuff ends up in the municipal landfill unread.

If you wish to be successful, you need to engage. Passive systems like those mentioned above all have their place in campaigns, but as I said, they're passive in nature. While they enhance visibility and send signals of superior organization and support, they do very little for those 55 percenters who are staying home. Those people must be contacted, as in hard contact. They need active engagement.

So although a little intimidating perhaps, and requiring a lot of time and energy, a hard canvass is the only way you're going to break through the disillusionment and apathy embodied in the 55%.

In short, you knock on doors or ring the bells, you greet them as they answer, introduce yourself to them, and tell them you have the solution to all their problems. You look them in the eye, you ask if you can count on their support, ask them for their contact information, and give them the option for a lawn sign.

This is called *“identifying the vote.”* You identify your supporters out there, take their contact info, then do everything you can on election day to phone every last one of them and remind them that there’s an election and its time for them to go out and complete their commitment. Hell, you even offer transportation and child care if it makes it easier for them to carry through on that promise.



This part of it is called *“getting your vote out,”* and in races with razor-thin margins, whoever commits to doing something like this may be able to overcome other candidates who rely on signs, sites, Ai, and Facebook pages to get the job done, and nothing else.

Voters — those who show up — have a single vote for mayor but I believe have several in the councillor race, perhaps as many as six. You don’t have to use them all, and in fact it may be

judicious not to. If you have a candidate that you really have a shine on, but also use all your remaining votes on other candidates, you may find yourself in a situation where your candidate falls a vote short of the cutoff, with somebody else you voted for coming out on top by a single vote, thus negating the vote you placed for your preferred candidate.

I realize this is saying two things that are uncomplimentary to one another. On the one hand, I'm saying vote and criticize those who don't. But then on the other, I go ahead and advise that a person should probably not use all of their allotted votes. Seems to be inconsistent and at cross-purposes.

I recognize the inconsistency, but the latter scenario represents a form of strategic voting, or more aptly put, strategic non-voting. But what I'm saying here is that a person shouldn't go into the voting booth, vote for their preferred candidate(s), but then still have votes left over and feel it necessary to use them. They may feel it's part of their civic obligation to use up all their voting allotment, hell it would be a crime not to, right? But again, if your person loses out by a slim margin to somebody you went shopping around for in the booth just to use up all your votes? That's a tough lesson to learn.

So, to be clear, I want people to vote. I just want them to vote wisely and not indiscriminately. Because in my mind, the only thing worse than a disengaged non-voter is an indiscriminate and un-educated one.

And so it begins, a look at the candidacies of ten people looking to fill six spots with four incumbents in the mix. Among the non-incumbent crowd is a former mayor and councillor, a former councillor, a former fire chief who I believe may have been a councillor at one point, a fellow with impressive credentials in industry and community board presence, and two other newcomers who look like they have some promise as well. Hell, one of the former councillors is a barber, which is kinda cool, since barbershops used to be the hotbed of political discussion back in another time.

Ten people all vying for a job I would never want owing to the seeming thankless nature of the craft. As well, I can assure people that candidates don't go after council positions because they think it's some sort of gold mine. I'm sorry but there's no \$15,000 out there that would justify me taking on a role like that, but then again, perhaps it's fortunate that these fine people are willing to undertake all of that in the belief that they can make the place where they live better in as many ways possible.

So I salute all ten for their civic awareness, responsibility, and respective calls to action.

My take on them, such as it may be, is something for tomorrow.