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THE RACE FOR MAYOR

**RENFREW'S MUNICIPAL ELECTION
DECISION 2026**

Elections for mayor will often bring out a number of candidates, and the 2026 municipal election appears to be no different with no fewer than six people vying for the job that comes with an impressive chain of office and the title of “Your Worship.”

Being the mayor of Renfrew can't be an easy thing, and looking at perhaps the past twenty years or so, it seems every occupant of that chair has made it look like it's an exceedingly difficult proposition.

Especially recently, with the last three or four councils, there always seems to be some kick-ass big-ticket scandal of some sort just around the corner, with perhaps none as big as the Ma-Te-Way thing when it comes to the potential of blood lust.

For the life of me, I just don't know why anybody would want that job, but here we are with six aspirants. And to make matters even more interesting, the mayor's race will result in at least three perfectly good local politicians no longer sitting around the council table. I say three because three of the candidates sit on the current council, one as the mayor. And another candidate has council experience of his own as a councillor, but was defeated in the last race for mayor back in 2022.

The other two names, *Callum Scott* and *Josh Marquardt*, have no council experience, although Scott has run in every election for mayor since the incorporation of the town way back in 1858. He lost all of them.

Marquardt, I believe, is a former bylaw enforcement officer with the town who was suddenly out of a job for reasons that I don't know. I know nothing about him other than he being the guy putting chalk marks on my tires when I park downtown. It's kind of weird to see a guy in near tactical gear wielding a stick of chalk, but it does make me wonder what the holster looks like and if he has a smaller chalk holster on his ankle. But that can't be much different from a guy who walks around town with a big stick and a squirrel in a bag, which would be Cal Scott.

No offence is intended to either of these two gentlemen, since running for public office is a noble thing as long as your motivation for doing so is positive. Admittedly, I've done little research on either of these two, because in one case I sort of don't have to, and in the other, I just feel that his candidacy may have something to do with his no longer working for the town. But as I said, I don't know for sure.

Anyone travelling across the bridge and onto Stewart Street will be familiar with Cal and his years-long campaign to rid the town of the OPP, or Ontario Provincial Police. I don't know the reason for this, and it's not like I'm a super fan of the OPP either, but still, the streets need policing, and Renfrew's lucky enough to have essentially two detachments in town, one specific to the town's policing needs, and the other for highway work and policing in the

outlying townships. To me that's a lot of cops around if the shit were to ever really hit the fan. Plus, Renfrew has already had its own police force but folded it into the OPP many years ago, probably for reasons of reach and budget. Standing up an entirely new force once again would be expensive to a town with no money, although there is a budget for policing of course. But as I said, the OPP is provincial, it's bigger, and has superior and much greater resources for I assume roughly the same dollars.



And there's not a single voice in this town, aside from Mr. Scott's, that is clamouring for us to find different cops. It's just not an issue. So I don't feel Cal will be successfully gaining any traction on that issue. He does also believe that municipal government is a mess of corruption, damned lies, and even more damned lies.

As a whole, I view Mr. Scott's campaign as one of attempted disruption. He's smart and articulate, but he's driven in his beliefs to the point where many simply dismiss him as being crazy somehow, an opinion I don't share. And I have, indeed, met the squirrel.

Over a hundred people voted for Mr. Scott the last time out, and he was surprisingly close to Kate Windle, who finished not too far ahead of him in the last mayor's race. Even with a low

voter turnout, a hundred and twenty odd votes doesn't get you the chain. You need eight hundred for that it seems.

So without intending to simply backhand these two candidates to the curb, it's time for me to look at the remaining four candidates, all of them experienced in politics at the local level, and one at the county level as well. Alphabetically, they are Michael Coulas, Peter Emon, Jason Legris, and Tom Sidney. Sidney is the current mayor, Legris is a current councillor, and Emon is the current reeve, although that position has been eliminated and will not be present in the new council. Coulas is a former business owner, entrepreneur, and real estate agent here in town. All of them at some time have sat as councillors on past councils, but Legris' experience is limited to just this past council from 2022 to present.

From these four men will come Renfrew's next mayor.

And as I indicated earlier, three of them will go home on the night of October 26th with a bad taste in their mouth. As a result, Renfrew will lose, at least for now anyways, some solid political experience on its council.

I believe all four of these men have degrees of gravitas, although certainly some of them appear to have more. So one way or another, we're going to lose some fine people here as there's only one mayor and the rest of them have to go home.

These four are my *Big Four*, with each having potential pathways for the win. So in that sense, I'm going to approach these four gentlemen in a separate piece, as there's a much larger body of work to look at, analyze, and assess.

With any apologies to Mistfers Scott and Marquardt, I'll endeavour to look a little more closely at who the remaining candidate are, what they bring, and why it's so gosh-darned important for them to run for what I view as essentially a thankless job.