

NOTEWORTHY

IN NORWICH

A COMMUNITY NEWS PUBLICATION

Councillor Toews Looking to Move to Ward Four

Q Why did you decide to jump from ward 1 to ward 4?

A I live in ward 4, when Councillor Couwenberg decided to run for mayor, that opened up ward 4. Karl also expressed he thought people feel more comfortable having their representative living in the ward they stand for.

Q What has your run on council taught you, now that you have 4 years experience?

A Its taught a lot! It's a steep learning curve, you can't just be rubber stamping the staff recommendations, yet you have to recognize the expertise of the staff.

Q Do you feel your representation is more for your ward or the township as a whole?

A This council does not get into turf wars. If people follow the council meetings I think they'll see that. Otterville park is a jewel, maybe the most beautiful place in Oxford County. In my experience, we're all in it for the township.

Q Have your priorities changed since your first campaign?

A No, my priorities haven't changed. Well, maybe a little bit in terms of tax increases. We can't be raising peoples taxes by 9, 10% per year. So in terms of the fiscal stuff, my priorities have changed there.

Q Where do you stand on the LGBTQ flag being on the community flag pole?

A It has quelled the controversy but stealing a flag is mischief and theft, burning a flag is a hate crime against an identifiable group.

Q We know you voted against the Oxford Safe & Well Plan, explain how wording is so important to this plan?

A Very important! My alternate recommendation was “groups of particular concern.” One more thing, should we spend a 150 grand of this and do our own safety and well being plan in Norwich, no. I will not condone discrimination, this priority groups language is discriminatory to me.

Q Would you be in favour of hiring more people to eliminate the township grass cutting contracts?

A Show me the numbers, when it comes to hiring new positions in the township that’s something we have to very careful about. Every tax dollar is precious. What’s the best value, that’s what I mean when I say show me the numbers. Is it better to have sub-contractors do it or should township staff do it? We want to be getting the best value for our residents.

Q What are your thoughts on the present number of policing hours we pay for from the OPP?

A This is a big worry, because the OPP are telling us that their costs are going to go way up. Where does that money come from? I just came from all this door knocking where everyone was telling me that speeding and careless driving was a number one concern. The OPP seems to be getting more and more expensive and it seems to be more and more needed.

Q What do you think is the number 1 traffic calming measure the township should implement to help slow down vehicles around the community?

A I really want to credit Councillor Gear on this, he's been spearheading and God bless him for doing it. I think the number one is police presence

Q Among the council, excluding the mayor you have the ability to lead council in whatever direction you think is best. Due to your charisma, tone of voice, legal experience and so on. Will you use this to the advantage of the township if elected?

A Okay, do I use whatever influence I have to push other councillors In a certain direction, I don't. I think they (other councillors) are more independent than that. I think all the people on our council are strong, independently minded people. There's nothing wrong with picking up the phone and saying agenda item 6.3.2, check out paragraph 42 just you might want to think about that before Tuesday morning.

Q What should happen to an individual who pleads to council for a new building, promising to use it as he stated his case, then uses it for something different?

A It is unsavoury, if somebody wants an ARU (Additional Residential Unit) in this era of housing crisis we're in, they're going to get it. In Norwich Township we do not have a short term rental by-law, the more I think about it the more I think we should.

Q What is your number one goal you hope to initiate and or accomplish should you be elected? A vehicle bridge was high on your list last time around as I recall.

A The big issue about ward 4 I think is the land grabs. We need councils, we need a mayor who is willing to fight for the best interests of Norwich Township. We're not just little Norwich and we're going to roll over, that's not who we are.

Q The township has many illegal vehicles on the roads. The HTA allows for individual townships to enact by-laws allowing these vehicles to be operated legally. E-Scooters, quads, dirt bikes come to mind. Would vote in favour or against such a by-law for these units to be operated legally in the community?

A No, I would not be in favour of that. These e-scooters are fast it was crazy, if you're one of the drivers how do you not get distracted? It's like the e-bikes they are limited but it's not hard to get rid of that.

Q I've heard it said the township should yield to the county, meaning moving to a one tier government, yay or nay and why?

A It's terrible, what about the land grabs, we'd have no power at all.

Q How would you vote should an individual approach council to pave a labyrinth in one of our parks? Perhaps it could be in Otterville or Springford, where ever.

A It's a nice idea, get people outside, it's healthy, it's very similar to the Township of Norwich spending, I think it was \$75,000.00 on the outdoor exercise equipment. It's a lot of money, can't use it in the winter. How much would it cost? Would it cost 20 grand, ya probably, would it cost 200 grand no, that would be the crucial point would be the cost.

Note

This interview as well as all others will be posted unedited, in its entirety on Byler's Banter the Youtube channel, each Thursday until they are completed. Far more content on Youtube.

Highlights from the September 9 County Council agenda

Ambulance response times and emergency medical dispatch

Oxford County Paramedic Services brings forward its annual response time performance plan next council meeting. The report shows that Oxford's response times remain in line with many other Ontario municipalities, and that Oxford met its response time targets for 2025. Oxford County paramedics responded to more than 23,000 emergency calls in 2025.

Ambulance response time targets for Oxford are expected to change with the launch of a new medical emergency dispatch system across the London Central Ambulance Communications Centre area on October 14. Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) is an internationally recognized system that will be used to prioritize 911 emergency medical calls only, not calls for police or fire. A separate report to County Council explains required updates to the medical tiered response agreements with Oxford's fire services as a result of this change, with fire departments responding to some medical emergencies until paramedics arrive. For more information on MPDS, visit www.oxfordcounty.ca/medical-dispatch

Active times for school zone speed limits

Oxford County Council is being asked to approve a by-law change that will standardize operating times for reduced speed limits in school zones on County roads. The recommendation follows a staff review that found varied reduced speed limit periods and flashing beacon schedules among school zones relative to arrival times, lunch and nutrition breaks, and dismissal. With the updates, school zone flashing beacons would be activated 45 minutes before and 15 minutes after arrival bell times; 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after nutrition and

lunch breaks; and 15 minutes before and 45 minutes after dismissal bell times when school is in session.

Update on conservation authority changes

County Council receives an update on the Government of Ontario's progress in amalgamating the province's 36 conservation authorities into nine regional bodies by February 1, 2027. At present, public consultation is underway for the proposed regulatory framework that will guide board appointments for the new conservation authorities. Under the new model, the four current conservation authorities with portions of their watersheds in Oxford County (Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, Grand River Conservation Authority, Long Point Region Conservation Authority, and Catfish Creek Conservation Authority) will be reduced to two: Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority and Eastern Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority.

Local Accountant Looks to Ward Two

My interview with candidate Tim Thompson, who is running for a seat in the council chambers at 285767 Airport Road, Norwich. Thompson is a first time candidate taking on incumbent Lynne DePlancke for Ward Two, Village of Norwich.

Q Why have you decided to run and do you think having only two candidates will make it better for you?

A I'm confident regardless how many run. I'm doing this with genuine interest, I don't have an issue I'm coming with.

Q What is your background, schooling, career etc?

A Public and high school in Norwich, Norwich born and raised. I went to William Laurier University, I got my Chartered Accountant

designation in 1989. In 1992 I became self employed, under various names.

Q Are you one to speak your mind and not simply follow the crowd?

A If you're in a meeting, you don't have to guess what I'm thinking. I'm not going to ignore a percentage of the population if their beliefs or they happen to think different on certain issue.

Q Do you feel your representation is more for your ward or the township as a whole?

A I think my role is to represent the township, if I get voted in, in Ward two I would be the person that people of ward two come to with their concerns.

Q Where do you stand on the LGBTQ situation?

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A I'm compassionate, I'm supportive, any concerns they have I want them to feel safe.

Q Are you in favour of the Oxford Safe & Well Plan, voted against by the present council?

A I'm not trying to skirt the issue, I'm aware of it, there's two or three things I need to look into on that.

Q You are a numbers man, will you be crunching number or leaving it to the township staff when it comes to things like hiring more people to eliminate the township out sourcing work?

A Oh, I'm going to look at the numbers. I'm hoping with my skill set I can find a balance with that.

Q What are your thoughts on the present number of policing hours we pay for from the OPP?

A I haven't delved into that as much as I'd like to, policing concerns me. It seems the cost are rising and it seem the services are dropping. While campaigning concerns have come up wether it be kids on motorcycles and availability. That's an area of concern.

Q What do you think is the number 1 traffic calming measure the township should implement to help slow down vehicles around the community?

A More information needed, I'm sure there's lots of things. There is not going to be a one size fit all. I sure there are lots of ideas out there.

Q What should happen to an individual who pleads to council for a new building, promising to use it as he stated his case, then uses it for something different?

A That's an area that's concerning, right now I believe the system is reactive, I'm struggling where to go with that one now.

Q Are you in favour of creating by-laws that have some teeth, then having a permanent by-law officer enforce them?

A I'd be willing to look into it. Cost and benefit again. If it's the same laws should we take a look at amending those laws?

Q What is your number one goal you hope to initiate and or accomplish should you be elected?

A I really don't have an agenda item there. I basically want to represent the concerns of the township. I'd like to run it like a business, I'm concerned about the dollars and the costs of property and cost to the tax payers.

Q I've heard it said the township should yield to the county, meaning moving to a one tier government, yay or nay and why?

A My knee jerk reaction is nay. I'm a Norwich guy, I'm primarily concerned about Norwich. A one tiered government we would lose a lot of benefit.

Please note; The full in depth, unedited interview will be on Byler's Banter on Youtube later in September.

NRC Proposal Discussed at Council Meeting

NRC Wants Medical Centre Property

The Netherland Reform Congregation is looking to council in order to enlarge Bethany Care Home. For that to happen, the Russell Hall Medical Centre must go. More details on this will be available in the coming months. This will be an agenda item for the newly elected council.

— — — — — Medical Centre present location

— — — — — Medical Centre proposed location



Source Township of Norwich Sept 8, 2026 council meeting agenda

Each of the present councillors commented positively regarding the proposed sale and replacement of the medical centre. The motion will move forward in terms of staff and medical centre stake holders preparing to proceed making way for further discussions carried unanimously.

Pick One Editorial By Vic Whitcroft

If you read this publication regularly, by now you know the municipal council candidate interviews have started. With a few interviews completed, I'm happy that I only get to cast my ballot for mayor. Shawn Gear was acclaimed, being from Ward 3, his acclamation means our ward, ward 3 only has to decide who we want to fill the mayors seat.

So let me outline who is running and what the few interviews done to date have shown me. Lacey Hird and Karl Toews for Ward 4, moving south in the township, Shawn Gear in Ward 3 (acclaimed), Ward 2 sees Incumbent Lynne DePlancke and Tim Thompson vying to serve in Ward 2, finally Ward 1 sees Marius Kerkhoff and Roy King seeking a position on council in that ward. Sitting in the Mayor's chair will be Jim Palmer, the incumbent or Adrian Couwenberg. Very straight forward, pick one and vote.

If only it were that simple! Let me start by saying each of the people listed merits a close look, as each has strengths to bring to the table. Some bring with them experience on council, other have a work or business background, while other have education or life lessons to draw from.

Nearly anyway you look at it, if everyone works for a common good, no matter how you match them up, Norwich Township has the making of an outstanding council.

Let's face it, no one runs unless they intend to put their best foot forward. Each has a personality and mindset required for dealing with the public, listening to complaints and spending our money wisely.

I know as I write this many will disagree with my words. Now the onus is on you the voters to accept our candidates and mark your ballot for that person who, in your mind will do the best job.

We have a chance for a clean slate, so let put a positive attitude toward our new council, however it looks on Oct 27, 2026 after all the votes are counted.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not looking through rose coloured glasses. Yes, this is a turn around for me. I look at this realistically in that we have a hand full of brave people who jumped in with both feet, only the incumbents know the depth and temperature of the water. If you don't vote don't even try to complain, you had two choices, run yourself or do your research and vote for who you feel is right.

I know all councillors take the job seriously, so much so that they literally lose sleep when hard decisions must be made. There will be many such judgements to be made, by-laws to be passed and people to appease, so much so, that even more sleep will be lost in the next term of council.

Years ago, I took a young lad to get a tattoo. My wife and I laid out the pros and cons of his decision, he was determined to go through with it. We arrived at the tattoo parlour to find the artist unwilling to inject the ink into his arm, making an indelible mark. He instead, sent us home to seriously think about it overnight, then, if he truly wanted to go through with it come back the next day. Once again the artist tried to dissuade the young man's desire to have a tattoo. More counselling, more pros and cons however, once the tattoo gun made the first mark, all that ended, the deed was done and the mark was made.

Quite a tangent to make my point. Once you mark your ballot, the deed is done, there is no turning back. Do your research, vote for your candidate but, please vote. Your vote does matter!

Woodstock Traffic Alert

If your plans include travel to Woodstock after September 14/26, you may want to avoid the corner of Mill Street and Oxford Street, at Dundas Street.

Oxford County is continuing road reconstruction work on Oxford Road 2 (Dundas Street) with the next phase of construction to include the intersection of Oxford Road 2 and Oxford Road 12 (Mill Street / Oxford Street). The intersection will be closed for approximately four weeks and is tentatively scheduled to begin the week of September 14. Please note, this date is subject to change; for the most up-to-date information, visit www.oxfordcounty.ca/construction

There will be no access to the intersection. Local traffic will need to access the area using one of the detours or nearby side streets.

Two detour routes will be in place:

- Main detour: Oxford Road 30, Oxford Road 17 and Oxford Road 59 (Vansittart Avenue)
- Secondary detour: Oxford Road 9, Main Street and Oxford Road 59 (Wilson Street)

Road reconstruction began in April and is expected to wrap up in November 2026. Phase 1, which included Oxford Road 2 from Oxford Road 30 (11th Line) to Oxford Road 9, began in April and was completed in July 2026. Phase 2A, which includes Oxford Road 2 from Oxford Road 9 to west of Oxford Road 12, is underway and expected to be completed in November 2026.

Please note that construction schedules are weather dependent and subject to change based on site conditions, contractor availability and other factors. Source County of Oxford

To The Editor

Good Morning!

You have a interesting take on Council's Safe and well oxford details. I interpreted it that the other 2 councillors relied on Councillor Toews expertise and knowledge, not that he led the other two councillors to vote a certain way. (Note: I have watched every single council meeting).

Its also interesting that you note wording is important but it will cost us. Don't you think that if we don't get wording right it could cost us more in the long run?

Regards
James

The Editor

As a child growing up, there were two places I loved more than any other place. The museum (Royal Ontario Museum) and the Ontario Science Centre.

Such fascination, at an early age. I also spent a lot of time at the ROM during college. The professors would actually provide classes at the ROM through cassette tape and discuss the exhibits.

We could do the same for the youngsters in town with a STEM program, showing them fossils, evolution, biology, chemistry, physics, engineering and astronomy. We should use our education and experiences to help our youth.

Robots are being implemented for manual labour jobs (painting, drywall, electrical, plumbing, roofing, manufacturing etc). Especially

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where the work is repetitive (like a new home subdivision, where you have standard home designs).

We can help our youth adjust to the changing world. Your museum would be a fantastic venue for such an activity.

Cheers,
Tim



Noteworthy in Norwich

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