

Cobourg Municipal Election Analysis Summary

What the data actually shows (rigorously computed):

- **Incumbency:** 10 of 11 incumbents re-elected over 12 years (91%). The vote premium is +1,400 to +2,400 votes per incumbent vs. the average challenger — mechanically driven by name recognition, not merit.
- **Alphabetical bias:** The correlation between alphabetical position and votes is **-0.343 (2022)** and a striking **-0.789 (2018)**. Winners averaged alphabetical position 3.0–4.2; losers averaged 6.8–7.5. The 2014 result is an outlier because incumbents were clustered later in the alphabet (Rickerby, Rowden, Sherwin), which actually *suppresses* the correlation — meaning the true ballot-order effect is likely larger than 2014 suggests.
- **Winning threshold collapsed 34%:** From 3,822 votes (2014) to 2,532 (2022). This is the most important structural shift — the race is more accessible than it has been in a decade.
- **The biggest unexploited opportunity:** In 2022, Mills (2,362) + Sprayson (2,336) + Bouman (2,269) = 6,967 votes across three candidates. Consolidated, that elects two of them. The challenger vote *exists*; it's just divided. Challenger coalition strategy is the single highest leverage play for 2026.
- **Darling is declining, Barber is weak:** The two most vulnerable seats going into 2026.

Here are the sharpest findings:

Mayoral Races

- Sitting mayors are **5-for-5** in contested races over 28 years. The only "mayoral defeat" in the data (Henderson 2022) was actually the Deputy Mayor attempting to step up — not a true incumbent defender losing. When a sitting mayor faces a challenge, they win.
- The **105-vote Cleveland win in 2022 is a statistical anomaly**, not a template. It required Henderson to be untested for 4 years (acclaimed in 2018), with no other credible candidates splitting the field. Cleveland essentially won because Henderson forgot how to campaign.

The Councillor → DM → Mayor Ladder

- Every successful long-term mayor in the dataset climbed this exact ladder. Brocanier did it cleanly (Councillor → DM 2006 → Mayor 2010/2014). Henderson followed the same path until his 2022 stumble. **Nicole Beatty is next on this ladder** (Councillor 2018 → DM 2022 → almost certainly Mayor 2026).

Deputy Mayor — The Most Underrated Race

- The DM race is more competitive than the mayoral race, and **it is the strategic gateway to the mayoralty**. Whoever wins DM in 2026 is the structural 2030 mayoral frontrunner.
- Seguin's biggest strategic error: she should have run for Mayor in 2022 instead of defending DM. The open three-way race (Cleveland/Henderson/Seguin) might have been winnable. Instead, she ran for DM, lost, and now holds no platform at all.

The Acclamation Trap

- Henderson's 2018 acclamation directly caused his 2022 loss. Four years without a contested race left him with no active voter contact list and false confidence about his vote floor — exactly the pattern seen with Chalovich's narrow 1994 win after being untested.