

Polls boost mayoralty campaign for Ford

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Etobicoke North Councillor Rob Ford's campaign got a boost from two polls this week, both of which put him in a dead-heat race with former Deputy Premier George Smitherman in the race for the mayoralty of Toronto.

Meanwhile, former Progressive Conservative leader John Tory was pegged in one of those polls as an early favourite among voters for the mayoralty - in spite of the fact that he's made it clear he's not interested in the job.

That poll, by Forum Research Inc., showed that among decided voters, 29 per cent would vote for Smitherman, and 26 per cent for Ford. Because those numbers are within the poll's 4.9 per cent margin of error, that puts the two in a dead heat.

But respondents said should Tory decide to reverse his January decision not to run and enter the race, 38 per cent would vote for him. Ford would drop to fourth place, with just 13 per cent, behind Sarah Thomson and George Smitherman.

The second poll, conducted by Nanos Research, put Ford in first place among those who are likely to vote in October, with 29.1 per cent ahead of Smitherman's 26 per cent.

Speaking to reporters at a Toronto Board of Trade event, Ford said he was pleased with the news.

"Things are going great," he said. "My message is resonating with the voters. They're sick and tired of spending at City Hall. I'm campaigning hard - it's still early in the race. I'm getting tons of volunteers."

Ford said he believed getting spending under control is a number one priority for Toronto voters - and he repeated his promises to abolish both the vehicle registration tax and the land transfer tax, and cutting the number of councillors in half from 44 to 22.

And Ford was unfazed by Tory's popularity in the Forum poll. Earlier in the year, Ford said he would only run if Tory didn't. But he said that if Tory did decide to re-enter the race, he wouldn't back out.

"I like John - I've always liked John," said Ford. "I guarantee that no matter who runs, I'm going to be on the ballot for mayor."

Tory was at the Board of Trade too. Asked by reporters, he wouldn't say whether the numbers were swaying his decision to stay out of the race. But he admitted it's hard to put the idea out of his mind.

"Well you can't stop thinking about it I guess," he said.

"I say never say never in politics generally. Every time you walk down the street, people raise it with you... People have approached me about it and I continue to listen to what they have to say, but I'm very busy



Polls boost mayoralty campaign for Ford. Mayoral candidate, Etobicoke Centre councillor Rob Ford, speaks to reporters at a Toronto Board of Trade event. He said he was pleased with the news he running neck and neck with George Smitherman. (June 14, 2010) *Staff photo/DAVID NICKLE*

helping with the City Summit Alliance... At the moment I have no plans to have any plans to be a candidate, as Bill Davis said."

Smitherman was out of the country. But early Monday, his campaign put out a release questioning Ford's plans to cut council and use the money to hire 100 more police officers, calling it a "wake-up call" to Ford.

Rocco Rossi, the right-of-centre candidate who fell to fifth place in the Forum poll and fourth place in the Nanos poll, was also on hand at the Board of Trade. He said the poll showed he was holding his own against candidates who had much higher name recognition than he did.

"I'm working against three guys who've been in politics for 30 years," he said. "Given how well I'm holding I'm exceptionally pleased."

As for other candidates: the Naxos poll showed Joe Pantalone at 16.5 per cent, Giorgio Mammoliti at 4.1 per cent and Sarah Thomson at 9.5 per cent. The Forum poll showed 18 per cent for Thomson, 12 per cent for Pantalone and four per cent for Mammoliti.

Both polls showed that a large percentage of voters hadn't yet made up their minds. The Forum poll showed 30 per cent still undecided, and 38.6 per cent hadn't yet decided.

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