

Tory in full control, according to new Nanos poll



John Tory takes part in the first debate for the Toronto mayoral race in Toronto on Wednesday, March 26, 2014. (The Canadian Press/Nathan Denette)

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A CTV/CP24 poll released Monday shows John Tory widening his lead in the Toronto mayoral race.

He now holds a huge lead with 49.2 per cent support among decided voters. That is almost twice the support Doug Ford holds at 27.4 per cent and Olivia Chow's support continues to slide and is now down to 23.5 per cent. Tory is up a full seven points from the last Nanos Research poll three weeks ago. Ford has yet to make a substantive case for his run for mayor but his support is only a point behind where his brother Rob stood at the end of August. Chow has dropped three points from that poll. Pollster Nik Nanos said it's a "massive lead" for Tory and said the Tory campaign will have to "blow up" for either Ford or Chow to close the gap.

Looking more closely at the poll it shows the Tory lead is spread right across the city. In every corner of Toronto Tory is polling over 40 per cent and in what is called Old Toronto his support is at almost 54 per cent. That huge lead does not bode well for Chow who only has 29 per cent of support in the old city. On his home turf, in Etobicoke, Ford trails Tory by a full 11 points. Three weeks ago 17 per cent were still unsure how they would vote but that number has now been cut in half to eight per cent.

Nanos said it is very unusual for the unsure vote to be in single digits this early in the campaign. Voters appear to be making their choice and one after another are opting for Tory. But Nanos pointed out the support for Ford is holding for his brother. Nanos said, "The Ford Nation support is the firmest of all the candidates. He has a base to build on. But Ford has to attack John Tory" to shake loose votes from the front runner.

A majority of voters are not comfortable with Ford taking over his brother Rob's campaign for mayor. Fifty per cent says they are either "uncomfortable" or "somewhat uncomfortable" with the switch. For 28 per cent the reason for being uncomfortable is a lack of trust in the Fords and the belief they will embarrass Toronto. However, 40 per cent say they are OK with the change and almost 30 per cent see the brothers as being similar. But if only the core Ford Nation support votes for Toronto's newest candidate for mayor Ford will have to find a way to cut into Tory's support. Otherwise it looks like this election could turn into a cakewalk for Tory.

For the past three weeks there have been one or two debates virtually every day but Ford's coming out appearance makes tomorrow night's debate feel more like a federal or provincial election leader television debate. With so much attention on this debate the candidates will be looking to score points and define their campaigns. And through it all one candidate, Ford, will be both introducing himself as a candidate, instead of a campaign manager, and putting forward his position on issues for the first time. It's a unique combination and it will be fascinating to see how he does. Ford has only done a handful of media scrums since he entered the race and he's said that his policies will closely reflect his brother Rob's. Ford's director of communications, Jeff Silverstein, told CP24 Monday night that it "goes without saying that Doug Ford's platform will be very close" to Rob Ford's. The poll today suggests that adopting Rob Ford's platform will not be enough to catch Tory. But Silverstein said "the poll won't change the Ford strategy...you have to take these polls with a huge grain of salt. This campaign hasn't really begun."

CP24 will have live coverage of the debate starting at 7 p.m. Tuesday and after the debate will be full coverage and analysis of what happened.

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