

# NDP MP Olivia Chow widens lead over Toronto Mayor Rob Ford in mayoral poll

By: David Rider  
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As polling shows more Torontonians than ever favouring Olivia Chow over Rob Ford for mayor, a high-profile politico is being cagey about whether he has been approached to run Chow's rumoured 2014 mayoral campaign.

"I never think it's appropriate for the campaign manager, or any campaign manager, to announce before the candidate does," said John Laschinger, who guided David Miller to mayoral victory but failed in 2010 with Joe Pantalone.

"I'm just watching what unfolds. I suspect I'll be involved at some point, when there's an election, but there's too many unknowns right now."

In a Forum Research poll of 1,045 Torontonians conducted Tuesday, 60 per cent favoured the undeclared NDP MP Chow. That compares to just 33 per cent for the sitting mayor and 7 per cent who don't know who they'd vote for in a hypothetical head-to-head mayoral matchup.

The gap appears to be widening. A late January Forum poll had Chow at 52 per cent and Ford at 40 per cent. Last October, it was Chow 49 per cent vs. Ford 34 per cent, and last June it was Chow 58 per cent vs. Ford 34 per cent.

The margin of error of the new poll is plus or minus 5 per cent 19 times out of 20.

In the head-to-head comparison, Chow's support was highest in Toronto-East York (74 per cent) and lowest in Scarborough (45 per cent). Ford had 47 per cent support in Scarborough but a measly 18 per cent in Toronto-East York. (Margins of error are higher when results are broken down by region.)

In a hypothetical four-way mayoral contest held now, Chow would win with 43 per cent support compared with 32 per cent for Ford, 13 per cent for Councillor Adam Vaughan and 7 per cent for transit advocate Sarah Thomson, the poll found.

Another combination tested had Chow winning with 47 per cent to Ford's 32 per cent, Councillor Shelley Carroll's 8 per cent and Thomson's 6 per cent.

Perhaps surprisingly, when Forum asked Torontonians how they would vote in a Ford-Thomson contest — not long after Thomson accused Ford of grabbing her buttock during a party photo-op — Thomson was within striking distance, at 36 per cent compared with Ford's 41 per cent.

Chow, who has held many Toronto media events as her party's transit and infrastructure critic, recently admitted she is "considering" running for mayor of Toronto.

Laschinger, a veteran who has run campaigns for politicians on the left and the right, is rumoured to have been approached by those close to Chow.

"I think she's got a lot of strong qualities," he said, again refusing to confirm or deny any such approaches.

"She's proved that she knows how to work with people, which is a weakness of the current incumbent. I think she would bring a touch of class and dignity to the office.

"I think she'd be, according to the polls, a reasonably solid candidate."