



## Election Notebook: Campaigns take note of poll

Mon Sep. 26 2011 2:54:18 PM | Web staff, cp24.com

It took a few weeks but we had the first interesting weekend of campaigning in this election.

I'll start with the big poll the Toronto Star published on Saturday. Yes, province wide it showed the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives tied with the NDP not gaining. One can argue with the methodology but when more than 40,000 people are contacted I pay attention.

One interesting thing the Star did was to produce a GTA map that showed how competitive each riding is with two weeks to go. It is important to remember that the margin of error when you look at individual ridings is, according to polling company Forum Research, plus or minus 5 per cent. So it is wrong to read too much into it. But when the city's biggest newspaper goes with it, the impact is real.

You can bet the map was on the desks of each campaign manager in each campaign office across the GTA. Some campaigns didn't like what they saw and went into spin control mode offering up reasons for a poor showing. Others grabbed positive news and used it to energize volunteers as the election campaign ratchets up for the final sprint.

The Star didn't stop there. Today it zeros in on the downtown Toronto riding of Trinity-Spadina which the poll shows to be close. Trinity-Spadina has been NDP for a long time. Federally Olivia Chow won it easily in May. In the Toronto City election a year ago, Mike Layton, Jack Layton's son, won it.

Provincially, NDP MPP Rosario Marchese has held the riding since 1990. But over the last few elections his margin has slipped. Still in 2007 he won by 4,000 votes so it should be a safe NDP seat and it probably is. The Liberal candidate is Sarah Thomson. Thomson ran for mayor a year ago and then worked hard for the federal Liberals in Trinity-Spadina during the federal campaign. She has been campaigning almost non-stop for a year while Marchese has coasted. How do I know this? Because I live in the riding.

At my door, both Thomson and the Conservative candidate, Mike Yen, have come around. Yesterday a canvasser delivered the NDP pamphlet and spiel. There was no sign of Marchese on the street. A close poll like the one on Saturday will make both the NDP and Liberals campaigns pick up their game.

Sometimes political campaigns slip in a Saturday announcement hoping the distraction of a beautiful fall Saturday will minimize the impact. Maybe that's what the Liberal Party hoped when it announced the cancellation of a gas-fired power generating plant in Mississauga.

It didn't work. A senior member of the Tory campaign called me right away to make sure I'd heard of the announcement and to make the point that the cancellation came with no details on the cost of the cancellation. This plant, after all, was under construction -- concrete was being poured.

Taking this step, at this time, might just mean that the Liberals are getting nervous. We've all known since day one the Liberals need to hold the Mississauga ridings. Ontario energy expert Tom Adams told me this morning that a power plant on the west side of the GTA is critical and is needed to "keep the lights on." You can read his analysis here. Adams went on to tell me that there is the "smell of desperation" in the Liberal decision to announce the plant will not be built but moved to some new, undisclosed location.

The power plant issue has become a major issue for voters living in the neighbouring Etobicoke ridings as well. It's no surprise then that Etobicoke-Lakeshore Liberal MPP Laurel Broten was one of the Liberal candidates supporting the announcement on Saturday.

Both the Tories and NDP are keeping up a steady stream of media releases focusing on the Liberal announcement. Here's a Tory headline from this morning: "Costs Escalating At "Cancelled" Power Plant."

The NDP release has the same theme: "Come clean on gas plant cancellation costs: NDP." It will be interesting to watch the give and take on all this during tomorrow evening's debate.

CP24 will have full coverage of the debate. A special edition of LeDrew Live will start at 6 p.m. a half hour before the debate gets under way. And after the debate ends at 8 p.m. Stephen will have guests to help him pick the "lines of the night." And starting at 6:30 we will stream the debate at [cp24.com/live](http://cp24.com/live) and I'll be moderating a live chat.