

Poll puts Hazel on top, Ford near bottom

By Stephanie Findlay, The Toronto Star October 24, 2011



On a visit to City Hall in Toronto, Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion shows Toronto Mayor Rob Ford the salmon she caught. A new poll puts McCallion's approval rating a 78 per cent and Ford's and 37 per cent.

David Nickle/Toronto Community News file photo

Despite her recent conflict-of-interest woes, Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion is the most popular mayor in Canada, while Toronto's Rob Ford is second from the bottom and sinking.

Hurricane Hazel's 78 per cent approval rating topped a poll released Monday by Forum Research Inc. of citizens in the country's 15 biggest cities. Naheed Nenshi of Calgary was a close second with 76 per cent, while Régis Labeaume of Quebec City came third with 74 per cent.

“She’s extremely well-liked and I think a lot of people actually know her,” said Lorne Bozinoff, president of Forum, adding that McCallion “is kind of legendary.”

Meanwhile, Rob Ford sank to a new low of 37 per cent, making him the second-least popular mayor in Canada. (With an approval rating of 32 per cent, Montreal’s Gérald Tremblay took the honour of least-liked mayor in the land).

Ford’s rating varied across Toronto. His highest ratings, 42 per cent, were from North York and Scarborough, while his lowest, 30 per cent, was from Toronto-East York.

Residents were also asked if they intend to re-elect their sitting mayor in the next municipal election. McCallion, Nenshi and Labeaume were given thumbs up with more than 50 per cent supporting their re-election. In Ford’s case, fewer than one in three surveyed residents want to see him in office another term.

Perhaps the most troubling result for Ford is his steady, steep decline. In February, he had a 60 per cent approval rating. In June, it was 57 and in September it was 42.

“In the first six months he can blame everything on the old administration,” said Bozinoff, “now he’s starting to own these problems, he can’t blame David Miller and the previous council anymore.”

The poll was conducted among some 6,700 residents. The margin of error ranges from 3 per cent to 6.8 per cent, varying according to the sample size in each particular city.

Bozinoff said there is still hope for Ford. One proven strategy is to invest in hockey. There is a positive correlation between backing the sport and high approval ratings, said Bozinoff.

Take Labeaume, the beloved mayor of Quebec City, who is hoping to bring back the Nordiques, or Stephen Mandel, the well-liked mayor of Edmonton, who is promising a new NHL stadium. Ford, said Bozinoff, has “got some opportunities there.”

Popularity contest

Top 3

Hazel McCallion (Mississauga): 78%

Naheed Nenshi (Calgary): 76%

Régis Labeaume (Quebec City): 74%

Bottom 3

Gregor Robertson (Vancouver) & Sam Katz (Winnipeg): 49%

Rob Ford (Toronto): 37%

Gérald Tremblay (Montreal): 32%

Also in the GTA

Susan Fennel (Brampton): 54 %, placed 11 out of 15