

Exclusive poll shows Robertson just ahead, with Anton closing in

By KENT SPENCER, The Province November 19, 2011



Mayor Gregor Robertson talks about Vision Vancouver's affordable housing strategy in Vancouver on Sunday, Oct. 30, 2011. Photograph by: Wayne Leidenfrost, PNG

The race to fill the mayor's chair in Vancouver is a "statistical tie" in the final hours leading to the 2011 civic election on Saturday.

A poll released to The Province on Friday by Forum Research Inc. said incumbent mayor Gregor Robertson of the Vision Vancouver party has a four percentage point lead over NPA challenger Suzanne Anton.

In a Nov. 17 poll of 770 eligible voters who declared their intention to vote on Saturday, results showed Robertson has the votes of 49 per cent of those interviewed compared to 45 per cent for Anton.

“At this point, it’s anyone’s race,” said Forum president Lorne Bozinoff. “It’s a statistical tie.”

He said the statistical tie occurs because the four per cent lead is considered the same as the poll’s margin of error, plus or minus 3.5 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

“The Occupy Vancouver issue looks like it may be having an impact on Robertson’s bid for re-election,” he said.

“It appears that his handling of the situation has pushed the majority of undecided voters in Anton’s direction,” he said.

The poll shows that support among members of the opposite sex is a significant factor in both camps.

Robertson fairs best among female voters with 54 per cent support, while Anton is the top choice of male voters with 51 per cent support.

Hundreds of thousands of voters head to the polls on Saturday to cast their ballots in civic elections across the province.

In one of his final campaign stops, Robertson said Vision is treating the election “like it is anybody’s race.”

“We expect to campaign hard on Saturday,” he said. “That’s the real poll.”

At a False Creek gathering with all Vision’s candidates for council, parks board and school board, Robertson slammed the NPA for running a “negative campaign.”

“It speaks to the desperation of their campaign,” he said.

“There is a clear choice: strong, steady government which will work on things like affordable housing and homelessness or the NPA, with its record of civic strikes and secret deals on the Olympic Village,” he said.

Anton, meanwhile, said the poll results reflect what she’s hearing.

“The world’s a friendly place to the NPA this campaign,” she said. “We’re doing very well. People like our campaign.”

On Friday morning, NPA supporters set up a fake tent city at city hall and someone showed up dressed in a chicken suit.

Anton said they were just having “a bit of fun” while raising the “serious issue” of the mayor’s leadership.

She said he has failed at creating housing and moving the green agenda forward, other than to grow wheat fields in front yards and permit chickens to be raised.

“There has been no new housing under this mayor, now that the cold-weather shelters have fallen through because the province won’t fund them,” she said.

Both parties promise to work hard on Saturday to get voters to the polls, where the race could be won or lost.