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News / GTA

## Rob Ford, former Toronto mayor, dead after battle with cancer

Rob Ford, 46, seemed like an unstoppable political force, but the city councillor and former mayor could not beat cancer.

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Former Toronto mayor Rob Ford has passed away at the age of 46 after an 18 month battle with cancer.

By: **David Rider** City Hall Bureau Chief, **Jennifer Pagliaro** City Hall reporter, Published on Tue Mar 22 2016

**Rob Ford**, the Toronto city councillor who became the world's most famous mayor during a wild, scandal-filled term, is dead at age 46.

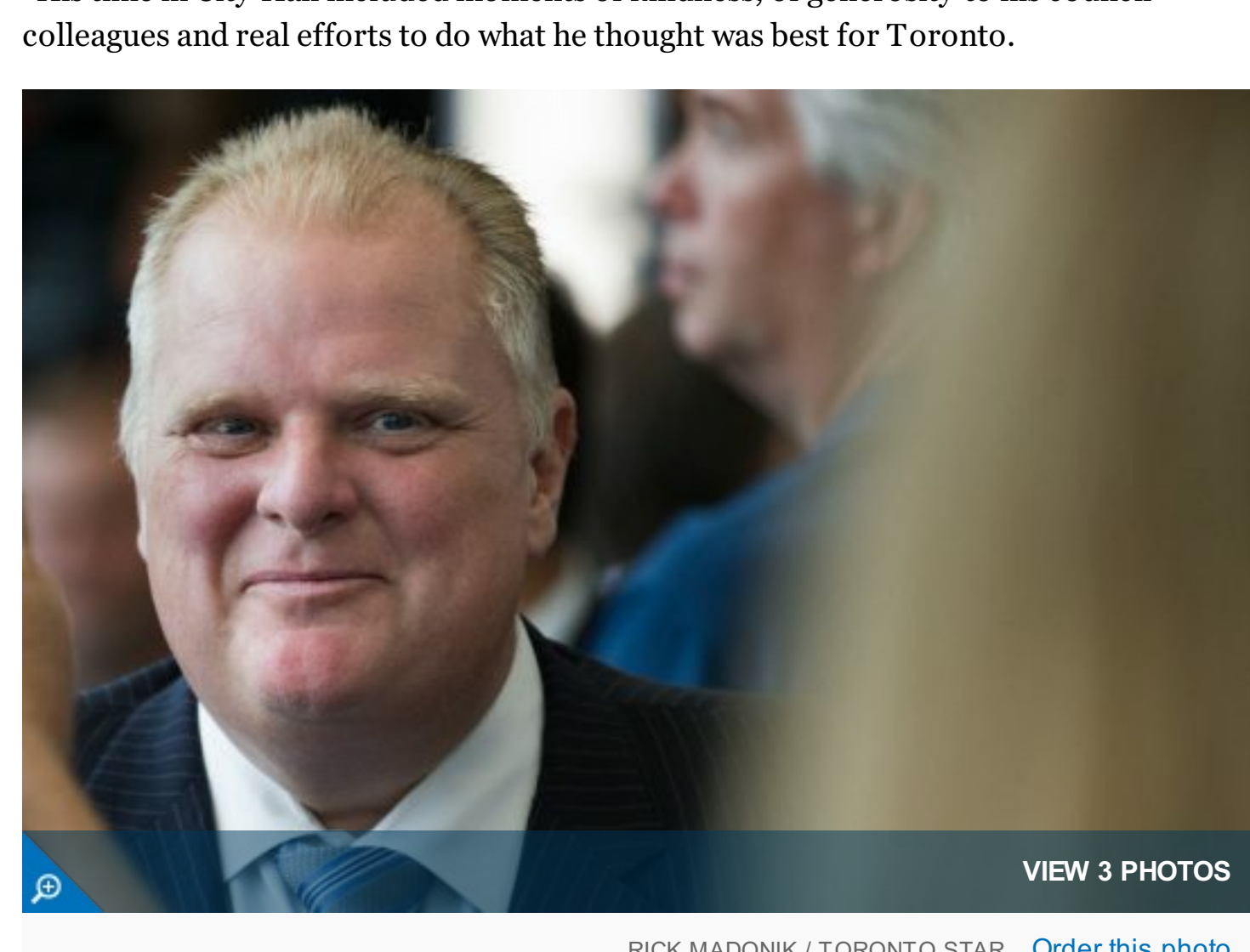
The married father of two young children died after 18 months of treatment for a rare and aggressive cancer first diagnosed in the midst of his 2014 bid to be re-elected mayor. Ford would have turned 47 on May 28.

A brief statement from the Ford family announcing the death Tuesday described the former mayor as a "dedicated man of the people" who "spent his life serving the citizens of Toronto."

"The family will not be making any statements to the media or taking any questions," the statement said.

Politicians were quick to respond to the news. "I have known Rob Ford for many years. He was a man who spoke his mind and who ran for office because of the deeply felt convictions that he had," Mayor John Tory said in a release.

"His time in City Hall included moments of kindness, of generosity to his council colleagues and real efforts to do what he thought was best for Toronto.



RICK MADONIK / TORONTO STAR Order this photo

Former mayor Rob Ford, who was diagnosed with a rare cancer in 2014, would have turned 47 on May 28.

"He was, above all else, a profoundly human guy whose presence in our city will be missed."

Premier Kathleen Wynne noted that "Rob Ford grew up in a family with a strong tradition of political involvement and community service. And he upheld that tradition throughout his life."

"Uncle Rob, You have fought the good fight long enough and now can rest in peace. Love you and will forever miss you," Ford's nephew, Toronto District School Board trustee Michael Ford wrote on Twitter.

Ford underwent surgery at Mount Sinai Hospital in May 2015, what was then considered his last chance to survive **pleomorphic liposarcoma**.

Though the surgery was hailed as a success, the discovery of two new tumours months later merited repeated rounds of chemotherapy that kept him away from the council chamber and his city hall office.

In recent weeks, Ford entered a clinical trial aimed at finding a personalized treatment for his cancer. But the process, which involves implanting a tumour in mice and testing different combinations of drugs, takes four months to complete.

As his health worsened, Ford's family set up a website for well-wishers to leave messages of support.

"May you have a speedy and successful recovery. Be strong," said one post left Monday. "We need you as Mayor in 2018 to save Toronto."

His earlier diagnosis forced Ford to **abandon his re-election hopes** in September 2014, even as polls suggested he remained a contender. He then coasted to victory in Ward 2 Etobicoke North, which he represented for a decade before his 2010 mayoral triumph.



MARK BLINCH / REUTERS

Rob Ford was well-loved among Ford Nation. Here he is with members of the public as he takes part in the East York Canada Day Parade in 2014.

Last year, after learning multiple rounds of chemotherapy and radiation had shrunk the original tumour enough to allow surgery, **a relieved-looking Ford told reporters:** "I'm just lucky to be alive today, and I'm just lucky to get another chance at life ... At least I have a chance."

He also thanked people "from all over the world" who had inundated him with hopeful messages.

The rumped populist spent the months following surgery as he had the previous 15 years — immersed in politics. He attacked Mayor John Tory's positions at city hall, gathering ammunition for a declared 2018 mayoral comeback.

Robert Bruce Ford, the son of self-made millionaire Doug Ford Sr. and Diane Ford, worked for the family label-making company before deciding to follow his father, a one-term Progressive Conservative MPP, into politics.

He failed to win an Etobicoke council seat in 1997 but, after the 2000 election, started a decade-long tenure that saw him rail against perceived overspending and face criticism for caustic insults and **off-colour comments**.

Ford built a profile on talk radio as a plain-spoken champion of the little guy, always eager to get a pothole fixed, and parlayed that into a 2010 mayoral bid that quickly gained steam and shot him into the mayor's chair.

He at first seemed invincible, unilaterally declaring former mayor David Miller's Transit City light rail plan dead and convincing council to quickly axe the vehicle registration tax, declare the TTC an essential service and reduce councillor office budgets.

But Ford's grip on council slipped. He lost battles on the Port Lands and 2012 budget amid seemingly endless controversy that included his use of city staff to coach football and calling police on a **comedian at his house**.

Ford's penchant for rule-breaking seemed his undoing after a **judge ordered him ejected from office** over a conflict of interest, but an appeal court rescued him on a technicality.

In 2013, the Star revealed that Ford had **attended a military ball** intoxicated and then that **a cellphone video** apparently showed him smoking crack.

That bombshell triggered months of controversy and worldwide headlines as Ford angrily denied, and then finally admitted, abusing drugs and alcohol. Council stripped him of most of his powers.

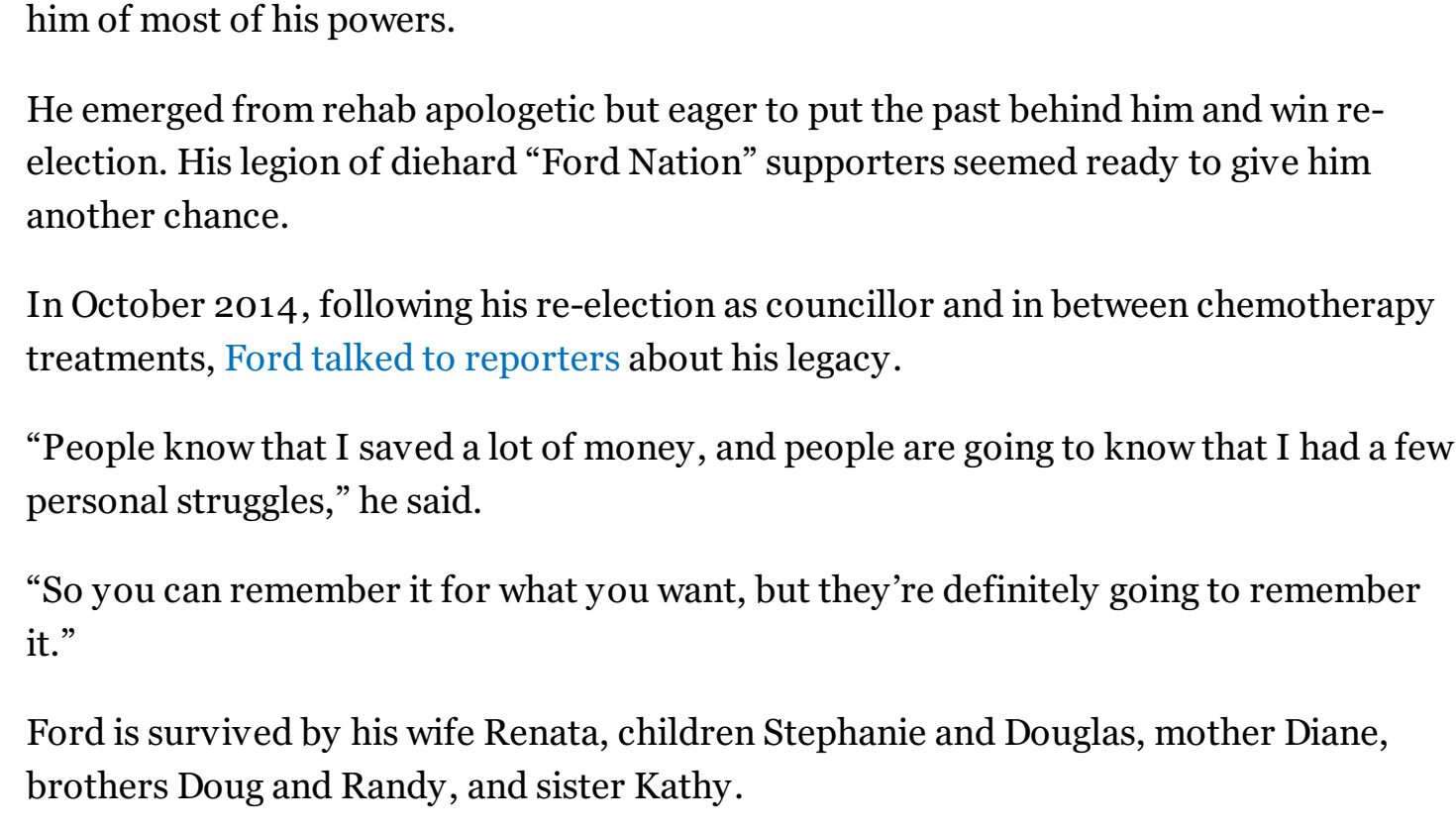
He emerged from rehab apologetic but eager to put the past behind him and win re-election. His legion of diehard "Ford Nation" supporters seemed ready to give him another chance.

In October 2014, following his re-election as councillor and in between chemotherapy treatments, **Ford talked to reporters** about his legacy.

"People know that I saved a lot of money, and people are going to know that I had a few personal struggles," he said.

"So you can remember it for what you want, but they're definitely going to remember it."

Ford is survived by his wife Renata, children Stephanie and Douglas, mother Diane, brothers Doug and Randy, and sister Kathy.



RENE JOHNSTON/TORONTO STAR

Rob Ford laughs as he sees a sculpture of himself made of butter at the CNE in 2012.

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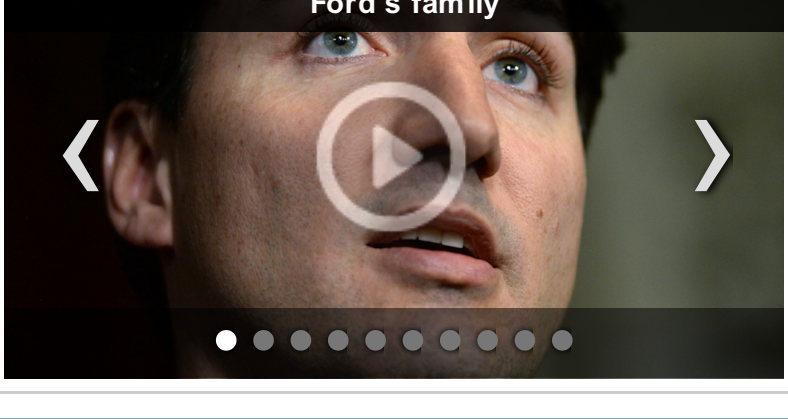
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