

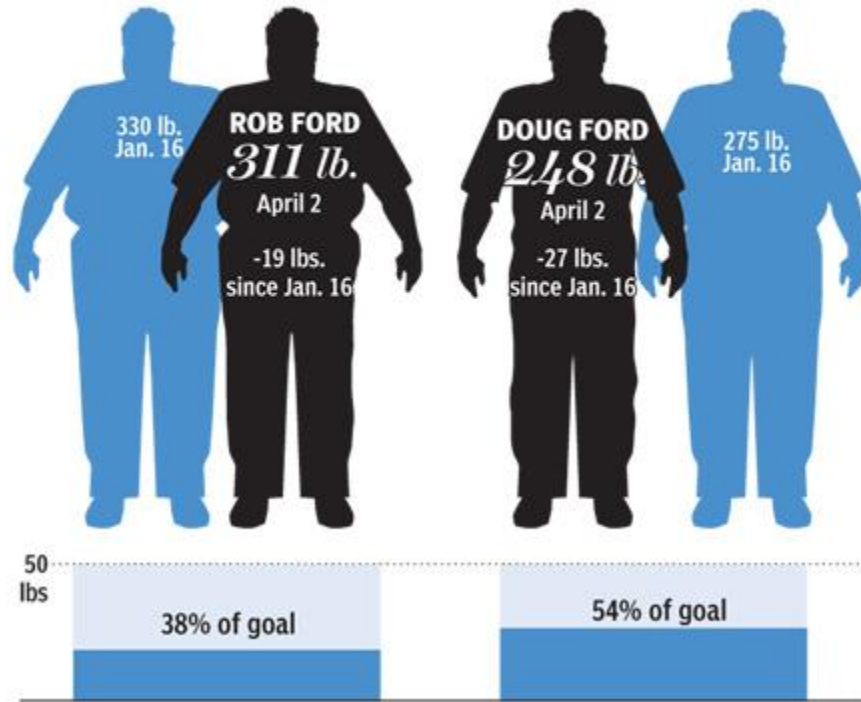
National Post

At 311 pounds, Rob Ford struggles to cut the waist

Natalie Alcoba Apr 3, 2012 – 1:52 AM ET

## FORDS CUT THE WAIST

*Mayor Rob Ford and his brother, Doug, are attempting to each lose 50 lbs. in six months*



ANDREW BARR / NATIONAL POST

For his tenth public weigh-in, Mayor Rob Ford marched out of his office without his suit jacket or his shoes, stepped on the factory-size scale he and his brother had dragged in from their family's label plant and barely let the needle settle. "311. Gained three pounds," he grumbled, before breezing past reporters on Monday and back into his quarters. It lasted all of 10 seconds.

"It's a challenge, it's tough. So we just keep going, try my best," Mayor Ford said later in the day.

He has cut city spending and reined in public-sector contracts, but almost halfway through a six-month campaign to shed 50 pounds from his 330-pound frame, the Mayor is evidently having a hard time.

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Mr. Ford came out strong, losing 20 pounds in the first three weeks of the Cut the Waist challenge he and Councillor Doug Ford started to slim down and inspire others to live healthier.

Mayor Ford started bringing salads and fruit to council meetings, and gulping down water instead of pop. Since Feb. 21, however, he seems to have plateaued, teetering between 308 and 310 pounds and cancelling a couple of weigh-ins.

“He’s having a little bit of a struggle, but he has to get back on board and start working out,” said Doug Ford, who has hovered around 248 pounds for a couple of weeks, down from 275. Councillor Ford recounted stories of dieters who had persevered that he heard when he attended a cheque presentation at the Harvey Brooker Weight Loss for Men centre on Sunday with Newstalk 1010 host John Tory. Its members raised \$2,093 — a dollar for every pound lost — for the Heart and Stroke Foundation in the name of Cut the Waist.

“It’s very personal. It’s like somebody coming out and saying I’m going to stop drinking and all eyes are upon you,” said Harvey Brooker, who for 26 years has led Alcoholics Anonymous-like sessions for men trying to lose weight. A healthy eating plan, exercise and copious note taking of everything that is consumed are important, said Mr. Brooker, but having a strong support system and expert help is also key.

For Mr. Ford, the diet campaign clearly doubles as a chance to soften his image, and give people another reason to root for him. As such, it’s a risky move, says Anne Sowden, a Toronto-based image specialist. “It took an awful lot of guts to do it. I think it was well intentioned, but I don’t think it was thought through,” said Ms. Sowden, who says the Mayor risks damaging his credibility if he doesn’t succeed. Just like on the campaign trail, said Ms. Sowden, “he makes big promises ... the question is can you believe him.” Mr. Tory, the former PC leader who shed 40 pounds with Mr. Brooker’s help, knows how hard politics can be on eating and exercise habits. He has noticed a difference in the Mayor already. “For a guy fighting battles on nine fronts, from transit to labour, the weight loss should be the easiest,” said Mr. Tory. “If he loses 42 pounds no one will say that is terrible. I think people will commend him for that.”

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