

FORD IN 'CRACK VIDEO' SCANDAL: [Cellphone recording made by men involved in Toronto drug trade - viewed by a pair of Star reporters - appears to show incoherent mayor inhaling from a glass crack pipe 1]

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Cellphone recording made by men involved in Toronto drug trade - viewed by a pair of Star reporters - appears to show incoherent mayor inhaling from a glass crack pipe Ford is incoherent, trading jibes with an off-camera speaker who goads the clearly impaired mayor by raising topics including Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau and the Don Bosco high school football team Ford coaches.

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A cellphone video that appears to show Mayor Rob Ford smoking crack cocaine is being shopped around Toronto by a group of Somali men involved in the drug trade.

Two Toronto Star reporters have viewed the video three times. It appears to show Ford in a room, sitting in a chair, wearing a white shirt, top buttons open, inhaling from what appears to be a glass crack pipe. Ford is incoherent, trading jibes with an off-camera speaker who goads the clearly impaired mayor by raising topics including Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau and the Don Bosco high school football team Ford coaches.

"I'm f---ing right-wing," Ford appears to mutter at one point. "Everyone expects me to be right-wing. I'm just supposed to be this great ... " and his voice trails off. At another point he is heard calling Trudeau a "fag." Later in the 90-second video he is asked about the football team and he appears to say (though he is mumbling), "they are just f---ing minorities."

The Star had no way to verify the authenticity of the video, which appears to clearly show Ford in a well-lit room. The Star was told the video was shot during the past winter at a house south of Dixon Rd. and Kipling Ave. What follows is an account based on what both reporters viewed on the video screen. Attempts to reach the mayor and members of his staff to get comment on this story were unsuccessful.

A lawyer retained by Ford, Dennis Morris, said that Thursday evening's publication by the U.S.-based Gawker website of some details related to the video was "false and defamatory." Morris told the Star that by viewing any video it is impossible to tell what a person is doing. "How can you indicate what the person is actually doing or smoking?" Morris said.

Ford's chief of staff, Mark Towhey, would not listen to questions by the Star on Thursday night and abruptly hung up when the Star called.

The video was taken on a smartphone by a person who said he has supplied crack cocaine to the mayor.

Throughout the video Ford's eyes are half-closed. He lolls back in his chair, sometimes waving his arms around erratically. He raises a lighter in his hand at several points and moves it in a circle motion beneath the glass bowl of the pipe, then inhales deeply.

The Star reporters (Donovan and Doolittle) were shown the video on the evening of Friday, May 3, in the back of a car parked in an apartment complex at Dixon Rd. near Kipling Ave. in the north end of Etobicoke.

The reporters were allowed to watch and listen to the video three times. After, both reporters separately made written notes of what they saw and heard. Both reporters, prior to watching the video, studied numerous city-hall-related videos of Ford and, to the best of the reporters' abilities, they separately concluded the man in the video was Ford.

In the video, what appears to be afternoon sunlight is streaming through partially closed window blinds, lighting Ford's face. The video ends with the ringing of a cellphone (it is not clear if it is the cellphone that is being used to video-record the scene). The ring tone, which is a song, startles the mayor, whose slitted eyes open a bit, and he is heard to say, "That phone better not be on."

The Star was approached with an offer to purchase the video shortly after the Star's story on Ford's removal from the Garrison Ball due to apparent intoxication of some sort. The story, published March 26 of this year, described a concern by unnamed associates and staffers at city hall that Ford had a substance abuse problem.

Ford dismissed the Star story, called the Star "pathological liars" and invited the newspaper to sue him. Garrison Ball attendees interviewed by the Star did not say they smelled alcohol. One said, "He seemed either drunk, high or had a medical condition."

After the story was published, the Star was contacted by two separate people who purported to have information on Ford abusing crack cocaine.

One person, who described himself as an organizer in the Somali community, told the Star he had copies of a video that, he said, showed Ford smoking crack.

This man was acting as a sort of broker for the person who had shot the video. What followed was a protracted discussion between the man and Star reporters. The broker said he represented two Somali men who had supplied crack cocaine to the mayor in the Dixon Rd. area. The Star was not able to verify those claims.

The man said his two associates (one had been present when the video was made and had done the filming) wanted "six figures for the video." At another point he said they had originally wanted \$1 million, but he had convinced them to lower the price. Asked why they were selling the video, the man said the two who claimed ownership of the video wanted to make a change in their lives and use the money to move out west to Calgary.

The Star did not pay money and did not obtain a copy of the video.

Initially, the Somali man who contacted the Star said he had information about "a Toronto politician." When the Star met him the first time, he showed a photo of Ford dressed in sweatpants, standing in the driveway of a brick house with three other men. The one on the left in the picture had apparently been killed the previous week on King St. near the Loki Lounge. The man, with his strong forehead and distinctive jaw line, looked like Anthony Smith, 21, who indeed had been killed recently.

Over the past month, the Star has had several meetings with the man who was acting as a broker, culminating with the May 3 meeting at the Dixon Rd. apartment complex.

The reporters had told the man that they wanted to see the video. A meeting was arranged. First, the reporters were told to drive to the parking lot of an Etobicoke strip mall. They were told to leave their bags and cellphones in their own cars and get in his. The drive lasted less than five minutes. They pulled into the parking lot of the Dixon Rd. highrise complex.

The man got out of his car and returned with his associate.

The associate, also Somali, was a man in his early to mid-20s. He looked nervous and was shaking slightly. He had thick scabs on his arm.

He pulled out an iPhone - he would not let the reporters hold it. At first he wouldn't let the sound play, but then he relented.

In a video clip less than two minutes long, an incoherent and rambling Mayor Rob Ford can clearly be seen smoking what appears to be crack cocaine.

He is sitting on a chair holding a glass pipe with a blackened top and a lighter. Ford is the only person in the video, but there are at least two other people in the room - one, a man who told the Star he is Ford's dealer, secretly recording him, and another, an anonymous voice asking him questions.

The footage begins with the mayor mumbling. His eyes are half-closed. He waves his arms around erratically. A man's voice tells him he should be coaching football because that's what he's good at.

Ford agrees and nods his head, bobbing on his chair.

He says something like "Yeah, I take these kids ... minorities," but soon he rambles off again.

Ford says something like: "Everyone expects me to be right-wing, I'm ..." and again he trails off.

At one point he raises the lighter and moves it in a circle motion beneath the pipe, inhaling deeply.

Next, the voice raises the name of Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau. The man says he can't stand him and that he wants to shove his foot up the young leader's "ass so far it comes out the other end."

Ford nods and bobs on his chair and says in a slurred voice, "Justin Trudeau's a fag."

The man taping the mayor keeps the video trained on him. Then the phone rings. Ford looks at the camera and says something like "that better not be on."

The phone shuts off.

Credit: Robyn Doolittle and Kevin Donovan Toronto Star

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