

Kelly leaves Tory leader door open

By AMY SMITH and KELLY SHIERS Staff Reporters

Halifax Mayor Peter Kelly says he has no immediate plans to enter the Tory leadership race but isn't ruling out a run at the party's top job altogether.

"I have a job," Mr. Kelly said in an interview Thursday. "I love my job. We have some issues before us and that thought (of running for Tory leader), although from time to time does cross your mind, I haven't really spent any time on it.

"At this time, I can say I am focused on the job I am doing."

But when pressed, Mr. Kelly would not close the door on the idea.

"It's not high on my agenda, but I also don't want to mislead anybody," he said. "Is it a possibility some day? Who knows?"

Mr. Kelly's name has come up recently amid speculation about possible candidates to replace Rodney MacDonald, who stepped aside as party leader just two weeks after the Progressive Conservatives fell from government to third place.

Other names that have been floated include former finance minister Neil LeBlanc, who lost to Mr. MacDonald in the 2006 leadership race, former Tory cabinet ministers Chris d'Entremont and Cecil Clarke, and Jamie Baillie, who was chief of staff when John Hamm was premier.

No date for a leadership contest has been set.

The party has 18 months from Mr. MacDonald's resignation to set the date for a convention, and a party spokesman has said officials plan to spend the summer talking to members about how and when the contest should be held.

For now, Colchester North MLA Karen Casey remains the Tory's interim leader, a choice that was unanimous among the caucus.

Mr. MacDonald said he will stay on as MLA for Inverness, the job he has held since 1999.

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