



Poll STATION

With Linda Banister

Edmonton has more than its share of big box shopping outlets and chain stores, however, our city is also full of unique local businesses that add to the fabric of our neighbourhoods and make districts like Whyte Avenue and 124th Street popular. For this *Poll Station*, we decided to ask Edmontonians about some of their shopping habits and how they feel about independent businesses in Edmonton.

ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT THE GROWING NUMBER OF CHAIN STORES?

To begin the survey, we asked Edmontonians whether they were concerned with the growing number of chain stores in Edmonton. One third of respondents (33 percent) were concerned, while two-thirds (66 percent) were not, and one percent were unsure. The most frequently mentioned cause for concern was that smaller businesses can't compete (39 percent), followed by chain or franchise outlets not being Canadian-owned (21 percent), the belief that there are generally too many chain stores (21 percent); 12 percent preferred supporting local business.



DO YOU SHOP AT FRANCHISED STORES? WHY AND WHAT FOR? OR WHY NOT?

Next, all respondents were asked how likely they are to shop at a franchised store. Approximately two-thirds (64 percent) reported they were highly likely, followed by 20 percent that were moderately likely, and 15 percent that were unlikely to do their shopping at a chain store.

When asked to comment, respondents that were likely to shop at a franchise mentioned that they have the best prices or most fairly priced items (45 percent), that they can be conveniently accessed near their homes (34 percent), that they carry necessities and have a good selection (25 percent), and that most stores are a part of a chain, providing little alternative (14 percent).

Those respondents that were unlikely to shop at a chain store most frequently commented that they prefer to support local or Canadian businesses (40 percent), that the stores are too busy and crowded (13 percent), that customer service is poor (13 percent), and that chains undercut local and small businesses (13 percent).

Approximately half of respondents (47 percent) preferred to make particular purchase at stores that are part of a chain, while slightly more than half (52 percent) did not express such a preference. Items they preferred to purchase included food (21 percent), clothing (10 percent), electronics (eight percent), home or day-to-day items (five percent), and furniture and appliances (five percent).

IS SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES IMPORTANT AND WHY?

Next, respondents were asked a series of questions to determine their attitudes toward local independent businesses. To begin, they were asked to rate how important it was to them to support independent business. Sixty-nine percent indicated supporting local business was highly important to them, followed by 22 percent who felt it was moderately important, and seven percent that attached only low levels of importance.

Of respondents that felt it was important to support local business, 39 percent said independent stores help the local economy, while 15 percent simply preferred to help small or Canadian businesses, 15 percent believed local businesses help create a unique neighbourhood feeling, and 10 percent indicated these stores are unique and sell a diversity of unique products (10 percent).

Sixty-two percent preferred to make certain purchases at an independent business, including food (21 percent), clothing (16 percent), jewelry (seven percent), gift items (six percent), books (five percent), home furnishings (four percent), and craft or hobby items (four percent). Approximately one-third (32 percent) did not prefer to make any particular purchases at an independent business.

SHOULD THE CITY PROMOTE INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES?

Finally, we asked respondents if the City of Edmonton should do anything to promote local independent businesses. Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) felt the City should offer tax breaks or rebates for local independent businesses, while 21 percent indicated the City should advertise them or provide signs for independent businesses. Seventeen percent said nothing should be done by the City to promote local business. ✓

Monthly Poll Station Online Question

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