

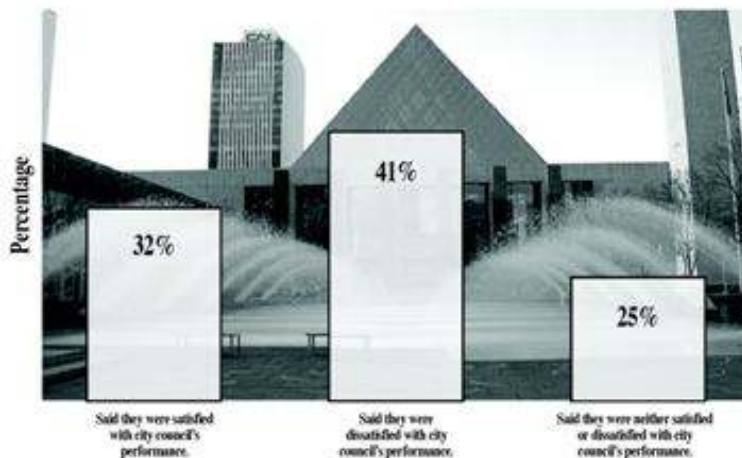


Poll STATION

With Linda Banister

It's municipal election time again. On October 15th Edmontonians will elect their mayor and councilors. In 2004, Stephen Mandel was elected to the Mayor's chair in an intense and exciting campaign. In this month's *Poll Station*, we asked residents about the performance of the mayor and council, and had them identify issues that candidates should address in their election platforms.

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH CITY COUNCIL?



To begin, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the performance of city council since the last municipal election. Approximately one third (32 percent) of respondents were satisfied with its performance, 41 percent were dissatisfied and 25 percent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Of those who were dissatisfied with council, 27 percent were concerned about the city's infrastructure, specifically potholes; 20 percent believed council was wasting public money on useless things; 15 percent believed council had not accomplished anything; and 15 percent were dissatisfied with snow removal or street cleaning.

HOW DO YOU RATE MAYOR MANDEL'S PERFORMANCE?

When specifically asked to rate the performance of Mayor Mandel, the majority (80 percent) of respondents provided a positive rating, with 19 percent rating his performance as very good or excellent. Seventeen percent believed his performance has been poor. When asked to identify the best thing that Mayor Mandel has accomplished this term, a wide variety of responses were provided. The most commonly cited accomplishment centred on his ability to develop relationships (13 percent), while less frequent mentions included the positive steps he has taken in strengthening relationships with the citizens of Edmonton, with council, and with other governments. One fifth (21 percent) of respondents felt the mayor has accomplished very little this term.

WHAT ISSUES SHOULD BE THE FOCUS OF THE NEXT TERM?

Respondents were then asked to identify the issues that

Edmonton's mayor should focus on in the next three-year term. One-quarter believed the focus should be on infrastructure or road conditions. Twenty-one percent mentioned affordable housing, and 10 percent mentioned lower taxes. Other areas of concern were public transportation, including LRT expansion, and the general upkeep of the city (five percent).

Next, respondents were presented with a number of specific issues and asked to rate the importance of each to the new council. Infrastructure repair and maintenance (89 percent) and affordable housing (84 percent) were identified as being the most important issues for council to address. LRT expansion (66 percent), inner city revitalization (63 percent), and regional cooperation with surrounding municipalities (61 percent) were rated as the next level of importance. Less than half (47 percent) thought it was important for council to address urban sprawl.

SHOULD THERE BE A LIMIT ON LENGTH OF SERVICE?

Finally, respondents were asked whether there should be a limit that restricts the number of terms an individual can sit on Council. More than half (52 percent) felt there should be a limit, with 42 percent of this group saying it would ensure new ideas and opinions make it on council. Twenty-nine percent felt that councilors can become complacent and limiting the number of terms would remedy this. Twenty-seven percent favoured term limits as a way of providing opportunities for other residents to serve on Council.

However, more than one-third (38 percent) of respondents did not support setting limits on the number of terms someone could sit on council. Forty-two percent of this group argued that councilors doing a good job should be allowed to stay on. Others (21 percent) commented that it should be left entirely up to the electorate to decide who sits on council and for how long.

The *Poll Station* surveyed 100 City of Edmonton residents on the topic and, while the results of the research are not statistically reliable, they do provide a qualitative indication of what Edmontonians are thinking.

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