



Poll STATION

With Linda Banister

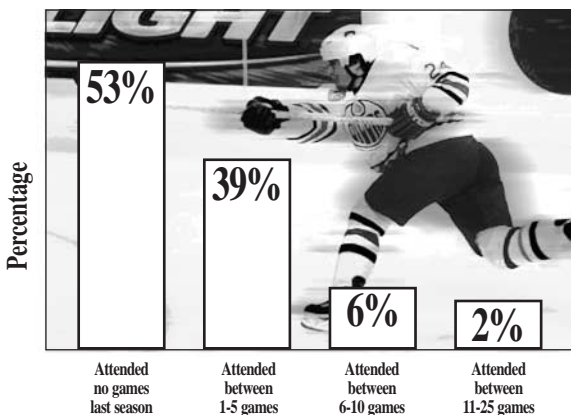
In any other year, right about now, throughout the city and across the nation, families would be gathering every evening around their television sets to watch 16 teams battle each other for Lord Stanley's Cup. This year is not like any other year. For the first time in the history of professional sport in North America, an entire season has been cancelled due to a labour dispute. This month *Poll Station* asked Edmontonians what they thought of the NHL lockout, the effect it is having on the City and what they feel is in store for the future.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE OILERS TO EDMONTON?

To begin, respondents were asked, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being extremely important, how important professional hockey and the Edmonton Oilers are to the City of Edmonton. The majority of respondents (59 percent) felt it was important to the City and provided a rating of either 4 or 5, with a mean rating of 3.6.

Those who indicated hockey was important to the City said they felt this way because they bring a large economic aspect to the City (53 percent), a lot of people like hockey and Edmonton is a hockey city (27 percent), and they give City pride and are a major part of Edmonton and its history (20 percent). Those who said it is unimportant felt this way because professional hockey has a small economic impact on the City (27 percent), they don't follow hockey or the Oilers (20 percent) and because they believe the players are greedy and are paid too much (17 percent).

HOW OFTEN DID YOU ATTEND GAMES?



When asked how often they attended Edmonton Oilers' games last season, 39 percent said between one to five games, while only six percent go to six to 10 games, and two percent attend 11 to 25 games. No respondents said they attend all Oilers' games, and over half (53 percent) indicated they did not attend any games. Respondents were then asked how often they watched hockey, in general, on television last season. Over one-third (34 percent) stated they don't watch hockey on television, while 22 percent

watched it once a week. Fewer respondents said they watched once a month (17 percent), once every two weeks (eight percent), two to four times a week (14 percent), or five times a week or more (six percent).

WHAT OTHER SPORTS DO YOU WATCH INSTEAD?

Respondents were asked what other sports they watch more of on television because of the NHL lock-out. The most popular mentions included football (34 percent), basketball (18 percent), and golf (18 percent). Over half (53 percent) reported not watching any other sports on television. When asked what other activities they partake in instead of watching hockey, respondents mentioned spending more time with the family (33 percent), going to the movies (23 percent), and going out to dinner (17 percent).

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF PRO HOCKEY?

Finally, respondents were asked to rate a series of questions regarding the future of professional hockey, on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 meaning not at all likely and 5 meaning extremely likely. Respondents, overall, felt it was most likely that the season will start next year, but be delayed (mean=3.0), followed by the next season starting on schedule (mean=2.7). Respondents felt it would be less likely that there would be no hockey at all next year (mean=2.0), or that the NHL would fold and a new league would be formed (mean=2.2).

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. 4

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