

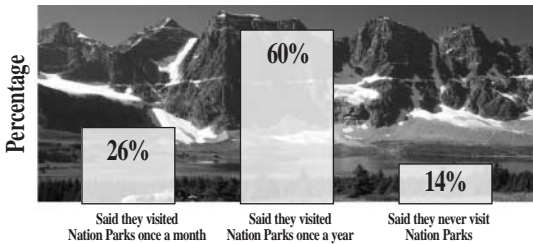


Poll STATION

With Linda Banister

Canada's National Parks are a source of pride from coast to coast. These vast areas of land capture the sheer beauty of the country, while maintaining natural areas that are representative of the unique Canadian eco-system. They have been protected for public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment, while being maintained in a pristine state for future generations. This month, the *Poll Station* asked Edmontonians for their thoughts and opinions regarding the status of national parks in Canada today.

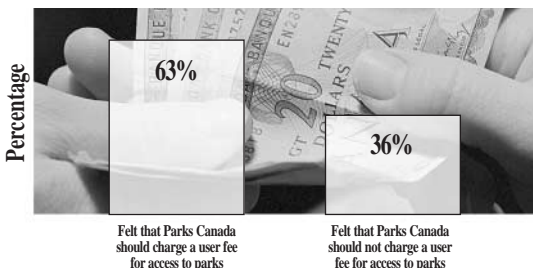
HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT THE NATIONAL PARKS?



To begin, respondents were asked to indicate how often they visit the national parks in Alberta. About one-quarter of respondents (26 percent) said they visit these parks once a month or more, while 60 percent said they visit about once a year. Only 14 percent said they never visit Alberta's national parks. Jasper ranked as the favourite national park for the majority of respondents (54 percent), followed by Banff (31 percent), Waterton Lakes (nine percent) and Elk Island (six percent).

Respondents were asked what activities they most like to take part in while at the park of their choice. The most frequently mentioned activity was hiking or cycling (61 percent), followed by camping (30 percent). Other popular activities included skiing or snowboarding (28 percent), sightseeing or touring (28 percent), and just being outdoors and enjoying nature (21 percent). Shopping (11 percent), going to museums or historical sites (five percent), golfing (five percent) and going to the hot springs (four percent) were also mentioned.

SHOULD PARKS CANADA CHARGE USER FEES FOR ACCESS TO NATIONAL PARKS?



When asked if they felt Parks Canada should charge a user fee for accessing the country's national parks, the majority of respondents agreed that it should (63 percent), while 36 percent felt there should not be user fees and one percent

were unsure. Those who agreed with the user fees indicated the fees help pay the wages of park wardens and staff, maintain the park and provide services within the park, and agreed with paying, as long as the fees were reasonable. Those who disagreed with the idea of user fees said that visiting the parks is already too expensive and the costs should be covered by taxes, and that user fees reduce access to the parks by those with lower incomes.

Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of one to five, where one means "very important" and five means "not at all important", how important the national parks are to Alberta. On average, respondents provided a very high rating of importance; the mean rating was 1.2 out of five, with 80 percent of respondents providing a rating of one, or very important, and 15 percent providing a rating of two, or somewhat important. Two percent of respondents provided a neutral rating of three and only one percent rated national parks as five, or not at all important.

The majority of respondents (62 percent) thought the federal government should create more national parks in Canada, while 28 percent were content with the current number of parks, and 10 percent were unsure. Those who felt more parks should be developed were asked if they had any suggestions for a new national park in Canada. While a variety of ideas was mentioned, the most frequently mentioned were a park in Canada's far north, the Drumheller region of Alberta, BC's David Thompson Region, Ontario, and a prairies' park.

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. ✓

Linda Banister is a certified management consultant and the owner of Banister Research and Consulting Inc., a full service provider of market research and program evaluation services. If you have a question you would like included in the Edmontonians Poll, contact Linda at 780.451.4444 or e-mail at lbanister@edmontonians.com. For further information on the firm visit www.banister.ab.ca.