



The State of Baseball: Professional & High-Level Amateur



Executive Committee - January 20, 2015
City Council – April 14, 2015

Background & Current State

- Part of Edmonton's social/sporting scene for over 100 years
- Renfrew / John Ducey / Telus considered the "hub" of baseball in the city/region
- Built in 1995
- Pacific Coast League (Major League Baseball affiliated):
 - Edmonton Trappers played 24 seasons (1981 to 2004)
- Independent professional baseball:
 - Edmonton Cracker Cats (2005 to 2008)
 - Edmonton Capitals (2009 to 2011)
- Western Major Baseball League
 - Edmonton Prospects (2012 to current)

Background and Current State

- Hosted national and international baseball events
 - Intercontinental Cup (1981,1985)
 - World Men’s Championships (1990)
 - Olympic Qualification Tournament for the Americas (1996)
 - World Junior Championship (2000)
 - World Junior AAA Championship (2008)
 - World Cup of Women’s Baseball (2004, 2012)

Background and Current State

- Current lease with Oilers Entertainment Group
 - Month to month basis
 - Arrangement with the Edmonton Prospects
 - Other bookings accommodated
- Facility Condition Assessment Report in 2013
 - \$1.3 Million over next 10 years
 - 8,800 seats, including 3,200 bleachers

Major League Baseball Affiliated

- AAA (2 leagues)
- AA (3 leagues)
- A (7 leagues)
- Rookie Ball (6 leagues)
- The number of franchises in each league aligns with the number of MLB franchises
- One affiliated franchise in Canada
 - Vancouver Canadians play in the Northwest League (A)



Independent Professional Baseball

- Numerous leagues exist across North America
- Level of baseball played varies
- 3 franchises in Canada:
 - Winnipeg Goldeyes
(American Association of Independent Baseball)
 - Québec Capitales (Can-Am League)
 - The Ottawa Champions will begin play in 2015
(Can-Am League)

Collegiate & Amateur Baseball

- Edmonton Prospects of the Western Major Baseball League
- Provides summer baseball for collegiate players from May to July
- 11 teams in the league
 - 4 in Alberta:
Okotoks, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Edmonton
 - 7 in Saskatchewan: Regina, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Swift Current, Melville, Weyburn, Saskatoon
 - Prospects play 26 home games per season
 - Average game attendance: 653
- Fort McMurray building new stadium

Trends and Best Practices

- Dedicated venues
- ‘Retro’ parks
- Group spectator / entertainment areas
- Baseball districts



Stakeholder Perspectives

- Strong baseball culture in the city - ballpark highly valued.
- Future success will require strong leadership.
- Competitive amateur and collegiate baseball is important to the future development of the sport.
- Desire for the return of Triple A baseball.
- Challenges:
 - travel and geographic/logistical concerns
 - weather/length of season
 - suitable venues to sustain franchise operations
 - league and ownership stability

Potential Directions

- Retain the facility - 5 to 10 year commitment
- New model for operating the facility to increase use
 - Western Major Baseball
 - Midget Triple A
 - Community ball / special events
- Operational: break-even / cost neutral
- Building rehab: City responsibility

Potential Next Steps

- Spring / Summer 2015 – information session with baseball community / stakeholders
- Fall / Winter 2015 – issue RFP for Spring 2016 operation
- Consider public sector comparator