Something that was brought up earlier this week really irked me. Glendale councilor Joyce Clark referred to a few Canadian investors as " poachers ".

"It's sited in a major sports and entertainment district in Glendale and we rely upon the 42 nights of hockey games to help to keep what we call Westgate healthy," Clark said, "so that's a major reason for supporting keeping the Coyotes in Glendale and in Westgate."

First of all, its 41 home games, not 42, so thanks for showing me that you're a true supporter of the Coyotes and the NHL. Secondly, if it's such a major sports and entertainment district, why the hell, on average, do only 12,000 fans show up to the home games when you ice a highly competitive hockey team (with quite a few six, seven, eight and nine thousand attendees sprinkled in there). If the team was in Canada it'd be sold out left, right and center. Hell, our teams can be 0-82 and we'd still sell out all of the home games. Thirdly, I understand that you've made a huge investment and have sunk millions and millions of dollars into building the new Jobing.com Arena and relocating the Coyotes from central Phoenix into Glendale, but it's a sinking and hemorrhaging ship. According to Wikipedia , the Coyotes have lost well over $200 mil since the move from Winnipeg, and have lost at least $20 mil per season since 2001 and by far are the worst financial team in the league by a huge margin.

Face it, you're pretty desperate when you're paying a potential new owner just to help cover their annual losses. Any smart investor will look at this situation and stay far, far, far, far away from it. Why would an investor look at this situation and put their hand up to lose $10 mil this season, which is in addition to your $17 mil "subsidy fee" ? You should be happy that there are even any investors willing to take this hemorrhaging ship off your hands, not condemning them.

The reason why they are “poaching” your team is because they can easily turn a sinking, hemorrhaging ship into a money making enterprise if the team is moved into a hockey “hot-bed” city. Just look at the Thrashers situation . They were a financially unsustainable entity in Atlanta, boom they get bought out, given a “relocation fee” and suddenly the value of the team increased 21 percent! Even Facebook going public didn’t increase that much in value over a year. So why are there so many Canadian “poachers”? Because they can turn a fledging enterprise into a money-making machine. That’s why!

You’d be better off letting the Coyotes go, while accepting a “relocation fee” of say $100 mil. Watch the NHL grow its wings in the US with much more national coverage via the NBC network, and hopefully get the NHL to expand back into Phoenix when the area/fan base is redeveloped in a few years’ time, which is basically applying the exact same situation that happened in Winnipeg to Phoenix. That makes more sense than to convince an investor too willingly to lose $10-20 mil year after year and hope that the fans will eventually buy in four or five years down the road.

I thought I’d look into the matter a bit more and this is what I dug up.

City	Avg. Attendance

Percentage full

NBA competition

1. 1.Chicago

21,533

105

√

1. 2.Montreal

21,273

100

1. 3.Philadelphia

20,433

107.4

√

1. 4.Detroit

20,144

100.7

√

1. 5.Toronto

19,506

103.7

√

1. 6.Ottawa

19,356

101.1

1. 7.Calgary

19,289

100

1. 8.Vancouver

18,884

102.5

1. 9.St. Louis

18,809

98.2

1. 10.Pittsburgh

18,866

102.7

1. 11.Buffalo

18,550

99.9

1. 12.Washington

18,506

102.7

√

1. 13.Tampa Bay

18,468

99.9

1. 14.New York Rangers

18,191

100

√

1. 15.Los Angeles

17,920

100

√

1. 16.Minnesota

17,772

98.4

√

1. 17.Boston

17,564

100

√

1. 18.San Jose

17,562

100

√

1. 19.Edmonton

16,839

100

1. 20.Nashville

16,690

97.5

1. 21.Florida

16,628

86.6

√

1. 22.Carolina

16,042

85.9

1. 23.Colorado

15,498

86.1

√

1. 24.New Jersey

15,396

87.4

√

1. 25.Winnipeg

15,004

100

1. 26.Anaheim

14,760

86.4

1. 27.Columbus

14,660

80.8

1. 28.Dallas

14,226

76.8

√

1. 29.New York Islanders

13,191

81.3

√

1. 30.Phoenix

12,420

72.5

√

It’s interesting to see the attendance numbers in cities where there’s competition between a NBA team with a NHL team.

Traditional sporting/hockey cities like Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Boston, Minnesota, Los Angeles and New York don’t have a problem of filling seats even though they have competition. It’s the small market teams that are below the 40th parallel, while facing direct NBA competition, that’s finding it difficult to fill the seats.

Six (Florida, Colorado, New Jersey, Dallas, Islanders and Phoenix), of the nine teams that operate with a lower than 90 percent capacity face direct competition from a competing NBA team which could be one of the main reasons to explain why they have lower attendance numbers.

If I'm Gary Bettman I'd look into these stats and plan my next course of action accordingly. If he's thinking of relocation, then teams that are struggling, like Dallas, Phoenix and the Islanders, might function better in a market where there isn't a market-share situation with the NBA. Perhaps Seattle, Kansas City, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Quebec City or Hamilton would make great potential targets to "expand" the sport of hockey.

What's the off-season plan for the Rangers? To be fair I don't think they need to change all that much in order to compete for the Stanley Cup next campaign. The major pieces are already there, so maybe just some minor tweaking by adding some extra offensive depth.

According to Capgeek, heading into next season the Rangers have roughly $16.4 mil to spend. They have Ruslan Fedotenko, Brandon Prust, John Mitchell, Steve Eminger, Jeff Woywitka, Stu Bickel, John Scott and Marty Biron headed to UFA, with Mats Zuccarello, Micheal Del Zotto and Anton Stralman headed towards RFA. Only ones that I see re-signing with the blue shirts are Zuccarello, Bickel and MDZ. Biron possibly might be re-signed if they don't find any of the other viable goalie options.

Now the interesting thing is, they do have a bit of cap space. The big question is what are they going to do with it? Brandon Dubinsky, Chris Kreider and a first-round draft pick have been linked to Rick Nash during the trade deadline and could be a possible option on the table on draft day. If the Jackets decide to take the Kings' first round pick this season, and land the Rangers' first round pick, it would give them four picks in the first 31 picks for the entry draft and five of the first 45, which could go a long way in helping to rebuild the franchise.

Landing Nash would give the Rangers a look of:

Gaborik – Richards – Hagelin

Callahan – Stepan – Nash

Anisimov – Boyle – Rupp

Zuccarello - ?? - ??

Girardi – McDonagh

Staal – Del Zotto

?? - ??

Lundy

??

Which would be a pretty solid mix in the top-six in terms of offensive depth and physicality and perhaps enough to get them over the hump.

One of the main reasons why they didn't get to the cup was their atrocious 1-8 record when giving up the first goal during the playoffs. Adding an offensive dynamo game-breaker like Nash into the mix could fix up that stat in a hurry.

According to Forbes , so much for the salary cap leveling the playing field in the NHL.

"More often than not, the teams that spend more will win more throughout the NHL's 82-game season. Between 2007 and 2011, teams that ranked among the league's top ten in player costs made the playoffs 82% of the time. For teams that cracked the top five in payroll, that likelihood

of reaching the postseason increased to 88%."

Interesting thing about that is spending more might get you in, but it won't win you a championship.

"Once through the door and into the party, though, anything can happen. The team with the bigger payroll won just 48% of the 75 playoff series played over the last five years. Of the 20 teams to make a conference final since 2007, just seven have ranked among the league's top five in player expenses, and several don't even come close."

This year proved no different as the Rangers, Devils, Kings and Coyotes all weren't amongst the league's top-five in player expenses.

"The last five Stanley Cup champions have averaged payrolls just 6% above the average team's, and two of those teams actually kept spending below the league average (2007 Ducks and 2009 Penguins)."

This also fits the bill of this year, as the Kings ($63.7 mil) are 8.2 percent above the average team's payroll, while the Devils ($61.7 mil) are 4.8 percent above.

So who's the most and least " cost-efficient " teams in the NHL this campaign?

Simon Gagne returned to practice on Friday. He hasn't played since Dec. 26 after another experiencing another concussion. The Kings have plenty of great chemistry at the moment and I don't know if bringing him in would mess with a good thing. I'd keep him benched.

Ilya Kovalchuk, Martin Brodeur, Zach Parise, Travis Zajac, Dustin Brown, Anze Kopitar, Drew Doughty, Jon Quick who's the frontrunner for the Conn Smythe? What about Pancake Penner?

The area that's going to determine the winner of the Stanley Cup will be the **special teams**. The Devils will pit their 18.2 percent PP efficiency against the Kings' 91.2 percent PK ratio, while they put their 74.2 PK efficiency on the line against the Kings' anemic 8.1 percent PP effectiveness.

Once again the team that scores first will essentially win the game. The Kings are 7-1 when scoring first, while the Devils are 8-2. However, the Kings are 5-1 when trailing first, but the Devils are just 4-4. The Devils will need to correct that if they are to hoist the Cup in two weeks' time.

A new record will be set this year. Whichever team wins the Stanley Cup this year will be the lowest seeded team to ever win it. The previous record was held by the Devils when they won the cup as the fifth seed in 1995.

Breaking news Jamal Mayers re-signs with the Hawks at $600k for a season.

The latest rumors have Zach Parise and Ryan Suter intent on signing together with a new team and determined to wear the same sweater. At least that's what the Red Wings press is trying to spin.

Minor trade in the NHL today, the Bruins moved Zach Hamill to Washingtion for Chris Bourque. Hamill was once an eighth overall pick back in the 2007 draft, but hasn't really gotten a full shot at the NHL level. He should get a bit more opportunity in Washington than he did with the

Bruins. Chris Bourque absolutely tore up the AHL by leading the league in scoring with 93 points. He's had a couple of cups of coffee in the big leagues, but probably will be a career AHLer.

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