

With Labour Dispute On Ice - Canadians Stick Handle NHL Issues

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Even If There Is No 2004-05 Season***

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Minimum Of 40 Games Played To Have Playoffs***

***Public Remains Strongly In The Corner Of The Owners When It
Comes To Labour Dispute***



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Toronto, ON – A new Ipsos-Reid/TSN survey released today shows that even if the National Hockey League season is cancelled, the majority of Canadians (62%) do not think that other hockey clubs should be allowed to compete for Lord Stanley's Cup and only NHL teams should be allowed to compete for this coveted trophy. But a substantial minority of Canadians (31%) do feel that other hockey clubs should be allowed to compete in a challenge tournament for the Stanley Cup if there is no NHL season this year.

If the NHL owners and players are able to come to an agreement and salvage at least part of the 2004-2005 NHL season, a plurality of Canadians (36%) say that there must be at least 40 regular season games played in order to justify a Stanley Cup playoff season – while smaller proportions say a minimum of 30 games (29%) or 20 games (15%) would be required.

And despite the highly-publicized recent efforts of the Player's Union to come to a labour agreement --which most notably involved offering a 24% rollback on player's salaries-- the Canadian public still remains firmly in the corner of the owners (59%) over the players (16%) when it comes to who is being more fair and reasonable in this dispute. Further, more than twice as many Canadians would most blame the players (50%) rather than the owners (21%) if the 2004-2005 NHL season is cancelled.



These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/ TSN poll conducted from December 17th to December 20th, 2004. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1000 adult Canadians were interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within \pm 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.

A Majority Of Six In Ten Canadians (62%) Want The Stanley Cup To Remain An NHL Prize – Even If 2004-2005 Season Is Cancelled...

As part of the survey, Canadians were asked to contemplate the future of the Stanley Cup if the NHL season for 2004-2005 ends up being cancelled due to the labour dispute.

A majority of six in ten Canadians (62%) feel that “the Stanley Cup is hockey’s ultimate prize and only NHL teams should compete for it and no team should compete for the cup until the NHL starts up again”. But a substantial minority of Canadians (31%) hold the opposite view, and feel that “if there is no NHL season this year, the world’s best hockey club teams should be allowed to compete in a challenge tournament for the Stanley Cup”.

Nearly one in ten Canadians (7%) “don’t know” which of these two statements they agree with.

Those Canadians most likely to believe that only NHL teams should allowed to compete for the Stanley Cup are:

- Residents of Atlantic Canada (67%), followed by residents of Ontario (65%), Quebec (61%), British Columbia (58%), Alberta (57%), and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (55%).



- Those with an annual household income of \$30,000 or more (64% vs. 55% among those with an annual household income of less than \$30,000).

Those Canadians most likely to believe that if there is no NHL season this year other club teams should be allowed to compete for the Stanley Cup are:

- Residents of Alberta (38%), followed by Saskatchewan/Manitoba (37%), British Columbia (34%), Quebec (33%), Ontario (29%), and Atlantic Canada (22%).
- Those aged 18-34 (37% vs. 30% among those aged 35 and older).

Well, How Many Games Must Be Played To Have A Season?

Survey respondents were told that as the NHL dispute has gone on for months now no deadline has been set for cancelling the 2004-2005 NHL regular season. And as such, there exists the possibility of an extremely short regular season if a collective bargaining agreement is reached.

With this in mind, respondents were asked what they believe to be the minimum number of regular season games that must be played in order to justify a Stanley Cup playoff season – 40 games, 30 games, 20 games or fewer than 20 games. Broken down by these ranges we see that:

- 36% say 40 regular season games is the minimum number;
- 29% say 30 regular season games is the minimum number;
- 15% say 20 regular season games is the minimum number; and
- 7% say fewer than 20 regular season games is the minimum number.



Meanwhile, 12% of respondents “don’t know” what the minimum number of regular season games would be.

- There are no notable demographic trends apparent for this question.

Most Canadians Believe Owners (59%) Are Being More Fair And Reasonable Than Players (16%) – Attitudes Consistent Over Last Two Surveys...

Despite the NHL Player’s Association recent offering of 24% pay roll-backs on existing player contracts and other economic concessions, the public remains strongly in the corner of the owners (59%) over the players (16%) when it comes to who they believe is being more fair and reasonable in this labour dispute.

Level of agreement that the owner’s position is more reasonable than the player’s position has remained steady at six in ten Canadians from September 13th, 2004 (60%), to October 11th, 2004 (61%), to now (59%).

In comparison, the level of agreement that the player’s position is more reasonable than the owner’s position has fluctuated mildly from September 13th, 2004 (20%), to October 11th, 2004 (14%), to now (16%).

Of remaining Canadians, 4% believe that “both” sides are being fair and reasonable (essentially unchanged over the last two surveys), 10% believe “neither side” is being more fair and reasonable (up very slightly from 7% who thought this in the past two surveys), and 10% “don’t know” which side is being more fair and reasonable.

Today, those most likely to believe that the **owners** are being more fair and reasonable are:



- Residents of Quebec (70%), followed by residents of Alberta (63%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (62%), Ontario (56%), Atlantic Canada (56%), and British Columbia (46%).

And, those most likely to believe the **players** are being more fair and reasonable are:

- Residents of Ontario (21%) and Atlantic Canada (21%), followed by residents of British Columbia (20%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (16%), Quebec (11%), and Alberta (5%).

And, Half Of Canadians (50%) Will Put Blame On The Players If Hockey Season Scrapped – Unchanged From September Survey (52%)...

If the owners and players can't reach an agreement and the hockey season doesn't start this year, half of Canadians (50%) think the "players" would be most to blame (essentially unchanged from the 52% who felt this way in the September 13th survey), while 21% would put the most blame on the "owners" (unchanged from the September 13th survey).

One in five Canadians (19%) say they would blame "both" the players and owners equally (unchanged from the September 13th survey), and 1% say they would blame "neither" (down very slightly from 3% who said this in the last survey). The remaining 8% of Canadians "don't know" who they would blame.

Today, those most likely to believe the **players** would be most to blame are:

- Residents of Quebec (58%), followed by Saskatchewan/Manitoba (56%), Alberta (55%), Ontario (50%), Atlantic Canada (47%), and British Columbia (34%).

And, those most likely to believe the **owners** would be most to blame are:



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- Residents of Ontario (25%) and British Columbia (25%), followed by residents of Atlantic Canada (23%), Quebec (18%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (15%), and Alberta (14%).

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