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Players take brunt of fan anger

BILL RODGERS, Special to The Free Press

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OTTAWA -- More than half of Canadians are mad at millionaire NHL hockey players and owners and have no sympathy for either side in the labour dispute, according to an SES poll. The survey of 1,000 Canadians, conducted between Oct. 26 and Nov. 1, shows 51 per cent of Canadians don't support owners or locked-out players.



But the players are taking the brunt of fan anger. Only nine per cent of respondents said they're behind the players in their battle against a proposed salary cap while 35 per cent say they sympathize with the owners. Four per cent were undecided.

"For the average Canadian, it's clear that the owners have been much more effective than the players at rallying support for their cause," said SES pollster Nik Nanos.

"Only one out of every 10 Canadians supports the players during this (lockout)."

But the poll also detected a worrying sign for both players and owners. Interest in Canada's national game appears to be on the decline among those surveyed, with a whopping 80 per cent saying they're either part-time hockey fans or would rather be doing something else.



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