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November 4, 2004

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Wed, November 3, 2004

**A pox on both hockey houses**  
**NO WINNERS IN NHL WAR: POLL**  
By BILL RODGERS, OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF

MORE THAN half of Canadians are mad as hell 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% of Canadians don't support owners or locked-out players.

But it's the players who are taking the brunt of fan anger. Only 9% polled said they are behind the players in the battle against a proposed salary cap, while 35% say they sympathize with the owners. Four percent 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," SES pollster Nik Nanos said. "Only one out of every 10 Canadians supports the players during this (lockout)."

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

The poll found 42% only watch the playoffs, and 38% said they would rather read a book than watch pro hockey.

Only 16% identified themselves as diehard NHL fans who were addicted to it. Four percent were undecided.

Michele Mandel  
Iran was first taste of  
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"I think people are just upset with the fact that this whole (lockout) has really boiled down to money and two different sets of millionaires are fighting over who gets a bigger piece of the pie," Nanos said in his analysis of the poll.

"The losers are really the spectators, the Canadians who support and watch hockey."

The poll is accurate to within 3.1 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

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