



# NHLPA fires Kelly: Picking through the rubble

by [James Mirtle](#) on [Sep 1, 2009 7:00 AM CDT](#)

According to sources, part of this group's desire to get rid of Kelly also stemmed from Kelly ordering an internal audit (by a top former FBI forensic accountant) of the players' association's expenses during the previous three years before he took over. That audit was still ongoing prior to Kelly's dismissal. Sources claim that through the audit, Kelly discovered that then-interim leaders Penny and Lindros were [allegedly] spending millions of dollars of the union's money. Lindros ended up resigning, but word is, that move fueled this attack on Kelly, and Lindros was very much involved.

— [James Murphy, NESN.com](#)

I've read 20 to 30 articles in the last 24 hours on Paul Kelly's surprise ouster from the NHLPA, and if anyone gets to the truth of the matter, it just may be Murph in the passage above.

And what a sad indictment of the whole "process" that is.

I've covered some of the NHLPA dealings extensively in the past, going back to [the pivotal meetings in 2007](#) here in Toronto, and throughout those days talking to players like [Mathieu Schneider](#) and [Shawn Horcoff](#), you wanted to believe that the union was, in fact, on the verge of turning a corner. The hiring of Kelly, the very man who had helped take down Alan Eagleson, seemed symbolic, a hopeful sign that this mess of an organization had found its leader to take them out of the Dark Ages.

And you can't help but look at what's happened here and wonder if there's any way for this group to find some sense of unity, especially as the gap between rich and poor continues to widen among its membership.

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Here's [Tom Benjamin](#):

The Union was broken in the labour war of 2004-05 and it is weak, fractious and inherently unstable. Paul Kelly did not really get a chance to make it strong, united and stable.

As I have written several times since 2005, it is very hard to see a positive direction for this Union. The last thing most players want is another fight with the NHL. Even if that were not so, how can the NHLPA convince themselves they could ever win a fight with the owners now? They can't – and won't – trust each other. When push comes to shove, the owners will get whatever they want from the next CBA, just like they got what they wanted from the last one.

I firmly believe that Kelly is a very intelligent man who tried to rule this union with common sense, honesty and integrity, and the fact that they've run him out the door this quickly is not a good sign. You look at the quotes from players before he was hired as to what they wanted, and he is their man, someone who would work, [as Mark Spector puts it](#), "as a cooperative alternative to the confrontational Bob Goodenow."

The NHLPA's chances of finding a better candidate to lead them into 2011's labour war in the near future are realistically slim to none. And you better believe the owners are licking their lips right now at that thought.

I still seem to be reading more hearsay than data, not sure how valid any of the info including the NESN article really is given the various factions and their efforts at spin. However, the very nature of the confusion implies a negative.

I am less concerned about fairness and \$um of player contracts and more concerned with continued play on the ice. I am not sure who wins the next NHL/NHLPA war but I hope they don't lose any more games. I am guessing, not much better than the news coverage on this topic, but guessing that we will lose games.

by [sctlaw](#) on [Sep 1, 2009 8:07 AM CDT](#) [reply](#)



Whether or not we lose games will depend on the membership of the NHLPA. Right now, we have the owners against a pile of NHLPA hardliners, many of whom won't even be in the NHL in 2012. If the collective lets this small group of selfish individuals re-fight the 2004-05 war, then yeah, we're going to lose games.

However, I very much doubt that there will be a lockout this time. If there is a labour disruption, it will be a strike by the players. So the question is, how much willingness is there in the rank and file to take on an ownership group that absolutely slaughtered them last time around? Especially when they are STILL making millions in most cases, while the fringe guys making minimum wage are earning twice what they would have in the last CBA?

The last lockout was about the owners being protected from themselves. The next strike will be fought within the union itself. A herd of sheep can overcome a few wolves, if it has the inclination to fight.