



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 28, 2022



Five NHL teams having sneaky-good offseasons

These teams have improved stocks for 2022-23 thanks to some savvy tinkering by their GMs.

By Mike McKenna

It's not always the big free agent signings that pave the way to success in the NHL. Trades can be just as effective, especially in the tight confines of a hard salary cap. And five NHL franchises have really caught my eye so far this offseason.

Carolina Hurricanes

Not willing to overpay in free agency? No problem! My Christmas in July piece had Filip Forsberg listed as the best gift Carolina could receive. And you know what? I was wrong. Because there was no way the Hurricanes were going to pay open-market value, even if he was available.

Carolina needed star power up front: a sniper that it could count on to bury 30-plus goals a season. Especially in the Stanley Cup Playoffs. So the Hurricanes perused the used car lot and found Max Pacioretty ripe for the taking. The Vegas Golden Knights had put themselves in a salary cap nightmare and he was available for pretty much nothing.

Then the Hurricanes decided to bolster their blueline after trading Tony DeAngelo's rights to the Philadelphia Flyers. To replace his scoring output, Carolina went out and landed Brent Burns in a deal with the San Jose Sharks. Oh, and the Sharks are eating a portion of his salary, so Burns only counts for just over \$5 million against the cap.

Wow. Job well done by Hurricanes GM Don Waddell.

Detroit Red Wings

Most of the work done so far this offseason by GM Steve Yzerman has been via free agency, but don't discount the move to acquire goaltender Ville Husso's rights from the St. Louis Blues. Detroit was able to sign the RFA to a four-year deal, solidifying the crease in tandem with incumbent Alex Nedeljkovic.

Then the Red Wings went to work during free agency, signing veteran defensemen Ben Chiarot and Olli Maatta. Detroit gained scoring at the forward position by signing David Perron and Dominik Kubalik. Michigan native Andrew Copp came home on a five-year deal.

I'm a huge fan of Copp's game and think an elevated role in the Motor City will be beneficial for both sides. Yzerman has been patient during his time at the helm of the Red Wings. But the rebuild was just kicked into high gear for the 2022-23 season. I think Detroit has a legitimate chance of making the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Anaheim Ducks

This might be a surprising pick, but hear me out. It's no secret that GM Pat Verbeek is looking to overhaul the Anaheim organization in his likeness. And he traded away almost every player of value at the 2022 NHL trade deadline.

But that's my point. Verbeek acquired so many draft picks that he now has flexibility in determining exactly what type of players – and people – he wants in Anaheim.

No doubt eyebrows were raised when Sonny Milano didn't receive a qualifying offer. I was shocked by the move. But I appreciate the hardline stance Verbeek is willing to take. An NHL GM needs a strong backbone, and I think Verbeek has thus far shown some of the tenacity that made him a feared opponent on the ice.

I also like that Verbeek didn't go scorched earth. Anaheim spent on forwards Ryan Strome and Frank Vatrano. They worked well together with the New York Rangers and should keep the Ducks respectable while the team rebuilds.

Pittsburgh Penguins

When the Penguins were able to re-sign Kris Letang and Evgeni Malkin this offseason, my expectation was that GM Ron Hextall was finished for the summer. Not so. Out went Mike Matheson to the Montreal Canadiens in exchange for Jeff Petry. And John Marino was swapped out for Ty Smith from the New Jersey Devils.

That's a big overhaul to the Pittsburgh blueline. And it's a gamble. Petry is 34 years old, and Smith is still finding his way in the NHL. But after several years of early exits in the Stanley Cup playoffs, it was apparent that Hextall wasn't content with the status quo.

I don't think either trade was made just to shake things up. Petry can hammer the puck. And Smith arrives at a low cap hit with tons of potential. But I was surprised to see Matheson go.

Up front, the Penguins were able to retain Rickard Rakell for the long haul. And Bryan Rust decided to stick around in Iron City on what I consider to be a team-friendly, six-year contract worth \$5.125 million per year.

There's no rebuild in Pittsburgh. With Sidney Crosby under contract for three more seasons, it's still win-now for the Penguins.

New Jersey Devils

Having salary cap room by the oodles has sure helped the Devils so far this offseason. General manager Tom Fitzgerald was able to look at several different routes to improve his team, and I think he's done just that.



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I've always thought that Ondrej Palat would be a star in the NHL if given the opportunity to play more top-line minutes. And while he did on occasion with the Tampa Bay Lightning – where he was a key component to winning two Stanley Cups – it wasn't consistent. The Lightning were deep, and Palat was a secondary player. That's about to change in New Jersey, where I think he'll play an expanded role. And for \$6 million a year, that's a reasonable price to pay for the next five seasons.

The Devils have also been active on the trade market, bringing in goaltender Vitek Vanecek from the Washington Capitals, Erik Haula from the Boston Bruins, and Marino from the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Last season New Jersey struggled mightily in goal. And while Mackenzie Blackwood's name has been floated in trade rumors, it appears he will team with Vanecek this coming

season. That's an upgrade. Vanecek is a solid NHL goaltender. The only caveat is that neither he nor Blackwood has taken the next step to being a true No. 1 goalie. So goaltending still might be a work in progress.

Haula can fly and should fit in well with the uptempo style preferred by head coach Lindy Ruff. But Marino might be the most intriguing deal of all for the Devils. At just 25 years old, the blueliner has five years remaining at \$4.4 million. That's a manageable cap hit for a defenseman that's proven to be responsible and capable of chipping in offensively.

Will the Devils be Stanley Cup contenders next season? That would probably be a stretch. But they will be better. And a lot of that is thanks to the trades and signings that have taken place in recent weeks.

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/five-nhl-teams-having-sneaky-good-offseasons/>

SportScan

Articles from outlets covering the Hurricanes' upcoming opponents and league-wide news

1250503 Websites

Arena Digest / Yo, Adrian! New restaurant planned for Wells Fargo Center revamped Club Level

by Kevin Reichard

July 27, 2022

The \$350-million makeover of Wells Fargo Center for the coming winter sports seasons continues with the unveiling of Adrian, a new Club Level restaurant set to debut this fall.

Adrian is being designed to embrace the history of Philadelphia's sports teams (both real and fictional, apparently)—Adrian is a reference to Rocky—with traditional accents and lighting reminiscent of an upscale tavern. With floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the Philadelphia skyline, the dining space will seat approximately 300 fans. The restaurant will be led by entrepreneur and James Beard award-winning restaurateur Stephen Starr and designed by Rockwell Group.

"Every inch of the new Wells Fargo Center is designed to be world-class, and we're incredibly proud to be the first venue in the world to offer a Starr Restaurant experience to our guests," said Valerie Camillo, President of Wells Fargo Center, via press statement. "As we've transformed the arena, we've focused on making every part of the venue top-of-the-line, but we've also made sure that every part of the new Wells Fargo Center represents the great city of Philadelphia and its incredible history. Adrian is a perfect example of that—it will be a world-class restaurant with an unmistakable Philly feel."

"An intimate interpretation of a classic urban tavern, Adrian offers a warm and inviting experience at Wells Fargo Center," said Matthew Winter, Studio Leader, Rockwell Group, via press statement. "We conceived a palette of richly textured materials, such as dark walnut, brass, and silk in an approachable yet sumptuous environment adorned with red diamond-tufted Hollywood banquettes, wine-colored fringe table lamps, and other nuanced architectural gestures."

"Through our culinary and strategic collaboration with Starr Restaurants, and with the leadership and vision of Rockwell Group and Wells Fargo Center, we are thrilled to see this exciting new restaurant come to life," said Alison Birdwell, President and CEO of Aramark Sports + Entertainment. "Adrian is poised to deliver an elevated game-day dining experience, all in a unique atmosphere that pays homage to the city of Philadelphia and its iconic sports history."



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Adrian's menu will feature American-style cuisine, as diners can start with soups, salads, and appetizers including crab cakes and French onion soup. The theme is comfort food: steaks, chops, sandwiches, burgers and an abundance of sides. For those who crave something other than meat, the menu includes an expansive selection of vegetarian and seafood options including raw bar, Scottish salmon, whole roasted celery root, and whole branzino.

The restaurant is part of the \$350 million Transformation of Wells Fargo Center and will debut as part of the brand-new Club Level this fall. The new Club Level, which will become Philadelphia's premiere sports and entertainment experience, will honor Philadelphia's rich sports and entertainment past while also showcasing the latest in entertainment and service technologies. Highlights of the Club Level include a Premium Seating Entrance & Lobby, new seating options and open-floor layout, exclusive retail, and themed whiskey and tequila bars.

As noted, the restaurant will be part of the new Club Level, a \$50-million makeover that's part of the \$300 million Wells Fargo Center Transformation project. The new Club Level will feature four new Club Level bars, new seating layout and options and a Premium Seating Entrance & Lobby.

Arena Digest LOADED: 07.28.2022

1250504 Websites

ESPN / NHL free agency - Seven potential destinations for Nazem Kadri

Greg Wyshynski

10-13 minutes

12:00 PM BST

Nazem Kadri is a Stanley Cup champion who had 87 points in 71 games last season for the Colorado Avalanche. He hadn't scored more than 61 points in a season previously, turns 32 in October and is seeking a hefty payday on a new contract.

The combination of those factors make Kadri a top-tier NHL free agent center who also has yet to find a home this summer. There's been all sorts of speculation about teams trying to clear space under the flat(ish) salary cap for the talented scorer, but nothing has manifested yet.

Kadri's agent Darren Ferris said he was unable to comment on the state of his player's contract talks at this time.

Where could Kadri end up? What makes sense? Here are some possibilities based on what we've heard and what's been speculated:

New York Islanders

Cap space: \$11,185,037

The running joke in hockey circles is that GM Lou Lamoriello keeps things so closely guarded that it's possible the Islanders signed Kadri when free agency opened and we won't find out until he skates out in a blue and orange jersey at training camp.

That tracks with Lamoriello, but so does his having an affinity for Kadri. When he was GM of the Toronto Maple Leafs, Lamoriello handed Kadri a six-year, \$27 million contract that Kadri just completed after the Avalanche captured the Stanley Cup.

"I think that Naz showed he can be put in any role, no matter what it might be," Lamoriello said in 2016. "He found himself in that shutdown role, he found himself offensively on the power play. I think that's the great thing about him. He'll accept whatever role is given to him."

Does he have a role on the Islanders? That probably depends on whether one of their current centers will accept whatever role is given to them. Kadri is a center and excels as such. The Islanders' top three pivots are Mathew Barzal -- who is a year away from restricted free agency -- Brock Nelson and Jean-Gabriel Pageau.

There's little reason to move Pageau out of the middle on their third line. So that leaves Nelson and Barzal potentially shifting to Kadri's wing. Shifting Nelson over to the wing makes a bit more sense, as he scored 37 goals last season and is generally a superior finisher to Barzal. But there's also an argument to be made that putting Barzal on the wing would allow him a little more open ice in which to create while also better minimizing his defensive deficiencies.

The Islanders are a win-now team that already has nine players over 30, so what's one more who turns 32 in October? After watching other teams in the division load up with talent this summer, Kadri would bolster this lineup and create a little more buzz in a shiny new building that needs it.

Seattle Kraken

Cap space: \$2,210,834

There was a lot of buzz around Kadri to the Kraken at the NHL draft. The logic was two-fold. First, Seattle was a team flush with cap space that needed to make a Year 2 splash after a tepid inaugural season. But Kadri would also allow the team's young centers -- Matty Beniers and Shane Wright -- time to percolate as Kadri handled duties in the top-line center spot.

That was then. Now, the Kraken have just over \$2 million in available cap space after adding Andre Burakovsky at \$5.5 million per year as a free agent and trading for Oliver Bjorkstrand (\$5.4 million AAV) after the Columbus Blue Jackets signed both Johnny Gaudreau and Patrik Laine. Those two both play on the wing, where the Kraken are really loaded. At center, they'll have Beniers and Wright along with Yanni Gourde, Alexander Wennberg, Morgan Geekie and potentially Jared McCann.

Salary cap conditions can always change -- the Kraken would do well to move one or two of their Year 1 forwards this offseason -- but the lineup doesn't really speak to a need for Kadri. Now, free agent defenseman John Klingberg on the other hand ...

Calgary Flames

Cap space: \$9.3 million

If the last week taught us anything, it's that the Flames are still very much all-in with this roster.

After Gaudreau walked away to the Blue Jackets, Calgary was forced to trade Matthew Tkachuk after he made it clear he wasn't signing there long-term. The return from the Florida Panthers was Jonathan Huberdeau and MacKenzie Weegar. Even if they walk next summer as free agents, the Flames added an MVP-level winger (Huberdeau) and a borderline elite defenseman (Weegar) to a Pacific Division-winning roster which features a Jack Adams-winning coach (Darryl Sutter) and a goalie (Jacob Markstrom) who is too good for Calgary to all of a sudden decide to tank instead.

They could use Kadri. Absolutely. After Elias Lindholm and Mikael Backlund, they don't have much at the center position. Kadri would instantly bolster that group. He probably wouldn't mind taking passes from Huberdeau for a season, either.

The challenge is the money. That \$9.3 million in cap space is deceptive. Restricted free agent Andrew Mangiapane needs a new contract after a 35-goal season and is scheduled for arbitration. Fellow RFA Oliver Kylington played 74 games and was a plus-34. He won't get the kind of reward that Mangiapane will, but it'll cut into that cap space.

Again, the on-ice fit is undeniable, right down to the fact that Kadri could help fill the agitation role that Tkachuk played so well. It would just be a matter of money and Kadri's desire to join a team that, frankly, might have a one-year window to win.



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Boston Bruins

Cap space: \$4,758,333

If we're to believe the notion that Kadri is waiting for a team to clear space for his arrival, then the Bruins have to remain on the radar because he's a potential fit as a center and a perfect fit as a pain in the posterior.

Patrice Bergeron's return to the team would slot him at the No. 1 center spot. The Bruins have had discussions with David Krejci about a return to the club, one season after he left to play in the Czech Extraliga. Then there's Charlie Coyle and Pavel Zacha in the middle, too, not to mention players like Jack Studnicka looking for ice time.

Finding room for Kadri would be difficult if Krejci returns as expected. Heck, finding money for either of them would still necessitate finding a taker for someone like Nick Foligno (\$3.8 million AAV for one more season).

But Kadri adds a snarl and swagger that the Bruins lack outside of Brad Marchand. As dependable as Krejci is as a point-producing center -- especially in the postseason -- there are elements to Kadri's game that Boston could really use in a No. 2 center.

The elephant in the room is, of course, that Kadri has just a smidgen of history with the Bruins. While with the Maple Leafs, he was suspended for three games for boarding forward Tommy Wingels in the 2018 playoffs and then ran it back with a four-game suspension for cross-checking Bruins forward Jake DeBrusk in the 2019 playoffs.

That history has made the speculation about Kadri and the Bruins both curious and potentially fascinating, depending on fan reaction. But he's a different person and player than he was during that run.

Ottawa Senators

Cap space: \$10,890,119

Based on what we've seen from Ottawa this offseason, we can assume it would be in the mix on Kadri. It has the cap flexibility. It is one of those Eastern Conference teams attempting a quick level up with veteran acquisitions (Claude Giroux, Alex DeBrincat) joining their collection of younger talent.

To that end, Kadri could be a fit here, although it would probably make more sense to keep young Tim Stutzle in the middle and spend the available cap space for an upgrade on defense.

Detroit Red Wings

Cap space: \$10,296,111

Does Kadri fit into the Yzerman plan? Detroit GM Steve Yzerman has made some money moves in the offseason, signing David Perron (\$4.75 million AAV), Andrew Copp (\$5.625 million AAV), Ben Chiarot (\$4.75 million), Dominik Kubalik (\$2.5 million AAV) and Olli Maatta (\$2.25 million AAV) in free agency and trading for goalie Ville Husso. That's an entire starting lineup!

The Red Wings still have the flexibility this season to bring in Kadri and then have a bunch of players coming off their cap in 2023-24. If they don't have to go too long in term with Kadri, he makes a lot of sense. Kadri slots in behind Dylan Larkin as the No. 2 center. Copp could fill that role or shift to the wing or drop down to No. 3 center -- his versatility made him a trade deadline darling last season.

Perron brings a ring to the Red Wings dressing room. So would Kadri. That's important for a young team learning how to win. But that's also part of the consideration for Kadri: Detroit is trying to turn the corner, but is it close enough to contention for Kadri?

Colorado Avalanche

Cap space: \$3.91 million

Can Nazem Kadri go home again? Better question: Have the Avalanche already converted his bedroom into a yoga studio/storage space?

"We've asked Naz's agent to keep us in the loop on it," newly promoted Avalanche GM Chris MacFarland said after free agency opened. "Obviously, he's a high-priority player, deservedly so. [Plays in the] middle of the ice. That's the best that I can say on that."

The biggest priority for the Avalanche right now is ensuring that their cap for next summer is in order so they can hand Nathan MacKinnon his big extension before unrestricted free agency. If Kadri doesn't fit into that financial planning ... well, that's why they walked him to free agency. Center J.T. Compher could slide up to the second line until promising 21-year-old Alex Newhook is ready to lock that down.

If there was a way to bring Kadri back on a contract that made sense regarding term and against the cap -- that somehow wouldn't necessitate it trading a player it doesn't want to jettison -- then why not run it back with a lineup that led Colorado to the Stanley Cup?

To create room for Kadri, moving Compher (\$3.5 million) one year before unrestricted free agency could make sense. The Avalanche won the Cup without Sam Girard in the lineup, but Colorado reportedly isn't keen on trading a 24-year-old defenseman with a great cap number (\$5 million AAV) through 2026-27.

It's hard to imagine Kadri going for a hometown discount with the Avalanche. He's earned the chance to score big on this contract. But if he's looking to play for a contender ... why not the champs?

"Being able to be put in a position to succeed with my teammates ... it's hard to explain. You work your whole life for this, and now it is here, so incredible feeling," Kadri said after the Avalanche won the Stanley Cup.

What's that feeling worth?

ESPN LOADED: 07.28.2022

1250505 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Team Canada will still play in 2022 World Juniors in Edmonton next month

IIHF committed to hosting 2022 World Juniors next month

Paul D. Grant@RealPDGrant

July 27, 2022, 2:48 PM

Amid the fallout from how Hockey Canada has handled sexual assault allegations, Team Canada will still appear in the upcoming World Juniors tournament in Edmonton, Hockey Canada president Scott Smith said during a pause in Wednesday's parliamentary hearings.

The International Ice Hockey Federation, Smith noted, remained committed to hosting the tournament in Edmonton, stressing that the event itself is not one run by Hockey Canada.

The team continuing to participate comes in the immediate wake of new allegations on Friday of sexual assault by former national team players at the 2003 tournament in Halifax. Halifax police quickly announced they are opening an investigation into the alleged incident.

Also on Friday, London, Ont., police announced they are reopening an investigation into an alleged sexual assault in 2018 involving eight CHL players, some of whom were on the 2018 Canadian world juniors team.

The 2022 tournament, already absent Russia because of an IIHF ban prompted by that country's invasion of Ukraine, will go ahead as planned at Rogers Place. Canada was in Group A with Czechia, Finland, Latvia and Slovakia.



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Team USA is the defending champion, having captured gold by beating Canada in the 2021 tournament held in Edmonton. Team USA is in Group B with Austria, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland.

The 2022 world juniors were postponed from the usual December-January window because of rising COVID-19 infections caused by the Omicron variant.

The 2023 world juniors are slated for Dec. 26 to Jan. 5, 2023, in Halifax and Moncton.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 07.28.2022

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL Scout's Analysis: Why Cole Schwindt could be the wild card in Flames-Panthers trade

Jason Bukala

July 27, 2022, 4:50 PM

Over the past several days, I've had the chance to sit back and digest the recent trade between the Florida Panthers and Calgary Flames.

Was I shocked that the Panthers would make a pitch to acquire Matthew Tkachuk?

Absolutely not!

Why wouldn't Florida kick tires on an elite 24-year-old who plays the way Tkachuk does and is coming off a career year (42 G | 62 A | 104 PTS). His style of play is exactly what the Panthers needed to add to their core.

But at what cost?

The Flames win the trade with the Panthers and it's not because they add Jonathan Huberdeau and his production (30 G | 85 A | 115 PTS). It's because they also landed MacKenzie Weegar, Cole Schwindt and a first-round pick in 2025 (the Flames also gave up a conditional fourth-round pick in 2025).

During my time with the Panthers organization, we selected Weegar from Halifax in the QMJHL, 206th overall at the 2013 NHL Draft in New Jersey. Halifax also had a kid named Nathan MacKinnon on their roster that year and he went first overall to Colorado. The Panthers were also in on the draft lottery that year, so we had several eyes on MacKinnon throughout the season. Weegar, to his credit, jumped out to us as well. Paul Gallagher was the QMJHL scout for the Panthers at that time and provided us with the background information required to take a chance on a player like Weegar. The rest, as they say, is history.

Weegar has blossomed into quite the player:

But the developing story in this trade, in my opinion, is the acquisition of Schwindt by the Flames.

We selected Schwindt in Round 3 (81st overall) of the 2019 NHL Draft in Vancouver. What we liked about Schwindt was the year-over-year growth of his game. Steelheads head coach and general manager James Richmond clearly trusted Schwindt after his OHL rookie season as he was given a significant increase in responsibility and rewarded the team with 49 points (19 G | 30 A) in his draft year. The following season, he went to another level offensively, scoring 71 points in 57 games (28 G | 43 A) during the COVID-shortened 2019-2020.

Statistically speaking, Schwindt was displaying the ability to find space in the offensive zone and occasionally score off the rush. He was also showing that he could create coming off the boards down low while going to the net looking for tips and rebounds.

What impressed me most, however, was his attention to detail. Schwindt is a rangy, right-shot centre who can also play the wing. His ability to win draws in all three zones is an element teams look for in players and coaches love to lean on and trust. In time, the Flames will value him as well for his pedigree in the face-off circle. There isn't an ounce of cheat in Schwindt's game. He tracks back the full length of the ice. He never cuts corners. In my opinion, he has a chance to produce secondary offence at the NHL level. He likely won't land on one of the power-play units, but he can penalty kill and match up strategically.

The AHL is not an easy league to develop your trade, yet Schwindt produced 40 points (19 G | 21 A) playing for Charlotte in his rookie season. His production was tied for second most in team scoring. True to his identity as a player, he led the team with a plus-22 rating.

Like many NHL players, Schwindt will always have to work on his skating. He has improved his stride and leg strength significantly over the years, but the NHL is a Formula 1 race and he will need to fine-tune his pace throughout his career.

I have personally witnessed Schwindt's growth and believe in his potential moving forward.

The biggest thing players like Weegar and Schwindt have going for them is their character. Weegar wasn't supposed to be an NHL 'D' but has persevered and could be a top-pairing defenceman for the Flames. Schwindt isn't an NHL regular yet but he's not far off. A big body, right-shot, detailed centre is hard to find in the NHL at the right price. I have no doubt Schwindt will deliver for the Flames.

I also have no doubt that Flames director of scouting Todd Button is smiling from ear to ear with the acquisition of Schwindt (who he has tracked for years). Not to mention that he and his staff also get an extra chance to swing for the fences with the 2025 first-round pick they also inherited in the trade.

Something to think about ...

All NHL players are paid in US dollars. Some players from the USA would prefer to play in their home country. Conversely, some Canadian players take pride in playing in Canadian markets.

Both Huberdeau and Weegar are Canadians. They are both scheduled to become UFA's after 2022-2023. They appreciate the intensity associated with playing in a Canadian market and I believe they will thrive in the environment.

A player being paid \$9.5 million per year playing in places like Nashville, Dallas and Florida take home approximately \$5.7 million after taxes.

A player being paid the same but playing in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal will end with approximately \$4.5 million after taxes. A player looking to sign long-term in Calgary is looking at just shy of \$5 million annually after taxes.

However, other considerations must be taken into account. For instance: the conversion of the \$USD to \$CDN is a bonus that takes some of the bite out of the tax scenario.

The ultimate "win" for Brad Treliving in this trade will be getting both Huberdeau and Weegar signed to long-term extensions.

Should that happen, then we look back at this trade and truly applaud the Flames for landing all those assets. As great a player as Tkachuk is and can be in the future, having a roster with Huberdeau, Weegar, Schwindt and whoever their first-round pick in 2025 becomes makes this a clear victory for Calgary.

On the horizon ...

The annual summer Under-18 Hlinka/Gretzky Cup is being played from July 31 – August 6 in Red Deer Alberta. Countries competing are Canada, USA, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, Czechia and Germany.



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The 2023 NHL Draft is projected to be an elite class. The Hlinka/Gretzky Cup marks the beginning of a new scouting season so I, along with colleague Sam Cosentino, will report back on the top performers from the event, during and after the tournament.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 07.28.2022

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TSN.CA / Embattled Hockey Canada president resists calls to step down

Rick Westhead

Hockey Canada president and chief executive officer Scott Smith came under blistering criticism during a government hearing on Wednesday examining how the organization responded to an alleged sexual assault in 2018 involving players on Canada's World Junior team.

The hearing came after former NHL player and abuse survivor Sheldon Kennedy on Tuesday night criticized Smith and called for him, his leadership team, and Hockey Canada's board of directors to resign en masse. Several members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage said Wednesday they agree with Kennedy.

"There needs to be a bigger culture change in Hockey Canada than you are promising," Liberal MP Anthony Housefather said to Smith. "There are times when good people have to step aside because the public has lost confidence in them. I'm afraid this is one of those times."

Conservative MP John Nater also called on Smith to step down.

"For the good of hockey, for the good of the countless volunteers across this country, for the good work that countless, blameless people are doing in the sport of hockey, I strongly believe there needs to be new leadership within Hockey Canada," Nater said. "Will you do that? Will you step down for new leadership to take over?"

Smith said he would not but understood that Canadians' trust in Hockey Canada has been shaken.

"I'm prepared to take on this responsibility for change within our game," Smith responded to Nater. "I believe I've got the experience to do it. Should our board, or the governance review that we've outlined in our action plan suggest that I'm not the person, then I'm prepared to accept that."

Smith also addressed Kennedy's call for his resignation.

"I've had a longstanding personal and business relationship with Sheldon Kennedy," he said. "I respect him, as all of you do. It was difficult to read his comments yesterday, but I still hold him in high regard."

Smith, who was appointed the organization's CEO on July 1 but joined Hockey Canada's head office in 1997, was also repeatedly questioned by members of parliament for his role in approving the settlement of \$3.55-million lawsuit filed in connection with the alleged assault.

The four-hour hearing had been anticipated for weeks and was convened after Smith and other Hockey Canada officials first testified before the committee on June 20.

During Wednesday's hearing, members of parliament demanded information on a variety of topics, ranging from the role Hockey Canada's board played in agreeing to settle the lawsuit related to the 2018 alleged assault to a purported lack of diversity within the organization's senior leadership, to historical data on how many other claims have been settled by Hockey Canada.

Smith was repeatedly pressed on whether he agreed that Hockey Canada is in a state of crisis. He refused to agree with the sentiment,

even though major sponsors have paused their relationships with Hockey Canada and the federal government has frozen the organization's public funding.

The storm around the organization has grown since TSN reported in May that Hockey Canada settled a lawsuit filed by a woman who alleged she was sexually assaulted by eight former Canadian Hockey League players, at least some of whom played for the Canadian World Juniors team, following a Hockey Canada event in June 2018 in London, Ont.

The lawsuit was settled weeks after it was filed, and the allegations made in the case have not been proven.

Hockey Canada has since reopened its investigation into the allegations, and the complainant in the case has agreed to cooperate. The National Hockey League is investigating, and London police have said they, too, have reopened a criminal investigation. London police initially closed their probe of the allegations in February 2019 without laying any criminal charges.

Glen McCurdie, Hockey Canada's former vice-president of insurance and risk management, began Wednesday's testimony by telling the hearing that at 12:08 p.m. (ET) on June 19, 2018, he received a call from Hockey Canada employees Denise Pattyn and Scott Salmond, who told him that a woman's stepfather had contacted them alleging an assault had taken place in London.

Following two mid-afternoon conference calls with colleagues, McCurdie said he phoned London police at 6:44 p.m. the same day. He said he spoke to two officers and "both were quite abrupt with me." McCurdie said that at 8:14 p.m., London police phoned and told him that a constable had been assigned to the case.

After CHL president Dan MacKenzie delivered his opening statement, saying, "Players, no matter their skill, must know they cannot act with impunity," attention turned to Smith.

In what would be a refrain repeated throughout the hearing, Smith insisted that he would not step down from his position. He testified that he served at the pleasure of Hockey Canada's board of directors and that the board had affirmed its support of him.

TSN requested a comment from Hockey Canada chair Michael Brind'Amour, who had not responded by the time of publication.

Smith said he and other Hockey Canada executives discussed the 2018 alleged sexual assault in London with board members, who approved settling the lawsuit filed by the complainant "up to the maximum settlement." Smith said there are no records of those board meeting discussions because they were held in camera.

Smith defended Hockey Canada's decision to settle the case on behalf of the CHL and the eight former CHL players named as defendants – referred to as John Does 1-8 in court records – without first advising them.

"We advised all players after we settled with the young woman," Smith testified. "We made the decision to settle on behalf of Hockey Canada and the other named defendants, and we did so in the best interest of the young woman in protecting her privacy and also her benefit going forward."

"...We did not want to subject her to further discussion or debate that we have now seen through the media in the last 10 to 12 days. We made that decision at the time to help her on a go-forward basis and we stand by the decision to settle with her."

Hockey Canada chief financial officer Brian Cairo backed up Smith's assertion that settling the case was the right decision.

"We didn't know all the details of the night, but we did believe harm was caused," Cairo testified. "We had two options. One was to work with the young lady to arrive at a resolution that met her needs and didn't re-victimize her or force her to litigate, which likely would reveal her identity and would essentially condone this behaviour to Canadians."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Hockey Canada officials also revealed during Wednesday's testimony that since 1989, nine settlements worth a collective \$7.6 million have been made in connection with sexual assault allegations using the organization's National Equity Fund. That total does not include the recent settlement related to 2018. Fully \$6.8 million of the total was connected to Graham James-related incidents.

Hockey Canada has also paid Toronto law firm Henein Hutchison LLP \$287,000 to manage its investigation into the 2018 allegations, Smith said.

Housefather was among the MPs who criticized Hockey Canada, saying that settling the case without first consulting the accused players was "highly unusual."

"I can only say you need better legal advice and better lawyers..." Housefather said.

Following the hearing, Smith told reporters that plans are proceeding for the World Juniors to take place in Aug 9-20 at Rogers Place in Edmonton.

"I know in Canada the World Juniors is an event that people associate with Hockey Canada, but it's not," Smith said. "It's an IIHF event. We're one of 10 teams. In discussions with the IIHF, they are committed to deliver on that event. Unfortunately, because of COVID and some problems at Christmastime, we couldn't finish the event for this age group, and the IIHF and ourselves committed to deliver that in Edmonton..."

"...This age group, although it was a similar age group in 2018, it is different players. We look forward to being able to deliver that."

TSN.CA LOADED: 07.28.2022