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[Despite decline in ticket sales, the Winnipeg Jets have never lost money, True North says](#) **[Multiple revenue streams keep Jets airborne, but ticket revenue key to icing competitive team, Chipman says](#)**

Bartley Kives · CBC News

The company that owns the Winnipeg Jets says it's never lost money since the NHL returned to Winnipeg in 2011, not even during a recent downturn in ticket sales at Canada Life Centre.

True North Sports & Entertainment has turned a profit on its combined hockey, arena and merchandising operations every year the NHL has been in Winnipeg, executive chair Mark Chipman said during a wide-ranging interview about the economics of operating a professional sports franchise in the smallest market in the National Hockey League.

As a privately held company, True North does not post its financial statements, leaving business publications such as Forbes magazine to speculate about the team's profits and losses.

True North has lost money on hockey operations alone, but has not ended up in the red overall since the former Atlanta Thrashers moved to Winnipeg in 2011 to become the Winnipeg Jets, Chipman said in the interview.

"From an overall perspective, no, we've never lost money in our NHL years. Previous years we did," Chipman said earlier this month, speaking in a boardroom at True North's offices in downtown Winnipeg.

While ticket sales for the Jets, Manitoba Moose, concerts and other events at Canada Life Centre make up the most important revenue source for True North, merchandising, broadcast rights and other revenue streams keep the company in the black, he said.

Fuelled by diminishing passion? What softer demand for Winnipeg Jets tickets means for True North
So does revenue-sharing within the NHL, as well as the league-mandated salary cap that limits team spending on the rosters to \$83.5 million this year.

Chipman said the NHL would never have returned to Winnipeg without revenue sharing and the salary cap.

"This market would not survive without that, and that's a fact," he said, adding those revenue assumptions underlined the original decision to pursue the return to the NHL.

Economic impacts and government subsidies

According to figures published by True North last week, the various arms of the company have invested \$1.6 billion in downtown Winnipeg real estate since 2004. True North contributes \$616 million a year to the municipal and provincial economy, as well as \$133 million to tax coffers at all three levels of government every year, the company states.

True North also receives municipal and provincial tax subsidies, which include a \$576,000 property-tax break on Canada Life Centre, a \$246,000 business tax refund, and the ability to collect approximately \$6.5 million worth of entertainment taxes on events at the arena.

True North is also eligible to receive revenue from 140 gaming machines at the Shark Club inside Cityplace mall, under a provincial funding deal created by the former Greg Selinger NDP government to help True North survive future economic challenges.

While the province expected the gaming revenue to average approximately \$5.5 million a year, Chipman said actual revenue from the Shark Club has been closer to \$2.5 million a year, on average.

"It was never a guaranteed source of revenue," Chipman said. "It never went into the Jets P&L [profit and loss statement]. It always resided inside the building and it was directed at paying down debt.

"We thought it was important that we pay down as much debt as we could."

Chipman said True North has never taken a distribution from any profits it's realized since the NHL returned. Instead, he said, all of the team's profits have been reinvested into Canada Life Centre: \$83 million since 2011, according to figures published by True North last week.

"We've almost invested as much in renovations as we have building it," he said, referring to a \$133.5-million construction project conducted in 2003 and 2004.

"We don't look at it like a garden-variety business. You've probably heard us use the word stewards or trustees. Like, it's true. We own it because somebody has to own it, but it doesn't really belong to us."

Franchise values rising

Viewed from a long-term perspective, the Winnipeg Jets don't have to produce financial dividends in a league where franchise values are rising.

True North paid \$170 million US to purchase the Atlanta Thrashers in 2011. Forbes magazine estimated the value of the Winnipeg Jets franchise at \$780 million before news emerged last week that a prospective Salt Lake City NHL owner is willing to pay \$1.2 billion for the Arizona Coyotes franchise.

"A lot of these owners get involved in their teams because they want the value of the club for resale someday," said Glen Hodgson, an Ottawa economist who specializes in professional sports.

Nonetheless, Chipman's comments about reinvesting profits are significant, considering skepticism exists about True North among elements of the Winnipeg Jets' fanbase.

In recent years, some vocal fans have claimed Chipman and True North are solely interested in extracting profit from ticket-buying fans. Some were outraged in February when Chipman told The Athletic there would be consequences if the season-ticket base did not return to 13,000 seats from its current level of about 9,500.

"This place we find ourselves in right now, it's not going to work over the long haul. It just isn't," Chipman told The Athletic, prompting speculation the team owner was threatening to relocate the Jets.

Chipman insists his comment was poorly elucidated, and that he intended to say True North cannot continue spending close to the salary cap every year without selling more tickets to Jets games.

Low attendance at Winnipeg Jets games 'not going to work over the long haul,' chairman says "In order to win, in order for fans to be engaged, you rightfully have to be doing everything you think you can to win," he said.

No fan of teardowns and rebuilds

Chipman went on to say that's why he was no fan of dismantling the core of this team last summer, as some hockey observers expected general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff to do, given former forward Pierre-Luc Dubois's desire to leave Winnipeg and the pending expiration of contracts for centre Mark Scheifele and goalie Connor Hellebuyck.

Instead of trading all three star players for draft picks, Cheveldayoff traded Dubois to Los Angeles for Gabriel Vilardi, Alex Lafalo and Rasmus Kapuri, adding more depth to the Jets' lineup as a result. Scheifele and Hellebuyck signed long-term contracts.

The 2023-24 Jets, which many hockey analysts expected to miss the playoffs, are now destined for a first-round playoff fight against the Colorado Avalanche.

Chipman strongly suggested he is no fan of tearing apart an NHL roster and rebuilding it.

"I've learned from people in this business who've been invaluable with their advice in terms of the fallacy of tearing down a team," he said. "I would challenge people to show me just what a rebuilding is. How do you do that?"

The Boston Bruins, he noted, did not engage in a teardown following their Stanley Cup win in 2011 and have been back to the Cup final twice since then.

"For the longest time, they kept [Patrice] Bergeron and [Brad] Marchand and on and on. They kept their core," he said.

Chipman insists True North is doing everything it can to win a Stanley Cup.

"Our singular purpose is to try and win. I wouldn't have got into this business if I didn't think that was achievable," he said.

"Believe me, I'm not trying to elicit any sympathy for anybody who's got themselves into this for a living, but it's a difficult business and it's really difficult to win.

"But I love that about it. I love the fact that we're the smallest market and then we get up every morning trying to compete against, you know, great big enterprises that have more resources, so we're trying to win."

Underdog mentality legitimate

The underdog mentality is legitimate, Hodgson said.

"Winnipeg was already challenged to begin with. It's by far the smallest market in the NHL. It's a long way from any other place. It has the smallest building," he said.

But Chipman said he is convinced Winnipeg is a large enough city, and possesses sufficient affluence to sustain an NHL franchise and succeed on the ice.

As evidence, he notes the Winnipeg Jets have won more regular-season games than any other Canadian NHL team — 517 as of an April 13 drubbing of Colorado — since the league returned to Winnipeg in 2011.

Chipman also finds himself with a fair degree of influence in the NHL. He now sits on the executive committee of the league's board of governors, which dictates policy direction for the broader group of NHL owners.

He attributes his presence on that committee as a matter of representation.

"I think it was more just a nod to the way we are operating, and perhaps the idea that it made sense to have one of the smallest markets represented," he said.

"I have to believe that's had something to do with it — that they try and spread out the influence across the league."

[***Jets owners mull providing transitional housing to reduce homelessness in Winnipeg***](#)
[***Philanthropic commitment by Thomson, Chipman would be separate from Portage Place redevelopment***](#)

Bartley Kives · CBC News

Winnipeg Jets owners Mark Chipman and David Thomson are considering creating transitional housing in Winnipeg to reduce the number of homeless people in Manitoba's capital.

Chipman, the executive chair of True North Sports and Entertainment, says he and majority team owner Thomson, one of the wealthiest people in Canada, have been talking about ways they could provide more housing for people who've been living in shelters and need assistance finding and keeping a permanent home.

"What we lack desperately in the city right now is the ability to transition people out of that type of living arrangement into a more independent circumstance, and it just doesn't exist," Chipman said Monday in an interview at True North's offices in downtown Winnipeg.

During a visit to the city in December, Thomson toured the N'Dinawemak homeless shelter in South Point Douglas, which Chipman helped establish.

The two got to talking about providing more transitional housing for people with a history of homelessness, addictions or struggles with mental health — and might need help with not just finding housing, but supports that allow them to remain in a home.

"When people talk about homelessness, it's a very complex subject that requires a range of different housing options for people to move through," Chipman said.

"So we're stuck with a lack of transitional housing. There are lots that are trying and some that have been successful, and that's where his [Thomson's] interest lies."

This proposed housing would not be part of the residential tower True North plans to build, in concert with the Southern Chiefs' Organization, above the west side of what's now Portage Place mall.

"We're partners and he's more than happy to be partnered in all things Portage Place," Chipman said of Thomson. "But his interest personally has been to create more housing capacity."

During that December visit to Winnipeg, Thomson and Chipman met with Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew and Winnipeg Mayor Scott Gillingham at the mayor's office. The foursome held an informal discussion about Winnipeg's housing needs.

The premier and mayor said they're happy to see the True North partners engaged in efforts to reduce homelessness, a shared priority for the legislature and city hall.

Kinew said Winnipeg could see immediate results if Thomson and Chipman use their real-estate and business acumen to assist non-profit organizations that have relationships with people in need of housing.

"If we can tap into the expertise on acquiring and renovating housing to bring new units online or standing up new housing to help us meet the needs or addressing homeless or respond to the needs around social housing, I think that would be really welcome," the premier said in an interview in his office at the Manitoba Legislative Building.

In an interview outside his office at city hall, Gillingham said "what this is all about is everybody coming together. It takes the public sector, the private sector and the non-profits to be in partnerships to really address homelessness and our need for housing."

Confidence grows

Chipman said the level of co-ordination between the city and province on the homelessness file — not to mention actual communication between the premier and mayor — gives him the confidence to follow through on True North Real Estate Development's proposed \$650-million purchase and redevelopment of Portage Place.

True North has until the end of June to exercise its option to purchase the mall, something that is all but a formality after Kinew signed a letter of intent for the province to lease space in the health-care tower for 35 years.

"I sure don't think we'd be exercising the option in June if I didn't see and feel a real commitment from our public-sector partners to once and for all engage the root causes of the crisis we're in right now," Chipman said.

In 2022, Chipman described the number of people suffering from addictions and homelessness in downtown Winnipeg as "a humanitarian crisis."

The True North chair said the redevelopment of Portage Place won't solve that crisis, but added some of the services in the health-care tower will serve people who live downtown.

There are several facets to the redevelopment, which is planned to take place in stages.

Along with the residential tower on the west side of the mall, the plans call for demolishing the atrium at Edmonton Street, and building a health-care tower that will include a new home for the Pan Am Clinic, a walk-in clinic, a renal dialysis centre and a rapid-access addictions-medicine centre, among other clinics.

Kinew said his government conducted six months of due diligence on the health-care component, and eventually jettisoned several aspects of the tower that "didn't make sense."

The premier said the original plans for the tower, as approved by the former Progressive Conservative government, called for moving every dialysis bed out of Health Sciences Centre, Winnipeg's largest hospital, and closing an Indigenous-led rapid-access addictions medication clinic on Higgins Avenue.

Health-care tower with new Pan Am clinic part of radical makeover slated for Portage Place
Those moves have been cancelled, Kinew said, adding the province has also scaled down its spending commitment in the new tower to \$77 million a year from \$110 million.

Manitoba Health is also expected to sign a lease for a health-card service centre in the middle of what's now the mall, Kinew said.

With the province on board, all that's left for True North to do with Portage Place before it exercises its purchase option is to sign a few more leases, Chipman said. The city and federal government are also expected to announce their own commitments to the project — likely municipal tax breaks and federal housing incentives.

"There's a lot more certainty to the new project than there was when we first announced our intention to build the rink," he said, referring to the \$134-million construction of what was initially known as MTS Centre in 2003 and 2004. "We all feel very confident that we'll be able to complete this one."

The pending work at Portage Place has effectively expanded True North's footprint in downtown Winnipeg to the point where it is difficult to separate the company's downtown development efforts from downtown revitalization overall.

"Some days it's a real daunting responsibility. Other days it feels somewhat natural," Chipman said.

Glen Hodgson, an Ottawa-based economist who is an expert in professional sports, said Chipman's interest in the social welfare of downtown Winnipeg is unusual among National Hockey League owners in Canada.

While most owners have commercial developments around their arenas, similar to True North Square, few are as interested in projects such as Portage Place, that have only marginal impacts on their bottom line, he said.

"It's really hard to come up with another example of an owner who's made such a large commitment to not-for-profit investment, to building up the civic space," Hodgson said in a Zoom interview from Ottawa.

Hodgson called Thomson and Chipman's interest in developing transitional housing more than unusual.

"I think it's extraordinary. I think it's a great example for the business community across Canada, where they should be thinking about the different sort of strata of housing that's required to get people off the streets in this country," Hodgson said.

Back at True North's offices, Chipman said he is still not comfortable with the attention he personally receives, and tries not to think about the inextricable link between the success of True North's downtown development efforts and the health of downtown itself.

"I don't think we set out to have that responsibility, but we've kind of fallen in that path and so, you know, it is what it is. We'll do the best we can with what we have, and we've thankfully we've got a very strong and committed group of people that feel the same way I do."

Winnipeg Free Press

[Jets won't be taking foot off the gas with playoffs just around the corner](#)

By: Ken Wiebe

DENVER — The first-round playoff opponent is set and home-ice advantage is still up for grabs.

All that's left for the Winnipeg Jets are a pair of regular-season tuneups, beginning with Tuesday's tilt against the Seattle Kraken (7 p.m. CT, TSN, CJOB).

The Jets are coming off a jaw-dropping 7-0 victory over the Colorado Avalanche on Saturday that extended their winning streak to six games and put the team in the pole position for second place in the Central Division.

Combined with the Avalanche losing 4-3 in overtime to the Vegas Golden Knights on Sunday afternoon (while blowing a 3-0 lead), the Jets will need to secure one point in order to host Games 1 and 2 at Canada Life Centre.

"For us, starting at home, it would be awesome playing in front of the fans," Jets captain Adam Lowry after scoring a pair of goals against the Avalanche.

"We've worked so hard to put it in our control. That's nice, but whether we start at home or on the road, we're a real confident group. We like our team, we like our depth, we like how we can match up players at home or on the road. We'll try to take care of that in the next couple of games."

So what will the focus be for the Jets this week?

"We're just focusing on being ready for Game 1," said Lowry. "It's nice to come in here and play really well, but come playoff time, we expect a better effort from them. We know they're a much better team than they showed."

“You can’t take too much out of this. It’s nice to finish the road trip strong, it’s nice to continue playing well and go into these last two games with a lot of confidence.”

Fair enough.

Although they weren’t about to take a victory lap after Games 79 or 80, they clearly sent a message to the rest of the NHL with convincing victories over the Dallas Stars and Avalanche.

Beating them both was a feat in itself, outscoring them 10-0 was quite another.

Producing a converted touchdown against the Avalanche was impressive, though posting consecutive shutouts against the Stars and Avalanche was the feat that stands out most.

“We know if we play with the right structure and the right pressure, that we’re a very tough opponent,” said Jets head coach Rick Bowness. “And when we do break down, which is going to happen, then our goalies are going to be there for us.”

If the Jets are able to locking down second place on Tuesday, the door is definitely open to have Laurent Brossoit make one more start in net Thursday.

Although he won’t reach the 25-game floor to have his name included on the Jennings Trophy if the Jets can stay in front of the Florida Panthers on that front, everyone knows how important the contribution Brossoit has made.

Connor Hellebuyck is dialed in and he won’t be run down, but giving him an additional night off and having him finish the season with 60 starts could be a benefit.

Continuing the commitment the Jets showed this week when it comes to team defence will be top of mind over the final two games, including Thursday’s finale against the Vancouver Canucks.

The Kraken have been eliminated from playoff contention, while the Canucks basically wrapped up top spot in the Pacific Division with Saturday’s win over the Oilers, so these outings probably won’t match the intensity of the previous two games.

That’s part of the challenge for the Jets, maintaining the high level they’ve played at against two division rivals.

It remains to be seen if Bowness will rest players who are banged up.

With Sunday’s result, he probably won’t do it before Thursday at the earliest.

After seeing Sean Monahan and Vladislav Namestnikov leave Saturday’s game in the third period for precautionary reasons, Bowness said there was no cause for concern.

The Jets are looking to get Nino Niederreiter back up to speed after sitting out the last five contests with a leg laceration, provided he makes it through Monday’s practice feeling good.

Provided the Jets clinch, there are some forwards they would like to get some game action.

On defence, the Jets have used the pairing of Logan Stanley and Dylan Samberg for four consecutive games and figure to do so for two more games since they haven't spent a ton of time together.

The Jets would also like to get each of Nate Schmidt and Colin Miller into a game this week as well.

The Jets could also choose to reward strong seasons at the American Hockey League level with several call-ups, with forward Brad Lambert and defencemen Ville Heinola and Kyle Capobianco all on the list of players under consideration.

Depending on what happens in the coming days, top forward prospect Rutger McGroarty could arrive on the scene and make his NHL debut if the Jets can get his name on an entry-level contract.

The Jets won't be shifting into cruise control either.

The trio of Monahan, Nikolaj Ehlers and Tyler Toffoli has been on fire since being reunited and the top line of Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabriel Vilardi had a pair of solid games as well.

The power play struck for a pair of goals on Saturday — a screened shot from Josh Morrissey and a beautiful backdoor pass from Connor to Vilardi — so keeping that running smoothly will also be important.

The remnants of the recent six-game losing skid (0-5-1) have been washed away, though not forgotten.

Another thing is abundantly clear: for a team that is looking to be playing its best hockey when the post-season arrives, the Jets are well positioned to do just that.

[Pioneering 1975 Jets reunite in May Championship team famous for freewheeling European influence](#)

By: Joshua Frey-Sam

It might be the final time the 1975-76 Winnipeg Jets walk down memory lane together and reminisce about the trail the team blazed.

Members of the pioneering squad will reunite at the Fort Garry Hotel on May 11 to remember the World Hockey Association season that culminated with the franchise's first Avco Cup.

Ulf Nilsson, Peter Sullivan, Veli-Pekka Ketola, Mike Ford, Norm Beaudin, Thommie Bergman, Bill Lesuk, Lyle Moffat, Perry Miller, Heikki Riihiranta, Bobby Guindon and Joe Daley will be in attendance.

"We've lost a number of players, but to be able to see the others again, that'll be awesome," said Lesuk, who has lived in Birds Hill since coming to Winnipeg in 1975. "It may be hard to explain, but that was one of the highlights of our lives, being able to play with the Jets, and having the European influence was just outstanding.

“That meant everything to me.”

Next month’s roster will be missing a few names, including Bobby Hull, Lars-Erik Sjoberg, Larry Hornung, Ted Green, Larry Hillman and head coach Bobby Kromm, who have all died.

“It’s to complete the trilogy of reunions for the Avco Cup-winning Jets,” said event organizer Geoff Kirbyson, who has held reunions for the two other championship Jets squads (1977-78 and 1978-79). “Also, I think this is the most important of those teams because they had all these Europeans.

“They were groundbreaking and trailblazing and playing a brand of hockey that people hadn’t seen.”

The Jets were high-flying hockey that no one in the WHA or rival NHL was playing in an era stamped by Philadelphia’s Broad Street Bullies.

Spurred by the prolific “Hotline” of Bobby Hull and a pair of Swedes, Ulf Nilsson and Anders Hedberg, Winnipeg finished atop the Canadian Division and faltered just once in their playoff run, which they capped by sweeping the Houston Aeros — led by 47-year-old Gordie Howe — in the Avco Cup final on May 12, 1976.

The championship effectively put Winnipeg on the hockey map, a little more than a year after the Jets became the first team to roster Swedish and Finnish players in 1974.

“It was quite exciting because we didn’t know really what we should expect, we didn’t have any idea what hockey would be in North America,” Ketola recalled. “It was very exciting to come there and meet those superstars like Bobby Hull, it was a very big thing to us.”

Calls to end the European experiment rained down on the organization after missing the playoffs in 1974. The foreigners’ flashier style was a tough sell to North American fans who celebrated a north-south brand of hockey.

Ketola, who eventually became a fan-favourite, said it took a couple of years to settle in — partly owing to the punishment he endured on the ice — but the support for his teammates shielded the Europeans from the outside noise.

“It was quite obvious Bobby wanted to have Europeans and, of course, Bobby had two great (players) for him with Anders Hedberg and Ulf Nilsson. I think it was a big thing for Bobby because Bobby liked to play (that style) of hockey,” Ketola said.

Lesuk pointed to the Jets hosting their training camp in 1975 in Europe, where they visited Finland and Sweden. Players not only bonded in the home cities of their new teammates but also gained an appreciation for their culture, which proved to be invaluable to the team’s success.

“To me, it didn’t matter where you come from. You look at all the guys we played with from Europe, you couldn’t ask for better people. That was the key to me,” Lesuk said.

Ketola said some Finnish players catch up every couple of years at home, but that it will be extra special when he’s reunited with his North American friends.

“That’s a big thing to me to see all those guys, I haven’t seen them in I don’t know how many years.” he said. “I’m very excited to see them and talk about hockey... and how excellent we were.”

It’s spring and Jets’ fans fancy turns to ... playoffs!

By: Ken Wiebe and Mike McIntyre

We now know the Winnipeg Jets and Colorado Avalanche will do battle in the opening round of the Stanley Cup playoffs. It’s the first — and so far only — NHL series that is set. The other seven will become clear over the next few days, with all the action set to begin next weekend.

Naturally, our monthly Free Press mailbag contained a heavy dose of related content. Let’s dig into what should be a marquee matchup, along with some other timely topics that are on your mind.

1. Assuming the team is in full health and you guys were behind the bench, what would the Jets lineup/line combos be for Game #1? -CRAIG

Ken Wiebe: Assuming full health, the Game 1 lineup has largely come into focus during the recently completed road trip, with one exception. Despite the strong play of David Gustafsson, who chipped in three assists during the past two games, he’s going to be replaced by Nino Niederreiter. Niederreiter has missed the past five games with a lacerated leg that was the result of a skate cut. He will practise with the Jets on Monday and is tracking to return for Tuesday’s game against the Seattle Kraken, though that will depend on how he feels after Monday’s workout.

With Logan Stanley dressing for four consecutive games for just the second time this season and playing seven of the past nine games, he looks to now have the edge to play alongside Dylan Samberg on the third pairing. I don’t foresee any other surprises.

One of the most interesting things to monitor for me is who is the first forward to be called upon? Now that we know the first-round opponent is the Avalanche, would Gustafsson be first up or would it be Cole Perfetti, who has 17 goals and 36 points in 70 games. It could depend on how the series is going or if the opening is in the top-6 or the bottom-6.

Nate Schmidt would be the first D-man to enter the series. It’s not that he played his way out of the job, but Stanley brings the kind of size and a physical element the Jets don’t have a ton of among the defence corps. As for the line combos, I expect them to stay the same, at least to start. If Kyle Connor and Nikolaj Ehlers need to be flip-flopped, that’s always an option. But Ehlers is clicking with Sean Monahan and Tyler Toffoli since they were put back together. And against the Stars and Avalanche, the trio of Kyle Connor-Mark Scheifele-Gabriel Vilardi showed it can handle the responsibility of going up against Nathan MacKinnon and Roope Hintz.

That line needs to continue to get more than it gives up, but it took an important step forward on that front on the road trip.

Connor-Scheifele-Vilardi
Ehlers-Monahan-Toffoli
Niederreiter-Lowry-Appleton
Barron-Namestnikov-Iafallo

Morrissey-DeMelo
Dillon-Pionk
Stanley-Samberg

Hellebuyck
Brossoit

Mike McIntyre: Kenny took the words right out of my mouth, and my lineup wouldn't look any different than his. Winnipeg certainly has some solid depth options with the likes of Perfetti, Gustafsson, Schmidt and Colin Miller able to step in should circumstance require it. It's a very good problem to have.

2. Someone asked Bowness the other day about resting players and he sort of implied that barring nagging injuries it would only be the last couple games. Do you see any Manitoba Moose call-ups happening for those spots? Ville Heinola, Brad Lambert, Nikita Chibrikov, etc? Or just the scratches going in? -CODY

KW: This is something that could fall under the category of being a work in progress. If the Jets lock up second place with one (or both) of their remaining home games left to play, that could potentially open up a window to rest some players who are a bit banged up. The Jets also have six players with the chance to appear in every regular-season game this season, so that could be a consideration as well.

The opportunity to reward several players who are having great seasons with the Moose is a consideration for sure, though the roster rules limit the number of recalls from the AHL after the NHL trade deadline. So, it won't likely be more than two players being rewarded.

Would it make sense to give defenceman Ville Heinola his first NHL game of the season after Bowness said he did enough to make the opening-night roster before suffering a fractured ankle? No doubt, but if he's resting one or two of the regular blue-liners, it probably makes sense to give Nate Schmidt and/or Colin Miller some game action to help keep them fresh if their number is called in the post-season.

I do think it's possible Lambert has an opportunity to make his NHL debut, either against the Kraken or the Vancouver Canucks. The 30th overall pick in the 2022 NHL Draft is up to 20 goals and 51 points in 61 games during his first full AHL season. The Dallas Stars recently rewarded forward prospect Mavrik Bourque, a 2020 first-rounder who has 26 goals and 75 points in 69 games for the Texas Stars in the AHL, with a game. It's a fairly common practice around the NHL at this time of the year.

The other consideration is that the Moose and Stars are jockeying for position in the standings as they prepare for a first-round matchup. Still, it makes sense to give Lambert a taste of the NHL game as a way to let him know the organization appreciates the progress he's made in his development. The Jets probably would like to get a game for Rasmus Kupari, who has played just once during the past 17 games.

3. I was thinking about playing at 1609 m (or 5280 ft) above sea level. The Avalanche are used to the elevation but the Jets may be at a disadvantage. Any thoughts? -COLLEEN

MM: It's definitely can be a factor for visiting teams, as the air truly is thinner in the Mile High City. Of course, the Jets managed just fine with a pair of regular-season victories in Denver, including Saturday's 7-0 shellacking. I'm expecting the series to begin next Sunday, and I'd guess the Jets would fly out on Friday if they're starting on the road to give themselves an extra day to get acclimatized.

If Winnipeg has home-ice advantage, both the Jets and Avalanche will be in the same travel boat (or charter plane, in this case) as they'd fly there at the same time for games three and four.

4. Will either Gabriel Landeskog or Mikko Rantanen play in a 1st-round matchup vs. the Jets? - CHRIS

KW: The return of Rantanen on Saturday afternoon was a great sign that he should be good to go for Game 1 after sitting out the previous two games, as he was in concussion protocol after taking a massive hit from Edmonton Oilers blue-liner Mattias Ekholm. Rantanen wasn't his dominant self but still has a week or so to get back to the form that has him second in team scoring (40 goals, 102 points in 78 games).

Landeskog is back skating on his own in Denver, but there is no indication that he will be ready for the opening round of these playoffs. The Avalanche captain has missed the past two seasons after leading his team to the Stanley Cup in 2022 and it's been a long road with multiple knee injuries to endure.

There's no doubt they miss his presence, but it will come as a massive surprise if he shows up in this series. There's no guarantee he returns at all this spring, even if the Avalanche went on a run.

5. With Laurent Brossoit's performances as of late, has the backup actually earned a start if the Jets were down two or three games in a playoff series? -CARL

MM: File this under "decisions Winnipeg hopes it wouldn't have to make." Brossoit has been a tremendous backup this year, arguably the best in the entire NHL, and there would be no qualms tossing him into any situation. See his performance last Thursday in Dallas as the latest example.

That said, Connor Hellebuyck is the No. 1 guy, the likely Vezina Trophy winner, and I don't see a situation where a switch is made should the Jets fall behind in the series. If that's the case, there's likely other issues at play that go beyond the quality of goaltending they are getting, and I'd expect other lineup tinkering outside the crease to occur.

6. Mark Scheifele is having a year of renewal, the way he's playing this season. He backchecks, he's willing to be first into a corner to battle for a puck, he's really strong on the puck when he has it, he's trying "stuff" again and some of them have worked. In my humble opinion (I have a jersey with his name on the back, by the way), he's having his best season of the past several and he's leading his team in the best of all ways, by example. Would you agree? -BOB

KW: Scheifele's commitment to two-way play has been one of the most important developments of this entire season and there's almost been no dropoff in terms of his production. He's still managed to operate at nearly a point-per-game pace (70 points in 73 games) but his diligent effort in all three zones has simply been excellent.

Scheifele's goals are down this season (from 42 to 25) but he's always been more of a pass-first player and he's still generated nine consecutive 20-plus goal campaigns. There have been signs of late that Scheifele could be poised for a 2018-type run.

For those who need a reminder, that was the playoff when the seventh-overall pick in the 2011 NHL Draft finished with 14 goals and 20 points in 17 games as the Jets reached the Western Conference final before being bounced in five games by the Vegas Golden Knights. Scheifele had only one empty-net goal in the past two games, but was noticeable for all the right reasons in consecutive shutout wins over the Stars and Avalanche.

It's not a coincidence that Scheifele has found the joy in his game once again after signing a long-term contract extension prior to the season. Recent playoffs have been filled with frustration and disappointment for Scheifele, ranging from being sidelined with injuries to the four-game suspension he received for a hit on Montreal Canadiens forward Jake Evans.

Going up against Hart Trophy front-runner Nathan MacKinnon, the Jets need Scheifele to continue to be one of their best players if they want to advance beyond the first round for just the second time since 2018.

7. With Rutger McGroarty's Michigan teammate signing Saturday (Frank Nazar) do the odds go up of McGroarty signing? -ERNIE

MM: I just spend much of the past week in Minnesota with McGroarty and his family members, who are truly good human beings, as he competed in the Frozen Four. In putting together an in-depth feature on the first-rounder, naturally the question of whether he will sign with Winnipeg now that his college season is over came up repeatedly.

I left St. Paul on the fence about it, wondering if a second straight loss in the semi-final might cause McGroarty to decide to run it back one more year in Michigan in an attempt at a national championship. But then came Saturday's most interesting development, with Frank Nazar opting to turn pro and sign with the Chicago Blackhawks. This is big, as Nazar is McGroarty's closest friend on the Wolverines, in addition to his linemate.

I chatted with Nazar for the feature, and he took me way back in time to when they first started playing spring hockey together as kids, moving up through the ranks together including time in Honeybaked playing AAA hockey, and then as teammates on the world junior team. Add in the fact McGroarty's other linemate (and buddy) Gavin Brindley is said to be mulling an offer to also turn pro and sign with the Columbus Blue Jackets, and suddenly I'd say his chances of joining the Jets have gone from a coin flip to much more likely.

I know the family is currently mulling it over, and I'd expect a decision in the next couple days here. Whether it's now or in a year from now, I can confidently say (as many others I spoke to did) that the Jets have a real good one coming in McGroarty.

8. Sean Monahan has fit into the lineup really well. What do you think his new contact will look like and do you think the Jets will be serious suitors? -BUBBA B

KW: I wrote about Monahan extensively last week, tapping into the insights of several folks who know him well from past stops, including former Flames head coach Bob Hartley, who raved

about him and his willingness to learn and get better as a young player after he was chosen sixth overall in the 2013 NHL Draft.

Near the bottom of the article, I mentioned that Monahan's camp is likely going to be looking for something in the neighbourhood of five years with an AAV likely north of US\$5 million. There's no doubt the Jets are going to be serious suitors, but can they win a bidding war for him?

Much like Paul Stastny did in 2018 after his arrival, Monahan's value has only increased since the trade. That means he will be in demand, especially since centre is a premier position and both contenders and teams looking to become one are going to be looking to add someone such as Monahan.

As Jets head coach Rick Bowness told me last week, Monahan has been "a perfect fit" since his arrival and he wasn't exaggerating. Monahan is contributing to every facet of the game and it stands to reason that his best is likely yet to come in the postseason, given his skillset. He's quickly become the Jets' best faceoff man, he's clicking at even strength, given the power play a boost in the bumper position, killing penalties, providing reliable defensive play and contributing plenty of offence.

Monahan, who has 13 goals and 24 points in 32 games since joining the Jets, is well-positioned to cash in if he gets to the open market. My expectation would be that the Jets make their best offer before July 1 as Monahan on a long-term extension would line up with their window of contention and eliminate the need to find a solution at 2C elsewhere.

The flip side of the equation is that if a deal can't be reached before July 1, there will be no shortage of suitors. Might the Columbus Blue Jackets try to reunite Monahan with close friend and former linemate Johnny Gaudreau? Could the Ottawa Senators look to bring Monahan in to help provide some veteran leadership during a region where he starred as a junior with the Ottawa 67s? Those are two of many teams that would figure to have interest in Monahan's services. That list will be long.

9. When the Coyotes move to Utah do all the Jets 1.0 records follow them to Salt Lake City or can Mark Chipman get them back to the Winnipeg (the original franchise) if he wants.? I was told before that all New Jersey's records still belong to the Kansas City Scouts I was told that after so many years (not sure how many) that all the records belong to the current franchise. Just like all the current Jets 2.0 still belong to Atlanta. -KEN

MM: A great question, and also one with no clear answer. This entire situation is a convoluted mess, and it's been complicated with reports that the Coyotes are basically going to be rendered an "inactive" franchise — rather than a re-located one to Utah — which would seem to suggest the 1.0 history stays dormant in the desert, at least for now.

There's reportedly going to be a five-year window to resurrect them, essentially as an expansion franchise, should the whole arena saga eventually get sorted out. This is because the NHL, as has become clear over the years, does not want to abandon Arizona entirely. They have no choice but to do so now.

My solution: Transfer the Jets 1.0 history back to Winnipeg where it rightfully belongs. Have the Coyotes 1.0 history (from 1996-2024) stay with the zombie franchise, with the potential to eventually move it to Utah (who would start fresh this fall) should they not ultimately rise from the dead.

10. Are you surprised regarding Colin Miller's limited usage and that Logan Stanley's usage has increased after the addition of an 8th NHL defenceman on the active roster? -CRAIG

KW: The larger element of surprise surrounds Stanley, who seemed like a mostly forgotten member of the competition into early March, with only 12 games played when the calendar flipped. But the light bulb went on and Stanley began delivering a more consistent game during the past month and has pushed himself into strong consideration for Game 1 participation.

As for Miller, I'm definitely surprised that he's only appeared in four games since he arrived from the New Jersey Devils. But my expectation from talking to multiple sources around the league was that he was being brought in to be the No. 7 guy. Miller was going to support Schmidt as an insurance policy, not necessarily replace him.

That Stanley leapfrogged both of them on the depth chart was something not many people had on their bingo card. Any team that goes on a long run often requires eight-to-10 blue-liners to make at least one appearance in the postseason. Adding a right-handed shooting D-man was a priority and Miller's 40 Stanley Cup playoff games are an obvious bonus as the Jets prepare for what they hope is an extended run.

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[Who has the edge in the first round between the Jets and the Avalanche? \(VIDEO\)](#)

Dropping five of their last seven games, the Avalanche remain behind the Jets for home ice advantage in their first round playoff matchup. TSN's NHL analyst Martin Biron joins SportsCentre to discuss who has the edge in the Central Division matchup, and who is his favourite to win the Hart trophy with the race heating up.