

Boycotting the Olympics—Who and How?

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What Canadian hockey fan does not want to see Connor McDavid and Sidney Crosby play together for Team Canada? It would be 'dream team'! But there is one problem—the location of the next Olympics—in communist-controlled China.

The list of human-rights complaints against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is growing and becoming more visible, and governments are taking note—which is good! Several countries, including Canada, recently announced¹ that they would be participating in a “diplomatic boycott” of the Olympics in protest to the CCP’s treatment of minorities etc.

This is good in two ways:

1. It means that (if they follow through on it) government officials from several countries, including Canada, won’t attend this event, so they would be taking action in a way that affects themselves with their actions, not just their words.
2. It means that governments are not telling athletes that they are banned from participating in the sports and competitions that they have spent years training for. Athletes may boycott, but they are not being forced one way or the other.

Do you think that athletes should also individually boycott these Olympics? Then reach out to them and let them know; a professional basketball player, Enes Freedom, had led the way and challenged² Connor McDavid and Sidney Crosby to boycott; if you believe that challenges such as this one are helpful, do likewise to athletes you might have contact with.

But perhaps you don’t know any athletes and you don’t care about sports, let alone the Olympics. That’s fine, the issue at stake is not as much about sport as it is the Chinese Communist Party’s record on human rights, and Canada’s relationship with it. Their record on human rights is bad. We need only look back a few years at their long-time, one-child policy. We could also use the example of their treatment of Tibet.

In 2020, Human Rights Watch reported:³ “Beijing’s repression—insisting on political loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party—deepened across the country. In Hong Kong, following six months of large-scale protests in 2019, the Chinese government imposed a draconian ‘National Security Law’ on June 30—its most aggressive assault on Hong Kong people’s freedoms since the transfer of sovereignty in 1997. In Xinjiang, Turkic Muslims continue to be arbitrarily detained on the basis of their identity, while others are subjected to forced labor, mass surveillance, and political indoctrination.” These situations are ongoing.

Do you think that Canada should be giving tacit approval to their actions by proceeding with a ‘business as usual’ approach? No? Then this situation matters, regardless of the Olympics.

Events are the tip of the iceberg; bigger issues are below the waterline, out of sight. But what lies below greatly affects what we can see, and if what we can see of diplomatic relations between our government and the CCP is turbulent, what we can't see is probably worse.

The reality is that China is an empire on the rise, and the USA is a superpower in decline. Canada is closely tied to the USA, but we also have significant trade with China. Canada isn't big or powerful enough to have either country angry at us and get out unscathed, as we saw with the ordeal of "the two Michaels." Canada has to play nicely with both sides, but the diplomatic boycott means that at this point, Canada is prepared to play more nicely with the USA and some European countries than with China.

This does appear to be the right approach from a moral standpoint. If this action were to result in China being shamed into better treatment of its citizens, and especially its minorities, that would be progress. On the other hand, if the CCP decides to retaliate, that would also help the world to see how willing China is to 'play nicely' with others when their civic pride is on the line.

We don't often have occasion to give a nod of approval to the actions of our government, but on the decision of a diplomatic boycott—one that will mean fewer taxpayer-funded flights sending politicians to China, while delivering a message of disapproval to the CCP—we do.

John Robson⁴ put it like this: "Their (the Chinese Communists') economy is also a house of cards. Not that ours are looking great, either. But free societies retain a resilience that brittle tyrannies never had. If western trade with China collapsed, it would hurt us and finish them. And deep down they know it." He goes on to say: "In 2022, China's leaders clearly intend the Olympics to vindicate their way of life. And there's something to be said for western athletes going and demonstrating that freedom is stronger than tyranny as well as more dignified."

So whether Canadian athletes decide to go or not—based on their consciences—let's keep the bigger picture in mind and stand for peace, order, and good government. That last one seems to be lacking in Canada as well as in China, so let's do so with humility.

Show your loyalty to Canada's heritage of freedom and democracy by promoting and supporting CHP!⁵

Footnotes

¹ nationalpost.com/news/politics/canada-joins-u-s-u-k-in-diplomatic-boycott-of-beijing-olympics

² www.cbc.ca/news/politics/enes-freedom-power-and-politics-1.6273409

³ www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/china-and-tibet%23

⁴ nationalpost.com/opinion/john-robson-there-is-value-in-a-diplomatic-boycott-of-the-olympic

⁵ www.chp.ca/