

## Falcons owner shares his thoughts on NFL franchise in Toronto, mentions expansion as possibility

Escrito por Jeff Kerr

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NFL commissioner Roger Goodell was thrown a curveball at his state of the league press conference Wednesday, a topic that wasn't even on the national radar until it was brought up. Goodell was asked why the NFL would overlook the potential of relocating a franchise to Toronto, Ontario, especially since the league has considered putting a franchise in London in recent years.

"The one thing I've said openly over the years – you may not be aware of it – but a stadium that is up to NFL standards is going to be a certain requirement," Goodell said on the potential of an NFL team in Toronto. "That is going to be an important element that's going to have to be focused on. It's not enough to just have a great city, which you have. You have to have a facility also."

The NFL has played regular season games in Toronto from 2008 to 2013, as the Buffalo Bills played one home game a season there for six years. The games were played at the Rogers Centre, which doesn't meet NFL requirements to support a franchise. The league moved back to Los Angeles with the promise of a state-of-the-art stadium set to be completed later this year, as the Rams and Chargers relocated to Los Angeles from St. Louis and San Diego respectively.

The Bills games were also separate from the NFL International Series games in London and Mexico City, as that was a contract between former Bills owner Ralph Wilson, Ted Rogers of Rogers Communications, and Larry Tannebaum of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, with the home team always being the Bills.

Toronto would need a new stadium for the NFL to consider the city for a potential franchise. Relocation may not be the only route toward the city actually securing the franchise.

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Falcons owner Arthur Blank expressed Goodell's thoughts on Toronto possibly getting a professional football team, via expansion. That would put the NFL at 33 teams if they chose to expand into Canada.

"I think it's a question of just trying to understand expansion and the implications – having it balanced," Blank said to The Toronto Sun. "You don't want an odd number of teams; you'd want an even number of teams. How that would fall out (is crucial).

"I don't think anyone questions the size of the Toronto market or the potential of the market. It's a great market and a great sports city – a great sports city. Other than a stadium. I don't think there's any particular road blocks that would keep the NFL from giving serious consideration to a team in Toronto."

While the league is still entertaining the relocation of a franchise to London, the NFL could expand to London and Toronto and have a 34-team league. Logistics and schedule/travel balance would clearly play a factor as there are many hurdles to climb, but the league won't close the door on that possibility.

If Toronto does get a new stadium, the NFL will have plenty of options to consider regarding the long-term stability of a franchise there.