
Canada's Gambling Watch Network's e-mailed Newsletter

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We are not alone in our struggle against the continuing expansion of gambling in Canada. Going to <http://www.citizenvoice.ca> will give you more information on this group, while Game Planit reveals the truth about slots and other Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs). See how deceptive the machines can be from virtual reels to concealed odds. All things in the EGMs are designed to addict the player. Visit <http://www.gameplanit.com> for more. Anyone who wants to join the class-action suit against Loto-Québec, or wanting to know more on that issue, will find a link on website www.vivaconsulting.com pointing the way.

Also: a group of activists in Nova Scotia established the Web site gameovervlt.s, it has many stories that show what pathological gambling does to individuals and their families. Our Blueprint for action to reform Canadian gambling law, policies & practices into real public interest will be e-mailed to anyone who asks for it.

We're always open to Guest Editorials and Letters to the Editor. Placing an item doesn't mean that we agree with the opinion expressed. As a coalition of a variety of groups and people, our "party line" leaves room for differences of opinion, and we welcome them!

Help!

We are always looking for persons who have the time, the interest and the ability to help us finding news articles about gambling from coast to coast. We are doing our best to be a Canada-wide organization, but the fact that many newspapers (especially in Atlantic Canada!) restrict access to their site to subscribers makes it necessary to find activists in all provinces to make sure that items of importance are not missed. All that our activists need is a computer and access to the Internet. Do not be afraid of your own inexperience: in the 7 years of our existence, we have more than once helped new people to get started! We should add here that Canada's Gambling Watch Network also needs financial help. For some seven years our expenses have been paid from the pockets of generous activists, and a few years ago we began to try to get regular supporters. We will continue to seek subscribers to our Newsletter. The minimum membership is \$10 per year, the regular is \$20 annually, and any bigger gifts will be welcome. We cannot issue receipts that will be recognized by Canada's taxation system. How can we actively oppose gambling without being politically active? Send cheque or money order, payable to Canada's Gambling Watch Network, to Treasurer, Art Tiesma, 308 Spruce Street, London, ON, N5W 4N5.

Due to the closing of our former Internet server, our Web site is presently inaccessible. Its contents are a part of our extensive archives, so it can be rebuilt. We are badly in need of a volunteer Web Master or Mistress with the ability and the willingness to do this.

First: Canada's still expanding gambling scene Canada

In 'Cashing in on betting fever' the October 7 Financial Post says that Global players will be gambling an estimated US \$295-billion annually by 2010, and it adds that in Canada it

is the biggest growth industry. That begs the question: should governments hold 'em, fold 'em, or raise the ante? The article does not answer that question.

British Columbia

On October 5 the Province writes: 'Next time you're in a bar playing the scratch-and-wins and an attractive young thing approaches you to chat about a hot new lottery game, you might want to bet that it's more than your sex appeal at work.' The article then adds that the B.C. Lottery Corp. has hired 'ambassadors' paid to 'educate patrons' in the company's "hospitality network" -- also known as pubs and bars -- about a new poker-themed lottery game.

Pastor Joel Ringma of Terrace writes on October 11: 'Later this month, our city council will hold a public forum regarding proposed changes to the current bylaw that prohibits slot machines in our municipality. I would like to speak to this forum'. We trust that the information we sent him was useful. A few months ago Abbotsford was threatened with the same gambling expansion, and the matter of slot machines at Hastings Park is still in front of the Supreme Court.

Alberta

The September 13 Calgary Herald wrote that construction would begin that week on the multimillion-dollar Tsuu T'ina casino, despite the hurdles remaining over access to the southwest site. Two days later this paper gave more particulars on that news.

The September 15 Edmonton Sun carried a picture and story to remind readers that the Sun's Texas Hold 'em contest would return at the weekend.

The October 13 Edmonton Journal writes that the \$178 million River Cree Resort and Casino on the Enoch Reserve is set to open Oct. 26.

Ontario

The October 5 Belleville Intelligencer reports the city's raceway will get about 200 slots when it opens next summer. Some years ago it was already decided that its horseracing hobby would be kept alive by the losses of gamblers, but since then a lot has been learned about the addictive nature of those EGMs. Would a responsible government still use slots as the life-support of an outdated and dying hobby? Two days later, this paper talks of the study of the impact of slots on Belleville's people; don't we already know enough about that after subjecting the people of many other communities all over our country to these machines purposely programmed in a manner that promotes addiction?

'Slots move hurts kids' is the title of an article in the October 12 Star that deals with the possibility that Windsor might lose its raceway slots to Tecumseh while a part of the cash lost by slot gamblers goes to a fund that supports low-income families. The item speaks of children who come to school with empty stomachs. This story causes the blood of our newsletter editor to boil. He grew up during the great depression, and his memories tell him that neither he nor his schoolmates came to school without breakfast. In those days, no slot machines could cause parents to lose their money, nor would one see parents line up at lottery booths to spend breakfast money on buying lottery tickets. Also: he did not live in a city that spent many millions in improving its casino, or a province that wasted half a billion every year in advertising to suck parents into those lottery booths. What a shame that kids have to come to school with empty stomachs in a city like Windsor!

'Good odds on sports betting lounge' is an article in the October 16 Windsor Star. One of its lines reads: 'Ontario Lottery and Gaming spokesman Don Pistor said the sports betting lounge is something Casino Windsor can offer the Detroit casinos can't due to a federal

U.S. law that prohibits sports betting in almost all U.S. states except Nevada.' That's why a 'gaming expert' can say: 'Windsor's casino is drawing U.S. patrons it otherwise wouldn't see'.

On-line gambling

The big news item on the Internet during our absence was that in the U.S.A. gambling on-line now is definitely illegal, while in some other countries – like the U.K. – it is legal. It is perhaps too early to come to definite conclusions. Some people think that it will end in a way that will enable governments to make money on Internet gambling. More than once, it has been evident that the only objection our provinces have against Internet gambling is that it will or might diminish their gambling 'revenues'. The same stance is evident in the anti- poker actions they undertake. They close down clubs that don't share the gambling losses with them.

Actions needed

It will take some time for Canada's Gambling Watch Network to catch-up on the news it has missed. As we have shown above: in our country gambling is still expanding, and our main difficulty seems to be two-fold: as Canadians we tend to be too provincial and too regional – even too parochial! – to see gambling as a NATIONAL issue, while we also do not like to be active politically. We tend to leave politics to our politicians.

This first Issue of year EIGHT might be the right place and time to arouse the many folks who are against gambling to be more involved in acting against it. In the past, many of our faith communities have expressed themselves against gambling. Recently in Nova Scotia, ALL faith communities expressed themselves against the damage VLTs (Video Lottery Terminals) are doing there, but as far as we have noticed that didn't cause people in the other Atlantic provinces to become more active against them.

Activism can take many forms. Let us give some examples: if you are a recipient of our (normally weekly) Newsletters you could simply forward them to people you know who might be interested, or to municipal, provincial or federal politicians. Another way would be to send us their email addresses so that we could add them to our address lists.

Most of us subscribe to a local or provincial newspaper. As a subscriber you would have access to that paper's Web site, and if you saw an item about gambling of any kind - even a lottery win – it would be easy for you to download that article and email it to us. We'd gladly send you instructions on how to do that; it's not difficult at all, but you must make sure that you include the source (name of the paper), the date, and the copyright notice.

Our own news gatherers search as many papers as possible for gambling news, but it is impossible for us – time-wise and financially- to check every Canadian paper for news of that kind. If you did what you could do, you'd be of great help!

If you are a member of any group -- a club, a Church, or whatever -- and attend meetings, you might have the opportunity to make gambling one of the subjects for discussion. One of the causes that it's an almost forgotten issue is that the many people who are against it are silent. Our editor remembers a talk he had with a church's pastor a few years ago. He had just heard that one of that church's members was a waitress in a nearby slots lounge and that the church's official stance was to oppose gambling. He asked that pastor how often he had mentioned gambling or lotteries in his messages during the past year. After a minute of silence the reply was: 'not once'.

If you occasionally are in a shopping mall, we suggest that you pay some attention to the lottery booth. We've often seen parents who in the presence of their small children spend

their money on lottery tickets. We've seen them even consulting their youngsters before they decided which tickets to buy! Many of our fellow-Canadians are totally unaware of the addictive nature of lottery tickets. When they waste their cash on break-open and/or scratch tickets they even might share them with their pre-school children!

Canada's Gambling Watch Network has contacts in all of our provinces, and it would be ideal if every provincial group that is active against gambling would appoint some people to establish and maintain lively contacts with us. It would not only relieve some of the pressure that's now on a few people, but it would also make us a more realistic national organisation. From almost its first issues our Newsletter has covered all of our country and we are convinced of the fact that for research purposes our archives are as complete in that respect as is possible.

We have always hoped that some well-known economist would take the time to do what some U.S.A. economists have done in their country: figure out what gambling really does to Canada's economy. It's a well-known and recognized fact that there is a really close relationship between gambling and crime: frauds, robberies, policing and jailing costs, and so on; family troubles like divorces, suicides, homelessness and so on are also related to gambling. If all the money now spent on legalized gambling: lotteries, casinos, sports betting, etc. etc., was spent 'normally', wouldn't our country be better off?

I thought of that again a while back when a scratch ticket addict told me he spent \$5 a day on them rather than financing his grandson's university education, and it also occurred to me when Sunday shopping became an issue in Nova Scotia: will it be good for business or will it just increase the cost?
