
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.com, 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 mainly from the pockets of generous activists, and a few years ago we began to try to get regular supporters. We will continue to look for subscribers to our Newsletter. The minimum membership is \$10 per year, the regular is \$20 annually, and any bigger amounts will be received with thanks. 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 our 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.

Gambling and crime

In this issue's news, the emphasis will be on the intimate relationship between gambling and crime. I am convinced of the fact that the anti-gambling stance of the grandfathers of our politicians was – at least in part – based on the then already well-known fact that

gambling and crime were closely related, and that for that same reason most communities of faith saw gambling as an improper activity.

It's easy to prove that that relationship still exists. Almost from the start of the existence of electronic gambling machines experts have known that fooling around with the odds by doing things to the reels was not only a possibility, but also a fact. The whistle blower in Edmonton was (and still is!) a victim of that dishonesty, and we plan to not let this matter rest until a thorough investigation has taken place.

Another reason to emphasize the crime relationship is the number of news articles found recently. It is impossible for me to spend so much time to find and download gambling articles, then to read all of them thoroughly, and to have enough time and energy left to make them fit in the Newsletter. I intend to get back to most of that news next week.

Internet Gambling

Once again, there were so many items on cyber gambling – mainly reactions and efforts to counteract or copy the U.S.A.'s ban. We believe that it's too early to truly understand what the consequences will be. Last week, we quoted a 10/19 Globe and Mail item about Ontario's plans. This week we go back one day to a Toronto Star article by Ian Urquhart. It said that Ontario plans to move to close the loopholes with a blanket ban on advertising of Internet gambling, direct or indirect. We wonder: will our other provinces also do this? Now, going back to crime: a 10/28 CBC item gives the disturbing news that hackers are demanding ransom from online gambling sites. At peak betting times, anonymous online hackers attack betting websites, swamp them with unwanted electronic messages and virtually shut them down. They then go to the site operators and typically demand from \$40,000 to \$60,000 in ransom in order to release the website so that users can return and keep 'playing'. How's that about gambling inviting crime?

British Columbia

The 10/17 Nanaimo News Bulletin reports that six people were barred from that city's casino last year for criminal activity, and the 10/17 Province writes that five of the six guys who worked together and won \$22M in the Lotto 6/49 last year, are now retired. 'Libs turn blind eye to evils they warned against' is a Michael Smyth article in the 10/13 Province, comparing what liberals have done to what they promised. 'Theft, fraud, money laundering, loan-sharking, counterfeiting, assaults, threats, cheating and desperate calls to the government's gambling-addiction crisis line are all up sharply,' but proceeds for the government are up!

'Richmond casino is a crime magnet' is a 5-page item in the 10/20 Vancouver Sun. It says that casino-related crime has quadrupled since River Rock opened in Richmond, and the Times Colonist of that date has a shorter version of that news. Three days later the Sun's article by Paul Willcocks speaks of organized crime related to that casino, and a letter by David Bornman, printed on 10/24, says: 'Anyone who accepts lottery money is complicit'.

Alberta

Most of the gambling news deals with the opening on 10/26 of the province's first native casino: the \$178-million River Cree Resort and Casino near Edmonton. There's no crime news from there yet.

Saskatchewan

'Province spending \$24M fixing highway to casino' is the heading of a 10/24 CBC item. It reports that highway 219 passes through the Whitecap Dakota First Nation, the future home of a casino that's expected to open next year.

Manitoba

'A nanny who stole more than \$140,000 from local media mogul David Asper to feed her gambling addiction received an 18-month conditional sentence yesterday' is the opening sentence of an article in the 10/24 Winnipeg Sun. The judge said he was satisfied the 42-year old woman 'fell prey to an addiction and was a suitable candidate for a community-based sentence'. She was also ordered to repay more than \$100,000 in restitution.

Ontario

I imagine that practically all who receive this Newsletter have watched the CBC's Fifth Estate T.V. program about the unusual number of big prizes won by Ontario's lottery retailers. Part of what kept me busy were the reactions of other provincial or regional lottery corporations. 'The Western Canada Lottery Corp. may review recent lottery winners to reassure the public that ticket retailers haven't been collecting an outsized share of prizes', wrote the 10/27 Ottawa Sun, but the 10/26 CBC news said: 'Lottery ticket terminals across the Prairies and northern Canada will be replaced next year in a move that would make it more difficult for retailers to falsely claim customers' prizes', and the 10/28 Halifax Herald reported that the Atlantic Lottery Corp. is reviewing its security policies for processing winners after a recent media report alleged that ticket retailers have won a suspicious amount of prize money in Ontario. The 10/26 Gazette wrote: 'Loto-Quebec stands by the integrity of its 10,000-outlet ticket sales network, following a CBC investigative report finding that a disproportionate number of Ontario retailers have won big prizes since 1999'.

That '10,000-outlet ticket sales network' figure reminded me of my suggestion that it would do reporters good to visit some of the many Ontario lottery outlets. I recently found out that the medium sized mall near my new home has three of those outlets. One is the official lottery booth (whose staff tried to get me banned from the mall); the second is in what we used to call a convenience store (a sign there makes sure that people know it has the highly addictive break-open tickets), and the third is located in a Shoppers Drug Mart. (As an aside: a week or so ago I bought some instant coffee in a Pharma Plus store, and when I paid I saw that I had placed my money on a sheet of glass above a display of lottery tickets. I buy all my prescribed drugs from a store that has no lottery counter). A letter to the Editor in the 10/29 Toronto Star says that Ontario's policies on lotteries, tobacco and alcohol are inconsistent. 'It is far too easy for minors to buy cigarettes and ProLine picks, which is something I thought we were trying to prevent', the letter says. I wonder if lottery retailers get any training in recognizing addictions. When I walk along the tables beyond the lottery booth, I see people working on scratch tickets, and the wastebaskets near the booth are often kept busy by people with bundles of break-open tickets.

I gathered 23 Ontario news items for our archives in this week. One of them deals with a crime that has nothing to do with lotteries. It appeared in the 10/25 London Free Press and it tells that a London man might be returned to Tulsa, Oklahoma, to face the charge that he robbed a woman at knife-point of a \$2,500 casino win. Others report things that are common in our world of today: Gananoque shared the 'proceeds' of its casino's slots with the Township (the 10/21 Brockville Recorder & Times); Tax preparer gets house arrest for fraud (the 10/20 North Bay Nugget - we still wonder if gambling was involved); Revenues from slots and casino remain stable (the 10/23 Sarnia Observer); Slot machine pact set to sign (the 1/21 Belleville Intelligencer), but many others were

related to the CBC's Fifth Estate TV show: Lottery retailers enjoying luck of the draw (10/24 CBC).

How to beat lottery fraud (10/25 Toronto Star) and No probe, lottery corp. insists in that same issue. Then the 10/26 Globe and Mail had this paragraph in its 'Insider-jackpot probe draws scorn' article: The Ontario government is allowing the province's lottery corporation to conduct its own review of allegations that an extraordinary number of "insiders" have won prizes of \$50,000 or more over the past seven years. But opposition members criticized the government's response as "cavalier" and called for an independent investigation by either the police or the provincial auditor.

One of the articles – this one was in the 10/26 Windsor Star – quoted Ontario's Premier as follows: "Every day in Ontario thousands and thousands of people go buy a lottery ticket. They put a lot of hopes in that particular purchase. So for them to learn that there might be something amiss in terms of the rigour with which we ensure that everything is on the up and up at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation is a real concern. So the minister has done the right thing, which is to ask for a report. I look forward to receiving that report and reserve the right to take any steps that are necessary to ensure that people have full confidence in the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission."

On that day, the CBC News said 'Ontario's watchdog is launching an independent investigation into how the province's lottery corporation protects the public from theft and fraud', and one day later, the Toronto Star in 'Watchdog ready for lottery probe' said that the Ombudsman asks for input from customers. Although we are no customers, we intend to submit the following items to him: Our 2004 Blueprint for action, the 9/6'06 Unbalanced reels study, and Roger Horbay's Guest Editorial: 'It's Time to Eliminate Deceptive Features on All EGMs', published in our April 24 '06 Newsletter. You may ask us for any of these items, and we'll email them to you.

If you are a customer of the Lottery Corporation and you have any reason to suspect that you have experienced any irregularities, please don't hesitate to contact the Ombudsman. May we add here that we'd like to receive a copy of your communication?

Quebec

'Smokes ban hits Loto-Québec' is an item in the 10/25 Gazette reporting that 'Loto-Quebec says it may see a \$150-million drop in revenue this year, as the new anti-tobacco law keeps smokers away from video-lottery terminals in bars'. The same issue has an item telling that the R&D subsidiary of Loto-Quebec, and Pollard Banknote LP said they have signed a long-term agreement. Financial details not disclosed.

An article in the 10/28 Gazette deals with the uncertainty the U.S.A.'s so-called Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act has caused 'Mohawk Internet Technologies, an 8-year-old business that has become remarkably profitable by servicing some of the world's most popular Internet gambling sites'. The most important question seems to be if the law can be effectively enforced. May we add here that we hope so?

Nova Scotia

From 'VLTs not unbeatable', a 10/26 CBC item, we learn that a computer whiz who made off with \$250,000 from video lottery terminals in Nova Scotia suspects someone has already figured out how to beat the latest generation of these gambling machines.
