

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

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In this first 2007 Newsletter we wish all those who take the trouble to read our Newsletter and who join us in opposing the still ongoing expansion of gambling in Canada, a happy and prosperous year. Please read our cries for help near the end of this publication!

### Editorial

'Cheaters often prosper' is an article we found in the 12/30 Financial Post. It talks of the 'rising wave of intolerance for corporate malfeasance in the wake of several high profile U.S. scandals'. You might have access to this item, written by Chris Sorensen, by going to

<http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/financialpost/story.html?id=5ef73243-9ba5-409e-97aa-b1ce02fcce3f>, When the article gets to the situation in Canada, it talks of the need to focus on creating a culture of ethics at universities in courses on business. Earlier this week I happened to come across a reference to a highly placed government official who was identified as an alumni of two well-known business colleges. This reminded me of an item in the 12/24 Morning Call Online, a Pennsylvania newspaper, that tells of the recent expansion of gambling opportunities in that state. Its author, Paul Carpenter, writes that gambling creates a fourth branch of government that he sees as a complex network of sleaze.

When I look at what's going on gambling-wise in all the provinces of our country, I come to the same conclusion. Many millions are spent on advertising a so-called industry that is totally based on the mobsters' attitude: don't look at the consequences: it makes money! When one looks at the odds of winning a lottery prize, all purchasers of tickets are just problem-gamblers, while many buyers of scratch and break-open tickets get or already are addicted. Slot machines and VLTs are also known as the crack-cocaine of gambling, yet our provincial governments promote them in many ways.

Johannes DeViet.

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### British Columbia

An article in the 12/14 TYEE – a feisty online publication – gives some very interesting information about the BC Lottery Corp. Its president/CEO in the past financial year was paid a base salary of \$274,999.92, a bonus of \$87,037.50, plus \$80,630.06 for unused vacation time, car allowance, and other taxable benefits. (According to today's TYEE this happened in a province that during the present government's rule doubled the number of homeless, froze welfare rates and in some cases even cut them). The BCLC's profit was \$1 billion during that year and that made its top man's pay very fair.

An item in the 12/19 Province is the first of a series dealing with the Ombudsman's probe of the fact that lottery retailers win major prizes at six times the rate of the general public. The next day this paper says that retailers must pass a criminal check and be accountable for their staff, and a letter to the Editor printed in the same issue states that the probe is needed to retain the public's trust in the lotteries. This issue also carries a special item written by the BCLC's CEO saying that lottery customers need proof that it's only the luck of the draw for ticket sellers when they win.

In 'Casino chips in for new park and ride' the 12/20 Vancouver Sun reports that the Great Canadian Gaming Corporation will build a \$33M parkade near its River Rock Casino in Richmond that will double as parking for future Canada Line commuters during the day and for casino patrons during nights and weekends. We quote: 'Canada Line will contribute \$4.5 million towards construction costs and transfer title of about two hectares of land to Great Canadian -- with about half to be used for the parkade and the rest set aside for future River Rock expansion'.

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#### **Alberta**

'First Nation gambles on new casino outside Whitecourt' is a story in the 12/19 Edmonton Journal reporting that, despite all sorts of reasonable arguments against a casino project: 'it will increase crime and problem gambling; finding people to build and staff it will be difficult in Alberta's tight labour market; its unlikely location on the Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation's reserve six kilometres west of Whitecourt makes it an economic gamble' the band's chief persists: "It is about the survival of my people," and is building a \$63.5-million casino, hotel and truck stop.

The remaining articles in the Calgary Herald and in the Sun during December are a repeat of what happened in Quebec when a smoking ban was coming. Calgary's January 1 ban is met with this argument: Some watering holes, ones where VLTs bring in more bucks than booze, don't want to go smoke-free until January 2008 because the city's new bylaw allows one more year of puffing in places where the "primary activity is the conduct of licensed gaming events." The 12/22 Sun foresees strong actions by the head honcho of the Calgary Health Region, because only casinos are legally seen as such places.

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#### **Saskatchewan**

'Casino Regina refunding James Brown tickets' is a 12/27 CBC News item that tells those who prepaid for a show that could not take place because the artist died of a heart attack, can reclaim their money.

'Jail for stealing from RCMP canteen', an article in the 12/30 Leader-Post, reports that the VLT gambler who defrauded the canteen of at least \$187,000, must spend six months in jail. Let's not forget that the government put the 'crack cocaine of gambling' there.

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#### **Manitoba**

This story reminds me of the fact that the first gambling addict I ever met was a bingo-er.

In 'Pickets delay bingo patrons', we read that a man was injured by one driver who hit him twice in an attempt to push through the picket line. I quote: "He bumped into me lightly, backed his car up four or five feet and ran into me."

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#### **Ontario**

'Slots gets smoking lounge', an item in the 12/18 Sarnia Observer, explains to a smoker that the Hiawatha Raceway's Slots lounge is allowed to build an elaborate \$250,000 smoking area because it does not serve food or drinks. The next day this paper reports that the Lambton OPP are searching for a male suspect in his mid-20s who grabbed a tray of lottery scratch tickets and fled a variety store there on Sunday afternoon.

'A bingo hall that closed two months ago will reopen in the new year with city council's decision Monday to endorse a proposal that has divided Windsor's charities' is a line in the 12/19 Windsor Star. An official says that most of the 65 charities that lost their home when the hall closed will be back there. 'But the charities at the other four bingo halls -- three of which are in receivership -- asked council to hold off on its

endorsement of another hall. The industry is too unstable, they said, and there aren't enough customers to sustain all the halls', the paper writes.

'Gaming industry plateau predicted' is the title of an item in this paper's 12/20 issue, that has an expert predicting that the casino - it will become known as Caesars Windsor in 2008 - 'will have to fight to retain market share in the face of cross-border competition even with the addition of a new hotel, convention space and a concert venue', according to Jacob Miklojcik, president of Michigan Consultants. In the same issue, this paper writes that lotteries are still the biggest source of gambling revenue for Ontario's government, far outpacing casinos and slots at racetracks. We're then told that OLG sold \$2.3 billion in lottery tickets and instant scratch games in 2004-05, and that the net cash that flowed to the government from gambling was \$1.96 billion. The article also mentions to what good causes most of that money went, but we did not see any mention of the horrible damage gambling inflicts on many persons and families.

On the same date, this paper writes that the Amherstburg Bingo Palace Sponsors Assn was excused once again from having to pay licensing fees when a majority of council voted in favour of waiving the costs, and on 12/21 it reports that the pending \$17.1 billion sale of Harrah's Entertainment Inc., which operates Casino Windsor with Hilton Hotels, to two large U.S.-based private investment firms won't change the plan to transform the casino into Caesars Windsor. This issue also contains a letter that expresses the writer's disapproval of the attitude that permeates the city's council and the anti-smoking lobby.

Now jumping to the Belleville Intelligencer: its 12/21 issue reports that - although the new raceway won't be ready till 2008 - the old one has applied for a schedule of 17 race dates in 2007, and the 12/22 writes that Mayor Neil Ellis says residents should not doubt the construction of a new Quinte Exhibition and Raceway on Bell Boulevard will happen.

'Pair charged in robbery of Fallsview Casino Hotel guest' is the heading of an article in the 12/21 Niagara Falls Review. It is also typical confirmation of Canada's Gambling Watch Network's firm belief that casinos attract crime and criminals.

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#### **Nova Scotia**

'Gambling addict robbed bank in hopes police would kill her', is an article in the 12/20 Halifax Herald about a 61-year-old female VLT victim. The next day's National Post carries more information about this retired nurse who led a blameless life until eleven years ago when Video Lottery Terminals spoiled her life. Her sentencing to 59 months in prison upset many people because the Nova Scotia government, despite many warnings, still is raising money by exposing people to this crack-cocaine of gambling.

'A long road to 1,500 harness wins' is a story about a New Waterford native whose horse (Vegas Girl!) gave him this victory. This dying so-called industry is on the life support of gambling's crack-cocaine.

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Canada's Gambling Watch Network is not alone in its struggle against the yet 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). Find out 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 information on this subject.

Anyone who wants to join the class-action suit against Loto-Québec, or to find out more on that issue, should go to a link on website [www.vivaconsulting.com](http://www.vivaconsulting.com) pointing the way.

Also: a group of activists in Nova Scotia established the Web site [gameovervlts](http://gameovervlts.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!

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### **Help!**

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.

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.

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### **Are we a failure?**

As we enter a new year, we tend to look back at what happened in the past. What is now Canada's Gambling Watch Network started spontaneously as a group of activists in the Province of Ontario when its government had plans to establish a series of charity casinos in the Province. It didn't take long for that group to realize that all of our Provinces were planning to raise money by expanding gambling and for that reason our Newsletter tried to cover every Province.

During all these years, we hoped that the many small groups of people opposed to what was going on would unite in a network that covered the whole country. We knew that a large percentage of Canadians saw gambling in the same light as we did, but by now it is clear that we missed the gift of properly organizing our Network nation-wide. Part of the problem is due to the nature of our Nation. To many of its citizens, it's just a collection of regions or provinces rather than a true nation. It's still our dream that every region or Province will have a group of activists that spends some time on gathering gambling news and share it with similar groups across

Canada. Is there anyone anywhere in our country who is a gifted organizer and willing to do her or his best to set us up properly?!?

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Please contact us if you want more information on items in this letter or on their sources