

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

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Who's doing well in gambling?

OPP Detective Chief Superintendent Mike Sharland, the former Commander of the OPP Investigation and Enforcement Bureau for the Alcohol & Gaming Commission of Ontario who refused to investigate the complaints that are now before the Canadian Competition Bureau, has been seconded to the OLG (which we believe is a total conflict-of-interest) for several years now as Vice-President, Corporate Security & Surveillance. The latter position paid him \$181,725.92 in 2005, according to last year's Ontario salary disclosure report. The Ontario government Info website lists him as Detective Chief Superintendent. How many OPP Detectives in Ontario make \$180,000+/year?

Sports

'Legal wagering expected to top \$100-million' is an AP article in the 2/3 Globe and Mail that reports on the Super Bowl betting. We quote: 'There's money to be won -- and lost -- picking the team that calls the first timeout, the result of the coin toss and the direction of the first errant field goal. Wide left is favoured over wide right.' As a non-gambler and a non-participant in any sports-craze, this writer cannot understand why so many people do spend their time and money this way.

Cyber gambling

'Research paints picture of 'average' online gambler' is the heading of a piece in the 1/31 Globe and Mail. It says that the average online casino gambler is a woman aged 46 to 55, who plays two or three times a week, has played for two or three years and plays for one or two hours each time, a new study says. It also states that most people do it for fun and not for money. Can we believe that?

British Columbia

An article in the 1/27 Duncan News Leader points out that the earnings in 2005/2006 of \$2.26B by the BCLC, up from \$2B a year earlier, represents an addiction to gambling on the part of our governments and a social cost to our society. In the past year calls to help lines for problem gamblers increased 86%! The author of the item, Rev. Allen Hern, says: 'Raising money through the lure of a large return is an unjustified form of taxation, even if it does provide a form of entertainment'.

The Victoria Hope Society, a successor to the Dallas Society, is making a difference for people with addictions like substance abuse and gambling, the 1/29 Times-Colonist says. It is calling for applications to its annual community grants program.

A 25-year-old Vancouver man was arrested by RCMP and faces criminal charges in the robbery of an Asian woman who had just left the River Rock Casino Jan. 23 with a purse filled with thousands of dollars in winnings, reports the 2/1 Province.

BCLC representatives are exploring options for Nanaimo's casino, now in the Port Place Mall, including tearing it down and building a larger one, writes the 2/2 Times Colonist; the same day's Nanaimo Daily News makes clear that the BCLC is waiting for its service provider in Nanaimo, the Great Canadian Gaming Corporation, to approach the BCLC with ideas. We wonder: why does this paper use 'gaming' when the subject is gambling?

From 'Help on way for problem gamblers', an article in the 2/2 Langley Times, we learn that the oxymoronic term 'responsible gambling' is also being used in BC. *Gambling is taking unnecessary risks; how can that be done responsibly?* Langley's Cascades Casino is awaiting the arrival of a Responsible Gambling Information Centre, the article reports; its kiosk is expected to arrive later this month and it is to be staffed at peak hours with responsible gambling officers, who have a background in counselling and psychology with some knowledge of addictions.

Alberta

An item in the 2/1 Calgary Herald writes that smoke-free bars attract people that might be new to those places because they used to avoid the smoky environment. Next Thursday, 35 bar owners will go to court to challenge the law, but even if that challenge is won, a number of bars will decide to remain smoke-free.

Both the Edmonton Journal and the Edmonton Sun report that a man whose sickness may have driven him to VLT gambling and to defrauding the youth group which he served as its treasurer, will have to spend a year in jail for taking \$118,000.

Saskatchewan

'The Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority will announce its new president and chief executive officer next week', writes the 2/3 StarPhoenix. The SIGA posted record profits of \$40.1M from its four casinos in 2005-06, and two new casinos - one on the Whitecap First Nation near Saskatoon and the other in Swift Current - are slated to open this year.

Manitoba

'Gullible gamblers' is the title of an article in the 1/30 Winnipeg Sun reporting that at the invitation of the Manitoba Lotteries Corp. and the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba the so-called Responsible Gambling Council of Ontario will bring its 'Know the Score' quiz to Manitoba's young people (between the ages of 18 and 24) about the risks associated with gambling. The program will be at Brandon University next week and at the U of M starting Feb. 26.

Ontario

The news that one third of Ontario's teens gamble – see last week's Newsletter- came to us again from Nova Scotia in the 1/30 Halifax Herald.

'Black Tie Bingo to benefit local Rotary Club's projects' is the title of an item in the 1/29 Windsor Star that talks of more than \$13,200 in prizes and tickets that cost \$75. On 1/31 this paper published a letter whose author found it 'appalling that casinos were OK'd for a smoking shelter before our legions', and its 2/1 edition had an item that talked of the local casino's expectation that, 'even though Sunday's Super Bowl is being played hundreds of miles away in Miami, Casino Windsor officials are expecting some major action locally'. 'City police are searching for a con man accused of duping a local couple out of \$19,000 with a scheme to help Christian gambling addicts' is a line in the Kingston Whig Standard of 1/30. The next day this paper has one article that warns religious groups to keep their eyes open for this con man, and another item telling that the con man was the founder of the local chapter of Gamblers Anonymous and that he was removed from his leadership role some months ago after members became suspicious of him and of the way he was acting. On 2/1, this paper writes that the man the police is looking for has been convicted of more than 260 crimes, while the Ottawa Citizen of that date reports that he has been spotted in that city and that the Correctional Service Canada has revoked his parole while the police is still looking for him.

'B is for Beer at bingo parlours', an article in the 1/30 Toronto Sun, reports that starting on 2/1 'bingo hall operators in Ontario will get the chance to bring another vice into their gambling dens with a pilot project allowing them to apply for liquor licences'. A day later the Brockville Recorder & Times writes that the local Bingo Hall will not seek a liquor license. On 2/1 this paper reports that patrons of the Thousand Islands Charity Casino in Gananoque will soon be able to smoke on an outdoor patio, according to the OLG spokes person who also said that the local plan was developed in consultation with the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

An article in the 1/29 Belleville Intelligencer reports that more than 66% of the required number of people has already completed the Quinte Exhibition and Raceway Impact study - 'the largest and most comprehensive ever conducted on gambling'. The remainder will be contacted over the next five weeks, the paper writes. We should add here that this study is done before the provincial government will install slot machines – known to be very addictive and deceptive – to keep a new raceway alive.

The 1/30 Metroland Media Group says that the Responsible Gambling Council is 'betting' that college-age students will be smarter about gambling once they 'Know the Score.' The Council – it keeps calling itself 'independent' while it is funded by the gambling revenues addicted Ontario government - is running the program this week at the Fleming College in Lindsay.

The 2/2 Chatham Daily News writes that a local woman received a cheque in the mail along with a note she had won a \$1M lottery. When she took the cheque to the bank, it was found to be part of a money scam, reports the Chatham-Kent police, who were called in to investigate. We wonder: will this type of scam ever stop? A day later, this paper says that the new Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation's Millionaire Life lottery has many 'players' gobbling up tickets on a chance for big, BIG money. We quote: 'Fifty-two-year-old Noel Mailloux already has his sights on winning. In fact, he's so eager to win he's even giving it a couple of tries - purchasing a few tickets with a couple of buddies and then joining a dozen of his co-workers at the Windsor Ford plant in pitching in \$20 each to purchase tickets'.

'The former director of marketing at the Fallsview Casino Resort, Anthony Annunziata, has been appointed to the board of directors of the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority', writes the 2/2 Niagara Falls Review.

New Brunswick

The January Telegraph Journal published a number of letters to the Editor referring to the social harm a racino would do to the Saint John community. A letter by Rev. K. Russell Knowles said that the Greater Saint John Community Foundation reports that in 2001 one quarter of the population of this city lived below the poverty line. In 2004 the top 10 per cent of New Brunswick families with children earned an average of \$255,056 (highest in the nation) while the lowest 10 per cent earned an average of \$16,938. In 10 years, this gap has doubled. Also: a study by the National Council on Welfare determined that in New Brunswick "problem/pathological gamblers are more likely than non-problem respondents to have an annual income under \$30,000." Many of these people cannot afford a lottery ticket, let alone the losses that they will incur at a racino. This letter has a lot more items of pertinent facts. Interested parties might write this senior Pastor of the Saint John Calvary temple and ask him for a copy of that letter.

Nova Scotia

'Fraudsters like to play on innocent image of N.S.' is the title of an item in the 2/1 Halifax Herald reporting that fraudster letters (like the one in the Chatham Daily News referred to above) often use Nova Scotia addresses.

'A Cape Breton man who orchestrated a \$700,000 Employment Insurance scam to feed an out-of-control gambling addiction was handed a conditional sentence of almost two years on Thursday' is a paragraph in a CP item in the 2/3 Halifax Herald. He also must do 240 hours of community service and is not allowed to enter any kind of gaming (here is that senseless word again!) establishment during the term of his sentence.

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 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!

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.

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