

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

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Our News Releases

On 1/15 Canada's Gambling Watch Network sent out a News Release to all our contacts who are involved in Newspapers and other media, and to all politicians on our lists. The item was a six-person complaint to the Competition Bureau calling for an investigation of the gambling business in Canada of its use of misleading and deceptive technology employed in Electronic Gambling Machines generally known as Slot Machines and Video Lottery Terminals. If you want to see the News Release, ask us to email it to you. The Ontario section has information on another News Release we sent out.

Cyber Gambling

An Associated Press item that appeared in the 1/16 Toronto Star writes that two Canadian citizens, founders of a company that processes Internet gambling transactions, were taken prisoner and charged by U.S.A. federal prosecutors with laundering billions of dollars in gambling proceeds. 'The prosecutor said the men knew, when they took their company public that its activities were illegal.' "Blatant violations of U.S. law are not a mere `risk' to be disclosed to prospective investors," Garcia said. "Criminal prosecutions related to online gambling will be pursued even in cases where assets and defendants are positioned outside of the United States." There's so much going on in the sphere of online gambling that our Newsletter can't keep our readers up-to-date with all the news.

Lotteries

What I see on my daily walks through a nearby mall really bothers me. There are always some tables used by folks with scratch tickets. A few days ago a female, her wheelchair parked beside her table, had a great variety of those tickets on her table, and I always see problem gamblers standing around the lottery booth. It's disturbing that many papers give so much publicity to those who happen to win a big jackpot. Are these winners always really 'lucky'? 'In Winner down and out after record lottery win', an article in the 1/13 – if you are superstitious, look at that date! – London Free Press has the story of a man in Charleston, W.VA., who won nearly \$315 M (US) on Christmas 2002, then the largest undivided lottery prize in U.S. history. He took his win in a lump sum of \$113 M after taxes. He now can't pay a settlement to a casino worker because thieves cleaned out his bank accounts. This is not the first time that we see a tale about people whose 'luck' did not last long.

British Columbia

'Legion gets slap in the face from bookkeeper' is a 1/12 item in the Abbotsford Times that tells of a bookkeeper who defrauded the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion for over \$202,000, was ordered to repay, and has paid back only \$80 to date. When we see a story like this one we always wonder if gambling is involved. Does the reporter take the trouble of mentioning it if it is?

Alberta

Of the 14 Alberta articles we found 12 are dealing with the tobacco smoking issue. In the 1/12 and 13 Calgary Sun we read that defiant venues are finally obeying the new by-law and making sure their clients are not smoking, and the 1/11 Calgary Herald reports that Alberta's new health minister has said that he intends to bring forward a proposal for a province-wide smoking ban, arguing that lighting up is a "drain" on the medical system.

'Owners of the Palace Casino want striking workers to vote on management's latest wage and benefits offer' is a sentence in the 1/16 Edmonton Journal, but the rest of the article gives the impression that the end of the strike – it began in September - is not yet in sight.

'VLTs labelled unfair' is the title of an item in the 1/19 Edmonton Sun reporting Canada's

Gambling Watch Network's complaint to Canada's Competition Bureau. We quote two paragraphs of this item: "People need to be forewarned before they play these machines. Our government vouches for their integrity when they know very little about the software behind the screens," said Garry Smith of the Alberta Gaming Research Institute. "These machines are being tested and approved in the same place as those which end up in Las Vegas, but laws governing fair play are different here." The ALGC's reaction is in this paragraph: "All our products are purchased from recognized vendors who sell proven products," said AGLC spokesman Lynn Hutchings-Mah, adding all machines are tested and approved by U.S.-based Gaming Laboratories International.'

Saskatchewan

'Ensure gaming proceeds properly spent' is the heading of an item in the 1/19 StarPhoenix

that - just like the Manitoba article below - might be of interest to other provinces. We've heard rumours on cases like that elsewhere. The article refers to an item written by Doug Cuthand – see our 1/11 Newsletter – asks questions, but has not any definite answers. We enjoyed the sentence that says: It reminded me of our Cree comedian Don Burnstick's joke, "White people have the Mafia. We have chief and council."

Manitoba

The 1/17 Brandon Sun carried an item on our Complaint made to the competition bureau that VLTs use 'deceptive' technologies.

Will Manitoba's anti-smoking law apply on Indian reserves is a question that's heading to the province's highest court, the 1/19 Regina Leader-Post writes. Last fall, a lower court ruling said the province's no-puffing-in-public law was discriminatory because it did not apply to reserves. Appeal Justice Michel Monnin decided Thursday to allow Manitoba's government to appeal this lower court ruling. The outcome of this case will be important not only for Manitoba but also for other provinces. The present uproar in Ontario about casinos installing smoking rooms is one of the issues that might be involved indirectly.

Ontario

An item in the 1/11 Niagara Falls Review states that any rumours suggesting that Niagara Casinos are planning any mass firings, mass layoffs or any other large-scale restructuring initiative, are just that – rumours, according to Niagara Casinos spokesman Medulun.

A letter to the Editor in the 1/12 London Free Press says Wilf Kemp is shocked that the Trillium Foundation granted the bankrupt World Lacrosse Championship \$147,000 while two applications for less than half that amount for support in the renewal of the Thorndale Library were turned down.

A CP item in the 1/13 Windsor Star states that Detroit's three state-licensed casinos took in US\$1.303 billion in 2006; their 6.1% increase happened in a year when the competing Casino Windsor had to ban smoking under a new Ontario law. The paper contains many more figures of no interest to us and also talks of Windsor's future as 'Caesars Windsor'.

An article in the 1/15 Globe and Mail writes of the charges and problems piling up for a bankrupt stock promoter whose discharge request was rejected but who keeps gambling at casinos despite his precarious financial situation. He filed for bankruptcy in 2003, and listed \$5,000 in assets and \$2.7M in liabilities. He blamed his business collapse as well as his "high lifestyle" and gambling debts for the bankruptcy, according to court filings.

Brantford's city councillors are looking at the possibility of setting up a charity bingo, the 1/16 Expositor writes. The city lost its last bingo hall with the closing of the Brantford Bingo Hall in December '05, leaving 46 charitable agencies scrambling for other sources of revenue and customers driving out of town to play. Councillors and an MPP are doing what they can to re-establish a casino hall.

'Students go face-to-face with students over gambling' is an article in the 1/16 Niagara Falls Review that talks of the oxymoronic Responsible Gambling Council working with students on their poker problems. The number of 18 to 24 years old playing online poker has risen to 5.5% up from 1.4% in '01, according to a '05 study by the council. Entering a survey of students on the signs of problem gambling leads to a draw to win \$1,500 in tuition, pizza and library gift certificates.

In the 1/17 Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal, an article titled 'Casino slots go coin-free' is very important. What it basically means is that Ontario – it has always proudly said that it has no Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs) – is now converting its slot machines to VLTs. If you want to know more on this subject, **ask us for the Press Release we sent around.**

'The Western Fair Association generates more than \$114 million in economic spin-offs for the city of London, fair manager Gary McRae said yesterday' is a line in the London Free Press of 1/17. Toward the end of the article it mentions that the raceway's spin-off is \$7.8 M and the slots' \$51.7 M.

In addition to the items mentioned so far, we found twelve Newspaper articles dated from 1/16 to 1/20 that are critical of the fact that the province's casinos are spending money on shelters where gamblers can satisfy their urge to smoke while no other establishments are allowed to do so. Words like 'unfair', 'hypocrisy', and 'discriminatory' are common in the articles. In the 1/20 Sarnia Observer, the Health Promotion Minister Jim Watson is quoted as follows: "We're treating the casinos the same as every other office building or structure that doesn't serve food as its primary business."

We also received a 56-page report prepared for the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre on surveys of casino patrons that were done in 2002-2004. The five communities studied are Sault Ste. Marie, Brantford,

Point Edward and Sarnia, Thunder Bay, and Gananoque. One of our co-workers is still seeking for some answers on the report's contents. In the meantime: **ask us to email it to you if you're interested.**

Nova Scotia

Bar owners are seeing fewer customers since the province reduced the number of VLTs permitted in their establishments, and banned public smoking, writes the Halifax Herald on 1/13, but the RCMP is not bluffing about its illegal gambling crackdown. Barkeepers won't be able to make up their loss by illegal card games and other gambling ventures.

The 1/16 Halifax Herald carried an article on our Complaint made to the competition bureau that VLTs use 'deceptive' technologies.

'Nova Scotia is expecting a drop of more than \$40 million in video lottery terminal profits because of changes to the machines and the province's smoking ban' is a sentence in the 1/18 Herald. 'We quote: 'In the past 18 months, the province has imposed midnight as the daily shutdown time for the machines; removed the games' stop button, which gave players the impression they could control the game's outcome; got rid of nearly 1,000 VLTs; and slowed the speed of the machines'. The phrase 'gave players the impression they could control the game's outcome' tells that gamblers were purposely misled! That's one of the reasons why activists will not rest until all those machines are gone!

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.

This help has become more urgent recently because, in order to be able to send out large numbers of emails, we had to register as a business with our Internet server at a much higher cost than before.

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'll continue to look for subscribers to our Newsletter. The price is \$20 annually and any bigger amounts will be received with thanks. We cannot issue receipts that'll be recognized by Canada's taxation system. How can we actively oppose gambling without being politically active? **Send a 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