

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

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Youth and gambling

In the past week many Ontario newspapers carried items on a study released by Ontario's oxymoronic Responsible Gambling Council, funded by the province's gambling addicted government. The Ottawa Citizen has an extremely appropriate title for its article on this study's finding that slightly more than one third of teens aged 15-17 have gambled in the past 12 months: 'Teens caught in society's urge to gamble, study says' is that title. Why is that heading so appropriate in my opinion? Let me try to explain that. First of all we must look at our irresponsible government. Has it ever tried to make sure that parents have any idea of what gambling can do to youngsters? As far as I know: never! What it does is the opposite: it spends half a billion dollars annually advertising and promoting. Let me add here that its henchmen who do this work now make sure they do not receive our weekly newsletter by blocking their address. Should that surprise us in a province that makes an estimated \$6 billion yearly from the gambling it has legalized and normalized?

Some papers added pictures to these stories. At least one of those, supplied by the OLG, showed a huge enlarged winner's cheque that would make a teenager's mouth water!

Anyone visiting a mall with a lottery booth will see parents training their children in their bad habit of buying lottery tickets. I have seen mothers telling their little ones to get the lottery forms they wanted, heard of parents presenting their offspring lottery tickets for a birthday or Christmas, and grandparents doing the same with the highly addictive scratch-and-lose tickets. Near my present home I see oldsters with those tickets every day; one of them said that his addiction to them could only stop if they became banned and he could not buy them any more!

It's a sad fact of life that well-meaning charities have played their part in the normalizing of gambling by their addiction to lotteries, in spite of the unshakeable proof that they are a very inefficient way to raise money. Another sad truth is the silence of our churches. At one point a number of denominations spoke out against gambling, but now the matter is mentioned so seldom from our many pulpits that in the past week I got a phone call from a church goer to tell me that a guest pastor had warned against lotteries in his sermon!

Is it any wonder that the study shows that young people are absorbing gambling concepts because they see them all around them, along with poker on TV and On-line betting etc. on their computers? Our newspapers have become a part of that: just look at the up-beat stories they write and publish about people who win a lottery jackpot! In the past week several newspaper said that many parents aren't aware of what their kids do on their computers, and a piece in the 1/26 London Free Press reported that a group of 18-year-olds and even younger, too young to get into casinos, find other ways to gamble on a weekly basis. One of them, aged 16, lost his pet rat in a bet. 'A young gambler's tale of addiction' is a story found in the 1/24 Knoxville News Sentinel that we would like everyone to read. We may not copy it, but you can read it by going to

http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/national/article/0,1406,KNS_350_5304732,00.html

Horseracing

Last week we ran out of space before we could cover this subject. When horses no longer were a necessity for farming, horseracing became an outdated and dying hobby. Despite that fact, some of its supporters managed to manipulate greedy politicians to put it on the life support of slot machines. A good example of that was what occurred in London, Ont. A few months after Londoners turned down a proposed charity casino by a vote of some 67%, its councillors approved a 'slots lounge' for its local racetrack without a referendum.

A CP item in the 1/18 Globe and Mail says that 'Magna Entertainment plans to quit Great Lakes Downs in Michigan' after 2007, but will reconsider that if the state's government changes the rules governing the track; it lost about \$1.8 M (U.S.) during 2006.

The 1/18 Edmonton Sun reports that 'Alberta Grits are calling on Premier Ed Stelmach to phase out what they claim is a "sweetheart deal" that's pumping \$200 M into horseracing.' Alberta's horseracing chairman said the not-for-profit industry is seen as a model in North America for preventing horse racing from being strangled by casino and VLT gambling.

The next day's Sun continued its coverage of Liberal MLA Maurice Tougas' attack. He said the horseracing chairman earned \$193,501 and the president made \$211,304 in '05, compared to the \$140,000 salary of Premier Ed Stelmach.

In an ironic reaction to the above, the writer of a letter that appeared in the 1/22 Edmonton Journal suggests that the homeless, working poor, impoverished seniors and over-taxed middle class should stop complaining and go get themselves a racehorse so they can take advantage of the 'trickledown economics' practiced by our government, but a letter to the Editor in the 1/27 Journal stresses the fact that every betting pool, including horseracing and lotteries, is taxed by both federal and provincial governments. 'Without these betting taxes, which are in the billions of dollars, the governments would be increasing taxes on non-betting Albertans', the letter concludes.

Ontario's municipalities hosting a racetrack with slots get paid every quarter for their part of what gamblers lost. Recent newspapers reported these amounts: Sarnia \$442,132; Fort Erie \$408,000; London \$1.1 M; Clinton \$149,618, and Woodstock \$264,521.

British Columbia

'Canada's first-ever recovery house for "crime addicts" has opened in Vancouver' is a line in the 1/22 Province. As crime and gambling are very closely related, we are glad to read that efforts are made to cure and re-integrate these addicts into society.

The irresponsibility of the provincial government is demonstrated in the decision to open a "gaming" centre in Duncan with a large 750-seats bingo hall and 75 Slot machines while statistics show that in the Langleys new admissions for problem gambling treatment went up after the Cascades gaming venue was introduced, the Problem Gambling Help Line took approximately 5,830 calls specifically related to gambling last year – up 45% over the previous year – and across BC the number of clients admitted for treatment increased by 25% in the same period. (We found these figures in the 1/24 Duncan News Leader.)

Two women were robbed of their winnings after leaving the River Rock casino by way of the front entrance. They were followed to their house and robbed there, the

1/24 Province writes. The two high-stakes robberies are just the latest in a string of more troubles at that casino, and the RCMP has asked the Richmond council for more officers. Two days later this paper reports that a city councillor wants to ask the council's next budget meeting to find money for six new police officers, some of whom could be dedicated to the casino. To do it, he's proposing a tax hike. Public outcry about recent violent crimes in Richmond has been intense, one councillor said.

Alberta

'Alderman seeks addiction centre' is the heading of an article in the 1/25 Calgary Sun that talks of emergency rooms being revolving doors for addicts, who are tying up paramedics at hospitals. He said: "If you can take the addicts and alcoholics out of the emergency system, then you would set (aside) a lot more time for doctors and nurses to treat actually real emergency issues,"

Manitoba

'Charitable and religious organizations can shuffle up and deal on a permanent basis due to new licensing rules that allow them to hold real-money poker tournaments' is a line in an article in the 1/23 Winnipeg Sun. As of Feb. 1 such groups can apply for a provincial licence to hold Texas Hold'em poker events that raise money for their cause and reward competitors with a payout, the paper says.

'The European-style alpine village will have a conference centre, helipad, nightclubs and a casino' is the only sentence of interest to us in a 1/22 Calgary Herald article that tells of a planned development by Calgary-based Bridgecreek Development Corporation in the Manitoba Crowsnest Pass area.

Ontario

The 1/20 Brantford Expositor reports that the city's third quarter share of casino revenue was \$946,749. Since the casino opened in 1999 the city received more than \$28.5 M as its share of the losses of gamblers there. On 1/23 the paper writes that city's councillors are fuming over what they consider the Liberal government's "hypocritical" decision to allow casinos to build outdoor smoking shelters for patrons, and on 1/25 it reports that the OLG said the cost of the local shelter isn't available but that the city's permit is for \$200,000.

The 1/26 paper writes a warning about poker events for charities. Any gambling in a licensed establishment is illegal under the Liquor Licence Act of Ontario, the paper says.

The 1/20 Sarnia Observer writes that both its mayor and the OLGC see the rise in slots revenue as evidence the impact of a '04 county smoking bylaw and last year's provincial smoking legislation is waning. "We're seeing it lessen at (OLG Slots) Hiawatha," said the mayor after a fourth-quarter payment of \$442,132 marked four consecutive increases in quarterly revenues from 2005. 'The first step is admitting we have an addiction' is the title of an article by Paul Morden, an editor of this Sarnia paper, written in reference to what is going on with smoking shelters for casinos. He expresses many undoubted truths in this piece, and here is one of them: 'Ontario signed its deal with the devil when it decided to go into the gambling business'.

'Frequent fraudster gets 200 days in jail' is an article in the 1/20 Kingston Whig Standard that tells about a man whose seven crimes included tendering an altered Nevada ticket to claim a prize. Exactly one week later this paper has an article about

the casino smoking shelters that quotes our spokesman Brian Yealland saying: 'it's typical of the "preferential pampering treatment" that casinos receive.

On 1/22 the Windsor Star publishes two letters to the Editor that are very critical of the government's stance on smoking shacks, and the next day another printed letter calls the shacks 'an affront to other businesses'. On 1/26 this paper reports that the OPP and local police officers sized four Video Lottery Terminals from a local billiard hall, and that they arrested six people who will appear in court in March.

'The medical officer of health for the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Health Unit says a deal was reached with the Thousand Islands Charity Casino in Gananoque to not build a covered smoking patio there' is a paragraph in the 1/22 Brockville Recorder and Times. It will be interesting to see how this issue develops. The paper also writes that an official of the OLG said recently that a covered smoking shelter is being planned for that casino.

One day later this paper reports that the Leeds and Thousand Islands Township and the Town of Gananoque each received a cheque of \$383,720 as their quarterly share of the slots revenues of the casino. We quote: 'Since the June 20, 2002 opening of the casino, the host municipalities have shared more than \$16 million under an arrangement between the host municipalities and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation.'

The 1/23 London Free Press carries an article about the changes that are being made to slot machines – **please ask for our News Release on this subject** – that quotes a lot of what our advisor, Roger Horbay, says about them. A spokesman of the OLG denies much of what Roger states. We intend to get back to this subject next week.

The 1/24 Fairway Newspaper Group writes that the Responsible Gambling Council is at work with the students of the Wilfrid Laurier University. It is using its Know the Score interactive awareness program on those students.

New Brunswick

'Betting is not a sport' is an item in the 1/16 Telegraph Journal by Mark Huestis that puts the emphasis on the plain fact that the so-called horseracing 'sport' relies totally on the gambling that keeps it alive. He speaks of the harm betting on the races has done, and he opposes making racinos of racetracks by adding VLTs.

Nova Scotia

The 1/21 Daily News writes that the RCMP is warning places with liquor licenses to stay away from illegal gambling operations, such as Texas Hold 'Em. The article mentions a bar that organizes such gambling games and might be charged by the police.

In 'Spryfield Bingo worker beaten and robbed', a story in the 1/23 Halifax Herald, we are told that the culprit made off with an estimated \$1,200.

Several newspapers reported that printing scratch-and-win tickets makes businesses doing that healthy. We believe that those unhealthy addictive tickets ought to be outlawed and banned. It's a shame that our governments are the pushers of these tickets. On my walk through a nearby shopping mall this morning at around 11, I counted 8 people 'playing' with those unhealthy scratch-and-lose tickets.

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.

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