

Canada's Gambling Watch Network

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Visit our Web site: <http://www.gamblingwatch.ca>, click Newsletter to find more info on Canada's Gambling Watch Network along with links to other Canadian active groups.

General

In the last few weeks, so much news dealt with the Federal Budget and other items of great interest, that gambling news was rather scarce. Just as it seemed that for this time a shorter Newsletter would be sufficient, we received a New York Times article that tells of a possible radical change in the way addictions are seen. What usually was regarded as a disservice to addicts – trying to get them to cut down their use of the substance or action - is now, thanks to new drugs that seem to numb the brain to the euphoria from drinking or gambling binges, an acceptable option, the article implies.

We have always seen our provincial governments' talk of responsible gambling as driven by the fear of reduced revenues; will they now find justification for their greed in the use of those new drugs? We'll let this matter rest until we have had the opportunity to learn a bit more about the whole issue.

'Viva Las Vegas for Canadians' is the title of an article in the 5/3 Financial Post reporting that a popular way for Canadians to take advantage of the high value of our loonies is that they exchange them for 'an extra large helping of casino chips at a Las Vegas hotel'. We wonder: don't we have enough opportunities in our own country to waste our money?

Does the gambling addiction of famous people increase their fame? While most gambling addicts are ashamed of their situation, we some times get the impression that well-known 'heroes' see no reason to hide it. A CP article in the 5/2 Globe and mail reports that 'John Daly says he has lost between \$50-million and \$60-million (all figures U.S.) during 12 years of heavy gambling, and that it has become a problem that could "flat out ruin me" if he doesn't bring it under control'; then the 5/4 ESPN Internet Ventures writes 'Barkley claims gambling problem has cost him 10M', and on 5/6 an AP article in the Washington Post states that 67-year-old singer Jay Black 'said that gambling plunged him into debt but that he has conquered the habit. He will consider selling "Jay and the Americans," but he must retain "Jay Black and the Americans" so he can continue to tour.

In reaction to the news of gambling addictions among people of fame, the 5/5 Salt Lake Tribune published an article that calls the present situation 'epidemic'. For quite some time, we have seen it developing as that, and one of our disappointments has been and still is that so few fellow-Canadians have joined us in our struggle against it. What came to us in the past week gave us new hope: the Pastor of a Church whose denomination long ago expressed itself against gambling, sent us a copy of a down-to-earth sermon he delivered to his Alberta congregation, and he gave us permission to share it with others. The few of us who've had the time to read it see it as very realistic and to the point. If you ask us for it, we'll email you a copy of this sermon written by Saint Albert's Rev, John Luth.

Latest News

Early this morning when we were practically ready to send our Newsletter around, a 5/8 article from Poker News reached us reporting that – in the light of what’s going on in the USA’s political world – the so-called ‘American Gaming Association’, representing the Gambling ‘industry’, wants a year-long study of Internet gambling before its government decides on what to do about it. It reminds us of the fact that some years ago we, Canada’s Gambling Watch Network, suggested that a Royal Commission be formed to study the entire gambling issue.

British Columbia

'No to lotteries' is a letter to the Editor printed in The 5/1 Province in reaction to items in that paper promoting lotteries that raise money for both the 2010 Olympics and children’s charities. It is the writer’s opinion that lotteries are a form of gambling and should not be used to support sports and charities.

A letter in the 5/2 Times Colonist protests against the idea expressed in that paper’s 4/29 issue to bring a smaller Las Vegas to Victoria. The author of that article wrote of the nice things, the fun and the glitter he had enjoyed in Las Vegas, while the writer of the letter highlights what goes on behind that glittering façade: 'the scores of "big loser" suicides wheeled out the back lane of those luxurious towers, and "big winners" whacked over their head before they even made it to their car or hotel room'. Then, quoting someone working in Las Vegas' sheriff’s department: "Every week we find a woman's body here, 52 weeks a year -- and those are just the ones we find. If you went out into the desert and called for all the bodies to stand up, you couldn't count them all." This reminds us of a story in a Calgary paper last week telling of a father whose daughter is lost in Las Vegas. 'Gambling no big deal' is a letter in the 5/2 Province. Its writer says 'he enjoys buying the occasional scratch-and-win ticket or buying a double dip on the 6/49', like millions across Canada do. Hearing this, we are tempted to remind people of the long odds that made our Italians friends call buying lottery tickets 'paying one's idiot taxes'.

The 5/2 Abbotsford News has an opinion piece that should cause the city’s voters to keep their eyes open. 'Liberals may again flip flop on casino issue' is its title, and the item tells what happened in that respect not all that long ago. We now take the liberty to quote the Article’s final paragraphs, and we thank Trudy Beyak for writing them: ' Since Esposito’s property is beside the University College of the Fraser Valley, and Finnegan’s was always a popular watering hole, a casino, if approved, could reasonably be expected to attract some of our finest young people to get hooked on gambling.

You can colour it glitzy, you can argue it’s fun, and once in awhile, you can say you’re a winner, but, in my books, we all lose, because a casino preys and profits on human weakness.'

'Vancouver's financially troubled Edgewater Casino could be run by a Las Vegas casino operator by this summer - making it the first foreign-owned casino in B.C.' is the opening sentence of a 5/4 Vancouver Sun item telling that Paragon Gaming is seeking the BCLC's approval to buy and manage the Edgewater Casino. An item in the 4/5’s VANCOUVER 24 HOURS carries the same news that seems to indicate that the province is really at the point where it must face the fact that even gamblers’ losses are not a bottomless pit.

Alberta

Bingo games, that were once a major fund-raiser, are now barely making a profit, reports the 5/2 Edmonton Journal in an article from the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission.

'With volunteers harder to find and attendance dropping, league officials aren't sure what the future holds for their bingo', the item says. From practically all other provinces we've had news like this and we just hope that not one of them will follow BC's bad example of putting slot machines in Bingo halls, converting them to places with electronic bingo and the deceitful name of 'gaming centres'.

In the present atmosphere of political correctness, it seems to be acceptable that provincial governments afflict gambling's social and economic damage to citizens as long as efforts are made to also repair the damage. The 5/6 Calgary Sun – along with two other papers – reports that officials launched a Responsible Gambling Information Centre, the second of its kind in the province, at the Deerfoot Inn and Casino.

From 'Five split \$10,000 in Sun Bingo' in the 5/7 Edmonton Sun, we learn one again that some media don't see any harm in encouraging gambling.

Manitoba

'The backers of the Wheat City Horse Park will get the meeting they've been waiting two years for', writes the 5/4 Brandon Sun. Agriculture Minister Rosann Wowchuk along with Lotteries Minister Scott Smith have agreed to meet on May 17 to discuss the Wheat City Horse Park with the committee that wants to build a \$16-million harness racing track and entertainment facility on the outskirts of the city. From previous news we know that it is the intention to get permission to have highly addictive VLTs at the park so that the dying horseracing hobby may become a successful 'industry' financed by gamblers' losses.

Ontario

'Smell of racing at Fort Erie track worth a bouquet' is a line in a part of an editorial in the 5/1 Niagara Falls Review that talks of the scarcity of thoroughbred racetracks left in our country.

A woman who stole almost \$175,000 from a former employer is a "pathological gambler" who used wagering to escape her daily stress, a gambling counsellor told a Guelph court, writes a CP item in the 5/2 Edmonton Sun. The 40-year-old pleaded guilty to theft and to falsifying the books at the company where she worked as an account credit manager. The story was found later in the Guelph Record; it says that she was addicted to video poker, horseracing and scratch tickets and that she's to be sentenced in July.

'The North American poker craze seems to have hit home in high schools with more than a third of Ontario teenagers reporting they bet money playing cards last year, is the start of a study report in the 5/3 Toronto Star that shows that the number of those players went up from less than one quarter to about one third in the past year. Although the researchers are quite optimistic about the number of youngsters that will become problem gamblers, a warning is issued to parents to keep their eyes open for things or money going missing.

Three letters in the 5/4 Windsor Star talk of the smoking ban that'll take effect on June 1. One of them suggests that a business ought to be allowed to make the decision itself; the others talk of the revenues and the jobs that are expected to be lost, especially since there are no plans for measures against smoking across the border.

The Niagara Falls Review of that same date mentions three other 'deadly' issues that are threats to its city's tourism: 'high gas prices, the passport and the rising Canadian dollar'. It also talks of the 'charitable gaming industry, a \$50-million-a-year business in Fort Erie', which is particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in the relative value of the Canadian dollar. Fort Erie's Community Gaming Development Corp. is responsible for issuing licenses to more than 110 charitable and not-for-profit organizations conducting bingo

events in Fort Erie. The higher valued Canadian dollar does diminish its revenue, the article says.

The Toronto Star of this day writes that the Niagara Fallsview Casino Resort is holding a 10-day marathon of poker, a Survivor-like endurance test. 'Since yesterday, an estimated 3,000 players from across Canada have begun winnowing the field down to the final table in the second annual Degree Poker Championship,' the paper reports. 'The game is Texas hold 'em and the betting is no-limit.' The tournament will be filmed and broadcast on the TSN, reduced to seven one-hour broadcasts, in September.

New Brunswick

A 5/5 item in the Telegraph-Journal is interesting because it mentions that the Spielo Corporation, the maker of VLT machines, a.k.a. gambling's crack cocaine because they are so addictive, received a reward. Don't we live in a strange world when deceptive devices that cheat people out of their money are deemed worthy of honorary rewards?

Newfoundland and Labrador

We are used to seeing stories telling us that prosecutors suggest jail sentences for certain criminals while their lawyers try to get them suspended sentences. In the case of the man who smashed nearly a dozen VLTs the 5/1 CBC News reports that the prosecutor doesn't want the man to go to jail. Our first thought was that he perhaps deemed the VLTs worth of that treatment, but we now realize that it was the tough life of the 'smasher' that caused his recommendation. We haven't found out what his sentence was.

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