

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

If, in the more than 6 ½ years of our existence, we've ever had a Newsletter with so little news from the provinces, I don't remember the occasion. In the past week, we did all the usual searches, but most days the results were very small. If it were true that no news is good news, we'd be glad. But the news from B.C. shows that the gambling scene there is still expanding and the same thing can be said of practically all other provinces. It is more likely that our media are getting so used to all the gambling in our country, that only very important growth or changes are reported. One of those important items got the attention it deserved in papers from coast to coast. It dealt with children and women. See below.

'New gambling larks are aimed at women and kids as young as 10', a 5/11CP

CanWest item that showed up in many other papers, has this line: 'Kids can learn the fundamentals of Texas Hold'em at a two-day event planned for June in Vancouver. The excuse for this is: 'math and communications skills are beneficial by products', according to a spokesman for Nevada North's Kids Poker Tour. 'The number of women betting on celebrity and pop culture events is spiking, say marketers in Vancouver's tony Yaletown neighbourhood', is another line in this article. A team of betUS.com. researchers is going through newspapers looking for pop culture wagers. They're even betting on things like the reaction of Roman Catholics to the Da Vinci Code movie, we're told. We're somewhat surprised that B.C.'s Solicitor General calls the involvements of kids 'unconscionable' and 'inappropriate'. We often have the impression that in this province all sorts of gambling are welcome, as long as they increase the government's 'revenue' from that 'entertaining pastime'.

An item in a Nebraska newspaper also deals with youth and gambling. The 5/13 Fremont Tribune writes that a biennial survey of students shows that more and more of them start gambling at an average age of 10 or even younger. It lists these reasons for the increase:

- _ the explosion of poker on television;
- _ the glamorous depictions of gambling in American culture;
- _ and more and more opportunities to gamble on the Internet and elsewhere.

Gambling is "more accessible and mainstream".

Casinos and Crime

A 5/11 Washington Post article contains a study by two researchers at Baylor University. David B. Mustard and Earl L. Grinols analyzed crime data collected from all 3,165 U.S. counties from 1977 to 1996, looking at local crime rates before and after casinos opened. We quote: 'Crime began to rise after the first year, slowly at first and then more quickly, until it had far surpassed what it would have been if the casino had never opened. By the fifth year of operation, robberies were up 136 percent; aggravated assaults, 91 percent; auto theft, 78 percent; burglary, 50 percent; larceny, 38 percent; and rape, 21 percent.

Controlling for other factors, 8.6 percent of property crimes and 12.6 percent of violent crimes were attributed to casinos’.

One day later a Press Release from New Zealand’s Problem Gambling Foundation gives this figure: “Every year 5000 New Zealanders will be criminalised for gambling-related crimes.” Now we quote the final paragraphs: “When someone steals or defrauds our community for gambling, that person is punished, that person’s family and friends are punished, and every working person in New Zealand is punished when they pay for the cost of the trial and incarceration. Smoking harmed the health of communities, and as a society we are addressing this. How long will it take to address the financial, socio-economic and cultural harms of gambling, and ultimately health and well-being of our communities?”

Another sports gambling scandal

‘Serie A engulfed in gambling scandals’, an item in the 5/14 Winnipeg Sun, reports a new match-fixing scandal in the soccer world, this time from Italy. It tells of the withdrawals of the accreditations of some officials and of a player being questioned by the police. One of the player’s lawyer said that his client had gambled on tennis, horse racing and foreign soccer games, but had stopped when that practice was banned last year, and prosecutors in Naples, Rome, Parma and Turin are conducting investigations ranging from match-fixing to illegal betting. Naples prosecutors said they are investigating four Serie A clubs - Juventus, Lazio, AC Milan and Fiorentina - for alleged match fixing that could implicate "top names."

British Columbia

Two Nelson elementary schools saw their family bingo-night fundraisers cancelled when lottery officials informed organizers that children are not permitted to play bingo’, reports the 5/10 Globe and Mail. News like this surprises our Editor. Even when bingo still was the only permitted gambling ‘game’ in Ontario, he knew some people whom he regarded as addicts to it. Are B.C.’s educators so used to the province’s gambling policies that they have become unaware of the dangerous side of that type of entertainment? They must be: the article writes that one of the principals plans to appeal the decision.

Two articles in the 5/10 Maple Ridge News deal with gambling; what will it be: changing the bingo hall into a ‘gaming centre’ with electronic bingo, off-track betting and slots, or a casino? Unless the market expands, the article says, it will have to be a ‘gaming centre’: the government has prohibited any new casinos from opening in the Lower Mainland. It was clear that there wasn’t much interest in the topic: few people showed up for the open house discussion. A ‘community gaming centre’ could expect to bring in yearly \$110,000 to \$400,000 according to district officials. That money would support the 38 charities that now rely on the bingo hall. But the city of Coquitlam, down the road, earned \$1.1M from its 10% share when Great Canadian Casino relocated there from Surrey. Apparently BC’s people are so used to relying on gambling ‘revenue, that neither article had a single word on the social damage it’s doing.

A 5/10 article in The Province contains this paragraph: ‘Have a beer, make a bet on the ponies and catch up on your duty-free shopping with the winnings. That’s the idea behind a neighbourhood pub and horseracing teletheatre proposed for the Surrey side of the U.S. border’. This "high-end" pub, proposed by a customs brokers company owner, would get its patrons from the 1,500 truck drivers and other travelers who come each day across the border at a point where there's also duty-free shopping. We quote: "The pub would feature

four fully automated betting kiosks, where wagering would be offered at local, national and international tracks. The races would be shown via satellite on screens and winning tickets redeemed immediately'. Surrey's council received the proposal favourably, but as one member saw it as more expansion of gambling, the decision was deferred.

The next day's Abbotsford News writes that 'the concept of slot machines and electronic 'gaming' in Abbotsford may not be dead, despite council refusing Paul Esposito's casino application two months ago'. The BCLS now says that the city is being considered for a Community 'Gaming' Centre as described above in the Maple Ridge news. We expect to hear more about the situation in Abbotsford in the near future.

Ontario

'A successful bid for a Toronto World Expo could transform city's derelict port lands into a green and dynamic community', is the opening sentence of an article in the 5/9 Toronto Star that's a dreamy description of what the city might become if it indeed gets to host the 2016 Expo. The reason why it's of interest to Gambling Watch is the fact that more than once we've seen ideas that included a casino plan. This time the item mentions Montreal's casino as an after-effect of an Expo there.

Windsor's council expects that the coming smoke ban will put the city in the poor house, and it is already turning to the province to ask for assistance. A study by an economic consulting company predicts that 'up to 2,700 jobs will be lost and tourist spending is expected to decrease by up to \$225 million annually', as Windsor is expected to be Ontario's hardest hit city when the law takes effect, writes the 5/9 Windsor Star. Council want to meet with Provincial officials and push for both funding and programs to help it through the bad times. Two days later the Star reports that Ontario's minister of Finance disagrees with that pessimistic city-commissioned study; he agrees there will be a drop in tourism, "it will be an initially short-term decline, but things will pick up. In six months, we'll see who's right and who's wrong". He also said that the province is concerned about any negative impact, particularly on the Casino. "We're investing \$400 million in Casino Windsor to enhance gaming in this province. We're not going to allow this asset to lose value." But his concern about the rising value of our dollar and possible delays at border crossings outweighs the smoking issue.

Quebec

Or should we, for news from the Kahnawake reserve, open a separate section? An article in the 5/10 Gazette reports that the Mohawks there are thinking of moving into the stock market of London, England to take a 40% stake in an Isle of Man company. The article contains a lot of information that's beyond our understanding. We'll quote one paragraph of the item that will make clear why it seems a doubtful situation: 'The Mohawks assert their jurisdiction over gambling, but the federal and provincial governments maintain that only the provinces and territories can operate gambling ventures. The Surete du Quebec routinely says they're investigating Mohawk Internet Technologies, but no action has been taken.'

Newfoundland and Labrador

One of this province's MLA, upon reading our last week's Newsletter, forwarded a CBC News item that reported that the man who smashed 10 video lottery terminals will not go to jail. He was given two years' probation. Thanks MLA Amanda Will!

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