

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

A totally unexpected interruption of our Internet connection is the cause of the lateness of this newsletter. It happened on the date of this letter and it took some time to get it fixed.

'Horse sense is a good judgment which keeps horses from betting on people' W.C. Fields

'A lottery is a tax on people who are bad at math' - anonymous (*Homemakers magazine*)

We found the above quote in the magazine's June issue but didn't find it on its Web site.

If you have this issue, please read it and share it with others. It tells of a hardworking and successful businesswoman who gets addicted to VLT gambling, comes close to a suicide, but with the help of her husband and professional counsellors overcomes her addiction. It is a sad fact of today's reality that this story – it comes from Alberta – could have come from any province – even from one of Ontario 'slots lounges!'

Another article that we'd love to share with others comes from the Times Colonist in Victoria, B. C. It also deals with addiction to gambling, No, not Joe or Jane Blow's addiction, but the one of our Provincial Governments, and again: it comes from B.C., but it applies as much to any other province as it does there. Here is the opening sentence of the article: 'To the list of lies, damned lies and statistics, it appears we might have to add a new category of blatant falsehood: Pretty well anything said by a B.C. politician on the subject of gaming policy.' The item ends by stating something that can be said of any provincial or regional lottery corporation: 'The corporate strategy of B.C. Lotteries is evidently to expand gaming just as far and as fast as the market will bear.' That is the sad state of life in today's Canada: crown corporations, run by fellow members of our society, employed by our governments on behalf of our politicians, are wilfully blind to the horrible social damage legalized gambling is causing to many of their fellow citizens and, when we look at the salaries some of the Ontario ones are getting, are well-paid for doing so!

Yes: we say **WILFULLY!** Canada's Gambling Watch is in its seventh year of letting well over a thousand of our leaders – in all sorts of positions – know weekly of the social harm and the economical damage gambling is doing to our people and our country. And despite the fact that we might be the only nation-wide group that is doing so, we know of smaller groups all over our country, that make similar efforts.

And that's not all. Many newspapers have carried stories of gambling related problems, of crimes like frauds and robberies, of bankruptcies, break-ups of families, and even of suicides related to gambling.

Frankly speaking: we are losing hope that any of our provincial political parties will ever change to a more honest practise; all of them use the word 'gaming' instead of gambling; they all talk of entertainment and relaxation rather than highly addictive machines; they all - like the BC article says - are incurably addicted to the money lost by gamblers in our gambling dens. On *December 15 of the year 2004* the Canada Safety Council sent a letter

to our then Prime Minister asking for the status of Canada's Gambling Watch Network's request to initiate a Royal Commission into Gambling in Canada. Isn't it more than time that our Federal Government starts doing that? Our request for that commission can still be found on our Web site.

Lotteries

No less than 10 articles on lotteries were added to our files in this week. One dealt with the troubles of a big winner, the others talked of 'lucky people. I sat next to an older man in a mall near the lottery booth. He said he bought every day \$5 worth of break-open tickets. Wouldn't well over \$1,500 a year do more for a grandson at university than for the lottery corporation?

The betting craze

The present trend for wagering shows itself in many ways. We usually lack space to write about it, but in the past week the 6/6 Globe and Mail in 'Hurricane season has investors betting' said that the hurricane season officially began last Thursday and with it, wagering on the likelihood of storms hitting the U.S. coast, and on 6/8 the StarPhoenix reported in 'Wacky Wagers' an online gambling giant is offering Enron Corp. victims a chance to win back some of their losses by betting on the combined sentence its convicted former chief executive officers will get in September.

Gambling and Health

'She swore she'd never play the slots. Eventually, she allowed herself to play, but only with quarters. Soon she was contemptuous of any machines that didn't let her bet up to \$100' is a paragraph from an article in the 6/11 R. I. Providence Journal titled: 'Gambling excites older adults but may be addictive'. The lady who did this was in her 60s and, according to experts, serves as a modern example of how the elderly develop gambling problems. She had risen to the rank of colonel in the Army, but after she retired she wasn't sure what to do with her life. Another sentence in the item says: "One day, I put my money in a slot machine, and it was like an instant addiction. I won."

In 'A Unique Gambling Research Partnership' item we read that Phil Upshall, Executive Director of the Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) and Dr. Sidney Kennedy, Principal Investigator and Psychiatrist-in-Chief of the University Health Network are pleased to announce receipt of funding from the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre for an important research partnership focused on understanding the frequency of problem gambling amongst people referred for treatment in mood disorder clinics.

In 'Tremor drug linked to odd compulsions', a four-page item in the Baltimore Sun, we read again that Parkinson's patients' medications seem to cause many odd compulsions in the victims. Problem gambling can be one of those irrepressible results.

British Columbia

Police still won't say if the human remains found in wooded area are those of the woman who was reported to be missing on May 26 after leaving Richmond's River Rock Casino and Resort, writes the 6/7 Vancouver Sun.

'Worth the gamble' is an item in the 6/8 North Shore Outlook covering a poker contest. It is a sad sign of our times that the paper adds its share to the present poker craze by giving many particulars of the ongoing tournament.

'Casino bets on liquor' heads an article in the 6/9 Goldstream News Gazette reporting that Royal View's casino (near Victoria) wants a permit to serve alcohol on its gambling floor.

The BCLC is holding a province-wide star search in its mission to find an undiscovered singing sensation to perform at the celebrity-studded David Foster and Friends Charity Gala at the River Rock Casino Resort in Richmond on Sept 10, reports the 6/9 Globe and Mail. The charity provides financial support to families across Canada with children that need life-saving organ transplants'

The landlord of the Edgewater Casino (Canadian Metropolitan Properties) and the city of Vancouver both agreed to the lease extension from 2008 to 2013 on the present location. Paragon Gaming Vice-President Yale Rowe said the company wants to move the casino to another Vancouver location but isn't sure when that will happen and needs that lease extension to give it time to find a new site', writes the 6/10 Vancouver Sun.

Alberta

Two articles in the 6/8 Calgary Sun give news on that city's casinos. One of them shows clearly that what we said about provincial lottery corporations in our general section also applies to provincial politicians: gambling is just a marketing issue for them. In 'No more casinos in the cards for Calgary' Alberta's Gam(bl)ing minister is reported to say that the city 'with six casinos and a seventh in the works, is at the saturation point for a city of its size'. The other item, reporting on the \$200M expansion of the Stampede Park, says that the new home for the Stampede's casino will be the first structure built. The minister says about that new home in the first article that 'the \$44-million Stampede Casino, which will open in 2008, doesn't count as a new facility, as it will replace the old casino, while offering more "bells and whistles."

A third article in the same issue reports on a 'poker league' set up two years ago after the Medicine Hat Casino stopped running poker games. Its leader pleaded guilty to operating an illegal gambling house and was ordered to pay a \$6,100 fine for not having a licence.

Ontario

'The Town of Gananoque expects less money from the local casino this year as a result of the indoor smoking ban recently implemented throughout Ontario', reports the Brockville Recorder & Times in its 6/3 edition. The town's budget is counting on getting .3M less.

We've often annoyed horseracing fans by calling their 'sport' a 'dying hobby'. In the 6/7 Hamilton Spectator we saw the sentence: 'Slots and steaks are beating horses by a furlong in the race to pad the bottom line at Flamboro Downs'. The article reports that the track's 752 slot machines produced more than twice as much profit as its standardbred races. It's a simple fact of life that racetracks are on the life support of the losses of gamblers.

'Smoking ban at casino is long time coming' is the heading of a letter to the Editor in the 6/9 Windsor Star written by a casino employee who now is ashamed of his former habit to blow smoke in other people's faces and sees his life as worth more than his job.

The 6/10 Toronto Star carries two articles on a shooting about which one item says that "Gambling and gaming, money and turf are believed to be the motives," according to the organized crime expert Antonio Nicaso. "In York Region, there is an increase in gaming and gambling activities." In the other piece we read that the shooting that wounded three men 'may have been sparked by something as trivial as a poker bet'. We expect to hear more about this incident in the coming weeks.

Quebec

The Finance Minister has become involved in the stalemate that's holding up the transfer of Quebec's four horseracing tracks from the provincial racing agency, SONACC, to the private operator Attractions Hippiques. He urges SONACC to accept the agreement that

has been announced last December, and he threatens to take action against the agency if it does not accept it, writes the 6/3 Gazette. Canada's Gambling Watch Network is not aware of all the angles of this dispute, but it has two concerns about this project: calling the horseracing hobby an 'industry' is silly. At one time it might have been a hobby that paid for itself, but those days are over, and trying to revive it by the installation of the highly addictive VLTs is socially irresponsible, while some of us see the way it's being planned as against what the criminal code says about gambling revenues. In addition to that we've received from Sol Boxenbaum copies of his correspondence with politicians and media persons about the fact that a senator is deeply involved in the company that's supposed to take over the management of the tracks. That would create a definite conflict of interest.

In the 6/10 Gazette, we're told that Quebec has introduced a law - it could be passed as early as this week! - that would rein in its horseracing agency.

'No love-in for Cirque's casino' is a somewhat strange article in the 5/31 Globe and Mail. It could be seen as a sort of reflection on the aftermath of the cancellation of the Montreal casino move to the western waterfront. What concerns us is that a business lobbyist says that the community groups that were involved in that cancellation have so much power that they have a paralyzing influence on economic development. More than one educated and well-known economist has shown that casinos cause economic losses if all costs are counted in the calculation. So how can they be part of an economic development? On this case, Sol sent us a copy of his letter to the Globe and Mail in response to this article.

Atlantic Canada

'How Secrecy beat Transparency' is a 6/3 item in the New Brunswick Telegraph Journal written by Peter McKenna, associate professor in the Department of Political Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island in Charlottetown; he also is writing a book on the politics of gaming in Atlantic Canada. In the article, he writes critically about the secrecy practiced by the PEI government in the approval it gave to the establishment of a racino in Charlottetown and compares it to what's going on now in Saint John in N.B. When we look at the article, we are struck by the fact that what he says about the horse racing issue - it's an outdated, dying hobby - is almost word for word the same of what we have written for years. You'd almost believe that we have attended his lectures!

'Too Foolish to Talk About' is an article in the 6/7 Beacon, a paper we'd never heard of before. Doesn't this show once again that we really need contacts in every province so we can be alerted to newspaper items we'd normally miss? Written by Robert Tulk, it has the subtitle 'Accomplice to gang of three' and says that there are three killers in this province employed by the government. Those three deadly killers are drugs, booze and the VLT. We'll take the liberty to quote what he says about VLTs. 'Now, gambling was always popular in some outports. I remember my father and his buddies playing the game of 45, for pennies, night after night. That was no big deal. The most they lost was a dollar and the most they won was a dollar. But it was great fun. This VLT is not a fun-loving game. It is a con artist disguised as a game. Our government loves it much more than they love the tobacco killer. Why? Because it lured the public into its clutches. People have got hooked on it. And people have ruined their lives because of it.' The article then lists the dire consequences of VLT gambling.

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