

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 active groups.

General

A 4/27 Vancouver 24 Hours article states that a survey released at the Gaming Summit in Vancouver revealed that 70% per cent of Canadians think gambling is fun and treat it like any other form of entertainment. We'd like to see that survey. Can anyone send it to us? Our many years of experience tell us that surveys released at occasions like this one are generally – to put it mildly – biased.

When half a dozen federal and provincial officials met behind closed doors at Ontario's Queen's Park to discuss the startling rise in illegal Internet gambling and what to do about it, they did so with representatives of casinos and racetracks', states the 4/24 Toronto Star. That they didn't invite people like us clearly shows their only concern is: losing their supposedly legal share of the moneys gamblers lose.

Casinos warn Net a threat to betting biz', an article in the 4/27 Vancouver Sun that covers the Canadian Gaming Association's national conference and trade show, shows the same attitude: Bill Rutsey, president and CEO of the Canadian Gaming Association, speaking on behalf of those who created many millions of gamblers - of which millions have become addicts and whose so-called industry sucks billions from our economy - wants the law that in many ways is broken by those he represents, applied to the cyber gamblers!

The Canadian gaming industry is partnering with a B.C.-based online job board to make hiring easier in an expanding sector struggling with recruitment in the booming Western provinces', reports the 4/26 Vancouver Sun. It's our hope that many people are opposed to taking parasite positions by working in places that depend on the losses of gamblers. Another point is: statistics show that the percentage of people who have become addicted to gambling while they worked at casinos is at least twice the 'normal' rate. Should those positions not be classified as dangerous?

\$14-billion gambling industry can't get any respect . . . yet', an item in the 4/28 Vancouver Sun, reports that a number of heads of provincial gambling corporations are complaining that, in their opinion, the 'industry' is not getting the respect it deserves. Well, we have a number of suggestions. The first one is that they ought to become a bit more honest. Why not drop the word 'gaming' and call what it really is: GAMBLING? Now: civilization has, as history clearly shows, always at least 'frowned' on gambling because it was always an effort that took what we got to know as a 'mobsters' attitude: get a profit at whatever the cost might be. That's why it never earned respect. How can a gambling corporation earn respect as long as it has that mobster attitude? Isn't it impossible to drop that attitude and still keep its gambling actions going?! What is worse yet: their existence and actions harm the respect people used to have for their governments. Isn't the increase in illegal actions of all sorts giving proof of the fact that this is indeed happening today? Now: our governments are complaining that Internet gambling is harming their gambling 'revenue'!

Cyber Gambling

It's not online gambling, but it looks like it' is an article in the 4/30 bonanza news service that drew the attention of Roger Horbay. He wrote the following comments on it, and we trust that his reactions to it will clearly indicate what the article is all about.

'This could open the floodgates to Internet gambling. They are using the same loopholes that the TouchScreen VLT operators tried to use in Iowa. But the politicians in Iowa caught on and shut them down. Now, the Nevada Gaming Commission gives it the green light? Here's how the loophole (attempt to circumvent the federal Wire Act) works. They preemie the outcomes of various games, like slots and keno. This way they say you're not actually playing a game, just checking the outcomes. Then they set up a display with the game on a VLT, Internet site or whatever. The game is linked to these "predetermined" outcomes. But, the games play exactly the same way they would play if the outcomes were being determined while playing the game. Everything about the game is the same except batches of outcomes have been predetermined using the same game logic as a real-time game. The player feels like they are playing the game. They don't feel like they're simply checking outcomes. One might also say that pushing the button on a VLT or slot machine lets you check the outcome. The Nevada Gaming Commission should know better! They have nice & quietly allowed for Internet gambling under the disguise "checking a ticket". This is a scheme deliberately designed to circumvent the federal Wire Act. If the player is playing a game linked to predetermined outcomes, it's absolutely no different than playing the game real-time. The experience and outcomes will be the same for the player. And, now that Nevada has allowed for it you can bet that every casino and lottery will quickly try it before anyone notices and catches on, which will be too late. The time to act against this is now!'

Slot machines and Horseracing

In the 4/27 Guelph Mercury, an article by Dave Briggs has this telling title: 'Slot machines not the long-term answer for horse industry'. This article contains much of what we have been saying for a long time, although we'd like to go quite a bit further than this writer. It is, according to at least some of us, a crying shame that proponents of this dying hobby – they call it an 'industry'! – have, with the co-operation of provincial governments – spent many millions to cause a stay of execution in a world where many people die of hunger. It is a part of history that certain games just get out of fashion and die a natural death. As one example we mention jousting. Many people don't even know what that was, though at one time it kept many people (and horses!) busy. We will try to get more information from this author.

'Magna Entertainment clashes over purse', a CP article in the 4/28 Globe and Mail gives practically the same story as the Thoroughbred Times of that date. The articles are about two Magna concerns: an agreement with Florida's Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, and government permission to have 2,500 to 3,000 slot machines in stead of the maximum of 1,500 that were originally allocated to the track involved.

British Columbia

We remember the time that Vancouver's city council didn't want slot machines within its border; now it finally has them in the Edgewater casino, the city's share of what gamblers lose is only slightly more than half of what was anticipated, the 4/26 Vancouver Courier writes. Not enough parking, no easy access to alcohol, and competition by other cities are blamed. We wonder: what would happen if council loses the action against slots that's the

subject of a 4/27 WestEnder item; would Edgewater survive if 600 slots came to the track at Hastings? If Hastings Park Conservancy, a non-profit community group, wins the case against the city in B.C. Supreme Court on Friday (May 5) for allowing slot machines into the Hastings Racecourse, might the city return to its former 'no slots' stance?

'Bingo group doesn't want casino' is an article in the 4.28 Delta Optimist reporting that the local bingo group wants to expand gambling without getting a casino. Its bingo games raised \$1.75M last year for 38 local charities, but a casino "cannibalizes bingo revenues", the group says. It will end up with a slot machines-filled electronic bingo set-up in what is deceptively called a 'gaming centre' and more addicted customers.

Alberta

In 'Horse racing centre clears major hurdle', the 4/26 Calgary Herald states that the centre we wrote about last week, was approved by the Municipal District of Rocky View.

'The Calgary Conservative MLA who oversees the provincial agency on the attack against addictions, figures a new-look Alberta Tory government, complete with a fresh-out-of-the-box frontman, could nix nicotine in public places as early as spring next year', writes the 4/29 Calgary Sun. What would that do to this 'Las Vegas of the North'? we ask.

Manitoba

The Army Navy and Air Force Veterans club became the first city charity to hold a Texas Hold 'Em event under a two-month provincial pilot project, states the 4/24 Winnipeg Sun; it also reports that participants hope it will become a regular event. They see it as "a great opportunity for charities to get some extra revenue."

Saskatchewan

From a 4/25 CBC News article, we learn that a union treasurer with a \$1,000-a-day VLT addiction will find out late in the week if he'll get a jail sentence. The 4/28 Leader-Post reports that the judge will deliver his sentence on May 8 on this pathological gambler who pleaded guilty to stealing over \$300,000.

'A gambling addiction fuelled a \$10,000 theft from a Saskatchewan First Nation by a man hired to help manage its finances, a Regina court heard Friday', report the 4/29 Leader-Post and the StarPhoenix. The 59-year old man, not a member of the Saulteaux First Nation, had control over the band's money when he was employed by First Nations Management Services, an organization contracted by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to help manage finances for First Nation. He pleaded guilty to theft over \$5,000, and was sentenced to a community-based sentence of two years less a day.

Ontario

A photocopy of a document from Ontario's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office, coming to us from an unknown source, gives figures of the turbulent personnel situation at casino Niagara from January 2004 to November 2005. The figures are unbelievable and it would take too much time and space to list them. As the item isn't copyrighted, we'll gladly share it with interested parties. Just ask us to email it to you.

The OLGC sucked 5.85B from Ontario's economy in '04-'05, providing \$1.7B 'revenue' to the province's government. We wonder: if this money had been spent on normal items and/or saved, how would the economy look? U.S. economists have figured out that every \$2 gambled away costs \$3 in the long run if all costs are counted. The 4/24 CP/CTV item that gave this news had many more figures, e.g.: \$2.3B came from lotteries and bingo.

'City endorses downtown plan but doesn't commit any money to revitalization project' is the heading of a story in the 4/25 Niagara Falls Review of a revitalization project that

would take \$100M from private investors and attract national retail chains. We have seen stories of run-down downtowns in other casino-host cities – is it casino-related?

'More casino cash for municipalities' writes the 4/24 Brockville Recorder & Times when it gives the figures of the municipalities' share of what gamblers lost at the Charity casino in Gananoque; our friends of the area's Casino Watch tell us that this is the third payment in a row that is less than the same quarter of the year before.

Thunder Bay's efforts to get a higher percentage of gamblers' losses at its casino are still in process, reports the 4/25 Tb News Source. A group of MPPs whose communities host a charity casino is preparing to lobby the province to increase its funding to the Trillium Foundation that would provide funding to charitable organizations in their communities. 'With only two weeks left in its annual lottery campaign, the Ottawa Hospital is only at 68 per cent of its target', writes the 4/27 Ottawa Citizen. The paper talks of other charities that have come into Ottawa's market as one of the reasons why this one might not reach its aim. We regret the fact that charities play so big a role in normalizing gambling. Years ago friends from the USA told us that the 'c' of 'casino' is usually closely related to the 'c's in crime and corruption. In the past week we discovered that the relationship might even be rather indirect. The 4/28 Toronto Star in 'Arrest in \$10M TTC token scam' states that the chips used to produce these falsified tokens were made by a Massachusetts-based company that makes casino chips, and that it may have been unaware that what it was in fact manufacturing were about five million high-quality but counterfeit TTC tokens. So far more than 20 people have been arrested and more than 100 charges have been laid.

Quebec

A letter writer in the 4/24 Gazette, who was 'all for the casino coming to the Point', wonders where 'all these "neighbourhood stores" are that Wal-Mart is going to put out of business'. The stores were mentioned in a 4/21 letter. A day later, another writer suggests relocating the Montreal Casino to the obsolete Planetarium site. That is already a sector with hotels and nightlife.

'West Islanders hooked on gambling's 'crack cocaine' is a piece in the 4/26 Chronicle that talks of the growth of VLT addiction in the area. 'Today, the region is home to six weekly GA gatherings, which help gamblers quit their habits. Close to 90 per cent of attendees are addicted to VLTs', a recovering addict in his fifties says.

The nephew of a former Canadiens goalie was charged with loan-sharking and fined, says the 4/29 Gazette. If we remember correctly, the loan-sharking of that family occurred at the Montreal casino. The interest charged was 5% per week, i.e. 2000% per year

New Brunswick

'Saint John's Downtown Ministers' Association will urge council tonight to turn down any requests to convert the Exhibition Park Raceway into a racino', states the 4/24 Telegraph-Journal, and the next day's issue writes they did so for theological, pastoral and practical-ethical reasons: "We believe that gambling is primarily motivated by greed, " Dr. Paul Brown, a Presbyterian minister and president of the Ministers' Association said.

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