



ATTENTION ABBOTSFORD RESIDENTS:

The gambling industry is *targeting* Abbotsford's youth

And I need
YOUR HELP
to stop them...

DEAR fellow citizen,

I'm deeply concerned. It is about something that's happening in our community. On our streets. And to our families.

You see, a powerful effort is being made by pro-casino lobbyists to bring slot machines into Abbotsford. They're spending big bucks on advertising to convince you that gambling will help our city. They're lobbying the local politicians. They're organizing rallies, luring people with free food and false promises. They're telling us slot machines "will be good for us."

BUT HERE'S THE TRUTH:

They're trying to get younger people hooked on gambling by enticing them into "Community Gaming Centres"—places with glitzy slot machines that seek to provide their patrons with "the ultimate" gambling experience.

How do I know this? The government admitted it: "The idea is to attract a younger consumer to the type of facilities formerly known as bingo halls," said the BC Lottery Corporation's official spokesman, in response to media questions about the new gaming centres.¹ You see, the way the gambling industry looks at it, old-fashioned bingo just doesn't have the addictive power of slots.

SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF GAMBLING ADDICTS

The fact is, younger people (those aged less than 24) are four times more likely to become gambling addicts, according to research done by both Laval and McGill universities. To make matters worse, it has been reported that as many as 20 per cent of young people may already be experiencing gambling problems.² And a recent survey by the Responsible Gambling Council found that problem gambling among people aged 18 to 24 rose 400 per cent between 2001 and 2005.

To the people who want to bring slot machines into Abbotsford, it's all very cold and simple, really. Slot machines attract young adults. Young adults get hooked twice as easily. That means more gambling revenue. Everyone's happy, right?

MORE CRIME FOR ABBOTSFORD

If slot machines come to Abbotsford you can expect more drugs, more alcohol, and more organized crime. But don't take my word for it. The government freely admits it.

According to their study "...there is a statistically significant link between (problem gambling) and gambling while drunk or high." Here in B.C., the rate of illegal drug use is twice as high among gamblers as it is among non-gamblers.³

As for organized crime, B.C.'s Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch reported that the number of investigations into alleged loan-sharking, money-laundering, fraud, thefts, threats and assaults rose 36 per cent last year. In the words of Derek Sturko, the head of the branch, "...the biggest risk for large-scale criminal or regulatory infractions exists" in bingo halls and casinos.⁴

MYTH busting (5 Things You Have to Know)

Myth #1: "Slot machines in Abbotsford will bring more money into our local government"

FACT: Slot machines in Abbotsford will NOT increase the coffers of local government. They'll actually be a net drain to our local government because of the increase in gambling-associated crimes and social costs.

Myth #2: "Slot machines in Abbotsford will result in more jobs"

FACT: slot machines will NOT result in more jobs. The truth is, the gambling industry makes unemployment worse by preying most heavily on those who are vulnerable in our society: the poor⁵, the unemployed⁶, and young people.⁷

Myth #3: "Bingo revenues are way, way down. If we don't add slot machines, the bingo halls will close!"

FACT: The numbers contradict the claim. Bingo hall revenues are higher than they've ever been—more than \$218 million last year alone, and have been

consistently rising during each of the last 5 years. The claim that bingo halls will close unless they get slots is total fiction.⁸

Myth #4: "Slot machines will be good for Abbotsford's economy."

FACT: Slot machines will NOT be good for our local economy. It has been shown that gambling diverts consumer dollars away from productive uses like savings, housing, and legitimate local businesses. The fact is, gambling adversely affects a city's economy.⁹

Myth #5: There are "71 local charity and community groups" who will rely on slot machines in Abbotsford as their primary means of support.

FACT: Those 71 local community groups are ALREADY getting a portion of the millions being raked-in by the BC Lottery Corporation. They'll do just fine, with or without slot machines in Abbotsford.

AND speaking of facts, here's one for you:

16,000 People in Abbotsford Are Already Being Hurt by Gambling

According to the B.C. government's own data, 4.6 per cent of the adult population in BC are problem gamblers¹⁰. That means there are 4,000 people in Abbotsford with a serious gambling problem. I would be remiss if I didn't tell you that there is a ripple

effect caused by each of these problem gamblers that involves, directly or indirectly, four to fourteen others. You see, a person with an addiction affects the well-being of people in their immediate family, extended family, friends, etc. Even if we use the lowest number of four people that are affected, then we have 16,000 people who are adversely affected by pathological gambling in Abbotsford alone.

It is estimated that two out of three problem gamblers commit crimes in order to finance their gambling—such as embezzlement, forgery, fraud, violence and robbery¹¹. Recent high profile court cases have seen addicted gamblers stealing hundreds of thousands from their employers to feed their habits.

Q: What Is City Council Thinking?

Listen, I'm concerned for our children. I'm concerned about the direction our local politicians are taking us.

I've watched this community go from being a wonderful place to raise kids to a haven for grow-ops, crackhouses, prostitutes and crystal-meth labs. And now City Hall is rolling out the red carpet for casinos...

Well, for me that's the last straw. The fact is, this city is going to become Surrey-east unless concerned parents like you and me decide to stand up and tell our City Council exactly what we think.

What I'm saying is, I need your help. I need you to join me this Monday (Sept. 10) at 6 p.m. at Matsqui Centennial Auditorium (beside City Hall). City Council is holding a public hearing about the slot-machine issue, and we need to make our voices heard. The pro-gambling groups are spending big money to try to ram this issue through City Hall, and the only hope we have of stopping it is by showing up on Monday night and letting the politicians know that Enough is Enough.

» Will you join me?

Yours for the family,

Trish Kolsto

Abbotsford Families United • www.AbbotsfordFamilies.org

1. Government Push for More Slot Gambling, Andrew MacLeod, October 4, 2004, TheTyee.ca

2. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission, 1999

3. Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General BC, Problem Gambling Prevalence Study, March 2003

4. BCLC releases retail... Chad Skelton, Vancouver Sun, May 30, 2007

5. Problem Gambling Prevalence Study, Op. cit.

6. Community Mental Health Journal, Prevalence of Problem Gambling Among Community Service Users, Lepage, Ladouceur and Jacques

7. Problem Gambling Prevalence Study, Op. cit.

8. BCLC Annual Reports 2003/4,2004/5,2005/6,2006/7

9. Cited by William Petersen in What You Should Know About Gambling (New Canada, Conn.: Keats Publishing, 1973), 37.

10. Problem Gambling Prevalence Study, Op. cit.

11. Statistics Canada, "Perspectives on Labour and Income: Fact Sheet on Gambling" 2003.