

CASINOS AND CRIME IN THE COMMUNITY: COMBATING THE MISPERCEPTION

When it comes to a casino's presence in a community, a topic that sometimes can arise is whether or not casinos create and bring with it crime in the community. While it is easy to point the blame at the presence of a local casino, it is important to consider what research, statistics and experiences have revealed, or in some cases, what they haven't revealed in regards to linking casinos with additional crime.

Listed below are a collection of third party observations and experiences that help provide a more informed view of the perception of casinos and crime in the community.

VARIOUS POLICE REPRESENTATIVES SAY THERE IS NO DATA SUGGESTING A CASINO WOULD CREATE ADDITIONAL CRIME

Based on the experience and expert opinion provided by various Canadian police authorities, there is no evidence that a gaming facility in a community increases crime.

- ▶ During a city hall public meeting in January 2013 regarding the possibility of a casino in downtown Hamilton, Ontario, deputy police Chief Ken Leendertse said that although Hamilton police have no opinion on a casino in the downtown, there is no data suggesting it would create additional crime.
- ▶ In April 2015 during a North Vancouver policy committee meeting regarding the topic of lifting a 20-year-old bylaw that bans commercial gambling, North Vancouver RCMP Superintendent and officer in charge Chris Kennedy shared his view on the matter. He told council he'd interviewed the commanding officers of other detachments with community gaming facilities and found no public safety reason to oppose one opening on the North Shore in British Columbia.
- ▶ Speaking during a staff report to Surrey city council regarding a proposed gaming facility, local RCMP advised that based on their experience with and calls for service to the Elements Casino (formerly Fraser Downs Racetrack & Casino), they did not have concerns with a proposed casino as it relates to crime and public safety in South Surrey or on the demand for police resources in the area surrounding the proposed casino.
- ▶ In November 2012, video testimonials from a number of Ontario Police Chiefs (OPC) indicate there has been no evidence that a casino's presence increases crime over the two decades that casino gaming has been available in Ontario. ([Watch video testimonials here](#))
- ▶ Based on his experience in providing services inside many gaming facilities across the province, Ontario Provincial Police (OPC) Chief Superintendent Fred Burtucca explained, "We have not seen an increase in crime. In fact, facilities are very well run. We have a very close relationship with the security and surveillance people located at the site and we're able to respond immediately to any situation that happens." ([Watch video testimonial here](#))
- ▶ The first-ever casino built in Moncton, New Brunswick in 2008 had its fair share of doubters. But according to Codiac RCMP, since Casino New Brunswick opened its doors, there haven't been any major incidents reported, and any rare onsite problems could be dealt with by the facility's security staff members.

CASINOS NOT A PROBLEM FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

A Canadian Gaming Association (CGA) report published in 2015 presented the opinions of Community Leaders who agreed to have casinos developed in their municipalities. One of the questions they were asked was whether they thought casinos in the community have contributed to crime. The findings demonstrate that the anticipated negative impacts of a casino in the community did not actually transpire:

- ▶ Community Leaders indicated that the majority of public perception of various societal and personal difficulties associated with casino gambling did not materialize (specifically crime and related strains on municipal services).
- ▶ Community Leaders suggested no incremental demand on public services such as police, fire and emergency medical services (EMS) as a result of introducing casino gaming to the community.
- ▶ In December 2012, when reflecting on how the opening of Brantford casino has helped revitalize the city and its downtown area, Chris Friel, Mayor of Brantford, Ontario at that time, echoed a similar opinion as Community Leaders surveyed by the CGA. Though he was initially opposed to the casino when it opened, out of fear that it could lead to increased crime, Mayor Friel is clear on the positive impact that the facility's revenue has had on his community. "It's exceeded our expectations. The dollars that we have been investing to see those building and the campuses grow, in our urban core, have come directly from the casino."

CASINO JURISDICTIONS EXPERIENCE NO MORE CRIME THAN THE AVERAGE MUNICIPALITY

In a series of police video testimonials from November 2012 that indicate there is no link between gaming facilities and increases in crime ([watch videos here](#)), Ontario Police Chiefs state that based on their experience, a casino's presence in the municipality has not been an issue, and there is no difference in crime rates between a community with a casino and a community without one.

- ▶ In his video testimonial ([watch here](#)), Dennis Poole, Chief of Police for the Municipality of Chatham-Kent in Ontario said that the OLG Slots at Dresden Raceway has not been an issue for police from a community safety perspective, noting that the average police calls per year to the facility are 20, no more than the average mall or large department store in the community. Poole adds that their working relationship with the facility's security staff has been exceptional and that they have been very helpful in resolving any issues, all of which have been relatively small.
- ▶ Brantford, Ontario Police Chief Jeff Kellner stated that prior to the Brantford Casino opening its doors in the city, there were initial concerns that a gaming facility would increase the local crime rate, however those concerns never materialized: "We were concerned as a police service, but the overall impact, as it related to crime, has been very insignificant in our community." ([Watch video testimonial here](#))
- ▶ As part of their referral for a gaming license during a staff report to council, Surrey RCMP shared that based on their experience, the number of calls for service to Fraser Downs Racetrack & Casino (now Elements Casino) in Surrey, BC falls within the same range as other licensed establishments across the City.

SOURCES

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Casinos alone don't cause crime, Hamilton officer says Samantha Craggs, CBC News January 11, 2013 | <http://bit.ly/1YpsQ9Q>

Brent Richter / North Shore News April 22, 2015 | <http://bit.ly/1p3JmQA>

Planning and Development Report: Staff Report to Council

Canadian Gaming Association Casino gaming in Canada: The Opinions of Community Leaders | <http://bit.ly/1LaV4TY>

Ontario Police Chiefs Say No Link Between Gaming Facilities And Increases In Crime November 6, 2012 | <http://bit.ly/1puSPkz>
Video testimonial: | <http://bit.ly/24NFTLr>

National Post
Betting on the future: Communities across Ontario have benefitted from gaining facility revenue, December 5, 2012 | <http://bit.ly/1SvTCNr>

Police Chief video testimonials from Ontario Lottery Gaming Corporation | <http://bit.ly/1SvTCNr>