

# COMMUNITY LEADERS' OPINIONS ON CASINOS IN THE COMMUNITY

## What Canadian community leaders said about a casino in their community

In order to gain a better understanding about what it means to have a casino in a community, we rely on the thoughts and opinions expressed by Canadian community leaders who have allowed casinos to be built. Community leaders' opinions matter because through their interaction and communication with employees, businesses and citizens, they know firsthand the impact casinos or gaming centres have, as well as how gaming revenue helps their communities.

As the Canadian Gaming Association (CGA) so accurately summarizes in its 2015 report on gaming in Canada and the opinions of community leaders, "They (community leaders) are the best resource for debunking the myths and stereotypes that surround this industry because they experience the impacts every day". The following third-party quotes shed light on some of those impacts by presenting what community leaders have to say about them.

## Positive economic impact

- ▶ Coquitlam Mayor Richard Stewart had good things to say about the contribution Hard Rock Casino Vancouver has made in the community: "Burke Mountain is the fastest growing community in Coquitlam and obviously the fire hall is an important part that facilitates that kind of growth. This hall was built as a post disaster building which means that in the event of an earthquake or other disaster, the residents will have a place to congregate. Coquitlam is a host city to Hard Rock Casino (Vancouver) and that host agreement brings with it a good funding source for the kinds of needs that a growing community like ours has."
- ▶ The City of Richmond was able to utilize \$50 million of its share of provincial gaming revenue from River Rock Casino Resort to fund what has become the iconic Richmond Olympic Oval. Richmond Mayor Malcom Brodie was happy with both the local and international attention it has received to date: "We had international and national competitions right here in about 50 different sports. The Richmond Olympic Oval has about 800,000 visits per year. Eighty percent of the membership is Richmond based so we have facilities for all kinds of different activities for the people here in Richmond. The Richmond Olympic Oval would not have been built without the input of the casino revenues. The people of this community are athletes and competitors from around the world have benefited."
- ▶ Upon officially welcoming Shorelines Casino Belleville to his Ontario city in January 2016, Mayor Taso Christopher voiced that he is looking forward to the much needed financial boost, as well as up to 300 jobs: "It's good news for the city of Belleville, good for development, good for growth, good for employment and good for the retail sector."
- ▶ In a Great Canadian community highlights video, Mayor Daryl Bennett spoke about the economic benefit that Shorelines Casino Peterborough will bring to the Peterborough community: "Looking at the benefit that it will bring to all of us in the community and it touched on the economic 3 month payment that comes in... and we are looking forward to that, but that is only one part of what it does, it gives us another avenue for folks in the community to have some enjoyment that was not there before."
- ▶ Prior to Brantford Casino in Ontario opening in 1999, Chris Friel, Brantford's Mayor at the time, openly stated his "anti-casino" views, but what actually transpired changed his mind. In an OLG video transcript regarding the economic impact of the Brantford casino in the community, Mayor Friel explained: (Attributing the investment and growth potential in Brantford's downtown to post-secondary education) "This September we will have four post-secondary institutions in our downtown and 3,000 students. The dollars that we have been investing to see those buildings, and the campus grow, in our urban core, came directly from the casino. From Casino Brantford, and our share."

## Contribution to local community improvements

In an OLG update on September 27, 2012:

- ▶ Innisfil Mayor Barb Baguley elaborated on how funds from OLG Slots at Georgian Downs were used by the Town to help build a \$40 million recreation complex, in addition to other capital projects. "We've also been able to build the town hall... some library branches have been fast-tracked, as have some fire halls," said the Mayor.
- ▶ Hanover's then Mayor, Kathi Maskell, described how her town used revenue it received from OLG Slots at Hanover Raceway to invest in local culture: "We really like to support culture in our town, so we renovated our century-old theatre - even used the money for new drapes, new seats, new air conditioning, and so on."

## A good corporate citizen

- ▶ As quoted in the CGA's 2105 report, "Casino Gaming in Canada: The Opinions of Community Leaders", Councillor, First Nation, Alberta said: "Many myths surround casinos. The fact is that the [casino] has focused on service to its communities, and is one that municipal, provincial and federal representatives have been proud to have as a feature of the community."
- ▶ Results from the CGA's 2105 report, "Casino Gaming in Canada: The Opinions of Community Leaders", indicated that 85% of community leaders stated (by answering agree or strongly agree) that they believe the casino in their community is a good corporate citizen.
- ▶ When it was built, View Royal Casino brought about more than just an economic benefit to the Town of View Royal. Said Mayor David Screech: "Prior to the casino being built, View Royal residents that wanted to belong to the Greater Victoria Library actually had to pay \$450 a year to belong to the library and when the casino was built the town officially joined and became a co-owner of the library system which made it possible for all residents to get a card at no charge."

## Job creation

Evidence from the CGA's 2105 report, "Casino Gaming in Canada: The Opinions of Community Leaders", illustrates that the impact on employment is a positive one:

- ▶ A representative of a not-for-profit business entity in an Ontario municipality said: "It (a casino in the community) has delivered in terms of jobs, tourism and entertainment quality. They are also excellent corporate citizens."
- ▶ An Elected Official from Vancouver, BC shares: "...Since inception nearly \$40 million in casino funds have been contributed to our community not including Community Gaming grants that have helped 290 organizations."

## An active community partner

- ▶ In a segment that aired April 7, 2016 on Shaw TV featuring BC's lotteries and gaming industry ([watch video here](#)):
- ▶ (19:22) Lori Ackerman, Mayor of Fort St. John spoke about the gaming funds her community received upon welcoming a gaming centre: "When we were considering a gaming centre years ago in the city of Fort St. John, the council of the day decided that the money that would be received by the community would go towards recreation. So we've been able to enhance recreation programs for our youth and our adults through the use of those funds."
- ▶ (20:38) Andrew Jakubeit, Mayor of Penticton echoed and expanded on what Mayor Ackerman's said about gaming proceeds having a positive social impact in a community. "There's so many non-profit groups that benefitted; we usually think of sports organizations that get gaming grants, but a lot of the organizations that provide day-to-day social programming for the community (also receive grants), not just sports and cultural. So the fabric of our community has benefitted greatly from gaming grants. Without them, they wouldn't be here and our community wouldn't be as vibrant as it is."

## Sources

**Town, Slots at Ajax Downs celebrate 10 years of casino operation**, Ajax News Advertiser , March 8, 2016 Keith Gilligan

**Belleville strikes new casino deal**, Kingston, ON, Canada / CKWS TV January 26, 2016 06:00 pm

**Canadian Gaming Association – Casino Gaming in Canada: The Opinions of Community Leaders**

**Shaw TV's Voice of BC – Lotteries & Gaming**

- ▶ Andrew Jakubeit, Mayor of Penticton (20:38), Lori Ackerman, Mayor of Fort St. John ( 19:22)

**OLG And Host Municipalities Working To Build Stronger Communities**, September 27, 2012

**Chris Friel, Brantford Mayor discusses economic impact of casino**, Descriptive video transcript, OLG

**Brantford mayor on casinos – "I was wrong."** CBC Hamilton, September 5, 2012

**BCLC Play it Forward videos**