



June 29th, 2015

Mayor John Tory, Chair
Executive Committee
City of Toronto, Office of the Mayor
100 Queen Street W, 2nd Floor
Toronto, ON – M5H 2N2

RE: EX7.4 Expanded Gaming at Woodbine Racetrack

Dear Mayor Tory and Executive Committee Members,

I have reviewed the report titled *Expanded Gaming at Woodbine Racetrack*, and I am pleased with the recommendations made by staff. The adoption of this report will be the catalyst that leads to tremendous positive change in North Etobicoke. It will allow us to create an environment that will foster development, job creation, local economic sustainability, revitalization and community benefits through the creation of a **Premier Entertainment Destination** for our City.

Moving forward we need to make the best choice for Toronto and its Taxpayers. Pursuing expanded gaming at Woodbine Racetrack would create opportunity for:

- Increased revenues to the City by generating up to \$14M net in new revenue through hosting fees (additional to the 15M the City currently receives),
- Increased incremental annual property taxes up to \$5.5M,
- New local and regional jobs created through expanded gaming, non-gaming uses and new construction (over 1300 new jobs created through gaming and non-gaming uses),
- Protect the current horse breeding and racing sector job stock, which generates over 60,000 direct and indirect jobs
- Increased focus on responsible gaming measures and practices,
- Possible improved transit connections via extended Finch West LRT line,
- Attract layover travellers from Pearson International Airport,
- Enter into community benefit agreements, and
- Be the catalyst to re-develop nearly 700 acres to create a Premier Entertainment Destination, attracting tourists both nationally and internationally

Councillor, Ward 1 – Etobicoke North

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The public consultation process conducted by Ipsos Reid has also made it clear that there is strong support for expanded gaming at Woodbine that would include new commercial and entertainment development (*City-Wide Public Opinion Telephone Poll: 75% support for those living near woodbine, 72% support across the City*).

The recommendations in this report exemplify that we listened throughout the public consultation process and included measures our residents would like to see along with expanded gaming at Woodbine, which include provisions for new local jobs, improved infrastructure, commercial development and improved amenities.

Furthermore, the staff report and recommendations are cognizant of the current RFPQ/RFP process the OLG is undertaking to select an operator for their gaming floors. **It is important that we proceed with recommendations and conditions that will not deter a prospective operator from doing business in the City of Toronto.** We will, as a Council, have an opportunity to review the selected operator's proposal for Woodbine when a planning submission is made. We want to ensure that Toronto remains competitive in the GTA, continuing to grow and attract business within our City's boundaries.

Woodbine is currently a 24 hour/7 day a week facility, and has operated as such for 15 years and has a strong safety record as highlighted in the communication from Toronto Police Service - 23 Division Superintendent Ron Taverner. All neighbouring casinos operate on a 24/7 basis. Restricting hours at Woodbine would have an immediate negative effect resulting in job losses and deter investment from an operator limiting the full development potential of the Woodbine site.

The OLG enforces Responsible Gaming (RG) practices to help protect those most at risk and who suffer from gambling addictions. The [*Productivity Commission 2010, Gambling, Report no. 50, Canberra.*](#)ⁱ indicates that studies on this topic contain methodological limitations, and do not provide conclusive information to support claims that shutdowns have a significant or long-term effect on gambling behaviour. Findings indicated:

- Problem gamblers report engaging in more frantic gambling in the hours nearing the shutdown.
- Problem gamblers sought to limit their hours at work so they could gamble when venues were open.
- Gamblers indicated that the shutdown had not impacted their gambling nor their overall spending; they either went home, went to another venue, or went back after the shutdown.

The OLG is committed to continuously improving its RG training and its requirements for staff to interact with players who may show signs of gambling problems. As part of its work the OLG is always exploring how more can be done to better support at risk gamblers, by building upon its existing RG program. The OLG continues to engage the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Responsible Gambling Council, addictions counsellors and researchers to determine what should be studied and how OLG's program may improve.

As a Council we have the opportunity to take steps that will allow for growth and revitalization of Woodbine, creating much needed new jobs and career opportunities in the Rexdale community, while protecting the current job stock provided through the horse racing industry.

Mayor Tory and Executive Committee members, I would encourage you to adopt the staff recommendations and receive the Board of Health communication. By doing so, you will be sending a clear message to North Etobicoke, Toronto, the GTA and the World that our City will continue to be a major economic contender on the Global scale.

Regards,



Deputy Mayor Vincent Crisanti
Councillor, Ward 1 – Etobicoke North

ⁱ Productivity Commission 2010, Gambling, Report no. 50, Canberra.
http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/1112_pcir.pdf