



Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Centre de toxicomanie et de santé mentale

**Centre for Addiction and
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CAMH Submission to the Toronto City Council Executive Committee

May 14, 2012

EX 20.16

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Thank you for this opportunity to address Toronto City Council's Executive Committee on this important issue. As you consider the possibility of a casino in the Greater Toronto Area, there are three points we would like to make.

1. Many individuals in Ontario gamble, and most do so without causing harm to themselves or others. However, about 3% of Ontarians exhibit evidence of a gambling problem, and the resulting individual and social costs are significant. It is estimated that between 30% and 40% of Ontario's gambling revenues come from this 3% of the population with gambling problems. For these individuals, a range of harms may occur, including mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and suicide, as well as crime, dysfunctional relationships, and bankruptcy. The social, economic, and health costs are heavy.
2. Increases in gambling availability are associated with increases in problem gambling. Evidence from a study we conducted in Niagara Falls from 1995 to 1997, as well as more recent evidence from around the world, suggests that following the opening of a casino, the number of people presenting for problem gambling treatment rises. This suggests that a casino in Toronto would likely have a negative health impact on some individuals, particularly those living close to it. I'm particularly concerned with how a new casino venue would lead to a relapse amongst those people in Toronto who had a gambling problem in the past and are currently in recovery. Gambling alters the way the reward system works and this is fairly permanent change in the brain, so that relapse is quite common.
3. International evidence suggests that following the opening of a casino in a community, the number of bankruptcies rises. Bankruptcies have an impact that goes beyond the economic – they can tear families and communities apart.

In closing, we would encourage you to consider the potential for negative impact on individuals with gambling problems as well as their families and communities, and the possibility that the number of people with such problems will rise.

For further information, please contact:

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