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Date: January 15, 2013  
To: Toronto City Council  
From: York Quay Neighbourhood Association (YQNA)  
Subject: Proposed Mega-Casino in Toronto

Dear Councillor Pennachetti,

I am writing to you on behalf of York Quay Neighbourhood Association (YQNA) on the Central Waterfront. We are a RESIDENTIAL community organization, representing just under a half of the persons of 15 neighbourhoods, immediately around the two downtown sites, that registered a residential population of 92,000 in the 2011 census. With new construction, this can be expected to top 120,000 by 2015.

At a recent YQNA meeting held at the Radisson Hotel January 8, 2013, the members present overwhelmingly voted by a show of hands that they are AGAINST the idea of a casino in general. More specifically, they oppose a mega-casino anywhere downtown that increases congestion and threatens the city's economic and social fabric.

Our opposition can be summarized as follows:

Process of Consultations:

- Many of our members attended the City Hall event on January 9<sup>th</sup> to learn more about the Mega-Casino and were very disappointed with the format and scope.
- The Open House format did not permit a formal presentation and Q&A time, where serious questions could be asked by people who are knowledgeable and concerned, and where the responses by the OLG, city councillors and staff of City Hall could be heard by all. The lack of information generated a spontaneous meeting that somewhat filled in the gaps, but many people left with a slanted view in favour of casinos because of the format.
- The on-line questionnaire appears open to abuse and manipulation, as one person can send multiple responses and thus skew the results.

- It is clear that the OLG and other organized gaming interests are flooding the airwaves, newspapers and movie houses to sway public opinion and manipulate results. We demand a more effective and transparent decision-making, even if it takes more time to arrive at a final decision.

The crucial practical issues we face are:

Exhibition and Ontario Place: The existing traffic and transportation infrastructure is already fully stretched to its capacity, and this has a direct impact on the Central Waterfront.

- The primary cause of this is that the Island Airport has been transformed unilaterally by the Toronto Port Authority (TPA) into a busy commercial hub, without a proper prior assessment of its impacts. Daily vehicle trips to the airport amount to 20,000 (10,000 in and 10,000 out). As a direct result, very dangerous congestion points have emerged at the Stadium Rd. and Bathurst Quay intersections with Lake Shore Boulevard; and at the crossing of Queens Quay and Eireann Quay. The City Place Residents Association and the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Association will also be weighing in on this.

Central Waterfront:

- Even before the start of construction on the revitalization of Queens Quay, the City's Public Works and Infrastructure Committee (PWIC) had discussed the extreme congestion at the intersections of York Street and Spadina Avenue with Lake Shore Boulevard and the daily gridlock.
- A number of large projects currently or soon under construction will generate additional residential, office commuter and service traffic during the next three years. These include the Aquarium, Delta Toronto Hotel, Ice Towers and office building, Infinity Condominiums, Tridel's condo tower, Menkes' condo towers and commercial building and the Waterpark Place office building.
- Queens Quay is in the process of being reduced to two lanes. We estimate traffic pressures will increase, more so during events at the Rogers Centre, ACC, Metro Convention Centre, the Islands and Harbourfront Centre. Already at Maple Leaf Square, residents have to wait up to an hour to exit from their garages when events are happening at the ACC.
- The City has recently granted approval for four new high-rise towers in the York/ Lake Shore area. Each tower is planned at triple the zoned density. Given that the existing infrastructure is already grossly inadequate, the impact of lane closures due to staging and access to construction sites over the next 3-4 years is going to be horrendous, notwithstanding the traffic nightmares expected during the PanAm Games of 2015.
- In spite of nearly 5 years of study, the City and Waterfront Toronto have not yet agreed on a Plan to accommodate projected Tourist bus parking (short

- term 45 minutes and medium term – 4 hrs.) and school buses. There were about 17 million visitors to the Waterfront recreational area last year.
- With projected busloads of mainly seniors -- on whom casinos prey-- there is absolutely no space for these buses on the Central Waterfront. In addition, the projected Casino traffic seems to vary from 7,000-11,000 vehicles per day, amounting to 14,000 to 22,000 trips.
  - The Gardiner Expressway is in the process of self-destructing and we live in anticipation of concrete dropping from its structure from time to time, and finally,
  - Only a week ago, Toronto Hydro publically expressed its concern with growth in our area outstripping the capacity of the antiquated system.

We believe the City may not have done due diligence in rushing a Casino proposal:

- Other models of mega-casinos show that only the operators/owners profit and that the percentage given to the cities does not offset the social/economic costs to the cities. (Atlantic City, USA is described as a ‘city turned into slum by the seaside’).
- OLG and international casino operators flashing the promise of big bucks, making it look like “free money”, can be irresistible to politicians.
- Why can we not support a handful of small up-scale casinos in luxury hotels that would attract the high rollers from out of town, some politicians, and local money launderers? They play, they lose and we win, because these casinos won’t suck in all the vulnerable segments of society nor kill restaurants and theatres, that have made long-term investments in the cultural life that makes Toronto a great city to live in.
- Another consideration: don’t people mostly gamble on the Internet? If we build a huge casino and technology makes it obsolete after it has wrecked the city, then what? And what about all the thriving performance venues in Toronto? Urban balancing acts are not unknown. Remember how Eaton Centre killed Yonge Street and it has yet to recover.
- While we oppose the negative impacts of organized gambling on ethical and social grounds as espoused by many correspondents, we also question many of the assumptions and projections of economic and financial benefits and ask the City to present real-life examples of successful models of how large casinos have benefitted other cities.
- We are also against predatory investors (such as the casino developers) using already-built infrastructure, previously paid for by taxpayers. Our view is that if a Vegas-style Casino, operating 24/7 with gambling, restaurants and shows, is permitted within the GTA, it must be only after a thorough study where the cost-benefit studies show that it is bringing tangible and immediate real benefits to the City.
- For example, investments in new transport infrastructure and services (as in resort development), in low-value blighted land, contribute towards enhancing land values and hence future tax revenues. The projections of tax

revenues as presented are nebulous. They do not include realistic future financial, economic and social costs that will be borne by the city.

Toronto is a wealthy city with a dangerously low municipal budget, in a province that is in debt. That is the explosive situation that can make politicians give in to the gambling industry. But the City is in no rush. We must also allow the Mayor to reflect on issues and connect the dots, as he has done previously on a transit system and the Port Lands. A well-run city will always have suitors knocking at our door.

These issues have already been brought to the attention of both councillors Adam Vaughan and Pam McConnell. We are sure they will reflect our concerns in Council discussions.

We oppose a mega-casino and look forward to your reassurance that it is not already a done deal behind closed doors.

Thank you.

*Braz Menezes*

Braz Menezes,  
YQNA Planning Committee

CC:

Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance, MPP  
Paul Godfrey, Chair, Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation  
Adam Vaughan, Councillor, Ward 20  
Pam McConnell, Councillor, Ward 28  
Olivia Chow, MP, Trinity-Spadina  
Rosario Marchese, MPP, Trinity-Spadina  
Dean Maher, President of City Place Residents Association  
Joan Prowse, Chair of Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Association  
Julie Beddoes, Code Blue  
Jennifer Keesmaat, Chief Planner  
Al Rezoski, Acting Manager, Downtown Planning  
Tim Laspa, Transportation  
Carol Jolly, CEO, Waterfront BIA  
Chris Glaisek, Waterfront Toronto  
Pina Mallozzi, Waterfront Toronto  
All City Councillors  
YQNA Files/Casino