



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Gambling Expansion in Toronto - Update

Date:	April 18, 2013
To:	Toronto Board of Health
From:	Medical Officer of Health
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The City Manager released a report, *New Casino and Convention Development in Toronto*, on April 8, 2013 for consideration by the Executive Committee at its meeting of April 15 and 16th, 2013. The report included recommendations for options and conditions that City Council may consider should they decide to consent to a new or expanded casino in Toronto. One recommended condition is that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) and casino operator(s) "review and consider" the harm mitigation measures in the Medical Officer of Health's (MOH) report.

This report to the Board of Health (BOH) is to inform Board members that the MOH sent a letter to the Executive Committee based on the Board's position which noted that the establishment of a downtown casino and the expansion of gambling at Woodbine, both raise concerns of increased problem gambling and related adverse health impacts. Further, the MOH reaffirmed that, should City Council consent to host a new or expanded casino in Toronto, it is appropriate to make approval contingent on measures to mitigate harm. The MOH recommended therefore that the wording of a condition in the City Manager's report related to harm mitigation measures be strengthened such that the OLG and casino operator(s) be "required to work with the Toronto Medical Officer of Health to implement harm mitigation measures". Executive Committee did not adopt the MOH's recommendation. The MOH recommends that the BOH endorse this recommendation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that the Board of Health

1. Reiterate its recommendation to City Council that based on health evidence pointing to health risks associated with gambling, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) not be invited to expand gambling in the City of Toronto; and
2. Recommend to City Council that if it consents to expansion of gambling in Toronto, that it make implementation of the Medical Officer of Health's harm mitigation measures a condition of its approval.

Financial Impact

The recommendations in this report will have no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

DECISION HISTORY

On November 5, 2012, the Executive Committee considered the City Manager's report, *Considering a New Casino in Toronto*. (<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.EX24.1>). The Committee authorized the City Manager to conduct public consultation and also requested that the City Manager give consideration to establishment of a "social contract" between the City and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG). The Committee also requested the City Manager report back to the Executive Committee in February/March 2013 on his findings.

On November 19, 2012, the Board of Health (BOH) considered the report *The Health Impacts of Gambling Expansion in Toronto*. (<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.HL18.1>). The BOH recommended to City Council that based on health evidence pointing to health risks associated with gambling, the OLG not be invited to expand gambling in the City of Toronto. The BOH also endorsed the Toronto Public Health (TPH) *Position Statement on Gambling and Health* which identified ten approaches to regulating and operating gambling such that health impacts are minimized.

On April 15 and 16, 2013, the Executive Committee considered the City Manager's report, *New Casino and Convention Development in Toronto*. (<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.EX30.1>). The Executive Committee endorsed recommendations to City Council that it consent to supporting the establishment of a new casino gaming site in the Toronto OLG C1 zone and to the expansion of gambling at the existing Woodbine site.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Since the release of the MOH's November 7, 2012 report, the OLG has provided a review and comment on the proposed mitigation measures found in the report.¹ In addition, TPH participated in a meeting with OLG staff to discuss items, including harm mitigation

approaches, to be addressed through the proposed social contract. To date, OLG has not committed to fully implementing the harm mitigation measures identified by the MOH.

COMMENTS

On April 10, 2013, the MOH sent a letter to Mayor Ford and members of the Executive Committee regarding the City Manager's report, *New Casino and Convention Development in Toronto* (see Attachment A).

As noted in the MOH's previous reports to the BOH, *The Health Impacts of Gambling Expansion in Toronto* (November 7, 2012) and *Community Health Impacts of a Casino in Toronto* (January 28, 2013), evidence indicates that gambling expansion is associated with an increase in problem gambling and its related health impacts. The two options proposed in the City Manager's report will both lead to expansion of gambling opportunities in Toronto. The most effective way to mitigate harm raised by gambling expansion is not to host a new casino in Toronto. If City Council consents to a casino going forward however, it is appropriate to make the City's approval contingent on measures to mitigate harm as identified by the MOH in previous reports.

The MOH's comments to Executive Committee note that the proposed condition related to harm mitigation in the City Manager's report does not in its present form ensure that the risk of increased problem gambling will be effectively addressed. The City Manager's report recommends that the City would only require OLG to "review and consider" measures related to harm mitigation. The OLG has already reviewed the harm mitigation strategies endorsed by the BOH and indicated minimal commitment to implement any of these measures. As a result, the MOH recommended to the Executive Committee that the wording of the relevant condition be changed to: "a requirement that the OLG and casino operator(s) work with the Toronto Medical Officer of Health to implement harm mitigation measures to address the negative impacts of problem gambling as outlined in the Medical Officer of Health's report." Executive Committee did not adopt the MOH's recommendation.

CONTACT

Monica Campbell
Director, Healthy Public Policy
Toronto Public Health
Phone: 416-392-7463
Fax: 416-392-0713
Email: mcampbe2@toronto.ca

Loren Vanderlinden
Supervisor, Healthy Public Policy
Toronto Public Health
Phone: 416-338-8094
Email: lvander@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Dr. David McKeown
Medical Officer of Health

ATTACHMENTS

Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to His Worship, Mayor Rob Ford, Chair, Executive Committee, Re: EX30.1 New Casino and Convention Development in Toronto report. April 10, 2013.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/ex/comm/communicationfile-35853.pdf>

Endnotes

¹ OLG update. January 7, 2013. OLG and Responsible Gambling in Toronto.
<http://www.modernolg.ca/article/olg-and-responsible-gambling-in-toronto/>