



**Canadian Union of
Public Employees**

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Executive Committee:

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Bargaining Units:

Bridgepoint Hospital
- Nurses & Paramedical
Units
- Service Units

City of Toronto
- Full-Time
- Long-Term Care Homes
& Services Part-Time
- Recreation Workers
Part-Time
- Unit B Part-Time

*Toronto Community
Housing Corporation*

February 11, 2013

Councillor John Filion, Chair
And Members of the Board of Health
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Councillor Filion and Members of the Board of Health:

Re: HL19.4 Community Health Impacts of a Casino in Toronto (Ward All)

CUPE Local 79 represents approximately 20,000 workers in the City of Toronto, Bridgepoint Health and Toronto Community Housing Corporation. We appreciate the exceptional work that Dr. David McKeown and his staff have produced to evaluate the health impacts of a Casino in Toronto.

Members of CUPE Local 79 work to deliver critical elements of Toronto's social support infrastructure. From public health, and employment and social services, to children's services, shelters and supportive housing, we take care of those most in need. Right now, in a time of budget cuts, we are struggling to keep up with the demands of a growing population. We have a social service infrastructure deficit in this City. Our Medical Officer of Health has now provided two well-documented reports that show that a Casino in Toronto will further burden these services.

According to the research, a Casino in Toronto could double the rate of problem gamblers, which is especially alarming when we consider the impact not just on the individual gambler, but their family, their children. To quote from Toronto Public Health's Technical report –

“Given that some problem gamblers are married and have children, it has been estimated that the proportion of people whose quality of life may be negatively impacted by problem gambling is actually three or four times the rate of problem gambling prevalence in the general population.”

Our goal as a city should be to support people in need, and empower them to gain stability, improved health and mental wellbeing, so that they can be self-sufficient once again. That is what my members do when they deliver these services. Adding to the number of people who need these supports further compromises our already stretched social service infrastructure which was hurt again this year by flat-lined budgets. More importantly, it works directly against a key tenet of social services work, and that's to help people avoid dependence upon these supports in the first place.

**SERVING OUR
MEMBERS
SINCE
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Although there has been much discussion about the supposed financial benefits of a Casino in Toronto, there is no consensus on whether it has a net benefit, and for whom. Likewise, the discussion around new revenues into city coffers doesn't at this point give us any idea about how they match up against the costs, to our services and to our communities.

Dr. McKeown's report cites a couple of studies from the 1990s that give a significant range to that social cost – \$6,000 to \$50,000 for each problem gambler. Those sorts of numbers are daunting and seem to be just the edge of the iceberg.

It's hard to calculate what a casino will do to our communities. That matters to our members, because they don't just work in this city, they live here too. Increased rates of poverty, addiction, deteriorating health, vulnerable children and youth aren't just impacts they will face in their jobs, they will face them when they go home to their neighbourhoods.

Our members have good reason to be concerned about a casino, both as employees and residents of this City. Over the next month we will be engaging them to gain their input so that we can better represent their professional and personal concerns as this issue makes its way to City Council.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Maguire', written in a cursive style.

Tim Maguire
President