

EX33.2.7

Dear Mayor Tory and City Councilors,

My name is Theo Lagakos, I represent the over 400 employees of Casino Woodbine, formerly known as the OLG Slots at Woodbine, I hold the position of president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada Local 533.

I have previously presented to this committee support of Woodbine expansion while at the same time also expressing employee concerns.

Last summer we were locked out by the OLG raising a variety of concerns including job security and the loss of our provincial pension plan. Before the lock out, our part-time employees were able to get at least an average of 3 shifts a week, which allowed them to keep their benefits.

Woodbine at least under the OLG, generated over half a billion in profit each year, yet we have a part-time workforce that exceeded 55%. Since the lockout has ended the average part-time employee gets only 2 shifts a week, at this rate their ability to keep their benefits over the next year will diminish.

Now I understand everyone wants jobs in the neighbourhood, and having lived in Rexdale for over 30 years, this union and I, are in complete support of the Toronto Community Benefits Network's commitment to represent the community and to make sure jobs are available for the people.

My personal concern and that of our Local, is that the new service provider keeps its full-time part-time ratio and does not keep moving towards reducing staffing levels, as is the current practice. This union is also not in favour of Casino Woodbine's decision to bring in outside workers doing bargaining unit work as is the case at present. This local is also deeply concerned in the way in which promotions are now implemented which creates hoards of people packing the facility to the point in which the main entrance had to be closed. I have raised this concern with management but I don't believe they take us seriously in regards to safety and I urge the city to investigate the congestion on the gaming floor particularly during promotions. My understanding is the new company keeps a larger portion of profits by adding the number of slot machines on the floor, and so they are indifferent to both patron and employees concerns regarding cramped space and potential for an accident to occur.

Also, since Woodbine is no longer a government agency but a private operator given a 22 year lease by the Wynne government, it appears the casino's priorities have shifted. Making profit seems to be taking precedent over everything else. In fact, the AGCO, that is the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario has deregulated and changed many of the rules concerning casino operations. With less regulation it is more likely for problems to arise. I have worked at Woodbine for over 8 years, and if you ask me if there is anything sadder and more pathetic than an individual addicted to gambling, I would tell you it's the government's addiction to gambling revenues. The health and welfare of the community should take precedence over profits.

I understand we can't go backwards and stop gambling and that future revenue sources is important to this city and province, but I also believe now more so than ever we need stiffer rules and regulations. Government should not rely on liquor, gambling and in the near future selling weed to balance its budget. The rule of law should be there to uphold the public good, and yet governments always seem to contradict their own laws. Do you know for example at Woodbine we still have a smoking section that is less than nine meters from the building. How did the OLG and Woodbine get away with that you may ask? Answer, because the doors lead to space that is neither an exit nor entrance. This union has complained to the authorities over the years regarding smoking, however there is some sort of loophole that allows for this to exist. I use this example to illustrate to you for the need to have laws that are consistent throughout the city.

Before you decide to give the green light I urge you all to remember your civic duty as our elected officials. Councilors don't let the dangling carrot of 31 million dollars per year, tie your hands and let Casino Woodbine off the hook in regards to its civic responsibility and its responsibility to implement best business practices and treat employees with dignity and respect.

Don't just give in to expansion for the sake of expansion and allow this company that makes billions to get away with posting part time jobs with only get 2 days a week scheduled hours. Make sure the 24 hour Casino Woodbine operation pays for a 24 hour daycare center, as this community and the current employees are in desperate need of.

Lastly our jobs at Casino Woodbine at present are only guaranteed up to January 23, 2019 as per the Ontario government's deal of selling the business; the workers and the people of Rexdale deserve better than this reality and we ask City Council to assist us in making sure full time jobs don't disappear.

Thank you for listening,


Theo Lagakos
President PSAC Local 533