

2. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT OF CASINO GAMBLING AND
EXPANDED GAMING - SIX-MONTH FOLLOW-UP

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive this report for information.

DOCUMENTATION

1. Medical Officer of Health's report dated 24 Nov 98 is immediately attached.

REGION OF OTTAWA CARLETON

REPORT

RÉGION D'OTTAWA CARLETON

RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf. RC

DATE 11 January 1999

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator
Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Medical Officer of Health

SUBJECT/OBJET **PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT OF CASINO GAMBLING AND
EXPANDED GAMING - SIX MONTH FOLLOW UP**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That the Community Services Committee recommend Council receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

This report is in response to Community Services Committee's request for a six month update on the success of the report's recommendations in being implemented. Last spring, Regional Council approved the following recommendations:

1. That this report be forwarded to the Minister of Health, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and Management Board Secretariat;
2. That the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations increase the number of Alcohol and Gaming Commission inspectors in Ottawa-Carleton from four to six;
3. That the Management Board Secretariat amend the Alcohol, Gaming and Charity Funding Public Interest Act so that slot machines and video lottery terminals are only allowed in casinos and other controlled casino-like settings;
4. That the Ministry of Health undertake a public awareness and education strategy as an important first step in helping people understand and talk about the addictive nature of gambling and the potential consequences;

5. That the Ministry of Health permanently fund counselling positions and allocate additional financial resources for treatment and prevention as the availability of gambling increases.

DISCUSSION

The Ontario Substance Abuse Bureau has released all of the funding previously allocated for Ottawa-Carleton. This funding will enable Addiction Assessment Services (A.A.S.) to hire an additional full-time counsellor. The Bureau has also provided additional funding for an additional half time counselling position. This position will be shared between A.A.S. and Somerset West Community Health Centre in order to provide services to a number of the Asian communities. Ottawa-Carleton now has 2.5 full-time provincially funded counsellors working with people who have gambling addictions.

With respect to Alcohol and Gaming Inspectors, no response has yet been received from the province. Health Department staff have begun discussions with other organizations and concerned individuals about the shortage of Alcohol and Gaming Inspectors. Preliminary discussions indicate the potential for a broad base of support for obtaining additional inspectors including organizations like the Ontario Restaurant Association.

In the areas of prevention and education, the Ministry of Health has recently approved the new Centre of Excellence For Problem Gambling and has begun providing pre-proposal information sessions for the public. The Centre will provide services in the area of prevention, treatment standardization and research into problem gambling. It will be comprised of individuals and organizations from across the province. In the interim, the Health Department has ordered 3,000 brochures from the Problem Gambling Helpline and will be distributing them through our community health promotion channels.

Finally, the Health Department is a member of the advisory committee for the Designated Problem Gambling Treatment Site in Ottawa-Carleton and participates in reviewing the services provided and in setting direction for the agency.

*Approved by
Robert Cushman, MD, MBA, FRCPC*