

SPECTRUM

First Nations' View

Casino gambling a hot discussion

RAISING REVENUE! Casino gambling is very quickly becoming an acceptable measure of raising revenue, creating jobs, and other economic benefits.

by Cline Gideon

The current debate about casino gambling is quickly becoming a very hot discussion within this province. The provincial government of Premier Frank McKenna is seriously considering this just-a-bit controversial topic, although this controversy is being self-made by the above mentioned government. Yes, I said self made. Why? Casino gambling is very quickly becoming an acceptable measure of raising revenue, creating jobs and other economic benefits. During this time of economic depression, such benefits cannot be ignored. With New Brunswick being a strong bastion in tourism, this issue further has implications that cannot be ignored by the provincial government. A perfect example now is the non-controversial video gambling machines, in which the government has high stakes, and is doing very well in. This is a small component in the casino gambling debate, and the revenues that are generated by this one aspect alone does raise eyebrows to provincial government officials. Upon their awareness of such factors, a certain official in the McKenna government mentioned expanding video machines into a broader capacity, casino gambling, and ever since, further eyebrows were raised, especially within the Native communities within New Brunswick.

There is no doubt of the advantages of casino gambling, and of course, there are some drawbacks toward this issue. Like everything else that we humans get involved in, we have to consider the good and bad side of the issue and weigh both and come up with a decision. In every case, one will not be happy with the decision, while the other will have at least some content.

The good premier of Quebec, Robert Bourassa, had come to the bridge considering this issue, and has crossed it, in coming up with a decision. In weighing the pros and cons of casino gambling, a few cons being that a possible addiction to gambling, and the idea of loss by those attempting at the game of chances, but greater consideration was given to the fact of the revenues that can be created by such a venture, the amount of jobs that would be produced, the spin-off effects for the people that would result from the attraction from foreign visitors (tourism); such factors just cannot be ignored! As a result, Premier Bourassa gave the go ahead to the establishment of casino gambling in the famed Man-and-his-World Pavilion on the Isle St. Helen, situated next to Isle Montreal. The sight alone is an attraction, and the onslaught of casino gambling further will attract those who feel their luck needs to be questioned/chanced. As visitors, they will tell their friends, and so on

and so on.

It is my belief that the Premier of New Brunswick is not blind to the benefits in the casino gambling issue. In the very near future, he will have no choice but to seriously consider the establishment of such a venue. As mentioned above and perhaps more so important to New Brunswick than to Quebec, Casino gambling will give tourists a much greater incentive to come to the Picture Province.

Unlike Quebec, which has a vast array of features that would attract tourists from the United States and other nations, New Brunswick is a bit more limited in this aspect. No doubt that New Brunswick (Atlantic Region) has perhaps the most beautiful scenery that can rival any on its own. The only difficulty is that they (tourists) are looking and are at awe, but they are not staying. Casino gambling is a solid incentive to keep visitors overnight, and also a few more overnights.

Tourists have the money to take such a game of chance. They are willing to spend their money and their money is what this province thrives on (cruel, isn't it!). With the perceived (and actual) success of other casino gambling establishments in Canada (Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec) New Brunswick will lose out in a dramatic way. Unfortunately, there is one snag to their plans - Native operators who are much more initiated in the application of casino gambling.

Chief Sacobie of the Kingsclear First Nation has expressed a genuine interest in casino gambling. Most importantly, he has the facilities in place to upstart this most viable venture, in which a success rate is all but assured. In the current economic situation on First Nations throughout New Brunswick and in Canada in general, with Kingsclear being no exception, the concept of casino gambling is perhaps the greatest idea (initially brought about by a certain provincial minister) since the two-row wumpum (a belt signifying two nations in parallel course moving about side-by-side in harmonious fluidity). For the Native population, an economic windfall creating benefits for the First Nation itself, and with provincial approval, benefits to the province also.

Currently at Kingsclear, employment is created for the First Nation itself, providing employment for the Native population of Kingsclear, and believe it or not, providing employment of the non-native population in the surround-

ing area of Kingsclear (in fact, more so) who are currently working at the Kingsclear Hotel and Resort. This alone proves that not only will Natives benefit in the casino issue, but so too will non-natives, in terms of employment and others economic benefits.

The whole issue is creating a negative atmosphere for everyone involved, including the provincial government. This negative atmosphere is hurting the Kingsclear First Nation more so in the short term, but in the long term, this will all be

establishments, saw the benefits that had been experienced in having games-of-chance present. During discussions of the budget (OOPS, hope I didn't give away the possible minister who goofed), casino gambling was heavily discussed. Upon getting a whiff of such discussions, Kingsclear and other First Nations quickly mobilized to follow provincially instigated insight into the economic miracle of casino gambling.

Today, because the province is dragging its feet on the issue, and because they did experience a bit of a red face (for a second it was difficult to distinguish amongst non/natives in a meeting room), we have reached this unfortunate crossroad. The province is caught in this wicked debate. In the long run, casino gambling will become a reality in this province. Mark my words!! (actually, they are anyway, huh!). The province will have to go forward. Unfortunately, it does not want the native population to be involved in this lucrative venture. A view that is regrettable since it will dramatically benefit the Kingsclear First Nation (and other First Nations) and the surrounding areas that border such establishments. Also, relations between First Nations and the province would vastly be improved as a new and positive relationship could be solidified, and in fact, establishing precedent.

No one wants this issue to turn ugly. It is an issue that could bring benefits to all.

Wela'liq



eliminated. Why? Everyone is aware of the vast revenues that will be created. When you have revenues, you have economic spin-off. Ask any economist if that statement has any merit! Also, it was this province only approximately four months ago whom wholeheartedly supported the Charlottetown Agreement in that most bitterly-contested referendum that was supposedly going to destroy this nation (Canada). We all know what happened to that agreement. In support of the referendum, the people of this province welcomed the idea of the Native population attaining greater freedom (economic, social, yes, even political). The people spoke to the Premier, and the voice was loud and clear. Despite the failure within the national arena, the provincial government has made a point that with such overwhelming provincial support, the Premier's office will continue to press to develop the issues contained in the Charlottetown Agreement, including the concerns of the Native population of this province.

We must not forget that the idea of casino gambling was not an idea first expressed by Kingsclear, but by the provincial government itself. They too ARE experiencing an economic downturn in one of their provincially run resorts (hint: with a Native namesake). While on their annual vacations at casino

ATTENTION ALL BRUNS STAFF

The next general staff meeting is this Friday at 12:30 pm. Anyone interested in working for the Brunswickan is also invited to attend.

Agenda:

- Viewpoint question for next week
- Spoof issue for April



1/2 PRICE SITTING

with this coupon
'til the end of February
Hours:

Tue.-Th. 10-5 Fri. 10-7 Sat. 10-2

88 Main St.
457-0123

Call TODAY for an appointment