

LETTER: Follow the money for clues on council's casino reasoning

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Dear Editor:

"Every breaking wave on the shore; Tells the next one there'll be one more; And every gambler knows that to lose; Is what you're really there for"

The U2 lyrics aptly capture the dynamic between the gambling industry and North Vancouver city hall.

When one proposal for a casino on the North Shore gets turned aside, you know that another one will follow. And while every gambler knows they are there to lose – or casinos wouldn't be so profitable – the North Vancouver community will a big loser if this latest proposal slips through.

The other two North Shore local governments quickly dismissed the latest overture by the gambling industry to establish a long sought-after beachhead on the North Shore.

The Squamish council does not think a private casino is a good use of their land.

The city, however, has decided to give the casino operators and the B.C. Lottery Corporation reason to believe there has been a change of heart.

Coun. Linda Buchanan, who opposed the last application only a year ago and has a public health background, now says the North Shore's chief medical and public health officers are "out of date." Coun. Holly Back, who voted with the mayor in favour of the last unsuccessful proposal, was more direct. The city wants a casino because it wants the money.

Never mind that Coun. Back would have to participate in public hearings that require her to have an open mind. She "truly believe(s) we will get one in North Vancouver" and therefore would "rather see the money in our (the city's) purse" than see it go to the First Nations or another North Shore local government.

If it is a casino we're talking about this time, not just slot machines, the waterfront is not at all a suitable location. The well-heeled gamblers that the casinos pursue most ardently don't ride the SeaBus. They arrive in expensive cars or limos. They want to be near an airport or just off the highway.

The only site in the city that comes close to being suitable is Harry Jerome. The interminable stalling by the city on rebuilding North Vancouver's most important community recreation centre now makes more sense.

Like too many things at city hall, you need to follow the money to understand what's really going on.

Guy Heywood
former councillor,
City of North Vancouver

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