

# Lottery Corp. gambles on a new casino

## It will canvass North Shore and south of the Fraser to gauge interest

Over the years, municipalities have shown an interest in gaming because they seek the benefits that come with it ... job creation, greater amenities.

Three years after Surrey city council rejected a \$100-million casino resort, the B.C. Lottery Corp. is putting its odds on another gambling facility, either on the North Shore or south of the Fraser.

BCLC said market analysis suggests there is potential for a gambling facility in either area.

The Crown corporation said it will canvass Surrey, Delta, the three North Shore municipalities and First Nations, including the Tsawwassen, Squamish and TsleilWaututh, to see if there is any interest in hosting a casino. The municipalities and First Nations have until July 15 to express an interest in allowing a casino, which would serve about 460,000 adults south of the Fraser or 150,000 on the North Shore.

Surrey has two casinos, Elements Casino (previously Fraser Downs) and Newton Bingo Country. Surrey Mayor Linda Hepner said her council would need more time, and information, before considering a bid for another casino.

In 2013, Surrey rejected a bid by Gateway Casinos and Entertainment Ltd. to shift its gambling licence from the Newton Bingo hall to a proposed \$100-million casino resort at 12th Avenue and 168th Street. The project had been considered a done deal until then-mayor Dianne Watts cast a tiebreaking vote to reject the bid following an exhaustive public hearing process.

“I had a pretty unpleasant experience a couple of years ago and I would not be anxious to duplicate it,” Hepner said, noting a report on the BCLC proposal will likely go to council in mid-June. “The process was pretty flawed last time. That’s why it’s important for me to get the sense of council on the whole thing, and I’d like to get the public’s opinion. I’d rather know earlier rather than later.”

Hepner, who had voted in favour of the Gateway casino bid, said she needs to know more details of what BCLC is proposing, noting Surrey has a policy of allowing only three destination casinos — entertainment centres similar to Richmond’s River Rock — in the city. With only two council meetings before the deadline, she doubts council will have enough time to investigate the proposal.

“I don’t even know if there’s a location where it would fit.”

The B.C. Lottery Corp. said it is making a play on the North Shore and south of the Fraser after considering revenue potential, population size, proximity to other gambling facilities and socio-economic factors. It estimates a casino south of the Fraser would generate between \$25 million to \$50 million in revenue, and bring in \$1.5 million to \$3 million for the host municipality or First Nation. The North Shore would reap slightly less, at between \$25 million and \$40 million with the host’s share of up to \$2.2 million.

“Both markets have potential,” said BCLC spokeswoman Angela Koulyras. “We’re still in the very early stages. We want to understand if there is any interest.”

Local governments in B.C. get 10 per cent of the net revenues of casinos and community gambling centres within their boundaries. The City of Richmond has used revenue from the River Rock Casino to pay for the Richmond oval and an aquatic centre and seniors' facility. The Hard Rock Casino in Coquitlam has provided funds for a library, sports centre and soccer tournament facility. New Westminster has used gambling funds for its Anvil Centre theatre-museum-gallery complex.

Other casinos in Metro include the Grand Villa Casino in Burnaby and Edgewater Casino in Vancouver.

"Over the years, municipalities have shown an interest in gaming because they seek the benefits that come with it ... job creation, greater amenities," Koulyras said. "They can use that net income toward capital projects."

Surrey Coun. Tom Gill, who was a big supporter of the Gateway casino project, said he would only back another large destination casino in a bid to leverage amenities such as five-star hotel and convention centre, which he said the city desperately needs.

"We've had great success with the Elements Casino, but I'm certainly looking at something much more grand," Gill said. "If I could leverage those opportunities, the answer would likely be yes."

Delta Mayor Lois Jackson said the latest BCLC proposal will go to council in the next few weeks, but she's not sure if her municipality has any land available to build a casino, or if the public wants it.

"Surrey tried twice and it was resoundingly trounced," she said. "We'll see what our council thinks."

The Tsawwassen First Nation would only say it is reviewing the proposal.

Koulyras said the market analysis showed the annual spending by North Shore players at gambling facilities is below the Lower Mainland average, indicating a need for more facilities.

North Vancouver City Mayor Darrell Mussatto said he would support a casino, but indicated all North Shore municipalities would have to be on board. Although some First Nations have expressed interest, he said, it's the first time in 10 years that the BCLC has pitched a casino for the North Shore.

Mussatto said he was surprised the BCLC was making another play for the North Shore but added, "I'm supportive of having a further look at it."

Calls to the Tseil-Waututh and Squamish First Nations were not returned Thursday.

North Vancouver District Mayor Richard Walton said there hasn't been much appetite for a casino in his area. But with two new members on council, he said, they will discuss the BCLC proposal.

He noted if a casino is built in the City of North Vancouver, West Vancouver or on First Nations land, it would still affect his residents, such as by increasing traffic or addiction levels.

"We've had no citizens or no organization, I recall, who have come to us in years saying we need a casino here," Walton said.

"You'd have to consult broadly if you want to put one on the North Shore. The lottery corporation is probably testing the waters really early to see if there is support or opposition to it. I think it's earlystage fishing."

# New casino proposed for North Shore or south of the Fraser

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/new-casino-bclc-1.3612487>

**BCLC says it wants to hear from local governments if they are interested in hosting a new casino**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 02, 2016 8:00 AM PT Last Updated: Jun 02, 2016 12:26 PM PT



BCLC is looking for local partners to build a new Casino on Vancouver's North Shore or south of the Fraser.

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The B.C. Lottery Corporation is asking local governments on the North Shore and south of the Fraser River if they are interested in having a new casino.

But spokeswoman Angela Koulyras says they are not looking for public input yet.

"At this point we simply want to get a sense of what the level of interest is among those local governments," she said.

She also says it's too early to talk about any specific locations or size.

"Once we've selected a preferred host local government in those regions, we would work with them to determine the location, the type of the facility and the size of the facility."

Ten per cent of the revenue would be given back to the host local government, said Koulyras.

She notes under the Gaming Control Act, any municipality considering a new casino would need to consult with local residents and adjacent communities.

"It's ultimately their decision to say yes or no at the end of the day."

## Millions in revenue forecast

According to a BCLC-commissioned study, a new casino south of the Fraser could bring in \$25 million to \$50 million in new gambling revenue, while a North Shore casino could bring \$25 million to \$40 million, she said.

But the BCLC study did not look at the impact a new facility might have on gambling addiction rates in the communities, or the impact on nearby businesses.

"It's not a health impact assessment," she said.

The following local governments have been contacted about the proposal.

- City of North Vancouver
- **District of North Vancouver**
- District of West Vancouver
- Squamish Nation
- Tsleil-Waututh Nation
- City of Surrey
- Corporation of Delta
- Tsawwassen First Nation

Three years ago the City of Surrey [rejected a proposal for a \\$100-million casino](#).

In 2013 Vancouver approved plans [for a new casino next to BC Place in 2013](#).

BCLC is also looking at building a [new casino in Victoria and Saanich](#).

## Province asks North Shore to mull casino

### B.C.'s lottery corp rolls dice again in pursuit of gaming facility in North or West Vancouver

[Brent Richter](#) | North Shore News

June 2, 2016 04:56 PM



Slot machines owned by Playtime Gaming. photo supplied

The province is trying its luck at convincing the North Shore's three local governments and two First Nations to considering hosting a new casino.

The B.C. Lottery Commission, which regulates casinos and community gaming facilities, announced on Wednesday that it was seeking expressions of interest from the North Shore as well as south of the Fraser River.

There is a demand for local gambling that's currently not being met on the North Shore, according to the BCLC, which routinely does marketplace assessments that take into account population trends, transportation access, estimated revenue potential, and tourism among other things.

"We know most people like to gamble at a facility close to their home and there is no facility on the North Shore. Some residents are travelling to other facilities for example in Vancouver or Burnaby but for other people, they just won't even bother. They'll stay on the North Shore," said Angela Koulyras, BCLC spokeswoman.

"We determined there is revenue potential of approximately \$25 million to \$40 million that is currently not being captured on the North Shore."

Any jurisdiction that hosts a gaming facility gets to wet its beak, receiving a 10 per cent share of net gaming revenue generated, less operating costs. According to a marketplace assessment by BCLC, that would mean about \$1.5 million to \$2.2 million annually for one lucky municipal or band hall.

Because the assessments contain "competitive information" they cannot be released to the public, even under Freedom of Information of Information legislation, Koulyras said

"It could harm our interests and the interests of our private sector service providers," she said.

District of North Vancouver Mayor Richard Walton said he'll take direction from his council members on how to greet the pitch from BCLC. But, he added, if the past is prologue, there won't be a lot of appetite.

"We're really a suburban community and a lot of our residents feel they don't want a casino in close proximity to

them and if they want to gamble, well, it's just across the bridge in Burnaby," he said. "If there's a change in the general consensus, it's incumbent upon me to talk to council and get direction from them if they want to hold a meeting."

City of North Vancouver Mayor Darrell Mussatto was not available for comment but in 2015, city debated and turned down a request to overturn its bylaw forbidding commercial gaming.

District of West Vancouver Mayor Michael Smith too was not available for comment, although in March, he told the West Vancouver Chamber of Commerce members "It would take a very brave man" to come to West Vancouver and pitch a casino project.

Neither the Squamish Nation nor Tsleil-Waututh Nation responded to a request for comment on the proposal.

Should one or more of the governments step forward and offer to host a casino, it remains very much an open question who the casino developer would be.

Previously, Playtime Gaming was given exclusive rights by BCLC to the North Shore territory. That prompted a lawsuit from North Vancouver-based Pinnacle Gaming Solutions. The company's owner David Moretto stated in his suit against BCLC that he had been working with the Tsleil-Waututh Nation since 2007 on a proposal for the nation's land. During numerous meetings with BCLC, the regulator's officials indicated their Tsleil-Waututh project would likely be approved, Moretto alleged.

In response, BCLC denied those claims.

Playtime Gaming was later sold to Burnaby-based Gateway Casinos, in December 2015. According to BCLC, that "extinguished" Playtime's exclusive rights.

## EDITORIAL: Pushing their luck

North Shore News

June 3, 2016 04:39 PM

The BC Lottery Corp has announced it's willing to bet – literally -that the North Shore is ready for its very own casino.

We haven't noticed a clamour rising up from citizens about this inexcusable lapse in ways to part with their cash.

But the lottery corporation says otherwise, and having noticed an unusually affluent and untapped market, is planning to go all in. Lottery folks were at pains to point out the distance from other gambling venues may even result in some North Shore residents not bothering to gamble at all. Presumably they've managed to fill those empty hours coaching soccer, hiking with friends or spending time with their families - activities that don't directly put dollars into provincial coffers.

But the lottery corporation is here to fix that.

The province, of course, ranks as one of the biggest gambling addicts out there, having grown reliant on the royal flush of over a \$1 billion that the lottery corporation brings in annually.

For the province, the winnings are obvious - it gets most of the financial benefit whenever a casino sets up shop. Local communities get to take on most of the risk.

We've already seen a dry run of the discussions involved when the City of North Vancouver debated the pros and cons of allowing slots on the waterfront. The city eventually decided to fold its cards on that idea.

But the lottery corporation is doubling down, and this time all three municipal governments and two First Nations are being asked if they'd like to roll the dice.

Chances are good that sooner or later, someone will say yes.

A thousand times "no" cannot stand up to that single "yes"! - cjk

We'd bet the house on it.

*What are your thoughts? Send us a letter via email by clicking [here \(http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter\)](http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter) or post a comment below.*

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