



CITY OF VANCOUVER

A7

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: August 29, 2005
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CC File No.: 2633
Meeting Date: September 13, 2005

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Director of Social Planning
SUBJECT: Social Responsibility Fund - Edgewater Casino

RECOMMENDATION

THAT City Council authorize a payment of \$25,000 from the Social Responsibility Fund towards the development of a Responsible Gambling Information Centre (RGIC) at Edgewater Casino in the terms outlined in this report.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

- On July 20, 2004, as part of the rezoning conditions for the Plaza of Nations, Council accepted a public benefit offering from Edgewater Casino that included a donation of \$200,000 annually, for the duration of the temporary permit to operate a casino at Plaza of Nations, towards the creation of a Social Responsibility Fund.
- Council policy requires Council authorization for funds to be drawn from reserve.

PURPOSE

This report seeks Council approval for the payment of \$25,000 towards the development of a Responsible Gambling Information Centre (RGIC) at Edgewater Casino. The source of funding is the Social Responsibility Fund.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

On July, 20, 2004, as part of the rezoning conditions related to the development of a temporary Class 2 Casino at Plaza of Nations, City Council accepted an offering of public benefits from the operators of Edgewater Casino that included annual allocations of \$200,000 for the creation of a Social Responsibility Fund. This contribution is to continue for the duration of the permit to operate the casino.

The declared intent for the use of the Social Responsibility Fund was to assist in the development and implementation of harm reduction strategies and programs to mitigate possible negative impacts of the gambling industry on the City of Vancouver. The legal agreement that was consequently signed by the City and Edgewater Casino on November 1, 2004, indicates that the City has sole discretion to administer the funds.

The City has received the payment for the year 2005 in its full amount, and a special reserve account for the fund has been created. Staff is proposing that the first funded initiative be a Responsible Gambling Information Centre at Edgewater Casino.

Responsible Gaming Information Centre (RGIC)

The RGIC initiative relates to a partnership with the BC Lottery Corporation (BCLC), the BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch (GPEB), the Edgewater Casino, and the City of Vancouver. The RGIC will be staffed by a Responsible Gambling Officer during peak times. Relevant literature and information material will be available at the RGIC. The objectives of the RGIC will be to increase customer knowledge and understanding of how casino games work, to provide onsite information and referral to the public, and to provide consultation services to employees. A City representative, appointed by the City Manager, will be involved in the implementation and continuing monitoring of the Information Centre.

This initiative will be funded for the most part by the BCLC, GPEB, and Edgewater Casino, and staff is recommending that the City contribute \$25,000 towards its implementation. An evaluation of the project will be conducted after the first year of operation to assess whether or not it should be extended for a longer period of time.

Role of Local Government in Responsible Gambling

While recognizing that the delivery of responsible gambling programs is for the most part a provincial responsibility, there is a role to be played by local government, particularly by those hosting gaming facilities in their jurisdiction. A number of municipalities in British Columbia are already engaged in the delivery of responsible gambling strategies. The City of Nanaimo, for example, has declared a responsible gambling awareness week, and the City of Richmond has drafted a comprehensive problem gambling prevention and treatment strategy and has made funds available for prevention and education programs.

The provincial strategy for responsible gambling includes three main goals: the reduction of incidents of problem gambling; the reduction of harmful impacts of excessive gambling, and the delivery of gambling in a manner that encourages responsible gambling. While the proposed uses of the Vancouver social responsibility fund could reinforce these three identified provincial goals, it is recommended that the City's activities focus on areas within the City's jurisdiction. Some of the potential uses of the social responsibility fund, above and beyond the proposed RGIC, may involve awareness activities and education initiatives related to issues of gambling policy and problem gambling, support for self-help groups, partnership with dedicated agencies for education/prevention, and support for crime prevention activities at the neighbourhood level.

It is proposed that the social responsibility fund be administered by the Director of Social Planning in consultation with the City Manager. Staff will be reporting back on the more detailed terms of reference and process for accessing the social responsibility fund.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A Social Responsibility Fund has been created as a reserve, with the original \$200,000 received already and will continue to accumulate with future annual payments from Edgewater Casino. This report seeks authorization to draw \$25,000 from this reserve.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The City of Vancouver is already taking part in a provincially funded initiative to assess the socio-economic impacts arising from gambling expansion. Together with the Cities of Surrey, Langley, and Langley Township, Vancouver is part of a longitudinal study being conducted by Blue Thorn Research and Analysis Group, which is measuring indicators such as demands on the health system, per capita income changes, impacts on policing, number of crimes, changes to the hospitality industry, tourism rates, and problem gambling changes.

The proposed initiative for a Responsible Gambling Information Centre at Edgewater Casino will further allow City and Provincial officials to better understand some of the impacts arising from gambling activity in the City of Vancouver.

CONCLUSION

The Responsible Gambling Centre at Edgewater Casino is an innovative project, which will provide for appropriate information and support to members of the public who may be affected by problem gambling issues. This initiative is in line with the purpose of the Social Responsibility Fund, and for this reason, Council approval for the payment of \$25,000 towards this project is requested.

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