

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING COMMENTS

3.1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING – Public Consultation – Proposed Expansion of a Gaming Site

- Ed Betterley – suggesting that the gaming proponent's approach says a lot about their business tactics and that he expects they will be very aggressive; indicating that they have come in offering buyouts to current employees and he does not feel that this is fair; stating that he is in support of expanded gaming, but that should be done through the casino that offers music entertainment, etc.; suggesting that the benefits that local patrons get are less than other gaming facilities; advising that one issue he has is that staff currently know him by name, but they almost always ask him to open any bags he is carrying, but the same staff don't ask the female patrons to open any bags they are carrying; adding that the survey may have included 700 people, and asking why weren't people surveyed outside the casino; and stating that the whole process could use more feedback.
- Mark Horner, racehorse owner, employer, located north of London – speaking to the benefits of expanded gaming at Western Fair; suggesting the proposed model will produce a win/win through the provision of 700 jobs, continuation of horseracing at Western Fair, and providing a full entertainment centre at one location; suggesting that not locating the expanded gaming at Western Fair would devastate horseracing in all of Southwestern Ontario; and strongly urging, on behalf of thousands of horse people, to keep gaming at the Western Fair District.
- Laura, 8-year volunteer with the Western Fair – indicating that she doesn't believe gambling should be expanded as it is an individual activity that doesn't promote social interaction; noting that there are a variety of activities at the Western Fair; suggesting that there is adequate gaming opportunities available to people in such places as Windsor, Niagara Falls and Las Vegas, all of which are quite easily accessible; listing all the enjoyable activities already available at the Western Fair District; and requesting that the City not proceed with endorsing expanded gaming.
- A. Straatman, Seelster Farms – indicating that she is in favour of expanded gaming; noting that Seelster Farms is a third generation operation, with approximately 200 horses, 600 acres and 20 full time employees; adding that she is representing more than 500 breeders in Ontario; advising that if Western Fair was not to have gaming, the best case scenario would be irreparable change to horseracing in Ontario; and urging the Municipal Council to vote for a win/win partnership for the Western Fair and Gateway.
- Wayne – indicating that he is totally against expanded gaming in London; suggesting that the Province sees gaming as an opportunity for revenues, but at the same time there are people begging on the street; stating that the Province is selling entertainment, but it is really selling gambling; noting that the Province has privatized gaming so that the general public can no longer access data regarding that activity; stating that gambling will be expanded, but it is just a question of where because it all boils down to dollars; advising that the proponent would not be here if they weren't going to build a casino; advising that he had a responsibility to himself to express his feelings on expanded gaming and to try and help Council Members recognize the associated repercussions of expanded gaming; and adding that if you could take all of the monies people spend on gambling we would all be in much better shape.
- Jackie – suggesting that the proponent likes London, but that they are looking at other locations than Western Fair; stating that London needs a new casino, but not a bigger more profitable one as the current one is big enough; noting that she wants entertainment and horseracing to stay as it is; indicating that she does not want a hotel as that would take over from the Western Fair and replace current exhibit space; and asking that things stay as they are.

- R. Caranci, Paramount Developments Inc. – noting that one of the big factors in developing their property on Dundas Street was the Western Fair, which has been a large part of London for a number of years; indicating support for expanded gambling at the Western Fair District; stating that this part of London has needed rejuvenation, which is happening with projects such as the redevelopment of the former Kelloggs plant; advising that while there was a large outcry when gambling was originally allowed, at the end of the day it has proven to be the right decision; noting that the benefit to the City will be approximately \$6 million per year, with a lot of dollars to be invested in the London community; advising that Paramount Developments Inc. purchase their Dundas Street property as they wanted to help rejuvenate the Old East Village, applauding the decision by Gateway and its efforts to negotiate expanded gaming at the Western Fair District.
- J. Pastorius, Old East Village Business Improvement Area – making the attached presentation.
- S. Merritt, 831 Elias Street – indicating that she understands that the purpose of the public participating meeting is to speak to whether or not gaming should be expanded in London, but noting that the people who have spoken in favour of expanded gaming have done so in the context of horseracing and the Old East Village and have kept referring back to the Western Fair District; stating that she believes that that context is a safe one for expanded gaming and as a result would like to support the position of the Old East Business Improvement Area that all partners, including Gateway, should monitor effects on the local community; advising that because of its long history, Western Fair understands context in the community and how things will need to be rolled out; stating that the best place for expanded gaming is the Western Fair District, and emphasizing that expanded gaming will need to support growth and development of business and the needs of the community; summarizing that she supports, in context, expanded gaming in the Western Fair District.
- Pam, Ward 13 – indicating she doesn't feel anywhere informed enough to make a decision with respect to the expansion of gaming and that she is not likely alone; advising that she would like more information and that is critical for all parties as the decision will have a tremendous impact on the entire community; referencing that last week in the local newspaper there was an article indicating that 70% of survey responders supported expanded gaming, but that the online survey was unscientific; advising she is not sure where the gambling proceeds go and asking where the cost benefit analysis is; questioning how it is possible to make an informed decision without sufficient information such as whether or not expanded gaming has the potential to help revenues and provide an economic boost; noting the timing of the upcoming election...nothing like a political campaign to get people to care; and asking that we learn what we need to know.
- M. Bray – indicating support for expanded gaming and that she worked on this many years ago; noting she has always felt a casino should be located Downtown and that there are lots of sites between the London Convention Centre and Budweiser Gardens where a casino should go, even if the slot machines were left at the Western Fair District; and indicating that a Downtown casino would bring business into the core.
- F. Felici – stating there are other important issues beyond whether or not you support expanded gaming, including being involved in revitalization; advising that you really need to understand that where it operates is as important as if it is operated; and indicating that it could be very exciting and a unique opportunity for the Old East Village if the expanded gaming was located at the Western Fair District.
- D. Desantos, 809 Dundas Street – noting that expanded gaming would bring 700-1000 jobs to London and that's what we need; advising it would also help the construction industry and keeping gaming at the Western Fair District would also help the horse people.

- L. Sibley and L. Griffin, Addiction Services of Thames Valley – providing the attached presentation and concluding by emphasizing the need to have an effective local strategy in place, with adequate resources to offer educational opportunities to promote prevention, reduce the stigma attached with seeking treatment for gambling addiction, and to provide assistance to those affected by gambling addiction.
- Jeff Harmon, Edinburgh Street – advising that he had a very serious history of gambling addiction but now serves on the Addiction Services of Thames Valley Board of Directors; spoke to how gambling consumed him and resulted in the loss of family savings, loss of his professional designation, loss of his job and almost the loss of his marriage and would have most certainly taken his own life if it weren't for the support of his family and friends; stating that anyone could succumb to a gambling addiction just like he experienced because of the availability of gambling and, in particular, card games; advising that while he personally strongly opposes the expansion of gaming because of his own experience, as a Board Member he takes a more pragmatic view that resources need to be set aside for treatment and prevention to ensure that others don't end up going down the same path that he did.