



Gila's Community

Two Mayors see their legacy projects slipping away

Martow

the week after the release of a opinion survey showed that most residents do not share Markham Frank Scarpetti's support for public of a hockey arena, Vaughan support for a casino in Vaughan evaporate in the face of mounting pressure.

ns were high as residents against proposal for a casino in Vaughan early for the committee meeting and the most popular item on the pushed to end of the afternoon. advocates and opponents looked when, instead of a smooth to address Deputy Mayor Gino motion for a re-vote on the casino City of Vaughan staff threw a at the council. A communication just prior to the committee required a revision of the legal ven to staff.

ittle surprised," Rosati announced overstated tone in response to city quest for a private, closed door with council members.

ouncil filed out of the chambers, idents looked around in disbelief. Eshkenazi lives close to where previously voted in favour of a casino. She first heard about the on the radio and informed many neighbours. "What outrages me the that they keep it secret," said i. "The first vote was secret and secret meeting."

Wong, President of the York Chinese Canadian Association, patiently for the meeting resume. ghan resident told me he would live in a city "focussed on health n wealth." Wong repeated a York Police statement that the YRP do k that a casino will cause a l increase in crime. He finds this g since, while gambling addiction

Rosati's motion asking members of council to rescind their support for a casino following what he termed "overwhelmingly negative" public reaction.

Vaughan resident, Franca Stirpe, addressed council with a summary of her research on the topic. She explained that the annual cost associated with each problem gambler ranges from \$20,000 to \$56,000, including loss of work, court and treatment costs. Assuming the prevalence of problem gambling in York Region is similar to the overall GTA rate of (0.2%), reported in The Health Impacts of Gambling Expansion in Toronto, this represents an annual cost of \$34 to \$95 million a year for the estimated 1700 problem gamblers in the Region (based on our 18+ population of over 800,000.)

While several audience members gave deputations in support of the casino proposal, most were non-residents or representing the interests of construction trades and area businesses. No one was surprised to hear a spokesperson for Ontario Lottery and Gaming asking council to vote in favour of the proposal. In contrast, a representative of 3,000 real estate agents surprised many by advocating for a casino, since most residents strongly believe that a casino will negatively impact real estate values.

Vaughan Council comprises five male and four female votes. Much comment was generated after the May 28 vote when the five men voted in support and the four women against the casino. With Rosati now reversing his position, the casino proposal appears to be squashed.

Thornhill resident Shelley Shields attended the council meeting and called Rosati "a big man for standing up for what is right, and changing his mind." She was pleased with the final vote and thought Councillors Sandra Racco and Rosanna DeFrancesca were "amazing" for saying that they have to "listen to the residents of Vaughan."

News of the flip-flopping Vaughan council spread quickly on social media and members of the Facebook group 'Ward 5 Vaughan Residents Stay Connected' weighed in:

Ami Maishlish: "Good show, Gino. The last thing that we need in Vaughan is a casino and all its harmful consequences. As residents of Vaughan, we can't afford the gamble (pun intended). Our taxes are high enough without our subsidies to vice businesses. Let's build up our cyber and high-tech business sectors instead!"

Antony Niro: "It's embarrassing how our city council acts some time. It shows the province we can't make a decision. What,

next month someone else h thought and reverses the dec It's not the decision Vaugh answer to now, it's the proces consultation process was init was there a motion to overt of council? This vote was p council needs to explain behaviour."

Ajay Kapur: "The casino aspect of the plan. Toronto/C have a convention complex b host major events. Gambling happening in Vaughan, exc Have we forgotten the pol Vaughan? Revenue and grov make the place attractive. Th be a good balance of work/li city to grow to its fullle Currently many people live in work and play outside of their a business wanting to build th to tax payers. We lost it now. a big volume private entertain will not be built by 2020 s nothing to bring in volume e Too many decisions are ma emotion. It is the job of the C at the issues without emotion of the community and balanc wants of the community."

Brian Gerstein: "I actual report commissioned by the C first vote that approved it, taxpayers' standpoint, with no for the next 30 years or so projections, I supported it. It free choice to go or not to understand the inevitable soc will come with it. I wonder referendum would have turne was on the table."

Jeffrey Stone: "Hooray for The politicians have listened c The casino vote is not final, be ratified at the next Com

"My opinion is that York Region is not the place for a casino. If there's to be an expansion of a casino operation, the most logical place in the Greater Toronto Area is Woodbine. There is already a casino there, there's a race track there, there's plenty of land, it's located in a place that is easily accessible by transit, by highway, and there is no challenge to the quality of life for the people around there. That is the most logical decision that anyone could make for expansion of