

## Crime Issues

There have been many comments from the public related to potential increased criminal activity in the area surrounding the racetrack. There is a perception that the introduction of slot machines will bring some undesirable people to the area, as well as general concerns related to the commission of crimes on the part of gambling addicts needing to feed their addiction or to pay gambling debts.

Despite the fact that there is little or no literature on slot machines in horseracing venues, a thorough review of the available literature related to the subject of crime and gambling was conducted by two consultants (Dr. C. Campbell & Dr. H. Wynne) hired to review the comments related to social issues received from the public during the Hastings Park/PNE public consultation process. Some of their findings are as follows:

- The majority of slot machine users are non-problem gamblers and present no threat. However, VLTs and slots are most closely associated with problem gambling and problem gamblers are associated with domestic violence, theft, and fraud.
- Casinos and racetracks are susceptible to counterfeiting, credit card crimes, thefts, assaults, and disorderly behaviour, but no more so than at rock concerts, sporting events, or other events drawing large numbers of people.
- Many Canadian City's have increased policing on opening of casinos which have been later redeployed as no increase in crime resulted (Halifax, Sault Ste. Marie).
- There is a lack of research showing a direct relationship between gambling and crime. However, the need of more research in this area was identified "as necessary, in order to understand properly the nature and extend of the relationship between gambling and crime." (p.39).

One of the most comprehensive studies of gambling and crime conducted in Canada was conducted by Smith, Wynne and Hartnagel (2003) in the City of Edmonton, where they found that: "overall, the number of crimes linked to gambling in Edmonton appeared to have been "quantitatively unsubstantial" (2003: 82). However, the low rate of crimes related to gambling is likely an artifact both of under reporting and under recording by police authorities."

Finally, in their recent reports Drs. Campbell and Wynne recommend a series of mitigation measures including problem gambling mitigation measures directed at the Province as well as site specific mitigation strategies including enhanced and proactive policing measures, CPTED design and co-ordination between Vancouver Police, Lottery security personnel, Provincial Gaming Enforcement personnel and on-site security personnel.