



Gambling, life support and language services

by Catherine Morrison

Here's a not-so-trivial question for you. What government-sanctioned activity occupies a majority of Albertans in the dead of a Canadian winter? According to the government itself, gaming, or "gambling" as it is known outside of official circles. Eighty-two percent of adult Albertans "participate in gaming activities as a form of entertainment."

To be fair to Albertans, to date their most favourite forms of gaming have been lotteries, scratch and win tickets, raffles and fund-raising draws. But if recent rumblings on the casino front are any indication, it seems that the Alberta government is about to usher in a whole new era in gambling in that province. While the government of Alberta is not actually buying casinos, it appears to be buying casino services.

At the end of February 2002, Gaming Minister Ron Stevens announced that a 1999 gaming moratorium would be lifted and the Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission (AGLC) would thenceforth be accepting new casino applications.

Last October, seven notices of "expressed interest for a new licensed casino facility" in various areas throughout Alberta were posted on MERX.

By January 2003, 27 applications had been received for casino licences in 15 centres throughout Alberta. Eight of the applications were for what the government terms First Nations Casinos, to be operated in seven of the 15 locations, by applicants such as the Enoch Cree Nation. The rest were for what are called "traditional" casinos to be located in centres like Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge and Camrose, and run by operators such as the Calgary Flames Limited Partnership or the Deerfoot Inn and Casino.

To make sure that all potential suppliers of casino services are considered, these suppliers were directed to request a "Casino Facility Licensing Information Package," giving at the time of their request, "the location of the proposed casino facility; [and] a description of the services and equipment that the applicant proposes to supply."

Casino licensing in Alberta is now a complex, eight-step process established as a result of a two-year review of gambling licensing policies, undertaken by the AGLC. According to Commission spokesperson Jodie Korchinsky, this review was a "major initiative," growing out of the 1999 moratorium, and it has "set the direction for the future of gaming in Alberta."

"The provincial government" said Minister Stevens, following the release of the review's 61 recommendations, would "ensure any future growth in gaming is carefully managed and controlled."

Alberta is not the only jurisdiction in which gambling has become big business, but revenues in that province, which go into the Alberta Lotteries Fund toward the activities of charitable organizations, amounted to \$200.1 million in 2001-2002. The 16 existing casinos generated over half that amount.

On another front, the Canadian Coast Guard has been busy acquiring 60 Automated External Defibrillators (AED). Defibrillators are used to deliver a restorative shock to victims whose hearts have shut down as a result of ventricular fibrillation, an irregularity of the heart's ventricle

(The human heart has four chambers: two ventricles, two atriums). Ventricular fibrillation can occur unpredictably, and may happen in someone being moved after becoming hypothermic from, say, being washed overboard into a frigid ocean.

There are basically two kinds of defibrillators: one is used in hospitals and has to be set to deliver the correct amount and frequency of current by the attending physician who is positioned to analyze the victim's condition. However, non-medical personnel such as the police, lifeguards and ski patrols can use automated defibrillators. The machine analyzes the victim's condition by means of electrodes. Instructions are given by "voice" prompts from the machine, explains the Coast Guard's Etienne Beaulé. Once an analysis is made, the machine advises the rescuer whether a shock should be delivered, whether CPR (cardio pulmonary resuscitation) is preferred, or if a combination of approaches is recommended. The machine delivers the correct current at the required rate.

According to Beaulé, there is an 80 percent chance of saving a cardiac arrest victim if the defibrillator is used within two minutes of the event. Chances of survival decrease by 10 percent with each minute that passes. This may explain why you see defibrillators appearing in airports and other public buildings lately.

The model the Coast Guard requires runs on lithium ion battery packs, although one manufacturer in the US makes a defibrillator that "runs on D Cell batteries you can buy at your corner convenience store," says Beaulé. "My guess," he says, "is that you wouldn't want to count on that one to deliver the power to re-start a human heart."

Speaking of automated processes, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) has recently put out a Request for Proposals to supply automated translation software. Noting the current high demand for translation into many languages in order for HRDC to adequately serve its increasingly multilingual clientele, the RFP states: "the implementation of a competent automated translation software solution will ensure quick turnaround and quality services in both official languages and foreign languages."

Hard to imagine this mightn't send a chill through the hearts of Canada's translation suppliers of the human persuasion. ~~~

Catherine Morrison, a writer based in Chelsea, Quebec, has been published in the Ottawa Citizen and the Globe and Mail's print and online editions, as well as in Canadian Consumer, Asia Pacific Magazine, the Edmonton Journal and C.A.R.P. Magazine. She was a full-time writer/broadcaster for CBC Network Television and CBC TV and Radio, Winnipeg and a contributing editor and columnist for Winnipeg Magazine.

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