

CBC News

Ottawa Public Health against new casino

Dr. Isra Levy wants more money for treatment from province, city

[CBC News](#)

Posted: Aug 13, 2013 6:05 AM ET

Last Updated: Aug 13, 2013 7:05 PM ET

The head of Ottawa's health department has come out against the city's push for more gaming, which could be coming with a second casino.

Dr. Isra Levy said in a report to the Ottawa Board of Health dated Aug. 19 he doesn't want to see increased access to and availability of gaming in the city.

Instead, he wants to focus on closing the gap between the 13,000 or so adults who have a gambling problem in the city and the resources available to help them.

"We expect that creating new opportunities to gamble might worsen the problem, so it's reasonable to say let's not, let's address the problem that's already there," he said.

"If we end up with an expanded problem we're going to be needing to invest more in supports for people who may be accepted in some future way."

The report also recommended asking the province for \$2 million a year to the Champlain Local Integrated Health Network (LHIN) for local gambling treatment, an increase from the \$741,000 it currently receives.

It's also asking that 6.5 per cent of Ottawa's annual commission from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) go toward gambling prevention and outreach.

It said the city currently devotes none of the commission in this way.

Councillor says money would go toward treatment

Ottawa city councillor Steve Desroches said Tuesday he understands Levy's opposition to expanding gaming, but said the city needs to find new sources of revenue.

"I'm not surprised by his comments, I think when you talk about anything such as alcohol, smoking, gambling, the chief medical officer of health will likely highlight the concerns that he has," he said.

Desroches said some money from a new casino would go toward gambling treatment programs, along with keeping gamblers in the city.

Beacon Hill–Cyrville councillor Tim Tierney said he's against gambling expansion because of the social side effects.

"I don't think there's room for gambling in the downtown area, it's going to bring a whole series of social issues," he said.

"Where are you going to stick it, between the Shepherds of Good Hope and the Mission? It just doesn't fit with our model of city."

Ottawa council voted in mid-July to ask the OLG for two gaming zones in the city, a move that would allow them to keep gaming at the Rideau Carleton Raceway while adding another facility.

- [2 Ottawa casinos still in the cards, for now](#)
- [Senators ownership threatens to sue over casino process](#)

The OLG said at the time it will review the pitch with the province when it received their proposal.