



COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Vigilance is warranted

The controversy surrounding legalized gambling is on the one hand an issue of broad morality, and on the other a more narrow question of scope.

Treated broadly, the question confronting all of us is; how moral can it be to entice people into vices, no matter what the purported payoff?

Viewed more narrowly the query is, perhaps, when is enough enough?

The libertarian will say it is a matter of individual will. Those who choose to gamble should be free to do so.

Others will mount an assault on that logic's underpinnings, noting that if such is the case the government may as well sell heroin too, since it is a proven money making business and there is an appetite for the drug, albeit usually among the genuinely downtrodden.

In Ontario today, the state appears poised to give legalized gambling a pervasive foothold it has never enjoyed before, and indeed one shared among few jurisdictions.

Video lottery gambling terminals, it would appear, are going to be relatively commonplace, and casinos will not be hard to find.

In defence of this, the provincial government indicates that the money will go to a higher good and not simple greed, since charities and indeed the people at large, through provincial debt reduction, will benefit.

But of course, many private sector firms and organizations will benefit too, such as the Ontario Jockey Club, which is lining up its tracks to take advantage of the coming legalized gambling boom.

The premise that the government appears to be working on is that vices are okay until they become habits — or worse.

If everybody gambles a little bit, nobody can be hurt very much, and in fact we might all be better off because using the newfound cash to pay down Ontario's debt means the tax burden can be lessened.

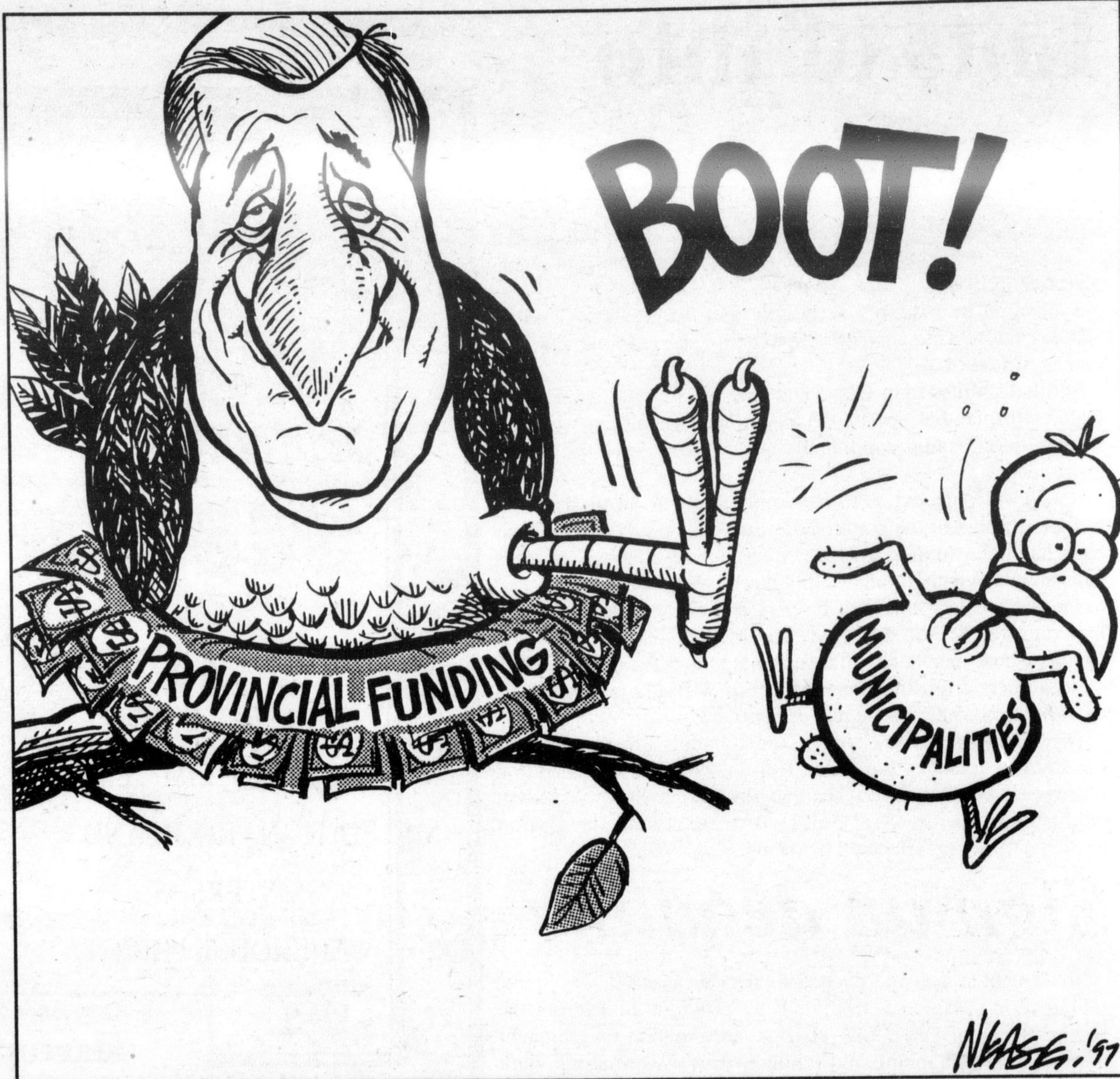
This is precarious reasoning. People tend to abuse vices, and marketing vices tends to get out of hand.

The habit of smoking cigarettes was at one time viewed as almost wholly innocuous, even sophisticated. Nowadays you can't smoke in most places, various governments are suing tobacco companies to recover health care costs for ailing smokers, and tobacco advertising, after a few glory decades, is severely restricted.

What if gambling goes through the same cycle, with high-budget ad campaigns and discount trips enticing people to resorts built around gaming? What if video lottery terminals start popping up virtually everywhere? Perhaps in time gambling ads will be restricted too, and gambling companies subjected to heavy taxation as the societal ills surrounding the activity become more apparent.

Big-time gambling has already come to Ontario and it is about to grow again. The clock can't be turned back. But it is an industry built on greed and forlorn hopes, and it must be strictly regulated and kept in its place. Vigilance is warranted for this somewhat tacky prosperity.

Rob Kelly



Pages of the Past

One Year Ago

From the September 4, 1996 issue

- A series of changes to the Municipal Act, recommended by the Who Does What committee, included a measure that would see voters heading to the polls in October rather than November. According to Mayor Gord Krantz this would encourage a higher voter turnout.

- Young film maker and recent graduate of Ryerson Polytechnic University's media arts program Tina Hahn selected Milton as the site to shoot her upcoming film. "The Tinker" was to be a coming of age tale set in rural Depression-era Ontario. The main shooting area would be Cowboy Jim's, a farm and petting zoo north of town. Ms. Hahn was funding the production via a grant from Ryerson's December 6 Memorial Fund and was pursuing additional funding from the the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council.

20 Years Ago

From the September 7, 1977 issue

- Milton Minor Hockey Association (MMHA) officials were feeling the heat over their decision to not allow an 11-year-old girl to register for house league hockey. Tracy Home had spent the previous two years playing left wing in a girls' hockey league in Burlington. But when her parents tried to do away with the 40 mile round trips to Burlington by registering Tracy in Milton, they ran into a brick wall. "The MMHA goes by the OMHA rules,"

explained Jim McLean who was in charge of registration procedures, "and they currently don't allow girls." It appeared though that this could change. The OMHA was presently involved in a court case with 11-year-old Gail Cummings who wanted to play goaltender on a boys' team in Huntsville. "If the OMHA rules change," explained Mr. McLean, "we'll be most happy to take her." This welcome was not widespread however. MMHA President Joe McCann related a possible OMHA rule change with "opening a can of worms."

50 Years Ago

From the September 4, 1947 issue

- The Milton Juvenile baseball team won their second consecutive Halton County Championship by sweeping Oakville in their best of three series. Walter Hayward and Don Tolezka coached the boys through their second championship season.

- A flash fire caused by gasoline totally destroyed a garage and threatened to engulf the brick house on the farm of William Cross on Highway 25. Fred Cross, who was helping his father in the fields, had been sent to fetch more gas for their jeep and as he was pouring the liquid into a can, a flash occurred and the fire started. The entire garage was destroyed. Losses were estimated at \$500.

- The Lorne Scots Band of Georgetown finished in second position in the Class B competition for bands at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. Many members hail from Milton and Acton.

Pud

by Steve Nease

