

# OPINION



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## SATURDAY FORUM

### Consider suffering casinos cause

**I**n my years of pastoral ministry as priest and bishop, I have become sadly aware of the grievous suffering experienced by individuals and families because of gambling dependence.

We are now engaged in debating a plan for a major new casino in the GIA. Although this debate did concern Toronto, many of the other proposed sites, including some in York Region, are also within our archdiocese. This is an appropriate time for each of us to reflect upon the effects of gambling in our community.

In recent years, governments have more and more used gambling to increase tax revenue, proposing as well that gambling benefits the economy.

It is understandable governments are tempted by the prospect of what seems to be an easy way to do that.

Even if there were significant long-term economic benefits, however, and that is far from clear, the establishment of a new casino will have a negative social impact that outweighs such benefits.

It is sometimes argued yet another casino could be a source of employment and would attract visitors and tourists. That approach is short-sighted.

I am particularly concerned marriages and families will be hurt or even destroyed through greater ease of access to gambling through the construction of yet another large casino.

The health of families is a constant concern of our Catholic Family Services and of Catholic Charities member agencies. In our parishes, we directly deal with the suffering that gambling addiction causes to individuals and families. We are concerned by the expansion of the capacity to harm.

Licensed gambling is undeniably legal and, in fact, is being heavily promoted by the government. In view of the suffering gambling can cause, however, it is important to consider what light both our Christian faith and reason shed on the moral issues related to it.

Occasional and small-scale gambling can be a legitimate form of entertainment and is not inherently evil.



Cardinal Thomas Collins

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states games of chance or wagers are not in themselves contrary to justice, but become morally unacceptable when these activities deprive people of what is necessary to provide for their needs and those of others.

That, unfortunately, is what happens far too often.

The Catechism also notes the power of gambling to enslave.

Individuals, the government and charitable organizations as well can become enslaved by the lure of easy gambling revenue and that is clearly not healthy.

Gambling is inherently based on illusion — on promoting the fantasy, particularly attractive to the most vulnerable and most desperate, that it is an easy way to provide a quick solution to the financial problems that they face. That is a cruel illusion and it is not wholesome for governments to promote it, especially through extensive advertising.

It is sometimes said should anyone become addicted, gambling's proceeds can be used to treat their addiction.

Apart from the fact this is rather dubious logic, as it makes more sense not to cause the problem in the first place, problem gambling is a serious public health concern. There is evidence a significant amount of revenue is derived from the people most vulnerable to gambling.

When gambling is so extensively available and aggressively promoted, it is also difficult to protect young people from viewing it as a worthwhile activity, whose negative effects are masked.

Cardinal Thomas Collins, the Archbishop of Toronto, was appointed to the College of Cardinals last year. This is an edited version of his letter to the archdiocese of Toronto. View full letter at [www.archtoronto.org/gaming](http://www.archtoronto.org/gaming)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Teacher critics should look at this school

Although I probably won't gain many fans with my letter, the wonderful thing about an opinion piece is the fact I may speak my mind without hesitation.

I realize many people feel teachers are overpaid, that they get ample time off (summers, sick days etc.) and at one time I, too, may have shared this opinion.

Now, however, as the parent of two children, aged 5 and 6, I hold teachers in a "class" of their own.

Perhaps it is my personal experience as a result of the school they attend.

Since the fall of 2011, my kids have been enrolled at Harry Bowes Public School.

I have nothing but praise for this school and its teach-

### HAVE YOUR SAY, STOUFFVILLE

► What do you think of these issues or any others?  
E-mail: [jmason@yrmg.com](mailto:jmason@yrmg.com)

ers and staff.

My children's individual teachers genuinely care about their well-being, both academically and physically, going so far as to give extra help when needed along with — sometimes — much needed confidence.

These qualities have transformed my children into well-rounded students who enjoy attending school.

In fact, if I had my way, these two teachers would climb the grades, as my kids

do, alongside them.

If and when there are concerns, they have always been addressed quickly and efficiently by the staff.

In a town growing as rapidly as Stouffville is, it's heartwarming that the principal can remember almost every student's name on sight. If that doesn't give the feeling of rural charm, I don't know what does.

As I said, perhaps I am slightly biased but if every public school operated the way Harry Bowes does, I doubt there would be as much to be said for teachers' salaries and union expectations.

Really, can one put a price on our children's education/educators?

I can — priceless.

KRISTEN PAYNE  
STOUFFVILLE

YOU CAN'T PLAY WITH THE BOYS  
MONEY... THEY'RE TOO ROUGH!  
WHAT IF I FIND A  
SMOOTH ONE?



PAT WHEELER'S  
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