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CANADA

Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

Comité permanent de la justice et des droits de la personne

**EVIDENCE NUMBER 21,
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Thursday, February 16, 2012 - Le jeudi 16 février 2012

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🕒 (1110)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC)): I call the meeting to order. This is meeting number 21 of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Today we're dealing with an order of reference of Tuesday, November 1, 2011, Bill C-290, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sports betting).

We have some witnesses with us this morning. I'd like to welcome Mr. Comartin, the sponsor of the bill; Mr. Rutsey; and Mr. Burns.

If you have an opening address, go ahead.

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The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Casey.

Ms. Findlay.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Thank you to all of you for being here to assist us this morning.

I do generally believe in regulation in this industry over allowing those in organized crime and others to profit and benefit. I've had occasion in my past life to actually testify before the Nevada Gaming Commission on behalf of a client. It was an interesting exercise, and their level of scrutiny is remarkable—something we don't really hear a lot about here in Canada.

What I'm wondering, Mr. Comartin, if you have canvassed the provinces on this. Have the provinces spoken up—perhaps the other witnesses know this—on their support or non-support for your bill?

Mr. Joe Comartin: It would be better for the others to comment.

We know--In fact, we have letters from the Ontario and B.C. governments directly to the Minister of Justice requesting this amendment. They are formally on record of it. I would turn over the balance, because Paul or Bill would be better positioned to talk about the interaction they have had with the other provinces.

Mr. Bill Rutsey: We've spoken with either the lottery corporations and the ministers responsible for gaming in each and every province.

No one has indicated to us that they're opposed to this. There were one or two provinces a couple of years ago that had some misgivings. They thought what was going to happen if people start betting on peewee hockey games and things like that. It's pretty easy to allay those fears. Those bets aren't just offered. I mean, the only way a peewee hockey game has a bet is if two dads are having a coffee, watching their kids play.

🕒 (1145)

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: --And it will happen at that level.

Mr. Bill Rutsey: You can't regulate that.

Mr. Paul Burns: Our letters--Governments in Alberta and Saskatchewan have also been requesting this change in support of it, and other provinces have been working through processes. Lottery corporations obviously have been very much in favour. In terms of official correspondence, it's British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario at this point.

The previous government in Nova Scotia had written early on as well, but the current government in Nova Scotia has not, as of yet, but are considering.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: I'm from British Columbia, but I'm wondering if every province and region—and I'm thinking of the northern territories of Canada has a lottery corporation-type regulation, or are there differences throughout the country?

Mr. Bill Rutsey: Each province chooses to administer and regulate gaming in an individual fashion.

There are different operating models, and there are different regulatory regimes from province to province. For example, in Quebec, Loto-Québec operates all aspects of gaming. Civil servants will clean the washroom facilities and deal with cards.

In Ontario, you have OLG overseeing private-sector companies that operate the major casinos, and OLG directly operates some of the smaller properties. In British Columbia, your province, private sector companies build the facility and operate them on behalf of BCLC, with BCLC oversight, with revenue-sharing arrangements.

In Saskatchewan, for example, there is a crown agency that operates two casinos, and there is a first nations organization that operates six casinos. The short answer is that each province is different. There is a regulatory process in place in each and every jurisdiction, and there is a crown agency charged with conducting and managing gaming on behalf of their provincial government.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Boivin.