

Racino.

The elected officials of our province have decided to flirt with lofty government and potentially questionable revenues at the expense of the people. Is this move motivated by increasing government deficits, fiscal mismanagement, poor policy and a severe lack of cost controls, Mr. Editor? It seems as though this move is less of a move to revitalize the harness industry, and more to increase cash flow into the pockets of the government.

On a tired and cold December day, City Council held a public inquiry as a means to step toward a cleaner, more transparent government. They spoke of the Racino and many advocates of either side voiced their opinions. However, the meeting was but a show for Lee and his companions. Everything had been decided prior to the meeting, thus making efforts futile well after construction has taken place.

Mr. Lee is wrong if he believes he can pull the wool over our eyes and arbitrarily call his government transparent while at the same time holding secret meetings. How can Mr. Lee expect to keep our vote and at the same time not ask for consent, or support at bare minimum.

However there is a resistance. I want to congratulate the Leo Brodericks in Charlottetown for his spirit and heart; a true delegate of the people looking to protect and conserve our precious level of society from corruption. Some have said that Mr. Broderick has moved too far on the left, and that his platform is now blurred because of the volume of issues he goes through. Mr. Editor, I disagree with those humbugs, and would venture to say that its not Mr. Broderick who is straying to the left, but it is the rest of our elected provincial and municipal politicians, save a few, who are bending toward the right.

In September shareholders of the Hillsborough Trotting Association has voted to approve a plan to put 225

video lottery terminals at the Charlottetown Driving Park. But it seems that few stakeholders were approached when cutting the deal. I would venture to say that City Council has pushed this project through the queue, unfairly and without public consent.

Mayor Clifford Lee refused to debate the morality of gambling during the public meeting, saying city council only has the power to deal with a request for a building permit for a new Racino.

Mr. Lee cleverly delivered the line, "I don't want to present to the community the idea that we have all this power in city hall to deal with this specific question. The reality is we don't. Legislation covering that activity is a piece of provincial legislation." Dodging the blame he looked up, as all governments do, toward his superior. What Mr. Lee needs is a strong set of values and a bag of leadership. He's become a politician too quickly and knows how to avoid the questions. Indeed, the buck stops at the Premier but Mr. Binns has barely been approached on the issue.

Premier Binns, or sometimes known as 'Teflon Pat' because nothing seems to stick, has been virtually silent in the public's eye. Mr. Binns made sure to protect the island by keeping a close eye on exotic dancers who are coming to corrupt society, yet he turns a blind eye to a severely dangerous gambling incentive in the works. What, Mr. Editor, has the Tory caucus been discussing in regards to the well-being of the people. How can this be justified, and how did it get pushed through our twisted bureaucracy with such haste.

The thought of a Racino in our neighborhood poisons our island in the worst way. Gambling breaks up families, leads good men into the poorhouse and overall steals money from society. And although I consider myself a formidable poker player, until today I have yet to gamble in a casino.

I have neither the time nor the energy to accurately describe the feeling that casino attire, big payouts and the charm of the VLTs has on a reasonable man, but I will briefly state, that since these VLTs are allegedly programmed to pay out roughly one third of the input, believing that we can come out even is almost pipedream.

Mr. Editor, we are all tired of coming up short in the games of the government. Mr. Lee, your insult to our intelligence will be felt for a long time and you are quite lucky it is not an election year. We ask that you immediately admit fault or resign. As for Mr. Binns, living as we do in an intelligent country, we deserve better treatment from our statesmen. Please make your stance clear so we can see your government for what it really is.

Matt Campbell

Tsunami... Continued from page 1

Emergency Relief Co-ordinator vowed last Thursday that the UN would ensure a full audit of the monies promised. This comes after \$1 billion (USD) was pledged by various nations after a 2003 earthquake in Bam, Iran, which killed 40,000 people, and only \$17.5 million (USD) was actually received. Topping the list of donors, Germany has pledged \$831 million and Australia has promised \$1 billion in aid and continued support throughout the re-building process. Governments have earmarked over \$4 billion in total for disaster relief. Private citizens have also contributed and raised funds for victims of the disaster. Michael Schumacher, a Formula One driver has donated \$12.5 million of his own money in support of relief, while NBA players have decided to donate \$1000 (USD) per point that they score in upcoming games.

For Canada's part, the federal government has donated \$80 million, an amount that Martin said last week

could be 'much greater'. The provincial governments have collectively raised \$18.5 million while among the charitable organizations offering support in stricken regions, the private contributions of Canadians now total upwards of \$65 million. Last Thursday the federal government mobilized the DART, (Disaster Assistance Response Team) a group of about 200 military personnel who will provide engineering, medical, security, logistical and administrative support. The government has also initiated a debt moratorium for affected countries, a move which seeks to relieve the governments of those countries from incurring more debt as a result of interest owed on loans to Canada. This initiative is expected to be discussed at the up-coming Paris Club (a group of Western nations to which the affected countries owe hundreds of billions of dollars) meeting on January 12th. Canada has also sent a contingent of 12 forensic scientists to Thailand to gather evidence to identify bodies recovered after the disaster, some of which may include 150 Canadians that are still missing. Over 30 countries have sent similar teams to Asia to help in the identification of those bodies.

While various organizations and governments mobilize their resources in a scramble to aid the millions that have been left homeless and without food or water, residents struggle to survive and to gather what remnants of their lives remain. The need for donations and support are desperately needed and organizations such as the Red Cross are seeking funds to continue to aid those affected and to mitigate further tragedy brought on by diseases such as malaria and other waterborne afflictions. The rebuilding process is projected to take years, while the short and medium term goals include restoring some level of normalcy while providing immediate care for those left homeless or injured by the tsunami.