



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Get the facts on the casino

Wasaga Beach – Soon Wasaga Beach will be home to a new casino. Here is a factual look at how this development in our community came about and what it means going forward.

How did we get to where we are today?

To answer that question we must go back to May 2012. The Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) announced its intention to expand private sector gaming in Ontario. OLG issues a Request for Information (RFI).

Ontario is divided into zones for gaming purposes and Wasaga Beach, along with Collingwood, Springwater Township, and Clearview Township are placed in Zone C7.

Zone C7 includes the casinos at Georgian Downs and at Rama.

OLG indicates that each new zone would support one new casino. In Zone C7, the new gaming facility will offer up to 300 slot machines.

What type of approval process is set up to determine where the new casino will be located?

OLG outlines three basic steps in the approval process.

1. A municipality must confirm it is interested in hosting a gaming facility;
2. OLG must choose a private sector service provider for the gaming facility through a fair and competitive procurement process;
3. The municipality, the casino service provider, and the Government of Ontario determine the location of the site.

The successful proponent would need to work with the municipality on specific details, including a preferred location – just as would happen with any major development.

Municipalities will have a say in many of the aspects of the development, including location, building height, density.

For the host community, zoning and development restrictions are key tools to ensure that regardless of what site is chosen it will benefit the community.

Before a site is built or relocated, the service provider must present a commercially viable business case for approval by OLG and the Government of Ontario.

So how did things proceed?

In July 2012, the Town of Wasaga Beach formally responded to the RFI with a letter indicating it supports Zone C7 as defined.

In September 2012, OLG hosted an education session at the RecPlex for the mayors and councils of all four municipalities. The session focused on the proposed 300-slot gaming facility and provided examples of such operations elsewhere.

How did Wasaga Beach Town Council respond to this?

In September 2012, council, led by then Mayor Cal Patterson, decided to undertake a thorough public consultation process prior to making a decision to either express interest to host a gaming facility or oppose such an enterprise.

In October 2012, the four area municipalities hosted a joint public information meeting at the RecPlex that drew 500 people. OLG staff were present to answer questions. Members of the public were able to share their views with their council representatives.

The town took one more step. Also in October 2012, the town held its own public information meeting at the RecPlex. It attracted 350 people. Members of the public again had the chance to ask questions and state views.

What other type of consultation took place?

In September and October 2012, the town conducted an online and paper copy survey. Notices placed in major media advised of the opportunity to comment.

Did the town do any other consultation?

Absolutely. The town established a dedicated "casino information" webpage where residents could read background information and e-mail comments to the town.

What type of participation was there for the online survey?

In total, 688 online surveys were completed and 62.7 percent of respondents were in favour of council supporting a casino in Wasaga Beach. There were several common themes in the responses:

1. Job creation;
2. Revenue creation;
3. Increased tourism;
4. A year-round attraction in Wasaga Beach;
5. The majority of respondents did not support a gaming facility in close proximity to the beachfront;
6. Support for a west end location or the site that previously was home to Wasaga Waterworld;
7. Some respondents also indicated that they would support a resort hotel-type development in conjunction with a gaming facility;
8. Respondents indicated that a gaming facility would provide an opportunity for the town to have a higher profile while trying to attract a branded hotel;
9. Respondents that indicated a strong opposition to the gaming facility commented on concerns surrounding addiction and issues such as suicide, crime, prostitution, and substance abuse.

How were potential sites for a casino determined?

On Nov. 6, 2012, town staff identified eight (8) sites that could potentially accommodate a casino based on appropriate zoning and suitable size.

Two private property owners also put their properties forward for consideration.

The following is a list of the eight sites town staff identified:

1. Sterling Cook Site (Beachwood Dr. at Fairgrounds Rd.);

2. DAS Development Site (Mosley Street at Beachwood Dr.);
3. Wasaga Beach Business Park;
4. Beach Area 2;
5. Stonebridge Town Centre;
6. Former Waterworld Site (River Road West at Theme Park Dr.);
7. Woodlands of Wasaga (Opposite Wasaga Stars Arena);
8. New England Village;

The two sites put forward by the private sector are as follows:

1. Links at New England Village Golf Course;
2. Beach Area 1 property;

Also on Nov. 6, 2012, Committee of the Whole recommends that council indicate to the OLG the town is prepared to host a 300-slot casino, subject to council indicating which sites it is prepared to support so that OLG can include the sites in the Requests for Proposals issued to the potential operators.

When did Council indicate to the OLG that it was prepared to host a casino?

On Nov. 13, 2012, council passed a motion stating it is prepared to be a willing host of a casino.

In addition, that fall, the townships of Clearview and Springwater indicate they are not interested in hosting a facility.

The town of Collingwood indicates that it is prepared to be a willing host subject to conditions. Collingwood does not have a site zoned appropriately.

Did the town take any additional steps that fall?

Yes, it did. Committee of the Whole considered preferences that it would like included in the OLG-issued RFP to potential operators. Committee recommended the following preferences be included in the RFP:

1. Development of a hotel/conference/entertainment complex as part of the gaming facility within a reasonable timeframe;
2. The operator and OLG are required to work closely with council regarding the location;

3. The operator and OLG must ensure the gaming facility is fully integrated into the community;
4. The private operator is required to work closely with the town regarding all matters pertaining to municipal processes, bylaws and regulations;
5. The OLG and private operators are strongly encouraged to support special events in the host community through sponsorships and community events;
6. The private operator is to work with the town to ensure that the gaming facility fits with the aesthetics of the town;
7. The OLG and private operator shall engage with the town's local health provider network, specifically Collingwood General and Marine Hospital and the Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care, and use best efforts to establish agreements with these organizations to address potential customer health issues that may arise.
8. The successful private operator is to make at least one public presentation to council on their proposal after it has been selected by the OLG.
9. The operator is to use their best efforts to hire local contractors and trades to construct the new gaming facility.
10. The operator is to use their best efforts to hire local residents to staff the new gaming facility.

How did Committee of the Whole formally evaluate the 10 potential casino sites?

Committee of the Whole used eight weighted factors developed by staff at its meeting on Nov. 20 and provided their feedback to council on locations that would be supported for a casino. OLG recommended that council not select just one site, as that would increase the price of the property and provide an unfair advantage. Staff were requested to tabulate the results and report to council.

Council met on Nov. 27, 2012 and passed a motion to submit four properties to the OLG as potential sites for a casino.

What sites did the town identify to the OLG?

The four sites put forward, in no order of priority, are as follows:

- 1) DAS Development Corporation property (located at the roundabout);
- 2) Stirling Cook Holdings Inc., property (Fairgrounds Road and Beachwood Dr.);

- 3) Sceptre Development Inc., property (across from the arena);
- 4) True-Star Development Inc., property (the former Waterworld site);

When was the beachfront site added?

In October 2015, at the request of the Economic Development and Tourism Department, council considers adding Beach Area 1 and 2 to the list of potential sites for a gaming facility.

After a public open house on Dec. 5, 2015, the sites are evaluated using the same criteria used to evaluate the other selected four sites. They score 70 points each compared to between 79 and 90 points for the other four sites.

On Dec. 15, Committee of the Whole recommends that council add Beach Areas 1 and 2 to the list of sites for consideration by the selected operator.

When did OLG select a casino operator?

In March 2018, the OLG selected Gateway Casinos and Entertainment Ltd., as the preferred operator for a casino in Zone C7 in response to the RFP.

Gateway must determine whether it wants to locate in Wasaga Beach or Collingwood.

Did the town advocate for the casino to locate in Wasaga Beach?

Yes. Economic development is important to our community. In the spring and summer of 2018, town staff and elected officials met with representatives from Gateway to explain the benefits of locating in Wasaga Beach.

When was it announced that Gateway would locate its casino in Wasaga Beach?

On Oct. 11, 2018, the Town of Wasaga Beach announced that Gateway had selected the municipality as the preferred location for a casino. The announcement was made just days before the municipal election.

On Oct. 22, 2018, Wasaga Beach voters went to the polls. Nina Bifulchi was elected mayor and Sylvia Bray was elected deputy mayor. Elected as councillors were David Foster, Stan Wells, Mark Kinney, George Watson, and Joe Belanger.

The mayor-elect became aware of a draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Gateway to locate the casino at Beach Area 1, subject to a number of incentives offered to Gateway with a value of between \$26.1-million and \$38.9-million. The previous council had not directed staff to draft such an MOU and the previous council had no knowledge such an MOU was being worked on at the staff level.

The new council was sworn into office on Dec. 4, 2018.

How did the new council respond to the draft MOU?

On Jan. 31, 2019, council's Committee of the Whole reviewed the draft MOU and the potential cost of the proposed town incentives offered to Gateway to locate at Beach Area 1.

Committee of the Whole passed the following motion:

“That Committee of the Whole recommend to Council that it not approve the provision of the following incentives to Gateway Casinos and Entertainment Ltd. to locate a casino at Beach Area 1:

- purchasing seven properties to form part of the site where the casino would be located
- construction of a 300-space parking structure at the beachfront
- construction of 100 underground parking spaces

Further, that Council indicate to Gateway Casinos and Entertainment Ltd. that it is prepared to work with the company to locate the proposed casino on any of the five sites identified by council as being suitable for the gaming facility.”

Council ratified the motion on Feb. 19, 2019.

Is Council able to influence the selection of the preferred site by Gateway?

With the five sites already zoned appropriately for a casino, the only influence that council has is to offer incentives under the Community Improvement Plan. It has not done so; rather it has said that it is prepared to work with the company on any of the available five sites.

Has Gateway ever appeared before council since it was announced the company is establishing a casino in Wasaga Beach?

Yes, the company has. On Feb. 21, 2019, a representative from Gateway made a presentation to Committee of the Whole. Rob Mitchell, a spokesperson for the company, said Gateway is looking forward to establishing a casino in Wasaga Beach. Mitchell noted that Gateway is currently doing its due diligence on its preferred site.

You can watch the presentation to council here: <http://bit.ly/2U3n4D1>. It starts around the 1:22-mark.

Has the town fulfilled its obligations to date with OLG and Gateway?

The short answer is yes. Check out this letter from OLG to learn more:

<http://bit.ly/2UdgzXH>

What are the next steps?

1. Gateway must obtain approval of its business plan by OLG and the provincial government;
2. Gateway is to inform the town of its selected site;
3. Gateway is to apply to the town for site plan approval and enter into a site plan agreement with the town to implement the approved site plan;
4. Gateway is to apply to the town for a building permit.

When does Gateway plan on opening the casino?

They are planning for an opening by summer 2020 at the latest.

How can I stay up-to-date on this issue going forward?

You have a few different options.

One is regularly visit the town's website at www.wasagabeach.com. Click on our Media Releases and Public Notices section.

You can also follow us on social media. Search "Town of Wasaga Beach" on Facebook or Twitter.

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For media requiring additional information, please contact:

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