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AGLC Issues Final Decision on Proposed Camrose Casino Relocation

The AGLC's appeal process has upheld its original decision to reject an application to relocate the Camrose Casino to Edmonton

Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis (AGLC) has [upheld an earlier decision](#) to reject an application from the Camrose casino to relocate to Edmonton. The decision was confirmed in an appeal made by the owners of the Camrose casino of the AGLC's original decision, which was issued in 2022.

While the issue is focused on the relocation of a specific casino, the impacts of the decision will be significant for rural charitable organizations in the Camrose and St. Albert charitable gaming regions, which cover much of north-central Alberta. The owners of the Camrose casino have publicly stated that the casino is likely to close if it is required to remain in Camrose. The impacts of this closure will have unknown (but likely significant) impacts on charitable organizations in these regions, which already face among the longest wait times and lowest per-event revenues in the province.

The AGLC's reasons for rejecting the relocation application include:

- ◆ Lack of community support from the general public, local government, and existing casino operators in the Edmonton market.
- ◆ Significant cannibalization of the proposed gaming revenues and the resulting negative impacts to existing casino operators in the Edmonton market.
- ◆ Limited new gaming revenues generated by the relocation.
- ◆ Negative impact to the agricultural sector, Horse Racing Alberta, and the First Nations Development Fund.

The RMA has supported the relocation application because it would increase revenues for rural charities located in the Camrose and St. Albert casino regions, which [as outlined in the RMA's 2018 report calling for changes to the charitable gaming model](#), receive significantly less revenue from casino events than charitable organizations in Edmonton. While this is the case for rural charities across the province, and a symptom of a broken charitable gaming model, this relocation would have reduced those gaps for some rural communities, even if the model itself would not be changed because of this decision. With the casino now likely to close, charitable organizations in the Camrose and St. Albert regions are now likely to face even greater revenue disparities compared to those in Edmonton and Calgary.

The RMA is not only disappointed with the impacts of the decision on rural charitable organizations; it is also concerned with the AGLC's rationale in reaching its decision. While the AGLC acknowledged that the closure of the Camrose casino would impact rural charitable organizations, it also indicated that all charities currently designated to the Camrose casino would be allocated to another casino and that "no charity would be left behind". The AGLC also emphasized that the impacts of the broader gaming model and associated regions were outside the scope of the relocation application. However, the AGLC also repeatedly acknowledged that approving the relocation would not only cannibalize revenues from the private owners of existing casinos in

Edmonton, but would also reduce the revenues available to Edmonton charities (by 11% according to one AGLC official participating in the review). This suggests that while AGLC appears to be taking a fairly casual approach to how the closure of the Camrose casino will impact rural charities, they are much more aware of the specific impacts that approving the relocation would have on Edmonton charities.

Additionally, while the AGLC acknowledges that the current gaming model is inequitable to rural charitable organizations (and that this decision will likely make it worse), they state the following in their summation:

A review of the charitable gaming model was not before Regulatory Services, AGLC Management or the Board as part of the application process and it is not before the Panel to consider. Considerations for equity among urban and rural charitable groups needs to be addressed through policy change mechanisms and not through a casino relocation.

As the RMA, along with other rural stakeholders, has advocated for changes to the gaming model for many years, the above quote is extremely frustrating. The RMA agrees that relocation applications for specific casinos are not the ideal venue to address the broader viability of rural charitable organizations; however, if AGLC continues to avoid undertaking the policy change mechanisms referenced in the quote, rural stakeholders will continue to have no other choice.

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