

# THE EASTERN DOOR



KAN IEN'KEHÁ:KA NA'KÒN:KE RONTEHNOHANÓNHNHA

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## Electronic gaming devices coming

DANIEL J. ROWE  
THE EASTERN DOOR

The idea to permit the two functioning poker houses in Kahnawake to put electronic gaming devices (EGC) in their establishment took a huge step forward this week, as council green lit a pilot project set to be unveiled in April.

The pilot project will allow Playground Poker House and the Poker Palace on Highways 138 and 132 respectively to operate the machines, on an exclusive three-year contract, which will generate funds for the businesses and the MCK's annual budget.

Playground manager Mackenzie Kirby said there remains details to be worked out before he could say how many machines will be in the location or what percentage will be shared with the MCK.

"From the very beginning, we've made it clear that the community would need to be considered at every step along the way," said Kirby. "For this, we have made it a priority to first hold a community meeting to present all pertinent information as it relates to the project, as well as answer any questions."

Poker Palace owner Stan Myiow relayed a similar statement saying a public information session will be forthcoming.

Kahnawake Gaming Commission chairperson Mark Jocks said there would be no minimum or maximum number of machines permitted, as is the case with Lotto Quebec, which requires establishments with a permit to operate five machines per bar in the establishment.

"The commission will make a determination of the number permitted based on a number of factors including floor plan, square footage of the proposed gaming area, available parking and management capacity of the operator," said Jocks.

The public info session should happen in the middle of April.

Council grand chief Joe Norton pointed out that the machines will only be at the two establishments along the highways and not in the village or residential areas in the community.

"The objective is to catch the flow of traffic going by," he said. "People go and frequent those establishments, so it's not really geared to our people. It's geared to the general population. I'm expecting that the majority will come from outside of Kahnawake."

Eight council chiefs voted for the plan with chiefs Carl Horn and Arlene Jacobs voting against. Clinton Phillips abstained from the vote and Billy Diabo was absent.

"My biggest concern is the three-year exclusivity," said Horn. "We have a lot of smart businessmen and women in our community that may want to get involved in the business. The other concern I have is something of this magnitude was never really discussed in detail with our people"

Executive financial officer Paul Rice was part of the team that studied the gaming devices, and he's confident they will increase public coffers dramatically.

"We've done some comparative analysis, we've done some research, and our expectation is that there will be significant amount of revenue to benefit the community coming out of that pilot project," said Rice.

"Making sure that it's done in an appropriate, responsible, regulated way is number one (priority), but it's nice to see those types of proposals coming out where community members want to give a portion directly back to the community."

Slot machines, video lottery terminals (VLTs) and other electronic gaming devices have been

## Singing Sistema students



DANIEL J. ROWE THE EASTERN DOOR

Children in the Kahnawake Education Center's Encore Sistema program showcased their emerging musical skills by performing "Mambo" from West Side Story alongside the Orchestre Nouvelle Génération on Friday at Kahnawake Survival School. See more photos from the afternoon concert on page 11.

barred from the community since 1994 when council voted to forbid them.

"That was a public policy really, a decision that was made because people were complaining the machines – they were slot machines – they were in the various establishments in the community," said Norton, who was MCK grand chief at the time.

Machines were once in corner stores, social clubs and other establishments throughout the community, and Norton said, the response was based on businesses operating Wild West style with no regulation or oversight.

"People were complaining about that," he said. "Nothing was regulated, and just go as you please. People came and complained, so we put out a warning if

you will, or request, or demand that you had so many days or weeks to stop operating these machines and they were all taken out."

While out of office, Norton forwarded plans to sell machines through an outside Indigenous company, which was denied by the council table under former grand chief Mike Delisle at the head.

Norton spoke about that business, and said that he would not benefit from the current pilot project.

"That was about maybe seven years ago," he said. "I'm not involved in any of that now. That was another company that started up with a group of people from outside of Kahnawake, other First Nations people, and we came forward with a proposal to supply

machines. We weren't going to operate or anything."

Norton knows there is opposition to gaming in Kahnawake, and that the business comes with social costs associated to addiction to gambling, and he hopes to increase services for those issues with the additional revenue.

"There are people in this community that are against gambling period. It doesn't matter what it is," said Norton. "They have every right to do so, and we have to listen, so we're trying to design regulations and policies that will take into consideration those types of concerns, so that if you do have people who it's become a habit that we have something in place, services and such."

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# Fiddlin' around

Music echoed throughout Kahnawake Survival School's gymnasium as dozens of young musicians performed Friday afternoon. For the past six years, the Kahnawake Education Center has partnered with Encore! Sistema Quebec, a charitable organization that implemented and operates the Sistema-inspired instrumental music programs in all three schools. This year, the students performed alongside Orchestre Nouvelle Génération and Moe Clark, a Métis multidisciplinary artist from Treaty 7 territory. The KEC also announced the program got a \$45,500 boost in funding through the Community Health Plan Initiative for the next school year.



JESSICA DEER, DANIEL J. ROWE THE EASTERN DOOR



THE EASTERN DOOR

22<sup>nd</sup> Annual

# Spring Cleanup



## Friday, April 20th

from 7 a.m. until noon

Our cleanup headquarters is at the

## Knights of Columbus Hall

parking lot