



June 2019

Dear members of South Huron Council,

We, the undersigned spiritual leaders of South Huron and surrounding area, are writing to express our concerns about the possible development of a casino in our community.

For several months now, we've been hearing reports of the South Huron Council's interest in hosting a casino in this municipality. We're also aware of a site exploration visit by Gateway Casinos near the Huron Country Playhouse and Dark Horse Winery in March of this year.

Because these talks are in the preliminary stage and to our knowledge, no concrete steps have been laid, we unanimously request that you reconsider a casino as a viable option for our community. We ask that you cease any further exploration into this possibility.

More than a few Canadian studies have been conducted in recent years that back up our concern about the detrimental effect a casino would have on the families of South Huron and surrounding area. We fear that often these statistically supported concerns are overlooked in favour of lining the economic coffers of municipalities and the province. We urge South Huron to not make the same mistake so many others have.

A November 2012 report by the *Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario* in partnership with *The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health* states that 2.5% (approx. 260,000) of Ontario's population experiences moderate to severe gambling problems. They list that access to gambling venues is a significant contributing factor. Additionally, 20.5% of problem gamblers have attempted suicide, indicating that this is a serious concern. The following is another troubling statistic: 24.1% of Ontario's gambling revenues come from problem gamblers.

We have attached to this letter a summary of the study from which these statistics have been derived. We ask you to consider these findings with careful, sober judgment. In this day and age where we are becoming more attune to the realities of mental health, we believe it would be pure folly to ignore CAMH's assertions that public health should be prioritized over revenue generation and that exposure to high-risk gambling environments ought to be avoided. To us, it would seem an obvious conclusion that we should not introduce these difficulties into our community.

Not only do we have statistics to back up our concern, we have also seen first-hand the devastation that gambling addiction has wreaked on families in our community. We are convinced that the often-unseen social devastation is not worth any potential benefit a casino could have in our community. Generating greater short-term economic growth is simply not worth it.

We do not share these concerns simply for the sake of being 'nay-sayers'. Instead, we have a vision for what a healthy, vibrant community looks like. We long for a community where persistent hard-work is valued, rather than the pursuit of the immediate riches via 'the roll of the dice'. We long for a community where those vulnerable to addiction are supported by relationships and social programs, rather than granted easier access to addictive possibilities. We long for a community where our common financial resources are drawn from economic enterprise and generosity, rather than in part from the pockets of those who are vulnerable.

We love South Huron and the surrounding area! We believe it is a marvellous gift from God to be able to lead, care for and live among the people of this community. We are passionate about nurturing a healthy, vibrant community and it is with this motivation that we present these concerns and hopes to you.

We appreciate all you do for the South Huron municipality and are well aware that it is not an easy job. We've been praying for you, that God will give much wisdom and sustain you for the important work you've been called to.

We look forward to receiving your response.  
With love and concern,



The Christian Ministers of South Huron and Surrounding Area

**Pastor Kevin TeBrake**

Exeter Christian Reformed Church  
Exeter

**Pastor Cathy Prout**

Centralia Faith Tabernacle  
Centralia

**Elder Jack Correll**

Exeter Bible Fellowship  
Exeter

**Pastor Tim Hawman**

**Pastor Aaron Johnson**  
Emmanuel Baptist Church  
Exeter

**Pastor Bob Loohuizen**

Exeter Pentecostal Tabernacle  
Exeter

**Pastor Frank Struth**

Grand Bend Church of God  
Grand Bend

**Janice Sinker, Council Chair**

Huron Shores United Church  
Grand Bend

**Father Matt George**

St. Peters and St. Boniface Catholic  
Parishes  
Zurich and St. Joseph

**Reverend Nadine Schroeder –  
Kranz**

St. Peter's Lutheran Church  
Zurich

**Pastor Ryan Jantzi**

**Pastor Dennis Estep**

Kingsfield – Zurich Mennonite Church  
Zurich