

Windsor pushes for single-sports betting in Ottawa



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The local Chamber of Commerce went to Ottawa Thursday to help push for what it considers a good bet: single-sports wagering.

Matt Marchand, president and CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, stressed to lawmakers and others how much border cities such as Windsor stand to gain from expanded sports betting.

“Combined with tax-free gaming winnings, single-sports betting would provide Caesars Windsor with a very important competitive advantage in the market place,” Marchand told the Star by phone between meetings. “It would translate into jobs and economic development and more reasons for people to come to Windsor, spend the weekend, get a hotel room and enjoy the region.”

Marchand spoke at a breakfast meeting, as did Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati and former OPP Deputy Commissioner Gerry Boose, in support of Bill C-290 — which would allow single-sports betting, as opposed to lottery tickets which allow only multiple-game bets. Bill C-290 was passed by parliament but has been stalled by the Senate for 14 months.

“It’s important for a number of reasons,” Marchand said. “From Windsor’s perspective, it’s jobs and economic opportunity.”

The best thing about the bill, Marchand said, is that it will give individual provinces the right to approve or decline single-sports betting. Expanded gaming would not automatically occur across Canada.

Paul Burns, vice-president of the Canadian Gaming Association — which launched a website Thursday called Bill C-290 Now — says he can’t understand why the bill has been stuck in third reading in the Senate since December.

“It’s stalled and we’re not sure why,” he said. “There’s strong support in the senate.”

Burns said Liberal Newfoundland and Labrador Senator George Baker, who in the past has suggested the country change its name to Cananevada if it allows more sports betting,

has been vocal about the fight against Bill C-290. Baker did not return phone calls to the Star Thursday.

Burns feels Canada is missing out on a bonanza.

“Right now, by our estimation, there is over \$14 billion being wagered on single-sports events by Canadians,” Burns said. “About \$4 billion goes to online sports betting, and another \$10 billion goes to local bookie operations that are predominantly run by organized crime.”

Burns said he does not believe legalizing single-sports betting would increase serious problem gambling — which he says amounts to about one per cent of the population — since the phenomenon is already happening.

“For Canadians it’s about consumer protection,” he said, noting that criminals don’t offer problem-gambling services as legal gaming facilities do. “And it’s about the economic benefits of that money staying in Canada.”