

Swift Current May Vote on Casino

The City of Swift Current will likely hold a plebiscite this fall to determine whether its citizens support construction of an Indian-owned and operated Casino and Performing Arts Centre in that city.

Members of the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council met with Swift Current City Council this week to discuss the feasibility of building a \$13-\$15.5 million facility that would house gaming tables and a 150-slot casino, a 700-seat performing arts centre, and a banquet and meeting hall.

"Under the framework agreement on gaming between the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the province any proposed casino must have community and municipal support before the proposal is considered and the business plan can go ahead," said Ron Crowe, chief of the tribal council.

"We are at the very preliminary stages and have a long way to go before we can approach the government with our plans to build a casino in Swift Current," Crowe said, explaining city council will now share that information with the community as part of the public consultations process.

Swift Current City Commissioner Matt Noble said the tribal council had been approached by the business community two years ago to look at the feasibility of building a casino in the city.

With blessing of the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority, which oversees Indian owned and operated casinos, the tribal council developed a market plan, which it presented to the local Swift Current business community earlier this month.

"The local business community reportedly was overwhelmingly in favour of such a project," Noble said.

"However, Council rightfully adopted the position that since this is a matter of concern to all citizens it should be decided by those people in a plebiscite vote. They do want to take this to the citizens and let them decide," he said.

"Council has asked our administration to prepare a report and a recommendation on whether to hold a plebiscite, including the wording of the question to be put to the city's electorate," Noble said.

The plebiscite would be held in October to coincide with the municipal election.

If the Swift Current project, which is part of the FHQ tribal council's economic development plans, is given the green light to proceed by the city and the province, it would generate 128 full-time and 82 part-time jobs and employ an estimated 247 people.

Swift Current is the province's largest centre in the southwest, with a population of about 15,000.

According to the tribal council's economic impact projections the facility would create an additional 94 indirect full-time equivalent jobs with 89 in the Swift Current area, provide governments with annual revenues of \$1 million prior to any profit sharing from the casino.

"Operational expenditures are expected to be \$38.4 million a year, of which \$33 million would be created in Swift Current," Noble said.

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