

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 17 April 2013 21:00 -



Mayor Rob Ford speaks at an executive committee meeting on Monday about the prospects of Toronto holding a casino. Toronto city councillors will soon have their chance to shoot down or support the construction of a downtown casino, a divisive topic that Mayor Rob Ford recently positioned as a possible election issue.

Ford's executive committee voted 9-4 in favour of moving ahead with the motion, [according to reports](#), sending the matter to a full council vote. Despite the executive council's support, a full council vote is expected to be much tighter.

The executive council does not include any downtown councillors, likely to be more hesitant to approve a plan that could impact their neighbourhoods. And it seems some previously on the fence are already souring on the project, which could bring an annual \$100 million into city coffers but also threatens to increase crime and social problems.

Midtown Coun. Ana Bailao announced on Tuesday that she would not be supporting the casino plan because she did not feel the "social impact" of such a project had been addressed.

[She wrote in a letter to constituents:](#)

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Ultimately, the risks are simply too great. A downtown casino risks the rich fabric of our downtown's residential, entertainment and business districts, which has taken decades to build. Downtown real estate is also too valuable and rare a commodity to risk on a casino and the traffic and transit requirements required to deal with the additional congestion will have incredible maintenance costs to our city.

The casino resort proposal is of such massive size and scale that the mitigation of these negative impacts must be equally as massive.

Bailao previously made casino-related headlines when she [pleaded guilty](#) to drunk driving after she was pulled over while coming home from an event in which she spoke with casino lobbyists.

[**Related:** [Casino meeting at city hall draws 200 speakers](#)]

Also on Tuesday, Scarborough Coun. Paul Ainslie, a member of Ford's executive council, made it clear he would not support the casino by joining three other executive members and voting against the motion.

The executive council decision comes at the end of two days of discussion, during which more than 200 people signed up to voice their opinion.

[CBC News](#) reports that most people who spoke on the matter were against allowing the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. develop a casino in the downtown core, largely on the claim that it would increase crime and cause other social concerns.

Thanks to our thousands of supporters! We trust in council to represent the 71% of residents who opposed a new Toronto

â€” No Casino Toronto (@nocasinotoronto) [April 16, 2013](#)

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[**Pulse of Canada:** [Toronto's downtown casino: Would it help or hurt?](#)]

Mayor Ford has dismissed the claim as "partisan rhetoric" and said a casino would create 10,000 much-needed jobs. A recent report from city manager Joe Pennachetti said that if city council allowed a downtown casino, it should require the casino operator enter into a "social contract" to limit its negative impact.

The [Globe and Mail](#) reported on Tuesday that Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair made an appearance at the executive committee meeting and answered several questions about how a casino would affect the downtown.

According to the *Globe*, Blair did not speak for or against the project, only saying that there could be criminal activity, such as loan sharking, associated with casinos. He also said, also in response to a question, that there is a correlation between unemployment and criminal activity.

Toronto will have to wait and see whether the project gets final approval from council, but the city shouldn't expect the conversation to end any time soon. Whether it becomes a green-lit project or an election issue, the downtown casino debate with rage for a while longer.

Read more <http://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/dailybrew/toronto-councillor-speaks-against-casino-construction-council-vote-210317668.html>