

Casino smoking issue still up in the air

Yorkton Mayor Phil DeVos is still looking to negotiate a deal with a First Nations-controlled casino that hasn't been following the city's smoking ban.

The issue has been simmering since last year, when the Painted Hand Casino went back to having smoking areas after operating under a smoking ban for years.

Both the City of Yorkton and the province have passed laws banning smoking in bars, restaurants, casinos and other enclosed public places. Although the casino is across the street from Yorkton city hall, it's on an urban reserve under jurisdiction of Sakimay First Nation.

Owners of some establishments have argued that two sets of laws creates an uneven playing field. Health groups have said allowing smoking in casinos is a health concern.

The issue reached the floor of Yorkton city council this week, with councillors debating the merits of returning to court to enforce the city's no-smoking bylaw.

That idea was voted down.

DeVos said he wants the two sides to get busy on a compromise.

„We're going to be making some very aggressive contacts with the lawyers involved, urging them to get the people around the table over the next few weeks,“ he said.

„Let's do this, let's get it done and hopefully avoid the cost to taxpayers of going to court.“

DeVos says the compromise will likely involve the casino building a special, ventilated room, where people can smoke

but not gamble or drink.

He said he will also ask the federal government to clarify issues involving urban reserves, so other problems like this don't crop up.