

# Dutch finance minister plans gaming tax hike

November 22 could be a critical day for the Dutch gaming industry. Currently the entire industry has ground to a halt as Wouter Bos, the country's Minister of Finance, is proposing to introduce a new tax of 40.85 per cent of gaming revenues on both the street market and the government-owned Holland Casinos.

He has put the project into his "miljoenennota" or "millions note" as the budget is called in the Netherlands, for imposition during the course of the next four years, but probably as early as July 1, 2008.

It would cripple the entire Dutch industry's 300 arcades and 35,000 limited payout gaming machines (AWPs), plus the string of Holland Casinos, which contain a further 10,000 slots. Even Holland Casinos has expressed disquiet about the plans being put forward by its government masters.

The new tax would come on top of the 19 per cent VAT already paid by the industry on cashbox returns, although it would then be exempt from the 30 per cent corporation tax which Dutch businesses must pay.

All movement within the Netherlands market has been stopped as a result of the proposal, which is to be debated next week in the Dutch second chamber, the Tweede Kamer, where some members will vigorously oppose the measures, having been lobbied and briefed by the Dutch trade association, the VAN.