

A cure for gambling: ludoplex the casinos

Quebec racehorse trainer Marc Camirand has a pointed but inspired suggestion for Loto-Québec.

Now that the provincial gaming corporation has apparently found a cure for problem gambling with its self-designed „ludoplex“ centres at the racetracks in Quebec City and Trois Rivières, Camirand says the socially responsible thing to do would be to also convert the Montreal Casino into a ludoplex.

Why should VTL gamblers who frequent racetracks be the only ones to benefit from the innovative controls Loto-Québec introduced at the ludoplexes to save people from themselves?

Are the gamblers in Montreal any less deserving?

Since the luxurious ludoplexes opened late last year, gamblers have stayed away in droves. Apparently they don't like having to buy a card with a pre-determined limit before playing.

Attractions Hippiques, the private company that took over from the Quebec government as racetrack operator in 2006, had expected millions from its 22-per-cent share of net revenues from the ludoplex VLTs, and made the fatal error of structuring its business plan for the horse racing industry accordingly. It's getting peanuts, and the entire racing industry is starving. Montreal's 101-year-old racetrack has even discontinued live racing, because Attractions Hippiques – now in creditor protection – no longer can afford it.

In its creditor-protection filing last month, the company said ludoplex revenues from January through April were only 30 per cent of projections, and „one of the main reasons“ was Loto-Québec's unilateral decision to use different machines and procedures for the gaming centres, the only ones in the

province with these restrictions.

Clearly, that's unfair.

Patrons of gaming machines at the Montreal Casino and in bars throughout the province deserve the same degree of protection.

If it leaves bar operators, and Loto-Québec, several million dollars short at the end of the year, so be it. Maybe somebody else can share the racing industry's pain, for the greater good.