



Saskatchewan Light Pollution Abatement Committee



7 May 2007

Mayor Sandy Larson
City of Swift Current
PO Box 340
Swift Current, Sk
S9H 3W1

Re: Living Skies Casino announcement

Mayor Larson,

It is with deepest concern that we hear about the Swift Current “Living Skies” Casino that was announced in the Regina Leader Post a few weeks ago. Although we have nothing against the casino, we are astonished to find that the non-environmental design of the exterior lighting, including the **teepee of light** lives on in the design. Apparently no one has been paying any attention to the controversy spawned by the nearly identically designed Dakota Dunes Casino at the Dakota Whitecap First Nation just south of Saskatoon!

Although our group and others concerned do not have any issue with the business of casinos, we are concerned that the Living Skies Casino with its teepee of unnecessarily bright lights (probably 7 lights at 4000 watts each based on the Dakota Dunes design) will cause a number of local issues with residents that will have their own “Living Skies” taken away from them and transformed forever because of the lack of concern by the architects and planners.

In the Saskatoon area, the Dakota Dunes Casino is in the midst of the Brightwater Science and Nature Camp, Beaver Creek Conservation Area, Pike Lake Provincial Park, the Dundurn Military base and more than 500 acreage dwellers – all of these people and places once enjoyed a dark night-time sky as should be expected in the country. **However, the glaring teepee of light designed to be seen for a hundred kilometers around** (according to SIGA press releases) **will trespass onto their properties, shine in their windows and create a nuisance.** Residents and park employees are up in arms over this invasion of their properties and rights! Despite the governments of Saskatchewan and Canada and FSIN and SIGA receiving over 200 letters of complaint, nothing has been done about the destruction of their environment. The issue that one development - one building and its environs having so much effect over so many people - is so much on the minds of the residents that they have even formed a new ENGO called the Rural Environment Preservation Association of Saskatchewan (REPAS) in order to fight for the right to live in a natural environment that does not look like Las Vegas. They are not asking for a closure of the casino – just for a design that does not invade their properties and their skies!

Our group, the Saskatchewan Light Pollution Abatement Committee has been fighting for good responsible lighting practices in Saskatchewan for many years, and with the preservation of the environment and the reduction of waste energy a top priority concern at all levels of government (or so are being told), we too are dismayed at the blatant disregard for the sky, the waste of energy, and the lack of good neighbour concern that this casino design has created. We have written to the Minister of the Environment about this issue and we have been referred to the Saskatchewan Law Reform Commission to review if changes are

necessary to protect the environment from light trespass and nuisance. We are also dismayed that only Saskatchewan has allowed casino designs that are so destructive to the local environment. We were once proud of our Living Skies, but now that seems to be a thing of the past. Most US states and some Canadian cities in other provinces already have light pollution abatement laws in place.

Please note that in the case of the Dakota Dunes Casino, no proper environmental assessment that included the effect of the light teepee was done nor were required public consultations held prior to the construction of this facility to the best of our knowledge. If that had been done, residents would have made this light pollution issue a leading issue in their assessment of the design. We know this because we have heard complaints about this design for over 3 years! (See www.dakotadunescasino.ca).

So with this letter, we ask you to enter into conversation with the residents of Swift Current and the representatives of SIGA and have a frank discussion on how this lighting will impact the skies of the Swift Current area and properties of the residents that now seem to have no choice about what they see when they look out of their windows! Please ask why in a time of environmental concern that a high priced casino has every right to pollute the sky with waste energy, and why residents that want to prevent this are simply ignored.

This also has long-reaching consequences and we need your assistance in addressing this issue as soon as possible. At least 3 other casinos will be built in Saskatchewan over the next 3 years, and as far as we can determine all will have the teepee of light in their design. These teepees will destroy the Land of Living Skies of thousands more residents around the province unless this awful practice is stopped with your casino leading the way! *Saskatchewan is supposed to be the Land of Living Skies* (see your license plate!) but our skies are dying because we fail to stand up and protect them from those who will ruin them without a second thought! The casino is surely to be an economic boost to Swift Current, but it should not be at the cost of the environment.

Please think about this and please decide to ask SIGA to alter their lighting practices so that your residents don't have to suffer the fate of the 500 Saskatoon area dwellings and so that you do not have to go through the same public controversy that has persisted here over the last few years. There are many alternate designs that will have similar impact visually that will not cause energy waste and concern about excessive lighting in the area. There are indeed many viable casinos in North America that have won awards for their environmental and non-obtrusive lighting designs. The Swift Current casino should endeavor to become one of environmental stewardship with your help and guidance.

Sincerely,

Richard Huziak
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Casino Light Pollution Website: www.dakotadunescasino.ca

Lots of studies and research: International Dark Sky Association: www.darksky.org/