

Interview With
RICH COLEMAN

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1 **Interview of Rich Coleman**
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4 **(RECORDING COMMENCED)**

5 MARK: The provincial government is responding to
6 concerns about money laundering in BC casinos.
7 Last week CBC brought you investigative reports
8 about gamblers bringing large amounts of cash
9 into casinos and about some gamblers taking chips
10 from one casino and redeeming them at another.
11 Law enforcement officials express concern these
12 gamblers might be laundering money. Rich Coleman
13 is the minister responsible for gaming and I
14 spoke to him just about an hour ago.

15 MR. COLEMAN: Good morning. How are you?

16 MARK: Okay, Mr. Coleman. What are you doing to
17 address concerns about money laundering in these
18 casinos?

19 MR. COLEMAN: Well, I think the thing I first of all
20 should, Mark, for ev ... for all your listeners
21 is this, is that we have very high standards and
22 relationships with police between BC's casinos
23 and the reporting on large cash transactions.
24 Probably the best in Canada, and it's probably as
25 good as anybody.

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1 However, you're always ... when a story
2 like this breaks you want to make sure that
3 there's nowhere else you can improve on it so
4 you want to go back and ... and sit down with
5 your folks. So I sat down last week and had a
6 conversation with them about that. They were
7 very clear that BC casinos report to them very
8 well, that they have a great working relationship
9 with them, and that their concerns were in and
10 around if there was something that could be done
11 quicker than we could look at it.

12 They tell me the reporting system's very
13 good. It is controlled to some level by FINTRAC
14 which is a federal agency.

15 MARK: On that point, FINTRAC, it's our understanding
16 that it takes 30 days for that to be assessed.
17 And in Ontario, apparently they have police
18 officers in the casinos. So right away an
19 employee can ask a police officer to come and
20 investigate this transaction. What about that,
21 putting police officers in casinos here in BC?

22 MR. COLEMAN: Well, the ... the challenge is ... is
23 ... I'm looking ... I'm going to have ... I only
24 see it through this discussion have a look at the
25 Ontario model. Ontario tells me they got some

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1 other difficulties with they're ... with they're
2 tracking as well, 'cause I spoke to some of the
3 folks back there last week as well. They ... the
4 challenge for us is ... is the speed of
5 reporting, if that's the issue. I think I'm not
6 prepared to throw the baby out with the bathwater
7 so to speak. I'm prepared to get this feedback
8 by the end of February and if there's any
9 additional changes we need to make we'll make.

10 Effective as of today, a new policy was
11 put in place with regards to chips, so chips can
12 no longer go from one casino to another.

13 MARK: So that's a change as of now, is it?

14 MR. COLEMAN: As of now, yeah. The BC Lottery
15 Corporation thought they could implement that
16 this week.

17 MARK: What about the example that we heard about,
18 \$460,000 in \$20 bills coming to the cashier, why
19 not prevent that kind of transaction from taking
20 place ...

21 MR. COLEMAN: And that's ...

22 MARK: ... in the first place and set ... and set a
23 limit. Set a limit on the amount of money that
24 you can actually bring into us?

25 MR. COLEMAN: In ... in ... in the first place, I want

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1 to be clear on that one because I think that's
2 where perhaps your reporter let the public down a
3 little bit. If they'd gone further they would
4 have found out that that individual is actually
5 known to the casino and has ... is a long-time
6 big player, and the individual doesn't launder
7 money, is actually a player that plays in the
8 casino. And we're very aware of the individual
9 with regards to that cash transaction. And
10 that's why after a long-term relationship and
11 knowing that, we would be able to ... to have
12 that relationship with one of our clients.

13 MARK: Okay. Well, there ... there is a long list of
14 other transactions; \$300,000, for example, or a
15 hundred thousand dollars ...

16 MR. COLEMAN: Sometimes ... sometimes you will find
17 that if one individual gambles a lot within the
18 casinos, 'cause we do have some customers who
19 make the deal in cash that are large ... large
20 ... large Asian customers, and we have noticed an
21 influx of ... of some of our Asian customers into
22 our casinos since the Olympics actually.

23 MARK: How can you be certain that they're not
24 laundering drug money?

25 MR. COLEMAN: Well, the only way you can do that, one

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1 way or the other, is you ... you know, when you
2 come in we know who you are, we check you out, we
3 take your identification, we follow up, we do the
4 checks; if there's something suspicious we
5 immediately report it to police for
6 investigation. And ... and then we file a
7 FINTRAC.

8 And so, you know, you'll ... you'll never
9 know a hundred percent all the time, and there's
10 no fail ... there's ... probably there's not ...
11 no fail proof system with regards to this, but
12 there's certainly the checks and balances in
13 place and I'm satisfied that we're doing as good
14 a job as ... as anybody else.

15 MARK: Setting a limit though, that ... that idea,
16 what ... what do you think of it? If it's
17 \$10,000 to report to FINTRAC, why not say that no
18 ... no more transactions above \$10,000 at a time?

19 MR. COLEMAN: Well, because we have ... we have
20 customers who come ... who will play in our
21 casinos in large amounts because of the betting
22 limits who have ... can afford it and do want to
23 do it, and they come to our facilities, and
24 they're legitimate people and ... and ... and if
25 we check them out I think they should be allowed

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1 to gamble if they're playing with legal money.

2 MARK: Something else, too, that has been brought up
3 as a criticism of the way the system works now is
4 that you are Minister for Public Safety, and as
5 Solicitor General you're also responsible for
6 both the operations and the enforcement, the
7 policing of casinos.

8 What ... what about that, separating those
9 two functions and ...

10 MR. COLEMAN: Well, we ...

11 MARK: How can you really do both at the same time?

12 MR. COLEMAN: Well, I ... I can actually wear quite a
13 few hats successfully as a minister, I've proven
14 that over the last ten years.

15 But we ... we actually have a review with
16 regards to that going on and how we could change
17 that ... change that so there's a different
18 separation. But it's really going to come down
19 to how our gaming policy enforcement branch looks
20 over the next six months versus how it looks with
21 the relationship and law enforcement directly.

22 MARK: Well, just in closing, we ... we've been told
23 by the RCMP, a Barry Baxter, that they're
24 suspicious it's dirty money. Given that, will
25 you give the enforcement branch some new tools,

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1 instructions to tighten up because of those
2 concerns?

3 MR. COLEMAN: Well, first of all, let's deal with Mr.
4 Baxter, because he's offside with some of the
5 messaging I got from the RCMP last week when I
6 asked them the question, and they're having a
7 look at the comments that he made within the
8 policing because they don't feel that it ... that
9 it was basically reported ... the quote ... or
10 the comment was reported at a level that made ...
11 that ... that actually was correct with regards
12 to his comment about money laundering.

13 MARK: He said that we're suspicious it's dirty money,
14 the common person would say this stinks, there's
15 no doubt about it.

16 MR. COLEMAN: Yeah, I know what he said. I don't
17 agree with him and neither do all the superiors
18 of his in the RCMP. And that's why I said to
19 them, okay, guys, we're going to look at this.
20 These comments came from you, I want them backed
21 up, and ... but I also want them ... as we back
22 them up let's find out how we can do things
23 better.

24 MARK: Mr. Coleman, are you going to give the
25 Enforcement Branch any new powers here to tighten

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1 things up?

2 MR. COLEMAN: Well, they have the powers. They have
3 the powers under the legislation, they ... they
4 can do their job, there's nobody stopping them
5 from doing their job. In actual fact, the ...
6 the question will be more is the Enforcement
7 Branch doing its job or are there improvements
8 we have to make so they can do it better.

9 MARK: Mr. Coleman, thank you.

10 MR. COLEMAN: Thank you.

11 MARK: That's Rich Coleman, he is the Minister for
12 Public Safety and Solicitor General. What do you
13 think of some of the measures that he is taking
14 right now, you just heard about? Please send us
15 an email, almanac@cbc.

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17 **(END OF RECORDING)**

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