

VANCOUVER.CBC.CA News - Full Story :**Loansharking alleged at B.C. casinos**


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VANCOUVER - A CBC News investigation has uncovered allegations about illegal activities at casinos run by Great Canadian Casinos Inc. in B.C.

Former employees have given sworn statements in the U.S. that loansharks operated on the premises – and that some managers looked the other way.

A U.S. company based in Dallas, Allegiance Capital, had hoped to cash in on a joint investment with Great Canadian – in a floating casino docked off the coast of Hong Kong.

But when the deal went sour over allegations of illegal activity on the ship, including prostitution and profit skimming – the Texas company took Great Canadian to court over the way it operates.

- [LINK: Allegiance Capital's amended complaint \(pdf\)](#) 

Great Canadian denies Allegiance Capital's claims.

- [LINK: Great Canadian Casinos response in court \(pdf\)](#) 

However, as part of that ongoing lawsuit, former long-time employees of Great Canadian were subpoenaed to go to Texas.

Under oath, they talked about the alleged criminal activity on the floating casino.

But they didn't stop there. In more than 200 pages of sworn depositions, two former security supervisors for Great Canadian made startling accusations about illegal activities in casinos here in B.C.

Those allegations deal with loan sharking – and about some company officials who, they say, knew it was going on.

Proka Avramovic is one of those former employees subpoenaed to give evidence in Texas.

"We'd been advised by our bosses that it's not really our business to stick our noses in the business of the loan sharks, that we are there just to watch the games and not worry about those activities anymore," he says.

Avramovic says the B.C. casinos banned certain loan sharks but allowed others to stay. "Obviously the company wanted



to keep them there because they are bring lots of money into the casino,' he says.

Initially, Avramovic says he directed his concerns to the company's head of surveillance and security – who has since left the company over accusations of stolen casino chips.

Eventually he says he got fed up, and took his claims and evidence directly to authorities.

But he says the government branch in charge of investigating casinos told him it wasn't the right time to go public with an investigation because of B.C.'s plans to expand gambling and open new casinos.

Solicitor General Rich Coleman's ministry is in charge of gaming. But the minister denies any knowledge of a stalled investigation.

"Well, you're talking about hearsay and a comment that came from one person to another which I'll not going to justify by even commenting on it.

"We investigate issues in and around our casinos, and in and around our gaming in a way that is supposed to be done by our gaming policy enforcement branch and by law enforcement.

"And at no time do I comment on whether there is or is not an investigation because I'll never compromise an investigation," says Coleman.

He later said he'd look into the allegations. But CBC News is still waiting for a response.

By its own figures, the B.C. government expects to collect more than \$850 million this year in gaming revenue.

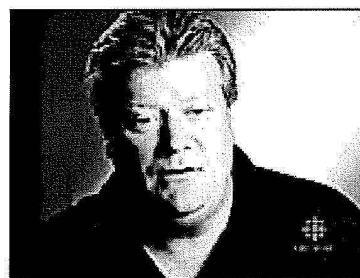
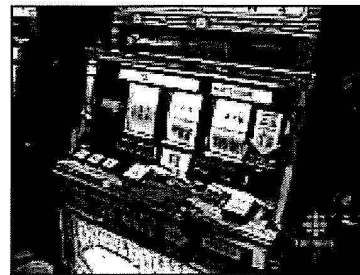
Through its lawyers, Great Canadian did say it has brought those Texas depositions to the attention of B.C. authorities.

And in a letter to the CBC, the company says its policy is to report any alleged criminal activity it becomes aware of.

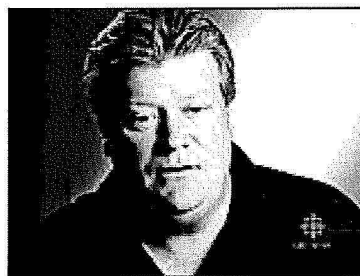
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