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Sports betting lounge to open Casino wooing Detroit bettors

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Facing growing competition from Detroit casinos and battling the fallout from no-smoking legislation, Casino Windsor will open the area's first sports betting lounge Friday.

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Popular in Las Vegas, sports betting is already available at Casino Niagara, which recently opened a \$10-million lounge.

Keith Andrews, vice-president of casino corporate affairs , said "opening Legends Sports Lounge is part of our overall redevelopment plan and demonstrates that we are ... in the game for the long haul."

There's nothing like this in the region.

"It's a quality, quality venue with state-of-the-art visual equipment."

The new lounge will feature 36 video displays and three seating areas accommodating 170 fans.

Bettors will be able to place wagers on NHL, NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball games as well as college football and basketball. People can place straight-up bets on which team will win. They can also wager against the point spread, over-under options, the number of yards gained in a football game and the number of three-pointers in a basketball game.

According to Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation rules, bettors will have to make three wagers at a time.

Gaming expert Jacob Miklojcik, president of Michigan Consultants, said "it's a dynamite attraction and it'll be new money coming to Casino Windsor mostly from

people who now bet on the Internet or with bookies.

"The attraction is the communal aspect of being able to sit in the same room with a large group of excitable like-minded people all there for the same reason -- to bet on sports.

"And there's also a fair chance they'll attract some people who would normally head to Vegas for sports gambling," said Miklojcik. "But it's not likely to have an appreciable impact on Detroit's casinos because their patrons don't attend those establishments for sports betting because it's prohibited."

Miklojcik said Windsor's sports lounge "may drag the odd person away from the tables or the slots but for the most part, these are going to be people who already bet on sports and want to do it out in the open."

Illegal in most U.S. states, sports gambling in Nevada reached \$2 billion two years ago and continues to grow.

Miklojcik said gambling in the U.S. comes under federal jurisdiction and can't be adopted by individual states without federal approval. Casinos in Atlantic City have been lobbying for years for sports betting approval but to no avail.

Legislation passed in the U.S. in 1992 prohibits betting on sports events except in three states which already had sports betting in place -- Nevada, Oregon and Delaware.

And while all professional and college sports leagues are opposed to gambling, its attraction in legal lounges and through illegal bookmakers is undeniable.

Housed in the former Showtime Lounge on the main gaming floor, Legends will be open Monday to Friday from 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. and Saturday, Sunday and holidays from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m.

Andrews said that existing staff will work in the lounge and none of the employees now on layoff are expected to be called back.

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