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**COMPULSIVE GAMBLING EXPERTS DISCUSS
EXPANDED GAMING AND PROBLEM GAMBLING**
*Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling Hosts Forum for Legislators
with Industry Leaders and Problem Gambling Experts*

BOSTON (September 22, 2009) – The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling and The Massachusetts Partnership for Responsible Gambling hosted a listening session yesterday to discuss with gambling industry representatives, legislators and their staff the importance of responsible gambling programs, policies and standards associated with any proposed gambling expansion in Massachusetts.

The daylong meeting included presentations on problem gambling prevention, treatment, and research by industry professionals from Canada and the United States who have created and implemented effective responsible gambling initiatives. The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling, the statewide agency charged with helping problem gamblers, says that the Commonwealth has an opportunity to be a leader in providing responsible public policy related to gambling.

“If we are to minimize the harm of any expanded gambling, we must invest in a comprehensive gambling policy at the outset,” said Kathleen M. Scanlan, executive director of the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling. “Massachusetts has the opportunity to take the lead in establishing responsible gambling policy, as no other states at present have the adequate programming and funding to address the problem.”

The forum highlighted comprehensive responsible gambling programs offered in Canada as an example to Massachusetts leaders. The Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation, for example, has preventative programs specifically targeting at the increase in online gambling, as well as youth education programs on the subject. They also established the Province’s first on-site Responsible Gambling Resource Centre and they work closely with lottery retailers to train employees on responsible gambling practices.

Dr. Debi La Plante, from The Division on Addictions at Cambridge Health Alliance, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School said that such programming is essential to the prevention and treatment of compulsive gambling. “Responsible gambling can become second nature once incorporated into everyday business practices, said La Plante. These programs are essential and can have a measureable impact on the habits and lives of compulsive gamblers.”

Today's forum was the first joint event for the Council and the recently formed Partnership for Responsible Gambling, a group which includes officials from Mohegan Sun, Suffolk Downs, Wonderland Greyhound Park, the Massachusetts State Lottery, the State Racing Commission and the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling. The Partnership's goals are to identify best practices in national and international responsible gambling programs, and to serve as a forum to share information on responsible gambling practices.

"Mohegan Sun is proud to support the Massachusetts Partnership for Responsible Gambling and to help promote awareness of the importance of responsible gambling programs," said Jeff Hartmann, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Mohegan Sun. "We believe strongly in investing in our local communities, and this Partnership provides vital educational and informational services to help Massachusetts achieve the most effective and successful gaming policies."

The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling has said that any legislation authorizing casinos or slot machines in Massachusetts must also include appropriate funds to aid those who may be harmed as a result of expanded gambling opportunities. An estimated 1 to 3 percent of the population has trouble with gambling at some point in their lives, according to a Harvard Medical School research study. In a recent national survey of funding for problem gambling services in the United States, Massachusetts ranked 18th in per capita expenditures to address problem gambling.

About the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling:

The Mass. Council is a private, non-profit health agency dedicated to reducing the social, financial and emotional costs of problem gambling. Founded in 1983 by Thomas N. Cummings, the Council has been instrumental in bringing the issue of problem gambling to the attention of the public and policymakers, offering resources to problem gamblers, their loved ones and concerned members of the community. The Mass. Council offers a toll-free Helpline (1-800-426-1234) which provides live confidential caller responses 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. For more information, visit www.masscompulsivegambling.org.

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