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BERMUDA CASINO GAMING COMMISSION MAKES STRIDES TOWARDS SUCCESS

Hamilton, Bermuda: The Island could ‘absolutely’ have a responsible, world class gaming model up and running in the near future, suggests international expert Kevin Mullally, of Gaming Laboratories International (GLI).

Mr Mullally, the Vice-President of Government Relations & General Counsel at GLI, has been consulting on the Bermuda Casino Gaming Commission’s behalf since being hired by then Minister of Tourism and Transport in early 2015, following the enactment of the Casino Gaming Act 2014. He previously served as Chief of Staff to Missouri State Senator Harry Wiggins and as Executive Director of the Missouri Gaming Commission.

In total, he has over 35 years of public policy experience with 22 of those relating to the regulation of gaming. His company has been sought out by more than 475 regulatory agencies around the world – and been involved at varying levels of “pretty much every casino start-up for the last 25 years”.

Mr Mullally stated, “I’ve been encouraged since my earliest communications with those placed in charge of this effort and have great respect for the leadership and members of the Bermuda Casino Gaming Commission.

“Bermuda, as a destination, not only has all the attractive tourism components that one would look for in a place to build a gaming resort, but it also has a very robust business community and reputation for safe, high quality entertainment and I believe that should be attractive to a lot of developers.”

Mr Mullally praised BCGC’s Executive Director Richard Schuetz as someone who has experience “in literally every side of gaming” – from the executive level with gaming operations to the operational level early in his career as a card dealer in a casino environment.

“Richard not only studied gaming as an academic, but also taught it as an economics professor in Macau, China; and served on the regulatory side on the gaming commission in California, so I think he brings an unparalleled skillset to Bermuda – one that is equipped to solve problems, as ultimately all good regulators do,” Mr Mullally added.

However, progress to get the island’s first casinos up and running has been slower than originally anticipated.

One of the biggest hurdles, according to Mr Mullally, was the time it took to get crucial legislation passed. The Casino Gaming Act 2014 was based on the Singapore regulatory model, which was assessed and deemed not to be a good fit for Bermuda.

“Singapore and Bermuda are two very different jurisdictions,” Mr Mullally explained. “There is no correlation in population size, inhabitants of the jurisdiction or the tourist model. The airports don’t share any similarities, the visitation rates aren’t the same, the size of the Government is different and the resources are unique as well, so it wasn’t really a great model to use.

“This was confirmed – not only by my opinion, but by a lot of consultants involved in international start-ups. For while you can draw lessons from various other jurisdictions for a project, there’s no such thing as cookie cutter regulatory policy. Every jurisdiction has unique economic, social and political considerations and different goals for what they want from gaming. When you piece together all those differences it forces you to build an industry and regulatory effort that is tailored to those specific needs.”

These legislative revisions “took much longer than anticipated”, which has delayed the start of the casino vetting and selection process, Mr Mullally said.

“The good news is the Commission has made very substantial progress and been very effective in using this time to develop an understanding of what types of projects would best fit Bermuda in building a regulatory structure that will support the public policy objectives of increased visitation rates and quality jobs for Bermudians. If the Commission’s recommendations for rules can be adopted quickly, the more visible work of the Commission can begin.”

Since the early stages of the project, GLI has worked at galvanising relevant stakeholders. They held an orientation process with the Ministry of Tourism and BCGC by taking staff to two highly regarded international gaming commissions for day long visits and educating them on how a highly functioning gaming commission operates.

“We have also had some high-quality people from both the academic, treatment and non-profit community overseas participate in open forums in Bermuda to educate stakeholders on what is needed for a responsible gaming prevention and treatment programme on the island,” Mr Mullally explained.

“As the author of the first self-exclusion programme in the U.S. and having been involved in building many responsible gaming programmes, I understand the importance of broad stakeholder involvement. Bermuda is in a position to do some great and much needed work in the area of responsible gaming. Just because Bermuda does not yet have a casino does not mean there is no gambling occurring on the island or people who have problems associated with it.”

“We have the building blocks in place and it’s clear to me now, that long before the casino door is open, Bermuda will have a very robust, fully implemented, responsible gaming prevention and treatment programme set up to meet its current and future needs,” he continued.

Mr Mullally is next expected on island in April. In the meantime, he’s reviewing draft rules and offering suggestions to develop an efficient and productive risk control gaming structure in Bermuda. He is also assisting in developing a vetting process that ensures a competitive selection process and attracts the highest quality gaming operators.

For more information and the latest updates on gaming in Bermuda, visit www.bccg.bm.

ABOUT BERMUDA CASINO GAMING COMMISSION: The Bermuda Casino Gaming Commission commenced operations in 2015 based on the enactment of the Casino Gaming Act 2014. The organization is responsible for regulating the casino gaming industry in Bermuda based on five key principles: Owners, vendors, managers, employees, and sources of finance should be free from any inappropriate past or present associations and behaviours, and uphold high ethical standards; operators should possess sound operational and financial controls; the games offered should be fair, honest, and operate with a high level of security and integrity; all fees, taxes, and related payments, should be appropriately accounted for and paid; and controls should be in place to protect the vulnerable.

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