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Niagara Falls, Buffalo Ready for Next Step

Wednesday December 31, 1969

BUFFALO, New York - As reported Buffalo Business Week: "Will the prospect of casino gaming in downtown Buffalo and Niagara Falls turn out to be an economic development panacea for the two struggling cities, as supporters say?

"Or will it be, as critics contend, a drain on two central business districts that cannot afford another economic development misfire?

"...Those are some of the key questions local officials are wrestling with in the wake of the Seneca Nation of Indians approving in a May 14 referendum a proposal that will help clear the way for casino gaming in Buffalo and Niagara Falls.

"Even with the referendum passing, by a 1,077-976 count, there are still issues to be addressed, including approval of the compact by the Tribal Council, New York state and, later, approval by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington.

"...The 14-year deal could generate \$1 billion in new revenues, most of which will be bound for the Seneca Nation. New York is slated to receive a cut that will reach 25 percent by the midway point of the contract. Buffalo and Niagara Falls will receive 6 1/4 percent of the state's share. Critics say the local cut should be higher.

"...An optimistic Cyrus Schindler, Seneca Nation president, feels confident that casino gaming will debut by mid-winter in the Niagara Falls Convention Center and sometime thereafter in a still-to-be determined downtown Buffalo site.

"...The presence of casino gaming is widely viewed as being a part of more long-term urban renewal strategies in both Niagara Falls and Buffalo. Leaders acknowledge a casino has the potential to be one of the anchors, but not the anchor for any revitalization project.

"...`If you take a casino and put in combination with what we have with the falls, it gives us a pretty substantial one-two punch,' said Stan Rydelek, president of the Niagara Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau. `A casino changes

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Niagara Falls dramatically. It will help us with what is both a blessing and curse of having one of the natural wonders of the world at our doorstep.'

"Rydelek said he is hoping that the Niagara Falls casino will do for his city what Casino Niagara did for its cross-river neighbor. Tourism industry officials credit Casino Niagara with being the catalyst for a steady flow of big ticket economic development projects launched since the gaming facility opened in 1996.

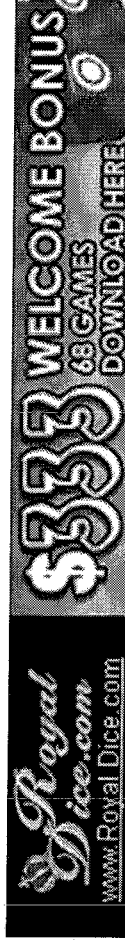
"... The casino scenario is clearer in Niagara Falls than it is Buffalo,' said Andrew Rudnick, Buffalo Niagara Partnership president. `When it comes to Buffalo, we're still a long way away from saying when it is going to happen and how it is going to happen.'

"Buffalo Mayor Anthony Masiello has been preparing for the casino issue for two years. The mayor sees the casino as part of a downtown redevelopment package.

"...Alan DeLisle, Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corp. president, agrees the overall economic development strategy has to be more than just a casino-based plan.

"DeLisle pointed to an urban renewal plan unveiled last fall as a good example of how a casino fits into the overall downtown package..."

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